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**Charter School Superintendents' Perceptions of Operating a Charter  
School System in Texas: A Phenomenological Investigation**

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**Charter School Superintendents' Perceptions of Operating a Charter  
School System in Texas: A Phenomenological Investigation**

by

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**Treatise**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Education**

**The University of Texas at Austin  
May 2017**

## **Dedication**

In loving memory of my father.

Teddy Joe Purcell

December 31, 1946 to July 16, 2014

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this treatise could not have happened without the help of family, friends, and colleagues. I am one of the lucky people who thrive on relationships, and each one in my life I count as a jewel. Friends who have been especially dear through this process are Amanda, Marilyn, Cody, Dean, and Jason. Thank you. God is ultimately who has seen me through to this point academically, professionally, and personally. He deserves all glory and honor for where I am today. He blessed me with a wonderful supportive family who are too numerous to name. My immediate family has been most understanding of hours away from home and away from them. Thank you, Momma, Joseph, and Charlie. Along with them is my sweetheart and champion who has stood beside me through more than just SB2, but life and the last 3 years is Rick. Thank you for your love and always believing in me. However, the person who has been the driving force to complete this treatise has been my father. He instilled in me the grit and tenacity to do what I do every day. He still nudges me along from the other side. He was the best mentor a superintendent or daughter could ever have and his love for kids a force of nature. In his honor, the song from his favorite band the Beatles expresses my feelings of gratitude most appropriately. Thank you, Daddy. I hope I made you proud. I love you more....

### **I Loved You More**

*There are places I'll remember  
All my life, though some have changed  
Some forever, not for better  
Some have gone and some remain  
All these places have their moments*

*With lovers and friends I still can recall  
Some are dead and some are living  
In my life, I've loved them all*

*But of all these friends and lovers  
There is no one compares with you  
And these memories lose their meaning  
When I think of love as something new  
Though I know I'll never lose affection  
For people and things that went before  
I know I'll often stop and think about them  
In my life, I love you more*

*Though I know I'll never lose affection  
For people and things that went before  
I know I'll often stop and think about them  
In my life, I love you more  
In my life-- I love you more*

Songwriters

LENNON, JOHN / MCCARTNEY, PAUL

**Charter School Superintendents' Perceptions of Operating a Charter School System  
in Texas: A Phenomenological Investigation**

Mollie Jo Purcell, Ed.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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This qualitative study involved interviewing four superintendents of public charter schools in Region 10 due to Texas legislation, namely, SB 2 (financial and academic accountability for charters) and HB 5 (pathways for high school graduation for all public schools). This qualitative study answered the following questions: (a) What implications does the implementation of state law have on superintendents' perceptions about leading Texas' charter schools? (b) What functions of charter schools were most affected state law and policy according to superintendents of charter schools open at the time SB 2 and HB 5 went into effect? (c) What adjustments to the 10 functions of the school districts may be necessary for applying this model of school functioning to public charter schools in Texas? Each one-on-one interview was conducted in person and lasted 60 minutes to several hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed through Rev.com and coded using NVivo. The findings revealed that charter school superintendents were affected with a high sense of urgency by the demands of SB 2. The four superintendents saw HB 5 as mostly something that affected Curriculum and Instruction but not as a factor that

could lead to charter school closure. The functions most influenced by SB 2 and HB 5 were Administrative, Finance, and Business Operations; Curriculum and Instruction; and Governance and Operations. The duty to manage finances responsibly was reiterated by all four superintendents throughout the data. These four superintendents spoke of finance as specifically being the most crucial subfunction for ensuring the viability of their charter schools. The data showed HB 5 impacted not only charter school configurations but also access to special funds, such as career technology money. As for the need to make any alterations to the 10 functions, Superintendent 1 said no changes were needed most effectively: “The functions are the functions are the functions.” Advocacy and education about charter schools is needed, and additional research for understanding how charter schools function as public schools in Texas is needed.



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The idea of school reform and educational transformation is part of the landscape and dialogue in Texas public education. School choice was the driving force for enabling the presence of charter schools in Texas. The majority of charters open in the state of Texas are considered open-enrollment charter schools. Open-enrollment charter schools in Texas operate in accordance with the governance structure stipulated in their charters. They are no different than the other types of charters operating as businesses in Texas, and the operation of open-enrollment charter schools is totally contingent on satisfactory student performance (TEC § 12.102). The student performance requirement required of the state's independent public school districts, and many uninformed people do not realize that open-enrollment charter schools are both public schools and subject to federal and state laws that protect civil and constitutional rights (Ausbrook et al., 2005).

One major difference in compliance between charter and traditional public schools is that charter schools are subject to the state education code only to the extent that state statute provisions are directed to be specifically applicable to them (TEC § 12.103; Texas Legislature, (n.d.)). A specific example of this is the differences in the implementation of Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code that deals with student discipline and Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code which provides protections and guidelines for teacher contracts. Texas Education Code § 12.001 stated specifically the purpose of charters as charter schools being specifically created to accomplish the following goals:

- Improve student learning
- Increase the choice of learning opportunities within the public school system
- Create professional opportunities that will attract new teachers to the public school system
- Establish a new form of accountability for public schools
- Encourage different and innovative learning methods. (Texas Legislature, n.d.)

The legislature determined the rules for operating and providing for school reform through charter schools. It also offered them unique advantages not available to traditional public school districts, but a major disadvantage for open-enrollment charter schools involves their lack of authority to levy local property taxes to fund facilities and programs not otherwise allowed to be funded by the state. Therefore, charter schools' financial bottom line can be heavily affected by the inability to receive funds from local property tax sources (Texas Legislature, n.d.).

Ausbrook et al. (2005) defined the open-enrollment charter school's charter document as a written contract between the chair of the State Board of Education and the chief operating officer of the school (TEC § 12.112). They also clarified that each charter granted by the SBOE must not only satisfy statutory provisions but must also include information consistent with what was provided in the application to the state to operate the charter school as well as any alterations required by the SBOE (TEC § 12.113). Hence, the charter document defines how the open-enrollment charter school plans to address accountability, operations, and governance. In addition, charters must

describe the geographical area of service, the process by which annual budgets are adopted, methods for conducting annual financial and program audits, and governance structures. Moreover, charters must define the qualifications required for employees and the criteria for renewal, probation, or revocation or denial of the charter (TEC § 12.111).

Since 1995, Texas charter schools have changed the whole makeup of the state of educational innovation as provided by educational reformers (Cetinkaya, 2014).

However, the process of educational reform only recently began and the challenges of these initiatives generated a whole new list of challenges adding to the complicated needs of Texas school children's and parents' needs. Traditional agencies and associations that have supported the state's independent school districts as they struggle to meet the new norms created by successful charters schools and charter school superintendents. These struggles emerge from the purposes of charter schools and the different implementation and oversight rules governing public charter schools. As time has progressed the accountability and oversight of public charter schools have changed, such as due to the implementation of Senate Bill 2 (SB 2) from Texas' legislature in 2013.

The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB, 2015) includes all 1,030 Texas school districts and the state's 20 regional service centers. TASB assists traditional school districts with the creation and editing of board policy. These policies help guide the school districts with issues of policy and governance. Although TASB allows charter school districts entrance into the association, TASB does not allow charters to adopt the board policies they provide for traditional school systems' adoption. Charter districts are required to create their own set of policies and governing procedures without a robust

model that can be generalized and used for implementation. The Texas Charter School Association (TCSA, 2014a) has policies that can be customized, but the content provided for policy formation is insufficient and lacks comprehensiveness for the needs of Texas charter schools.

Additionally, finding applicable peer-reviewed studies about “charter schools,” “charter school superintendents,” “leadership,” “strategic planning,” and “outcomes” in charter schools is very difficult. Available research, as seen in this document, has been quantitative and ex post facto by nonprofit organizations and government agencies (e.g., CER, 2000; Consoletti, 2011). The bulk of the available information about charter school functioning and effectiveness seems to be available primarily as qualitative data obtained by directly engaging with charter school scholars and practitioners. The gap in the literature addressing charter schools serving Grades pre-kindergarten through 12, as seen in this review, is quite large.

Additionally, research addressing the impact of recent legislation from the state on charters was needed at the time of this study. First, in 2013, House Bill (HB) 5 increased the complexity of accountability “to measure students’ academic performance in core high school courses and to become part of the graduation requirements beginning with the freshman class of 2011-2012” (TEA, 2012). HB 5 required the commissioner of education to adopt a transition plan to implement HB 5 and replace the Minimum High School Program (MHSP), Recommended High School Program (RHSP), and Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) with the Foundation High School Program beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. These rules allow students who entered high



school before the 2014-2015 school year the option to graduate under the new Foundation High School Program. (TEA, 2013).

Second, Senate Bill 2 (SB 2) went into effect with new accountability requirements on September 1, 2013. SB 2, sponsored by Senator Dan Patrick, Senator Donna Campbell, and Representative Jimmy Don Aycock, was introduced early in February of 2013 (McKenzie, 2013). When the bill was introduced, many anticipated it would have positive impact, and this bill was heavily advocated for by the TCSEA (2014b). SB 2 included an increase in the number of available state charter school contracts from 10 newly available contracts per year to 15 per year (Smith, 2013).

The other key parts of SB 2 involved requiring most the voters on a charter school's governance board had to be qualified voters or American citizens (Smith, 2013). The bill's advocacy was largely due to the initial language for directly addressing the need for facilities and governance changes in Texas charter schools and was initially focused on increasing number of charter school contracts that could be approved and put into operation (Smith, 2013). The consolidation process was supposed to be more streamlined and charter closure more defined. Moreover, SB 2 updated the charter renewal laws.

SB 2 represented the first legislation to address charter schools in 15 years; however, SB 2 made the largest impact across the state because of the unintended consequences of accountability on charter schools in the state. Additionally, SB 2 was written to target charter schools the state considered to be underperforming (Alexander, 2013). The new bill impacted the ability of charter school superintendents to plan around

the 10 functions of the school system because of SB 2 requiring them retroactively to address problems that emerged as of the day it became an active law in the state of Texas (Mosier & Hacker, 2014). SB 2 was retroactive to include the 2011 fiscal year and the financial solvency charter schools demonstrated as early as the 2011 fiscal year.

Charter schools, as well as traditional urban school districts, are bombarded in the media for the problems that most at risk students pose with low academic performance. The main focus of charter schools is often on immediate change, with little attention given to the ongoing needs of charter school superintendents, boards, and other stakeholders (Center for Public Education, 2010). A major issue regarding charter school superintendents is the lack of access to information catering specifically to charter schools. When looking at the public charter school superintendents' job descriptions, it is typical to combine the administrative, instruction and political leadership roles of traditional public school district superintendents. Charter school superintendents need greater awareness of the all of the implications and multidimensional aspects leading these unique public schools (Olivarez, 2013). The need to equip leaders for traditional public schools in districts is great as it is for public charter schools (Lookabaugh, 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The lack of accessible guidance from researchers and professional education organizations about the effect of state-level policies on the functioning of the charter school needs to be addressed by adding a qualitative study of charter school superintendents' perceptions of the effects of SB 2 and HB 5 on their leadership practices. There is a need to investigate charter school superintendents' perceptions and

leadership practices within the context of legislative policy. Olivarez's (2010) framework of 10 functions of schools was presented originally with traditional school district superintendents as an audience. However, those same 10 functions of schools are generally expected to be appropriate to charter school superintendents, even though for the purpose of this paper, no research was found as applying these 10 functions within charter schools. With the problem of the need for greater understanding of the functioning of the charter school in relationship to the Olivarez framework and within the legislative climate of Texas, the qualitative study of charter school superintendents' perceptions was conducted.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of leading charter schools with superintendents of public charter schools affected by HB 5 and SB 2, both of which went into effect on September 1, 2013. This study provided information to school administrators and researchers about the effects of law on Texas charter districts about legislation mandated by the state of Texas. This study illuminated superintendents' leadership perceptions and legislative issues that affect open-enrollment charter districts' operations in the state of Texas. The study's findings might inform curriculum development within graduate programs preparing future superintendents.

### **Research Questions**

This qualitative and phenomenological study answered the following questions:

1. What implications did the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5 have on superintendents' perceptions about leading Texas' charter schools?

2. What functions of charter schools were most affected by SB 2 and HB 5 according to superintendents of charter schools open at the time SB 2 and HB 5 went into effect?
3. What adjustments to the 10 functions of the school districts may be necessary for applying this model of school functioning to public charter schools in Texas?

### **Significance and Rationale for Study**

Charter school leaders' lack full access to school district oriented organizations, such as the TASB (TCSA, 2012a). As a result, a lack of research on charter school leadership and functions and the creation of legislation affecting Texas charter school districts have challenged charter school superintendents addressing many issues and overcoming obstacles that traditional superintendents do not experience. This study provided insightful information to strengthen the extant literature related to the functioning of charter schools by asking superintendents to discuss their perceptions about leading a charter school in the current legislative climate of Texas. This study illuminated superintendents' leadership perceptions and legislative issues that affect open-enrollment charter districts' operations in the state of Texas. The study's results might inform curriculum development within graduate programs preparing future superintendents. Addressing the unique nature of the charter school and the roles performed by charter school superintendents in Texas' legislative environment informed the educational leadership community and increased the likelihood of additional research to benefit charter school functioning nationally, if not only statewide.

### **Assumption**

The major assumption guiding the phenomenological study included participating superintendents responding with honesty to the interview questions.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study were due to issues beyond the researcher's control that prevented the findings from generalizing statewide or nationally. Texas law is unique and could prevent the findings from applying to public charter schools in other states. Next, every charter school operates differently and offers a unique mission. The criteria used to judge the performance of a charter school is constantly changing due to changes in accountability by the state law and education commissioner rules. With the demise of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 due to the emergence of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed into law in December of 2015, academic standards are once again under review and accountability rules might likely change at the national level, affecting the current study's generalizability depending on how quickly Texas, versus other states, reacts to the new law. Finally, unconsciously held biases by the researcher, a charter school superintendent, might have affected generalizability. Therefore, the researcher used a reflection log to identify and overcome those biases.

### **Definition of Terms**

Key terms related to the functioning the charter school district are defined in this section of the study.

**Average daily attendance (ADA).** A funding calculation formulated from the number of students who are in attendance each day of the school year for the entire

school year and then dividing that number by the number of instructional days in the school year (TEA, 2014).

**Bond insurer.** A third-party surety guarantees payment of the contracted obligation to the bondholders in exchange for a premium (TEA, 2010).

**Conservator.** An individual given sole authority by the TEA to direct the operations and/or government of a charter school's operation (TEA, 2014).

**Charter bonds.** Capital obtained from the general public in exchange for a low interest collateralized obligation (TEA, 2014).

**Entity holder.** This organization is granted the charter by the Texas Education Agency for the operation of a school district (TEA, 2010).

**House Bill 5.** The HB 5 required the Texas commissioner of education to adopt a transition plan to implement the Foundation High School Program beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. The law's rules allow students who entered high school before the 2014-2015 school year the option to graduate under the new Foundation High School Program and reduced the number of standardized tests high school students must pass to be eligible for graduation from 15 to five.

**Fund balance or net assets.** Net assets are the districts' liabilities subtracted from its assets; it represents what the district would retain if all its financial obligations would be satisfied. Or put another way, if a district planned to cease operations, the net assets would be returned to the taxpayers or transferred to a successor entity. The fund balance is what remains in a particular fund at the end of the fiscal year (TASB, 2011).

**Open-enrollment charter school.** A Texas public school legally authorized by

the state of Texas in 1995 that must accept any student that applies (TEA, 2016).

**Senate Bill 2.** The SB 2 law in Texas requires mandatory revocation of a charter by the Texas Commissioner of Education, if the charter has failed to meet state performance standards either academically or financially for three consecutive years (TEA, 2014).

### **Summary**

There was a need to investigate charter school superintendents' perceptions and leadership practices within the context of legislative policy. This chapter provided the purpose of this phenomenological study to explore the financial and other implications of operating a public charter school under SB 2 in the state of Texas, which went into effect on September 1, 2013. The chapter also included research questions, the problem, the significance, and the limitations. Chapter 2 provides the review of the literature on charter schools as well as additional overviews about SB 2 and the impact of legislation on charter schools. Chapter 3 provides the methods employed to conduct this qualitative and phenomenological study of charter school superintendents operating schools at the time SB 2 went into effect in the state of Texas. Chapter 4 provides the findings that result from the data collection. Chapter 5 concludes the study.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of leading charter schools with superintendents of public charter schools affected by SB 2 and HB 5, which went into effect in 2013. This study provided information to school administrators and researchers regarding the effects of education legislation mandated by the state of Texas. To conduct the review of the literature related to applying the 10 school district functions to the charter school model, legislative policy, and superintendent leadership studies about “charter schools,” “charter school superintendents,” “leadership,” “finance,” and “outcomes” in charter schools were sought using Google; ERIC; and EBSCOHosts’s Academic Search Premiere, Psychological and Sociological Collection, and Professional Development databases. Available data on general school outcomes, as seen in this document, were quantitative and ex post facto and were produced by nonprofits and government agencies (e.g., CER, 2000; Consoletti, 2011). This chapter begins with the historical foundations of charter schools.

### **Historical Foundations of the Charter School**

Charter schools started as a national movement based on the findings from the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983). This report discussed and showed the performance of students in America as at risk of failing to compete with other countries’ children academically and economically. As a result, many of the U.S.’s states began looking for innovative solutions to address this problem (Underwood, 2014). The



charter school movement in Texas directly resulted from citizens and legislators agreeing that traditional public school districts did not completely meet the needs of the students of Texas. A groundswell of support for reform by instituting charter schools was not only seen at the state and local levels in Texas, but also this call for action occurred at the national level.

The inadequacies of the public education system in Texas had been something that legislators were aware of as early as the 1960s. Charter schools were partially a result of the initial meeting in 1984 of the Select Committee on Education which produced a report of 12 recommendations for overhauling the nation's schools. Charter schools did not emerge until the 1990s. In 1991, the "Partner School Initiative" was introduced by the Texas Education Agency to challenge individual schools to achieve educational excellence and equity for all students by freeing the schools from certain regulations (Ausbrook, Barrett, & Daniel, 2005; Stevens, 1999). When this program began in 1992, more than 2,000 school campuses applied for participation in the program.

The Texas charter school movement was started in 1995 as a rider in the 74th Texas State Legislature on the largest substantive school funding bill ever introduced regarding school reform and education in the state. The bill provided for a complete replacement of the Texas Education Code, the reorganization of the Central Education Agency (CEA), and the reassignment of the responsibilities of the State Board of Education as an answer to the 73<sup>rd</sup> legislature mandate (Nelson et al., 2000). The mandate included 64 directives that educational stakeholders and Joint Select Committee of legislators were required to focus on for 2 years. This committee was tasked with

investigating charter schools.

Texas' original 1995 charter school statute stipulated that the State Board of Education (SBOE) designated an impartial organization with experience in evaluating school choice programs to conduct annual evaluations of the state's open-enrollment charter schools (Ausbrook et al., 2005; TEC § 12.118). The initial legislation that delegated this responsibility for designating the evaluator was given solely to the education commissioner in 2001. This charter school evaluation role was not much different from evaluating traditional public schools, but it was specific to the inclusion of the evaluation focus being on the whole charter school. Ausbrook et al. (2005) emphasized the statute's requirement for considering students' scores on the state's standardized assessment instrument as well as student attendance discipline, and grades data in addition to students' socioeconomic and family data, parents' satisfaction with their children's schools, and students' satisfaction with their schools.

As a result of a large number of campuses and districts wanting to participate in the initiative, the state legislature began offering significant changes to educational funding in 1993. The funding changes set the stage for the emergence of charter schools, which came to fruition with the next biennial legislative session in 1995. The initial 1995 legislation for charter schools passed with wide bipartisan support in Texas and paved the way for the launch of the state's first charter schools. The initial charter schools, whether they were home-rule charter school districts, local campus programs, or state-supported open-enrollment charter schools, were free from many state requirements, due to the 1995 legislation.

The committee's historical work led to the rewriting of the Texas Education Code known as Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) in 1995 by the 74<sup>th</sup> legislature. SB 1 introduced school choice in a bill with over 1,000 pages, and because of the magnitude of the bill's other items, the charter school provision was approved without significant opposition. The resulting Texas Education Code Chapter 12 Section 12.001 established charter schools as public institutions to create educational choice. These schools offered an alternative education option that provided the following specific goals:

1. Improve student learning
2. Provide a choice of learning opportunities within the public school system
3. Create professional opportunities to attract new teachers to the public school system
4. Establish a new form of accountability for public schools
5. Encourage different and innovative learning methods

The open-enrollment charter along with additional definitions of what legal rights, rules, and responsibilities to which a successful charter school superintendent must adhere are the focal points for this literature review. In Texas, the legislature saw charter schools as an answer the problem of education reform. The first 16 charter schools were established by the 74th legislative session in 1995, and these new schools began enrolling students in the 1996-1997 school year (Nelson et al., 2000). The following year the TEA plowed ahead in the following school year and opened more charter schools (Clark, 2001).

These goals suggested charter school superintendents should think strategically.

However, it is important to note the Texas Education Code did not dictate that charter schools to be run by certified staff. In fact, at their inception, the only certified teachers in charter schools were those involved with teaching students enrolled in federally funded programs such as special education and bilingual instruction.

SB 1's 74 R (1995) identified in Chapter 12.002 three classes of Texas charter schools:

1. A home-rule school district charter as provided by Subchapter B;
2. A campus or campus program charter as provided by Subchapter C; or
3. An open-enrollment charter as provided by Subchapter D.

As a result of the high student enrollments, the Texas Education Commissioner announced the selection of 83 schools with another 15 schools which were allowed to join shortly afterward for the program. The involvement of so many schools in the initiative suggested to Texas legislators that schools wanted greater local flexibility (Ausbrook et al., 2005). Penning and Slate (2011), among aspiring reformers, noted that previous major roadblocks to sustainable change included the following: (a) state laws, rules and regulations; (b) the state bureaucracy such as the Texas Education Agency, (c) school districts' unique policies, and (d) central school district administrations and school boards. Compared to charter rules across the nation, the Texas charter school law is considered to be one of the least restrictive (Center for Educational Reform, 1999).

In 1999, the 76th Texas legislature expanded the requirements for the content of open-enrollment school charters and required identification of both the composition of the governing board members and of all the charter school's officers (Ausbrook et al.,

2005). All officer positions including director and assistant director, chief operating officer, principal and assistant principal, and financial manager must be specifically defined (Ausbrook et al., 2005). Furthermore, charter schools must specify its officer selection and removal from office processes. They must also define how members of the governing body, such as the board of directors, board of trustees, or other governing body members, are selected and removed from office; how vacancies are filled; the terms of office for members of the governing body; and any staggering of the governing body members' terms (Ausbrook et al., 2005; TEC §§ 12.1011(3) and (6), 12.111(8)(A)-(F)).

In 2001, the Texas legislature added a statutory provision stipulating that granting a charter does not constitute any entitlement to renewal of a charter based on the same terms involved in the originally issued charter (Texas Legislature, n.d.). The original 1995 Texas charter school statute specified charter revisions as only made with SBOE approval (Ausbrook et al., 2005; TEC § 12.114). However, in 2001, the statute amendment required charter revisions to earn the education commission's approval, not the SBOE's approval (Ausbrook et al., 2005). The 2001 statute required all open-enrollment charter agreements must include descriptions of the school's educational program, the facilities it would use, the grade levels it would offer, the enrollment criteria, acceptable levels of student performance, and the period during which the charter would remain in effect (Ausbrook et al., 2005). In addition, charters must describe the geographical area of service, the process by which annual budgets are adopted, methods for conducting annual financial and program audits, and governance structures. Moreover, charters must define the qualifications required for employees and the criteria

for renewal, probation, or revocation or denial of the charter (TEC § 12.111).

Texas statute prohibited discrimination in admission policies for charter schools on the basis of gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, or disability but allowed open-enrollment charter schools to exclude students with documented histories of criminal offenses, juvenile court adjudications, or discipline problems (Ausbrook et al., 2005). The statute further outlined the requirements for continued open-enrollment charter school operations and renewal of charter as contingent on acceptable performance by students on the state's standardized assessment instrument, such as the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), and on the accountability provisions specified in the school's charter. Texas statute allowed open-enrollment charter school operators to require a reasonable application deadline to potential students who desire to lead their schools (TEC § 12.117).

Also in 2001, statutory provision specified rules for the event in which a charter school receives more enrollment applications than it has available spaces. In such a situation, the available positions are to be filled by lottery or according to a first come, first served order of applications as received before the deadline. Specifically, charter schools had to provide published notice of the opportunity to apply for admission to the school and include all application deadlines in a "newspaper of general circulation in the community in which the school is located not later than the seventh day before the application deadline" (TEC §12.117(a)(2) and (b)).

The child-focused part of the whole school evaluation was only a part of the assessment, however. The secondary focus of the assessment by the commissioner

included the costs of instruction, administration, and transportation that are incurred by open-enrollment charter schools. The evaluation further required information regarding the effect of these schools on local school districts and on the teachers, students, and parents within those districts. Also, the 2001 statute revision that empowered the commissioner to address and evaluate any additional issues as deemed necessary. The requirement to evaluate charter schools allowed for the regular flow of information about charter schools being brought to the legislature's and the public's attention, which left overall evaluation of each charter school being up for each commissioner's individual interpretation and implementation.

Charter schools were designed with the capability to offer innovation and testing of new ideas (Redd, LeClair, & Goessling, 2014). However, even though charter schools have been around since 1995 traditional public school district have just begun using the lessons from high-performing charter schools. This has recent information gained from innovative charters has just recently been put into practice with fidelity and consistency (Redd et al., 2014). An example of this implementation of knowledge gained from public charter schools was adopted by an innovative Superintendent Dr. Terry Grier in [Southeastern Texas City] ISD, one of the largest urban school districts in Texas. [Southeastern Texas City] ISD implemented five of the best practices from charter schools across nine schools affecting 7,000 students and significantly increased student achievement for Grade 6 and 9 students in mathematics and reading. Redd et al. (2014) argued that public charter schools are centers for innovation in education based on these results.

As of November 20, 2012, the State Board of Education awarded 17 eighteenth generation charters to these schools in Texas for a grand total of 215 in the state (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2012). At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, there were over 135,000 students enrolled in charter schools in Texas, according to the Texas Charter School Association (TCSA, 2012), and their number continues to grow (Mead, 2015). In 2013, Senate Bill 2 changed how many charters could be awarded from 215 to 305 by 2019. Significant information exists about the growth in charter schools across the nation, and the critics and advocates continuously approach charters from opposite sides of the education reform argument. Their rapid growth over the last 16 years in Texas and their impact have offered educators and researchers enormous data.

As of December of 2015, the TEA had awarded over 318 charters with 136 closing due to revocation, expiration, surrenders, and consolidation. These numbers show 182 currently active charters operating in the state. The possibilities for attendance and participation in the charter movement seems to be unlimited because of reports that there are more than 105,000 students on wait lists to attend public charter schools (TCSA, 2012). However, very little research has been conducted on the charter school chief executive officer (CEO) or on superintendents who run successful charter schools. In 2011, Center of Education Reform (CER) stated that in the 16 years of charter schools in Texas, the TEA has closed 52 of them. The overwhelming data provided in the CER report pointed to the failures directly resulting from ineffective superintendents or CEOs. In particular, these failures occurred due to financial mismanagement. CER called for research that could be used to determine the factors needed by superintendents who



effectively lead charter schools. Numerous articles, books, and dissertations appear in the literature to address leadership in schools and successful superintendents in general. However, research about the superintendents leading successful charter schools is limited (Fusarelli, 2000; Stevens, 1999).

### **Charter Schools Versus Traditional Schools**

After the inception of charter schools by the state of Texas in 1995, it is not contested that the fact is true charter schools are here to stay. This revolution in educational reform and the benefits that it is providing the parents of students in Texas is consequential. According to the latest numbers reported by TEA and the TCSA, the total enrollment of students in Texas public schools is 5,151,925 in the 2013-2014 school year and the total number of students enrolled in charter schools is 227,877 with charter enrollment being almost 5% of the total enrollment in public schools (TEA 2016, TCSA, 2016). The debate regarding if charter schools are good or bad may continue to be debated by policy makers and those focused on charter school achievement (USA, 2016).

The issue of charter schools being effective and maintaining their accreditation in Texas is one topic of great interest. In 2013, the Texas Legislature decided to further the accountability of charter schools, beyond those in HB 5 affecting charter schools, by drafting and ultimately signing into law SB 2, which put absolutes into the oversight and governance of charter schools in Texas. SB 2 required a financial evaluation of all open-enrollment charter schools. SB 2 mandated the closure of underperforming charter schools based on two criteria, the financial accountability system, and the academic accountability system. In the remainder of this paper, the charter school movement

undergoes further elaboration. The conceptual framework is explicated. The current state of charter school with consideration for the traditional school district is delineated.

### **Charter Schools' Gaps and Successes**

The charter school movement started as an experiment to the request for innovation by the commissioner of education in 1995. Now, many charter public schools have proven their value, and students have continued to enroll. Some Texas charter schools promote their popularity with long waiting lists. Public charter schools are here to stay. (Charter Schools, 2015). The main problem about gaps between traditional public school districts and public charter schools involves funding. Public charter schools receive only 64% of the funding traditional public school districts receive to educate students (Center for Education Reform, 2012).

The primary source of funding for charter schools in Texas comes from the Foundation School Program (FSP). Charter school funding is determined by the number of students enrolled in program participation (Rainey, 2015; TEA, 2016). Charter schools choosing to provide transportation to students may be awarded additional state funds but are not entitled to receive relief for bonds or existing debts from the state (Rainey, 2015; TEA, 2016). A charter school's Tier I allotment is based on a statewide average adjusted allotment which is entirely state funded because charter schools lack access to local tax revenue (Rainey, 2015). However, charter schools may receive Tier II entitlements based on average school district tax rates and ASATR based the greater of their 2009-2010 House Bill 1 (HB 1) revenue as part of weighted average daily attendance (WADA) figures, or the state average HB 1 revenue per WADA (Rainey,

2015). Charter schools also receive funds by participating in health insurance for their employees through TRS ActiveCare (Rainey, 2015). As a result, the finance functions become crucial aspects of leading charter schools, because attaining adequate funding requires adequate knowledge and skills by charter school administrators. Therefore, charter school administrators must have a strong understanding of the state's finance policies (Educational Resources Information Center, 2002).

Most students attend a charter school because they are not satisfied with the traditional school system. Many times, they enter the charter school as products of homeschooling, where the curriculum may be taught by unqualified teachers. If the student transferred from private schools, many private schools do not utilize the TEKS for the basis for instructional guidelines (Hope, 2014). Being a school of choice, charter schools instructionally many times spend a lot of time and energy finding the areas where students were not taught or not adequately taught the necessary skill in the content areas or grades that they have attended. Most students come out of traditional schools that have been performing academically in improvement required campuses for more than 3 to 5 years.

Professional educators are wary of working within charters because of their lack of understanding when serving as traditional public school staff. Many times, the charter school superintendent faces extreme obstacles as he or she attempts to legitimize the charter school and how it is directly a part of the community and wanting to improve the needs of the community in the area it serves (Dunn, 2011). Charter schools function much like a traditional school system in some ways but in many other ways they do not

(Texas Education Agency, 2013). Texas' Chapter 21 involves the nature of teacher contracts for traditional school human resource management but charter schools must provide contracts to teachers, and as a result, it is often difficult to maintain certified teachers throughout the year (Catano & Stronge, 2007). Teachers who are not held to the Chapter 21 contract in charter schools are not held to the same code of ethics for not completing an instructional year by State Board of Educator Certification or having their certification held for resigning in the middle of the year or after the timeline of 45 days before the first instructional school day. Recruiting and hiring highly qualified staff is difficult because of the apprehension and lack of knowledge that traditional experienced teachers have of charter schools. Many potential teacher candidates for charter schools have misperceptions or no understanding of the benefits and retirement through TRS that is comparable with traditional schools, as well as an overall belief of lower teacher salaries in charter schools (Cannata, 2010).

Charter schools receive greater organizational freedom than traditional public schools even while being held accountable for attaining the same federal and state academic standards as the traditional public schools (Estes, 2003). If a charter school maintains satisfactory student performance according to Texas statute, it retains authority for operating under its charter but it cannot impose or collect taxes (Campbell, 2013). Charter schools are limited financially because of this stipulation and only are allotted money by pupil enrollments. Charter schools in Texas do not receive tax money or facilities funding that traditional public schools receive.

The TCSA (2012) stated:

A recent independent analysis of revenue differences between charter school districts and independent school districts reveals a persistent funding gap exists. An average charter school in Texas receives an estimated \$1,500 less per student than independent school districts when examining general funds.

This funding gap only adds to the importance of charter school superintendents having the ability provide stronger leadership to their charter schools with little to no room for error.

This function represents another crucial area for charter school superintendents must master because facilities are not funded in ways similar to those of traditional schools (TEA, 2016). For example, the method of enacting a bond issue operates completely differently between charter and traditional schools in Texas (Terry & Alexander, 2008). Charter school bonds are not issued following a public vote by the taxpayers; therefore, the needed political and human capital for communication to the community about the need to fund the building of facilities is not present (Odden, 2011). Facilities for charter schools many times exist in nontraditional school buildings; most notably, charter schools may be housed within churches and in retail shopping malls (Graba, 2007). These otherwise planned facilities many times have not been designed to meet the physical plant needs of the specific charter school and may lack necessary space for offering adequate academic instruction and programs (Batdorff, Maloney, & May, 2010). Gymnasiums, cafeterias, playgrounds, science labs, and libraries may be extremely difficult to build into these environments. Only recently has legislation been passed in Texas allowing charter schools to have first right of refusal to gain facilities

from the local traditional school district (Cunningham, 2011).

Two key marked differences in the governance allowed by Chapter 12 of the Education Code between traditional schools and charter schools involves charter schools' ability not to follow Chapter 21 of the Education code pertaining to teacher and staff employment. Also, charter schools are not required to follow Chapter 37, pertaining to discipline. These two exceptions are provided and touted as offering more management freedom to a charter school's superintendent and governing body (CER, 2012).

However, the reasons charter schools are not successful or have not been successful have not related to student discipline or teacher contracts. According to CER (2000), many charter schools are closed primarily based on the mismanagement of funds, considering that approximately 85% of a traditional school district's budget is dedicated to personnel. Finance and how to manage money for charters in Texas is even more difficult because of the funding stream not including local tax dollars or facility funding.

Charter schools tend to enroll more students who are at risk for dropout and eligible for free and reduced lunch, and as a result, these students may come to school with poor social skills and may be less likely to participate in classrooms productively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). With this consideration for the needs of the students in mind, the charter school superintendent must manage getting these children to the school and/or must employ master schedules that enable students to ride public buses.

Charter school superintendents must hire staff able to provide for security within the school; however, charter schools cannot operate their own police departments. (Texas

Education Code Chapter 37) These distinctions merit scrutiny because 70% of charter school families enroll their children due to the desire to offer their children added security that they do not believe is available within traditional public schools (Center for Public Education, 2010). CER (2011) reported in great lengths as to why charter schools are not successful.

When charter schools do not meet state accountability requirements, the implications and sanctions are immediate and often fatal to the functioning of the charter. Senate Bill 2 required the state's education commissioner to enact a mandatory revocation of a charter, if the charter school failed to attain the state's academic or financial accountability performance requirements for the previous 3 school years (Campbell, 2013; TEA, 2014). "Failure can include three years in one specific area (academic or financial), or any combination of the two" (TEA, 2014, para. 4).

Financial mismanagement, academic failures by students, facilities issues, and district obstacles are the top reasons charters fail. However, when looking at the statistics and research from the nationwide perspective, only 15% of charter schools fail for any reason (Consoletti, 2011). This low charter school failure rate suggested that failing charter schools are not ignored and that accountability is enforced. According to the Texas Freedom Network (2000), nearly all failed charter schools close within the first 5 years of opening.

Too often bad or failed charter schools dictate perceptions about all other charter schools, and the story of successful charters tends not to be told. Consoletti (2011) reported Secretary of Education Arne Duncan had concurred with this assertion: "Bad

charter schools taint all of your reputations and allow your opponents, your opposition, to use those examples” (p. 6). Weil (2000) stated that charter schools are expected to follow state policies and achieve academic results throughout the term of the charter. By far, national data has shown that effective charter schools do exactly what they are supposed to do, and the level of success is directly correlated with the laws found within the states in which they operate.

### **Development of House Bill 5**

In 2013, the 83rd Texas Legislature established the new Foundation High School Program as the default graduation program for all students entering high school beginning in 2014-2015 (TEA, 2013). The State Board of Education adopted rules that implemented this new legislation in January of 2014. These guidelines directly dictate the implementation of the new Foundation High School Program that outlines the new criteria that must be met for students to graduate from high school in Texas. This bill was written and promoted by Representative Jimmy Don Aycock, who was acting as the chair of education committee for the house of representatives. House Bill (HB) 5 required the commissioner of education to adopt a transition plan to implement HB 5 and replace the Minimum High School Program (MHSP), Recommended High School Program (RHSP), and Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) with the Foundation High School Program beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. These rules allow students who entered high school before the 2014-2015 school year the option to graduate under the new Foundation High School Program (Schur, 2015).



## **Development of Senate Bill 2**

SB 2 directly resulted from the reformation of public schools in Texas. The original intent of the bill was linked to overwhelming growth of public charter schools in Texas. In the fall of 2015, over 613 charter school campuses were run by over 195 charter holders, and the waiting lists showed over 105,000 students were on waiting lists to attend charters (TCSA, 2016). This drastic increase in growth of charter schools led the SB 2 to be drafted by Senator Dan Patrick who focused on increasing the number of charter contracts offered and authorized by the TEA. The other purpose of this bill was to force the consolidation of small dysfunctional or poor-performing charters. This effort was promoted to ensure the allotment of charter school contracts could increase. A focus of this law would cause more amendments available to current charter contracts with the state so that charter school operators be able to expand and meet the demands of students and their families to have access to more charter school opportunities (Smith, 2013).

The growth of charter schools was closely debated, and multiple changes were made to the original SB 2 bill. The concerns of several legislators manifested, and more rigorous accountability measures were added to the oversight and regulation of charter schools. This regulation called for mandatory revocations of charter contracts should the charter school fail to meet accountability standards for three consecutive years in either finance or academic ratings. These ratings are directly made by the oversight of the commissioner and the Texas Education agency. This portion of the bill did not allow for the bill to be implemented for future ratings, but went into effect with retroactivity (TEA, 2015). This part of the bill did not allow for due process or consideration by the

commissioner and was deemed mandatory with no exceptions. This legislation caused the landscape of charter school superintendents to have a whole new set of political and legislative challenges in operating a public charter school. These measures of accountability affected all the functions and operations of a public charter school system as well as the highly complex and politically charged landscape and real world application of leadership and theory for charter school superintendents.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Ruben Olivarez (2013), professor at the University of Texas at Austin and Director of the Cooperative Superintendency Program, prepares public educators for the roles of central and district leadership. Dr. Olivarez outlined the oversight of school functions and their implications for superintendents performing the executive leadership role in public schools. This model was produced in response to the state's new policies and procedures for public school districts meeting accountability demands, and in turn, was thought to be the same for charter schools, in particular, for the management and financial aspects of running a charter school. These functions are what form the 10 different operational functions of the public school for which the superintendent is responsible.

### **Governance and Operations**

This function is what ensures the proper implementation of the Texas Education Code by the superintendent and the school board. This function ensures the proper implementation of duty and responsibilities of the school board and the superintendent as defined in the Texas Education Code. This function addresses the structure and

organization of the school board and the processes for formally carrying out all management, oversight, and policy development responsibilities of the superintendent and school board in delivering the state-required instructional program (Olivarez, 2013).

This function includes the guidance and support in the development of the district's comprehensive plan of operation and the corresponding allocation of financial resources. This function of the school system is carried out by the district leadership team, the school board, and the superintendent. The charter school board hires its superintendent and administers all charter district operations and school programs (Olivarez, 2013). Part of the responsibilities of this function involves school board members being properly trained and able to develop meeting agendas, organize processes, and present at board meetings. Knowledge of organizational structure is necessary to coordinate and deliver board services, such as meeting minutes, who comes to executive board meetings, and what is appropriate for the agenda items. The ongoing review of board-approved policies, development of a district plan, training of board members to understand their roles, and evaluation of the superintendent annually are all a part of this function (Gober, 2012).

The implications of the role of the superintendent regarding the governance function encompass the ability of the superintendent and administration being able to work together to keep all members informed and focused on district business. Special attention needs to be paid to the critical and ongoing planning and decision-making events when the superintendent and the board meet. This function is only successful if the superintendent can develop, nurture and maintain positive board/superintendent

relationships (Olivarez, 2013). The superintendent must be responsible for addressing the vision for the school district at events and during activities tied to the function of Governance and Operations. Community perspectives, learner-centered decision making and district-wide expectations for ethical leadership have to be apparent throughout the coordination of this function and in the implementation of policies and practices of the board and superintendent (Olivarez, 2013).

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

This area of function involves the school district implementing the state adopted curriculum in an effective and efficient manner where all students despite their cultural learning characteristics, styles and needs are addressed (Olivarez, 2013). Particular pieces of this function include the use of the local adoptions of the state curriculum and other instructional materials and equipment identified and used by teachers in order to take care of their daily needs as they teach the subjects and content areas in their daily teaching duties. An important part of this function is the coordination and delivery of district-wide professional development activities to all the campus-based instructional staff needed to prepare and guide them for the best implementation of the districts and states instructional plan for the required curricula taught. Part of this function is not only limited to state-adopted curricula but also allows for the provision and implementation of purchased or district locally-developed guides that provide direction to the teachers and schools on all the grade levels in a clear and concise manner (Schlechty, 2001).

The function includes the implementation and delivery of the special and state-adopted curriculum for the specific students served by the school district with

consideration for their cultural learning differences and needs (Olivarez, 2013). The importance of this is crucial because the curriculum must be easily accessible to the teachers and staff in the district. The superintendent must also make sure that the administrators follow through with making sure that the delivery of the state and district curriculum are taught with fidelity and consistency so that random variation does not occur. Effective planning of curriculum shows continuity of instruction both vertically and horizontally (Saphier & Gower, 1997). This function requires knowledge of the management structure that provides system-wide guidance for different curriculum content areas, the elementary and secondary curriculum programs' differentiation, and who manages ongoing planning and decision making at the district and campus levels. It is necessary to know the organizational structures related to the coordination and delivery of staff development district wide as well as how textbook and curriculum equipment and materials are distributed and maintained throughout the district. The processes and systems overseen by the superintendent ensure that all instructional staff are properly trained, equipped, and resourced to deliver the district's curriculum and instructional programs. Finally, evidence of district-level decision-making committees that pertain to curriculum and instruction must be collected.

Important responsibilities of the superintendent focus on the basics of curriculum in regard to ensuring that it is aligned to state standards and delivered to each classroom, materials correctly aligned to accountability targets. This task has to have a management system that appropriately interfaces with campuses with clear definitions of scope and sequence localized for all curriculum content areas and grade levels. Teachers should be

supported and be able to guide staff development and development of daily planning and teaching. This function requires the ability to choose topics for district-wide staff development initiatives followed up by procedures to follow-up and evaluate/support the application of these activities. Determining decisions must be made to the allowable degrees of autonomy and flexibility given to individual campuses to implement the state-adopted curriculum and the decision-making process that guides the district and curriculum department in supporting the teachers who are selected to choose the technology, textbooks, benchmark assessments and instructional enrichment materials used to deliver the state's curriculum to the students.

The implications for the role of the superintendent in shaping and leading curriculum and instruction are how he provides direct leadership in establishment of goals, objectives and strategies for improvement for the district, and specific actions that he possibly may take to directly impact the quality of the curriculum system-wide. Superintendents must consider the how they guide the priorities for system-wide training and planning.

The superintendent as a responsibility of this function must make sure that learner-centered values and ethics are maintained in the district culture and vision along with the community support addressing curriculum and instruction. As such, local community preferences must be addressed when decisions are undertaken for adopting specific curricula and instructional approaches. The focus must assure that the learner is the center of the culture and a part of the instructional and curriculum delivery process as a responsibility of the superintendent in the curriculum and instructional function of the

district.

### **Elementary and Secondary Campus Operations**

This function addresses the coordination all the systems and integrate the overall mission of the school (Olivarez, 2013). This includes the long term and short term planning for the future implementation and monitoring of learning. Much like the previous function it is important that systemic coordination with checking the progress and monitoring the development of students and learning in an ongoing basis (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002).

This function not only includes the how monitoring is done for the majority of the students through the campus based organizational structures but also how to best plan for the programs needed for the special populations such as limited English proficient students and students with special education needs, behavior and conduct disorders, and learning differences (Olivarez, 2013; Saphier & Gower, 1997). These programs may be implemented on the general campus but be coordinated in specialized campuses such as magnet programs and alternative campuses (Hill et al., 2002).

The responsibility of the superintendent in regard to the function of elementary and secondary campus operations is making sure that there as organizational structure that coordinates and integrates all staff actions at every campus level to maintain and implement the overall educational mission of the district (Moreno, 2014.) This function addresses the roles and responsibilities of campus principals who must coordinate with central staff. The structures and procedures must be established and employed to see to that not only traditional campuses but non-traditional and alternative campuses are

designed and made to accomplish their intended and unique missions within the appropriate and applicable federal, state, and district expectation and guidelines. In order to implement and carry out this responsibility, these programs must be staffed to ensure that students have access to all subjects to progress academically and meet appropriate instructional goals. This function requires special organizational structures and service delivery designs for each non-traditional campus according to the unique needs of the campus.

Not only is organizational structures key but equally important is the processes and systems must be in place to evaluate each campus improvement plan and make sure that improvement efforts are working and being successful. Systems and procedures must exist to make sure that the district-wide mission, goals, and values are supported on each campus. There should be an established process in place to develop implement each campus improvement plan. These plans and process have to be flexible enough to allow for individual differences and priorities while maintaining it focus on district goals. Program services must be provided systemically and monitored in regard to federal and state programs such as English language learners and students with special education needs to determine effectiveness and integration into the overall programs system-wide and on individual campuses. Other programs outside of the two mentioned before are the specialized needs of migrant, dyslexic, and gifted and talented students. Successful implementation of these processes and specialized services must be coordinated not just on the traditional campuses but also on alternative campuses.

Superintendent's responsibilities in establishing organizational structures,



procedures and systems to integrate elementary and secondary campus operations are especially important in the leadership activities carried out to address the needs of specialized campuses and to impact the quality of leadership at each campus. This is also manifest in ensuring that resources and support are made equitable to every campus, whether elementary or secondary. Demonstration of learner-centered values and ethics must be a part of maintaining effective elementary and secondary campus operations as well as functional district culture and vision with community support. Evidence and working relationships should be evident in the close partnership of community support programs and specialized campuses within the district. Most importantly, these operational structures are needed and must transmit and reinforce a district-wide culture focused on the needs of individual learners.

### **Instructional Support Services**

This function is key to the overall learning process and includes state-required support services that involves high quality academic, psychological and social development counseling to students and parents at all levels; library services; extracurricular programs; health-related services; community and parent outreach services; and specialized student and family support services that address unique circumstances and needs of students and families in distress (Olivarez, 2013). Traditional public schools have long been a part of traditional public schools and where the school system is located. Many superintendents in Texas are very familiar with the culture of the community and have longstanding relationships with outside organizations (Olivarez, 2013). This function ensures that state-required instructionally related services are

provided to students according to the goals and strategies of the district's instructional plan. This function may also include the responsibilities of the superintendent to make sure collaboration with other governmental and private agencies in the planning and delivery of social and human services are ongoing and part of the district-wide program.

This coordination is focused on the individual needs of students and assures students can successfully attain needed educational program services (Olivarez, 2013). The superintendent's responsibilities regarding this function of the district ensures organizational structures are comprised of effective leadership for delivery of support services, including, but not limited to library services, health and social services, parent and community partnerships, and extracurricular programs on all campuses. Further, clearly adhering and implementing federal and state law and district guidelines and policies enables effectiveness. Awareness of knowledge of what structures are available system wide that support school-community partnerships for families who require critical support in times of distress by enabling them to access a coordinated effort by the community and parents within appropriate parameters.

Effectively supporting processes and systems provide district-wide guidance and coordination of all existing support services is part of the superintendent's responsibility. This is noted by the establishment and maintenance of systemic evaluation procedures for libraries to demonstrate that all resources are current appropriate and adequate to address instructional needs at all grade levels and for diverse student populations. Extracurricular programs must be designed to ensure that equity is maintained in access and participation by gender and economic status. Mutually supportive and effective coordination between

the school district personnel and external governmental and private agencies calls for systems and procedures to be in place so that delivery of social and human services may be provided to students and their families.

The implications for the role of superintendent in creating and maintaining effective organizational structures and systems for the provision of support services is made up of many aspects and responsibilities. A Superintendent must enhance by effectively communicating and working with community and state leaders for the support of public and governmental backing of educational programs and services. This role has a huge impact and the superintendent's leadership directly affects what type and extent that health and social services provided to district students. All extra-curricular programs are guided by the direct leadership of the superintendent system wide as one of the many responsibilities dictated by this function.

As with all the previously mentioned functions, this one also is focused on demonstration of maintenance of the district culture and vision and the community support of learner-centered values and ethics in instructional support services. Community resources and support systems have to address the learners' non-instructional needs in the areas of physical and mental health and safety have to be easily accessible while making sure that the multi-cultural perspectives of the various segments of the community be used to design acceptable psychological, social and counseling services for district students. These structures and programs and procedures in regards to this function are critical and tie in with the responsibility of the superintendent to plan and coordinate the district's vision of the future in respect to the ability to respond to family

support services especially for assisting students in distress.

## **Human Resources**

This key function and responsibility involves all aspects of employee relations, including hiring, compensation, benefits, evaluation, and, when necessary, termination. Human resources personnel under the leadership of the superintendent collaborate with campus and district personnel to determine hiring needs, recruitment and retention policies, and personnel evaluation procedures. Federal compliance guidelines related to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the highly-qualified staff requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and others are an important part of the procedures to maintain compliance. This function of the district makes it essential that human resources staff work closely with appropriate district and campus personnel on an ongoing basis throughout the calendar year to address the complex processes needed to maintain and evaluate all staff.

Human resources should have organizational structures in place to administer personnel salaries and benefits; to implement recruitment, hiring, evaluation, and retention policies; to provide for staff development and training; to interface with the operations department and the curriculum and instruction department; and to provide for management of salary and benefit administration. This function must ensure that the most qualified and capable people are employed, retained, and developed for the personnel policies (Oliver, 2016). Furthermore, structures and practices must be in place to provide leadership training to promote job advancement opportunities.

This function establishes processes and systems guide the human resources

functions for the district focused on the district-level, campus-level, and role-specific staff development needs so they may be assessed and addressed systemically. A component of this is the training of administrators trained system-wide to ensure that they use appropriate and effective hiring strategies. Understanding and a process of evaluation of the Human Resource department should be in place. A specialized recruitment plan needs to be developed to secure staff in critical areas, such math, science, special education, and bilingual education for the needs of students in the district. The human resources function should include systems used to ensure sensitivity for employing and/or training for cultural diversity

The role of superintendent as the executive leader responsible for the quality and effectiveness of the district workforce had direct implications. These responsibilities are the superintendents many times to directly hiring key leadership staff. In doing so the superintendent ensures that the most qualified and capable staff members serve the needs of the board and the central office leadership team.

Learner-centered values and ethics are the responsibility and duty of the superintendent as well as maintaining the district culture and vision with community support in regard to human resource management. It is important that ethical and learner-centered behavior guide and emphasize this function in the behaviors of all district employees especially regarding the importance of ethical and learner-centered behavior on the part of all district employees; the vision of the district as reflected by how campus leaders are selected; and the establishment of district policies, practices, or guidelines that need to be followed within staff development programs for reinforcing a district culture

focused on the learner as the center of importance and concern.

### **Administrative, Finance, and Business Operations**

This function requires addressing leadership outcomes and the measurement and allocation of the public schools' district finances (Olivarez, 2013). No longer may this responsibility be the sole job of a district financial officer. It requires the superintendent to have a "hands-on" approach to financial management due to the era of accountability in which the state evaluates schools (Subjinski, 2015). The function requires management of the current financial situation while simultaneously preparing for the future and includes day-to-day operations crucial to the continued production of the school district. Such operations are the following: (a) purchasing, (b) accounts payable, (c) payroll, (d) funds management, (e) budget development, (f) monitoring, and (g) evaluation.

Part of this function is the organizational structures that support effective finance and business operations throughout the district. Specific organizational units needed to carry out the subfunctions are procurement, accounts payable, budget, payroll, and funds management. A known structure regarding the internal audit department involves to whom the internal auditor reports and the frequency and depth internal audit reports. Such reports may require annual inventories of the district's fixed assets.

Part of this function is the overall processes and systems for ensuring the adoption of an annual budget as well as for administering it appropriately by the district to maintain fiscal efficacy while following federal and state guidelines and regulations. This process necessitates having all information for the budget development process. A

crucial part of the budgeting process is the projection of enrollment and how it will affect staffing, payroll, the budget cycle, accounting, and the annual audit. Because the budget and finances of a school district are ongoing, the internal audit process needs to be streamlined into district oversight plans. The campus leaders and committees need ongoing access to budget allocations to manage instructional expenditures (Corrales, 2014).

The superintendent serves as executive and leader, primarily responsible for the fiscal management of district operations. The superintendent bears the key responsibilities for the overall budget development process and ensures the effective and ethical management of budgetary allocations. The superintendent demonstrates efficacy with this function through assurance that fiscal management of district operations support learner-centered values and ethics and district culture and vision have community support. The superintendent's leadership actions enable district staff to adhere to ethical principles in the management of school monies. Procedures ensure that community-based contributions to school services are properly managed in alignment with their intended purposes. Finally, the superintendent verifies that the district's and campuses' budgets directly align to the long-term vision of the district and the input of the community (Olivarez, 2013).

### **Facilities Planning and Plant Management**

This function encompasses the following areas: (a) evaluation of existing facilities, (b) operational management of facilities, (c) long- and short-range planning of facilities, (d) plans for and implementation of school construction, (e) educational

specifications for new buildings including technology integration, (f) safety and security in addition to flexibility for variable learning purposes; (g) development of a capital improvement program, (h) site selection and acquisition, and (i) architect selection. This function ensures sustainability by preventing potential challenges such as uncontrollable costs due to increasing or decreasing enrollment based on enrollment projections and modifying school infrastructures to address emerging policy changes such as incorporating environmentally friendly designs, materials, and energy sources (Olivarez, 2013). Organizational structures for this function are needed to provide ongoing oversight, planning, and maintenance among a district's facilities. District and campus leadership oversee facilities management to coordinate and enable timely responses to all situations, especially facility emergencies.

Processes and systems are an integral part of this district function and part of the superintendent's responsibilities. Superintendents must be able to project enrollments, assess future facility needs, maintain existing facilities in safe repair, oversee renovations and/or new facility construction, and address changing infrastructure priorities due to legislative mandates and/or population shifts. Systems that monitor changing facility needs related to building purposes and legislative imperatives must be enabled for this function's effectiveness. Procedures and processes to acquire support for capital improvement funds and to guide who makes decisions must be established to avoid challenges regarding site selection, architectural design, and construction management.

The superintendent provides direction about the maintenance, renovation, and new construction of facilities. The superintendent is responsible for the following: (a)



direction and oversight to the maintenance and improvement of facilities system-wide; (b) leadership for long-range planning for facility renovations, acquisition of additional real estate, and fund raising for new buildings or remodeling of existing facilities; (c) the selection and hiring of external architects and/or contractors and for guiding their work during projects involving the renovation or construction of district facilities. Ultimately the superintendent must continually address the learner-centered values and ethics and maintain the district culture and vision with community support in relationship to facilities planning and plant management. The district must have advisory structures to actively incorporate community voices in the design and implementation of facilities maintenance, renovation, and construction projects. The superintendent shares the vision of the district's and the community's learner-centered values that is reflected in the design and use of facilities system-wide.

### **Accountability, Information Management, and Technology Services**

This function is one interwoven with all the other nine functions of the public school (Olivarez, 2010). Systems of accountability are redundant on multiple levels and use of technology and how decisions are made with the data. Data integrity and auditing with all areas of the operations of a school are reviewed on a frequent basis for long-term goals and planning. This function is an essential part of the job for any school superintendent. The accountability area is overreaching and affects all areas of the operating and functions of a school.

This function is integrated with communication, data collection and analysis, and administrative monitoring the district's successes in meeting both academic standards and

federal and state compliance requirements. It is simply a non-negotiable responsibility of the superintendent to maintain carefully structured data in files of all types due to the exceedingly complex and interrelated federal and state requirements and as part of showing accountability with critical fiscal and legal parameters. This function addresses the entire network of data gathering and information exchange across all aspects of the school district organization.

The organizational structures necessary to provide oversight for accountability include information management, technology services, and the maintenance of data and analysis systems. The structures also include an internal audit structure or a contracted accounting organization to ensure purchasing systems operate in accordance with statute, policy, and budgetary allocations. Specific technology structures are used to track accountability data and provide ongoing analysis of real-time data to support district leaders.

Data collection, electronic data management, and instructional delivery systems need the support of system-wide processes that meet the needs and regulations applicable under federal and state mandates (Olivarez, 2013). These processes must be efficient, secure, and ongoing to track student data on academic progress, attendance, participation in special services, and other critical school functions. The technology-based systems in this function display the following (a) how technology is deployed to ensure school security; (b) what systems are used to allocate and inventory equipment, textbooks, and other school materials; (c) what technology tools and systems are used by teachers to deliver instruction in the schools; (d) what systems provide classroom- or teacher-level

analysis to guide instructional decisions in regards to the state accountability systems; (e) how final results are implemented as part of professional activities for the teachers in the districts; (f) the measurements used to assess the effectiveness of existing technology-based instruction systems; (g) how and to what extent media are part of the instructional activities in vocational or career educational programs; and (h) how technology systems are maintained and used to plan, revised, update, and maintain timely and coordinated school transportation schedules.

The superintendent, as the executive leader of this function, involves having primary responsibility for the district's fiscal management and operations. The superintendent keeps the board apprised and up to date regarding the status of objectives and priorities related to strategic long range planning of district-wide technology systems. The superintendent must use accountability data for guiding all decisions made at the executive and district level. Through the constant use of data, the superintendent implements this function responsibly by applying learner-centered values and ethics; maintaining the district culture and vision with community support; and applying all the above to accountability systems, information management, and technology services.

This overall implementation of systemic procedures with the highest ethical practices is maintained by respecting all processes related to accountability. Training needs to systemically required of all district staff to reinforce compliance with the use of technology ethically throughout the district. Training is used to stress learner-centered practices and strategies as the primary focus of instructional technology.

## **External and Internal Communications**

External and internal communications suggest schools communicate effectively on all levels from the board to the teachers to the parents (Olivarez, 2013).

Communication can be a very effective leadership tool (Odden, 2011). It is essential to communicate with key stakeholders to spread vision to the community (Dlugosh, 1993). Identification of technology-based systems is necessary to communicate priorities, needs, and concerns to the community and parents (Garza, 2010).

By increasing the flow of communication to external stakeholders, the community gains the opportunity for involvement decisions and becoming supportive of school district decisions (LeBaron & Markuson, 1991; Odden, 2011). Internally, recursive communication must occur within campuses and the central office and between the superintendent and school board. External communication is most typically used to inform parents and community members about campus and district activities, events, performance results, and other critical information, such as board meeting schedules and construction proposals. District communication systems should be used to maintain a positive image to manage effectively any potentially negative occurrences. Many school districts establish a Public Relations Department and dedicate an entire staff to maximizing the positive image of the district and minimizing any negative news (Olivarez, 2013).

Organizational structures within the district guide and manage system-wide internal and external communications. These structures are by district leaders to interface effectively with other governmental entities regarding school issues and needs. These

communication structures should be a part of the partnerships maintained by the district with external higher education and career education entities to help support interagency projects. A standing advisory committee typically addresses internal communication concerns as well as other structures established by the superintendent for ensuring the district vision reflects the needs and concerns of the community children served by the district (Olivarez, 2013).

To maintain ongoing multi-directional feedback through the district on critical issues, activities and decisions, processes and procedures provide system-wide parameters for effective communication, both internally and with respect to external entities (Olivarez, 2013). These technological systems are used to coordinate rapid and accurate internal communications. The purpose of these systems involves effectively resolving negative internal issues that could potentially disrupt internal and external communications. Strong and positive community support is maintained for schools by procedures being systemically implemented to engage the community and regional media in telling the district and campus stories with empathy and clarity. The implications for superintendent who serves the mission of the district and maintains the support of the community in establishing and maintaining primary expectations for effective communications involves the ability to carry out the role of the primary spokesperson on behalf of the district and the community and to judiciously employ the most critical communication responsibilities.

## **Operational Support Systems: Safety and Security, Food Services, and Transportation**

Although this function is mentioned last, it has the inclusion of the three essential operations of a school. Safety and security of students, food services, and transportation departments are elements of operational support and the essential components needed to address the basic needs of students and staff (Olivarez, 2013). The first of these systems encompasses planning for emergency events that include severe weather, unanticipated violence on school property or at school-sponsored events, and major community health issues impacting schools. Safety and security enables ensuring staff have knowledgeable to and capacity for enforcing preventative safety and security measures by maintaining secure areas such as medicine cabinets, maintaining chemistry laboratories' compounds, and continuously monitoring the facility and grounds for potential threats to safety.

The food services and transportation aspects of this function can be performed internally or may be contracted out to an external entity. Food and transportation services are highly regulated by the state and federal governments. They include health and nutrition guidelines, and implementation must be planned sufficiently to meet the variable needs of each district or school according to specific population needs and schedules. In both cases, the district is responsible for safe and responsible food services and transportation.

Deployment of effective district structures are necessary to coordinate with external departments and governmental agencies responsible for safety, such as local police departments, court officials, juvenile justice entities, social services. Clear

organization of food services and delivery district wide must occur. Transportation needs representation in the organizational structure to deliver students and staff efficiently to all critical school functions.

Operational support systems must be planned, implemented, maintained, and revised in accordance with all applicable regulations, fiscal constraints, and district functional needs. It includes maintaining current disaster plans for each campus to be constantly ready to respond to any immediate crisis. Alternative communications systems should be developed to allow for adapting loss of power, water, and mobile or land telephone capability within district facilities. Systems to address preventative and intervention programs regarding gang, drug, and other behaviors that may affect safety need to be explicated to all staff. The systems used to monitor food services for quality and safety throughout the school district must be standardized. Finally, the district must be sure its transportation services meet all security regulations.

As the superintendent provides leadership for operational support of district programs and services, the following roles must be engaged: (a) ensuring all district leaders remain vigilant to safety and security in district activities and services, (b) addressing crisis situations immediately, (c) structuring and implementing communication systems for immediate notification of any crisis or safety concern, and (d) maintaining constant flow of communication during any operational failures or high risk safety situations. Learner-centered values and ethics must remain at the forefront of the responsibilities as a part of the role of the superintendent as well as the district culture and vision with community support as part of the operational support. These are

maintained by generating and coordinating the safety and security of all students during their participation in all school activities and events. Strategies should be used by the superintendent to obtain and proactively involve the community in planning comprehensively coordinated responses in the event of possible disasters affecting schools in the district.

### **Synthesizing Bolman and Deal's Four Domains with Olivarez's 10 Functions**

The conceptual framework involves a full integration of legislative policy, the 10 functions of the school district, and the charter school superintendent. To form this framework, the work of Bolman and Deal (2008) offered an integrative lens. Bolman and Deal provided understanding of the functions and operations of an education organization on a day-to-day basis in order to more clearly evaluate the charter organization. Bolman and Deal introduced a four-domain framework as governing the overall operations of school superintendents and business managers as the following: (a) Structural, (b) Human Resources, (c) Political, and (c) Symbolic.

The structural frame refers to the roles and responsibilities of people within the organization. Structure is built to fit the organization's current circumstances functions based on workforce, goals, technology, and environment (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Structure is the first domain or frame generally used to describe an organization. Structure provides the features of division of labor, hierarchy of offices, rules to govern performance, separation of personnel from official property and rights, use of technical qualifications for selecting personnel, and the nature of employment as a primary occupation of a long-term career (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The structure domain can



easily be applied to the 10 functions of the school system.

The human resource frame provides guidelines for aligning the people who work in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). There must be parity in the employee-employer relationship because each party needs the other for the survival of the organization, intrinsically and extrinsically. In this context, a good fit between the organization of the charter school and the superintendent is necessary for human resource effectiveness (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The integration of the human resources frame involves all stakeholders within the organization most impacted by the influences of the political and the symbolic frames. For the purpose of this study, the human resources frame includes students; parents; in-house staff of teachers, administrators, and non-certified staff; the staff supporting the non-instructional aspects of performing the 10 functions of the school district; and the attorneys and auditors performing contracted work for the school system.

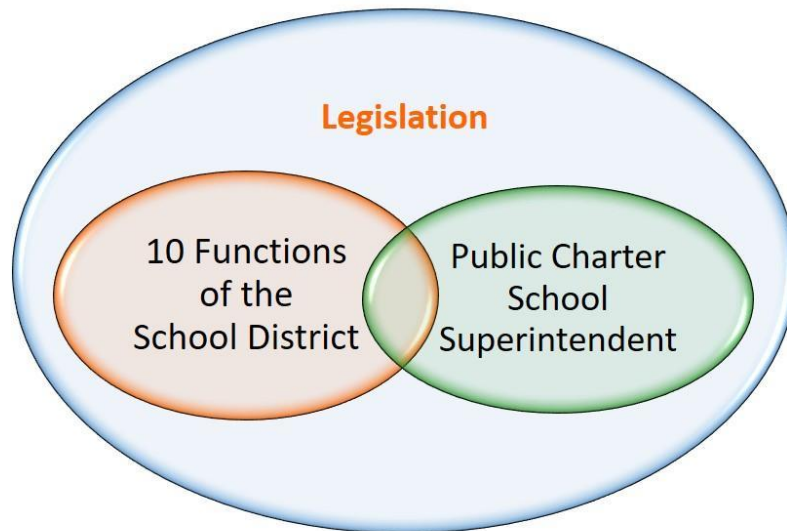
The political frame affecting the organization interweaves among and guides the functioning of the other three frames. The dimension leads to the organization's senior management need to set agendas and goals (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Texas' SB 2 caused the political framework of the charter school to become the foremost important one in the organizational structure. SB 2 defined the political frame of the organization both internally and externally within the charter school's local community, causing the charter school superintendent to be focused on the politics of the legislative arena. The state's legislative actions dictated the direction of goals and the agenda of the superintendent, because the political terrain not only encompasses the local stakeholders of the

educational organization but also the larger political system within the state.

The ability to align the charter school's collaborative strategy and focus of the larger agenda for education encompassing the needs for statewide implementation of the intended legislation of SB 2 and not the unintended implementation is the greater concern. Aligning the political frame's ramifications through collaboration carries instrumental weight for all parties affected by the implementation of SB 2. The adoption of a collaborative and transparent strategy, versus the choice of an adversarial approach, with political regulators from the state level represents a critical ethical dilemma for a charter school superintendent. The application of the political frame is only successful when the potential for collaboration is embraced through the use of long-term relationships at the state and local levels in addition to recognizing the underlying importance of the values and ethical principles of the superintendent (Bolman & Deal, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the political frame is seen as overlapping or superimposing itself over all the other three structural framework areas.

The final piece is the symbolic frame. This frame explores the more emotional thought provoking side of the functions. The symbolic frame focuses on how humans use meaning, belief, and faith to create a culture. In any organization, there are certain values, rituals, ceremonies, and stories that make up the environment and symbols of the group and attract members that support the cause. Symbols help people and leaders make sense of ambiguity in the world. Symbols allow people to see and understand events for the symbolic interpretation of them and not shallow occurrence. Symbols create unity and add meaning to the culture of an organization. Members create symbols to eliminate

confusion and ambiguity. Processes and events are held with higher understanding and purpose when they are linked to a common belief of the group. The symbolic frame allows for recognition of the importance of symbols in a group. Exploring the various stories, heroes, values, and vision that create the culture of an organization provides roots to the members to be motivated in achieving the goals of the group. The symbolic lens can be used to generate understanding all of the implications of SB 2 on charter school superintendents' leadership practices. What the symbols mean along with understanding the charter school organizations overall survival and successes may be discerned in this study of charter school superintendents.



*Figure 1.* Venn-diagram of the conceptual framework designed for this study as the intersection of legislative policy, the 10 functions of the school district, and the charter school superintendent's roles.

Charter school superintendents are tasked with understanding the factors influential to increasing student achievement. These factors guide financial decisions on specific functions within the district. Also, these factors guide the implementation of effective programs. When a superintendent is forced to make budgetary decisions and resource utilization, thoughts on each of the specific district functions become a factor (Brandewie, 2015). All 10 school district functions are also important to charter school operations. The area of finance is key not only at the state level for accountability but for day-to-day operations. Finance serves as the foundational function for the survival of the charter school organization.

Bolman and Deal's (2008) four lenses may operate as part of planning for the survival of the charter within political context of legislation. All four frames are only as effective as the superintendent who uses them. As depicted in the conceptual framework, HB 5, SB 2, and the standards for academic and fiscal accountability impact all aspects charter school operations and all 10 functions of the school system. Both traditional and charter public schools are held to the high standard that School First dictated. However, charter schools function with considerably less money. In order to be in School First compliance, a charter school superintendent must have a leadership tool box that is abundantly filled.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

Special attention to the background of charter schools, their funding, and current legislation due to the financial component applied in SB 2 and HB 5 was provided. Bolman and Deal's (2008) conceptual framework and Olivarez's (2013) 10 functions of

public schools were synthesized together to improve understanding of the implications of legislation on charter schools operating in Texas. Chapter 3 provides an explication of the phenomenological method and the procedures for conducting this qualitative exploration of the perceptions held by superintendents of public charter schools affected by SB 2 and HB 5, which went into effect on September 1, 2013.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures**

This chapter describes the design of the proposed study and the methodology behind it. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of leading charter schools with superintendents of public charter schools affected by SB 2 and HB 5, which went into effect in 2013. Included within this chapter are purpose of the study, research design, setting and sample, data collection procedures, instrumentation, credibility, and data analysis.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of leading charter schools with superintendents of public charter schools affected by SB 2 and HB 5. This study provided information to school administrators and researchers about the effects of law on Texas charter districts in relation to legislation mandated by the state of Texas. This study illuminated superintendents' leadership perceptions and legislative issues that affect open-enrollment charter districts' operations in the state of Texas.

#### **Research Questions**

This qualitative and phenomenological study answered the following questions:

1. What implications did the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5 have on superintendents' perceptions about leading Texas' charter schools?
2. What functions of charter schools were most affected by SB 2 and HB 5 according to superintendents of charter schools open at the time SB 2 and HB 5 went into effect?

3. What adjustments to the 10 functions of the school districts may be necessary for applying this model of school functioning to public charter schools in Texas?

The first question offered the opportunity to understand the implications of the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5 on superintendents' perceptions about leading charter schools in Texas. The second question enabled the superintendents to discuss the 10 functions of charter schools most affected by SB 2 and HB 5. The third question enabled the superintendents to share their thoughts on how the 10 functions of school districts may need to be adjusted for applying this model of school functioning to public charter schools in Texas.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research relies on interactive and humanistic methods that were ideally suited for the current study (Creswell, 2013). When using the phenomenological design, researchers provide in-depth reflections and descriptions of everyday experiences (Saldaña, 2013). The phenomenological model was the most appropriate method for an in-depth analysis of the perceptions had by superintendents guiding charter schools under the legislative climate created by SB 2 and HB 5. The phenomenological approach also provided the best avenue to develop and establish a rich description of the in-depth perceptions of charter school superintendents (Creswell, 2013). Information was gained from one-on-one interviews with four charter school superintendents who have served as superintendents in K-12 traditional schools and charter schools regarding their perspectives of charter school management in Texas.

## **Data Collection and Procedures**

The aim of qualitative research is to understand a specific phenomenon in its natural setting (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological approach was used to investigate the sample of participants to whom the researcher had access for gaining a wide array of information about the specific subject of operating a charter school in the legislative environment in Texas (Creswell, 2013). The one-on-one interview participants were educational leaders who have been superintendents of charter schools affected by SB 2 and HB 5. The participants were asked questions to explore their perceptions and experiences as charter school leaders in Texas as a result of SB 2 and HB 5.

Once the study was approved by the University of Texas Institutional Research Board, the potential participants were contacted for the interviews. Each participant completed and signed the informed consent form prior to the beginning of his or her interview. Each interview lasted between 60 minutes and 4 hours, depending on the participant willingness to share information about his or her experience with charter schools following the passage of SB 2 and HB 5 as Texas legislation. The interviews were recorded and transcribed through Rev.com, a secure transcription service operating through a smartphone application. At the completion of the interviews, the data were analyzed for themes regarding the perceptions and experiences discussed in the interviews by the superintendents.

## **Instrumentation**

The semistructured interviews were used for ensuring there was an opportunity to



ask follow-up questions for clarity and for all the participants to converse freely regarding reflections and memories about their perceptions experiences with the implementation and unintended repercussions of HB 5 and SB 2 (Saldaña, 2013). In the interviews, the participants discussed the content for answering the three research questions and seeking their answers to the research questions. The semistructured interview format was acceptable for this phenomenological study because the researcher was an instrument of the study addressing the initial unintended repercussions of HB 5 and SB 2 that the charter school faced (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Each interview lasted between 60 minutes and 4 hours, depending on the participant's depth of discussion and availability. The researcher respected the available time allotted by each participant. The questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were the following and may also be seen in Appendix A:

1. Share with me the history of this charter school from when you initially became superintendent until now?
  - a. What was the organizational structure like before SB 2?
  - b. How as the organizational structure been affected by SB 2?
2. What is your history as an educational leader?
  - a. What positions did you hold before becoming a charter school superintendent and in what types of public schools or districts?
  - b. What are the differences between leading a charter school versus a traditional public school?
3. What training have you received for strategic planning?
  - a. What are your experiences with your regional service center in relation to support for your strategic planning efforts?
4. How has SB 2 and HB 5 impacted your application of the functions of the

- superintendent?
- a. How have you adjusted?
  - b. Why have you made adjustments?
  - c. What aspects of strategic planning are most affected by SB 2 and HB 5?
  - d. What do you do differently due to SB 2 and HB 5?
5. Who do you include in your decision making as a result of SB 2 and HB 5?
- a. Why do you choose those designees?
6. What structures, staffing, resources, etc. have you initiated and/or invested in, as it relates to SB 2 and HB 5 and your charter school for the following:
- a. Governance and operations
  - b. Curriculum and instruction
  - c. Elementary and secondary campus operations
  - d. Instructional support services
  - e. Human resources
  - f. Administrative, finance, and business operations
  - g. Facilities planning and plant management
  - h. Accountability, technology services, and information management
  - i. External and internal communications
  - j. Operational support systems
7. What other experiences had you had in your role as a charter school superintendent specifically in regard to SB 2 and HB 5?

### **Participants**

The criteria for participating in an interview targeted superintendents of open-enrollment charter schools with administrator experience both in a traditional public school district and a public charter school. Only five charter school superintendents in Region 10 of Texas were identified by the Texas Charter School Association (TCSA) as meeting the criteria for inclusion. The four superintendents who participated in the study

were superintendents of charter schools and three of the superintendents led charter schools in the period of the initial impact of HB 5 and SB 2. The four superintendents worked in charters serving Grades K-12 and in traditional independent school districts, either as superintendents or as executive leaders. The superintendents held Texas Superintendent certification and had earned doctorates. All participants' identities were masked by use of pseudonyms in order to protect their identities and to maintain confidentiality. Interviews were recorded to facilitate transcription and analysis of the interview data.

### **Creditability**

Due to the nature of this phenomenological study, the researcher was the most qualified individual to investigate the implications of SB 2 and HB 5 on charter school superintendents' experiences. The researcher was a certified superintendent and led two charter schools for over 5 years. The researcher had academic knowledge of the 10 functions of a school district via Olivarez (2013). The researcher, a charter school superintendent, directly ensured the 10 functions of a school district are applied to charter school management.

Not only had the researcher been superintendent a charter school superintendent, but the researcher also held leadership positions in charter schools since 1999. The researcher was familiar with charter school functioning and aware of the interrelationships between the legislative and executive branches of government when addressing education and charter schools. The researcher was the key informant for finding participants due to having extensive knowledge and experience working in a

charter school under the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5. Furthermore, the researcher's superintendency status offered a unique qualification for understanding the participants connected with the leadership other charter schools in Texas. The researcher had immediate access to superintendents in Texas through the TCSA to complete this study to explore the phenomenon faced by charter schools in the SB 2 and HB 5 environment. Because the researcher was the instrument for gathering and interpreting the data derived from the interviews with the superintendents (Creswell, 2013), the researcher attempted to reduce bias and promote objectivity by engaging an outside person to verify the accuracy of data coding and writing reflections about the obtained data.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis allows for making sense out of data to communicate it to others (Creswell, 2013). Researchers ask questions to comprehend data implications and significance. The data analysis process involves understanding the concepts that interviewees frequently mention from the emic perspective, rather than from the researcher's etic perspective (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

However, in order to analyze the data from the individual interviews required elaborative coding because of the need to support the theoretical implications of the 10 functions (Saldaña, 2013). Each interview's data were reviewed in conjunction with the other interviews' data to be sure that no information or key findings were missed in the analysis process. NVivo software was used to complete the data analysis. The interviews produced data related to the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5 and its effects on the costs

of operating the charter school system as well as about the superintendents' adherence to meeting the 10 functions. The interviews were conducted face to face and multiple interactions with the researcher and participant occurred. Member checking occurred throughout the process to ensure that the credibility and trustworthiness of the research was assured. The researcher saw that the credibility of the study was tantamount throughout the interview analysis process.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an outline of research methodology used in this phenomenological study. The overall goal of the research was to answer the research questions and convey the experiences of the superintendents affected by SB 2 and HB 5. The participants' semi-structured interviews were used to answer the study's three research questions, and data analysis enabled the research questions to be answered. Narratives and findings for this information are detailed and explained in Chapter 4. Interpretations of the study, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for future studies are presented in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of leading charter schools with superintendents of public charter schools affected by HB 5 and SB 2, both of which went into effect in 2013. The legislature passed SB 2 specifically for impacting charter schools throughout Texas, but HB 5 was not retroactive and not designed to target charter schools differently than traditional schools. Four superintendents participated in multiple semi-structured interviews. These interviews were done over multiple days. The researcher asked probing questions and multiple follow up questions to gather meaningful responses that accurately provide the detail needed for the comprehensive nature of this phenomenological study. The data were used to answer the study's three research questions based on the theoretical framework founded on Olivarez's (2013) 10 functions of the school district. In this chapter, the participants' characteristics as well as the charter school systems they lead appear alongside their experiences. The findings are presented by research question.

### **The Participants**

The criteria for participating in an interview targeted superintendents of open-enrollment K-12 charter schools located within the geographical boundary of Region 10 educational service center located in and surrounding parts of DFW. Region 10 has 44 charter school systems that it serves and is one of the large conglomerates of charter systems in the State of Texas. The participants also had to meet the criteria of having administrator experience both in a traditional public district and a public charter school. Only five charter school superintendents were identified by the Texas Charter School

Association (TCSA) and by Region 10 as meeting the criteria for inclusion. One of the superintendents who was identified to meet the criteria chose not to participate. The four superintendents who participated in the study were made up of three men and one female. Each held Texas Superintendent certification and a doctoral degree. Three superintendents led charter schools in the period of the initial impact of HB 5 and SB 2. One of the superintendents has only been with the charter school system replacing a retired superintendent for 8 months. The three participants had also been superintendents of traditional schools before working in charter school settings, and one of them has held an executive leadership position in one of the most prominent and large urban traditional school districts in Texas.

The four superintendents led charter schools serving Grades K through 12. All of which were affected by HB 5's graduation accountability affecting secondary the level in traditional independent school districts and charter schools alike. Additionally, the participants shared their reflections according to their specific perspectives about operating charter schools under SB 2, which was effective in 2013, but retroactive as of 2011. All four superintendents were well seasoned and experienced public school leaders with a minimum of 30 years of experience in K-12 education.

Superintendent 1 had experience working in higher education. He received his doctorate from Texas A & M University and has experience in traditional districts in executive leadership positions as well as serving as a superintendent in Austin ISD, Ector County ISD, Graham ISD, and Waxahachie ISD. He currently is an appointed conservator of one charter school and the appointed superintendent of a charter school

that is going through the closure process by the TEA due to SB2. He has experience working alongside traditional schools as well as charter schools since he retired as superintendent. The charter school that he is currently the superintendent over served all grade levels and has not served students for the past school year. However, there is still many functions of the school district that must be attended to such as human resources, facilities and plant management, safety and security, administrative, finance and business operations, accountability, information management and technology services, external and internal communications, and governance and operations. Curriculum and instruction and instructional programs are really the only two functions that are not ongoing functions of his job. However, he is left with the burden of maintaining the curriculum materials and supplies that were purchased for the areas until the TEA and or guidance from the legislature will provide direction as to what to do with those items. The superintendent had a full understanding of the definition and the areas that the 10 functions before the interview process and understood their application for the purpose of this research. The reason that the school was affected by SB2 was because of getting three strikes in the areas of finance. Before the TEA closed it, the charter school served over 700 students within the [City 3] ISD with 75 staff members.

Superintendent 2 served in many executive leadership roles in smaller traditional school systems and lastly superintendent of Van Alstyne ISD in north central Texas before he was hired to be the superintendent of a charter by a TEA appointed board of managers with three campuses in the Southcentral DFW in 2011. He has over 30 years of experience in public education and was there for 5 years when he retired. He received



his doctorate from the University of North Texas and currently serves an adjunct professor in higher education for a doctoral program in education administration and as an ongoing consultant for the charter he retired from. The charter school for which he served has been in operation in one form or another since 1998 and is currently in good standing with the TEA and has met standard for the past year, meaning that it has no strikes according to the SB2 criteria. The charter operates all its campuses within the [City 3] ISD attendance zones, but the open enrollment charter can serve students in multiple school districts which are in close proximity. The charter school is operating with a student population that is 90.9% economically disadvantaged. The charter currently serves over 975 students with 142 staff at the three campus locations. This charter school is currently operating and has full application of all 10 functions of the school district, and the superintendent fully understood the characteristics and purpose of all to functions when the researcher checked for understanding during the interview process.

Superintendent 3 started her career in education in 1996 as a bilingual teacher for a large urban school system in North Texas. She worked in that traditional school system as well as a large suburban school system in various positions of leadership including being a part of a team of four in the large urban school district for the superintendent's learning community. During her time working in school turnaround for the large districts, she graduated from Texas A&M University at Commerce with her Doctorate. In 2012, she helped open the charter school for which currently she is the superintendent. This charter serves mostly the northeast corner of [City 3] and students that attend that

charter come from the adjacent school districts in that geographical vicinity not limited to Cities 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The charter opened three campuses with 800 students its first year and is currently serving around 1,400 students and has around 150 staff. The focus of the charter is to provide instruction that is project based and inclusive of multiple languages. The student bodies are 45% to 83% free and reduced lunch eligible, depending on the location, and these economically disadvantaged student numbers are growing. The charter is in the process of going through renewal even though they have failed their accountability for school first in financial accountability, and all three of the campuses are currently academically in Improvement Required making the district fail on its academics also. This charter school is currently operating and has full application of all 10 functions of the school district, and the superintendent fully understood the characteristics and purpose of all to functions when the researcher checked for understanding during the interview process.

Superintendent 4 has been in education for over 24 years. He has served in the roles of teacher, Systems Operator, Instructional Technology Specialist, Assistant Principal, Principal, Executive Director, Executive Transformation Officer, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent in a traditional school districts in Michigan, Illinois, and Texas. He received his bachelors in biology from the University of Michigan, his masters in curriculum and instruction from the University of Houston, and his Ph.D. in educational leadership from Western Michigan University. Superintendent 4 at the time of his first interview had only been superintendent for 8 months at a charter that serves approximately 700 students in the Region 10 area in the geographical vicinity West of

Cities 1 through 5. This charter is founded by a board composed of largely minorities and immigrants. Although there is a separation of church and state, this charter serves students who are primarily of a non-Christian-Judeo background. Superintendent 4 was brought into the charter system as a superintendent with a traditional ISD background but has done extensive research on charters and completed his research for his doctorate by focusing on public charter schools. The charter is currently in good standing with both the academic and financial accountability systems. As a part of his acculturation to the charter, this superintendent did extensive research on implications of compliance with all bills and legislation passed in Texas that specifically targeted charters and the grades his charter serves. The school operates in two locations and has approximately 75 staff members. The superintendent had a full understanding of the definitions for the areas of the 10 functions of schools before the interview process and understood their application for the purpose of this research.

### **Presentation of the Data**

The responses to the interview questions for this research question varied by participant. Each participant presented information based on the specific charter school's situation. Each of the four charter schools were described uniquely by the participants, and each charter school operated within the legislative climate of Texas and based on the mission and focus of the charter school. As part of preparing to answer the research questions concerning the legislative climate, the researcher used NVivo to code the data. The initial word clouds for the data regarding each of the two Texas statutes as seen in Figures 2 and 3.



Figure 2. World cloud for data presented by superintendents of charters regarding SB 2.

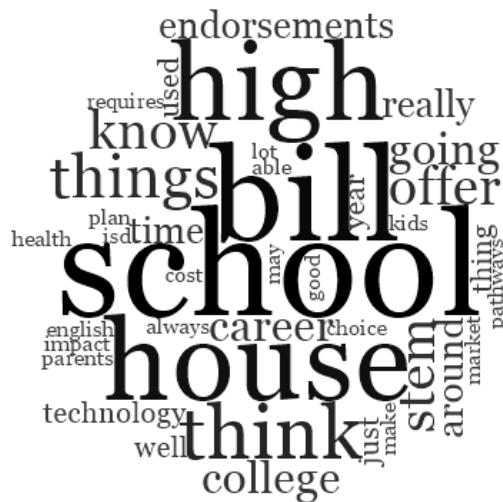


Figure 3. World cloud for data presented by superintendents of charters regarding HB 5.

### Research Question 1

This question asked the following: What implications did the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5 have on superintendents’ perceptions about leading Texas’ charter schools? The interview questions asked the participants to describe their education and superintendent career histories, charter school organizational structure, the effect of SB 2

and HB 5 on organizational structure, and any other experiences.

**SB 2 Results.** Superintendent 1 became a “superintendent in 2011 at a charter school, for which I was appointed to by TEA and hired by the TEA-appointed board of managers. I retired from there in January 2016.”

Superintendent 1 reported having “over 35 years of professional experience” that included the positions of associate director of planning, evaluation, research, and development; head of a school district human resources department, Texas independent school district superintendent, and charter school superintendent. Superintendent 1 also reported experience working in a curriculum department, an athletic department, as a professional service provider for schools needing improvement, and as a Texas Education Agency appointed monitor or conservator. Superintendent 1 stated:

I am currently serving as superintendent for a charter school that has campuses in [City 3] and [Southeastern Texas City]. I was originally appointed as conservator in 2013 and then they were closed and allowed to reopen in 14-15 school year. The campus closed and the revocation of the charter have since occurred as of July 2016.

Additionally, Superintendent 1 did discuss at one point in the interview having additional experience serving as the president of the board of trustees of a charter’s nonprofit; however, on August 1, 2016, the Texas Education Commission appointed a board of managers along with the superintendent. These appointments were direct changes to the governance structure of the organization.

Superintendent 2 provided more insight to answer the questions about the

organizational structure and changes to the structure as a result of SB 2. Superintendent 2 reported having “31 years in Texas public schools” as a teacher and coach, campus principal at schools ranging from 250 to 750 students, an assistant superintendent, an independent school district superintendent, and a charter school superintendent.

Superintendent 2 said the following:

The pure structure of the board didn’t change as a result of SB2 because all of our folks were grandfathered with provisions of SB2. Probably the same, no impact on us. Before SB2 the same, one school was impacted outside of SB2 for failure to submit audits beyond SB2 mandates.

Superintendent 2 said SB 2 had no effect on the charter school’s organizational structure; however, Superintendent 2 described the following circumstance that did affect the school’s organization:

SB 2 introduced nepotism guidelines, and we had at that time a board member who had two children who were employees of the school district. The board member was also a founder of the school; as a result of SB 2, she resigned from our board of trustees so that her children could be actually promoted into other positions.

Superintendent 2 admitted that SB 2 influenced him to think differently about advocating for his charter school. Superintendent 2 offered the following insights:

I became a little bit more active legislatively and through the state association. I became aware that our state association was heavily supportive of SB 2, and there are pieces and parts of SB2 that we liked and didn’t like that we feel like we’re

getting attention from our state association. I guess political activism especially as it relates to the state association. Being available and ready to testify at the TEA and at the senate hearings, house hearings, made me more active with politically with both the state association and state legislature. The biggest [impact] is the automatic closure due to SB 2, if there are three consecutive strikes. It provides an urgency towards paying attention to that accountability. It made an awareness of the importance of if you don't do well in one of the accountabilities to make sure you appeal that accountability rating because there's no due process built into SB 2 once you get to the closure stage. SB 2 was bad legislation specifically for charter schools.

Regarding other experiences guiding charters and dealing with organizational structures under the current legislative climate, Superintendent 2 added that SB 2 led to charters being consolidated between schools and noted the following:

A real topic of conversation. Something that a lot of other charter school leaders, myself included, would be able to talk about and complain about and worry about, and it activated not just me but a lot of the charter school leaders to do some of the same kind of advocacy type of things.

Superintendent 3 who was superintendent of one of the newest charters had a different perception regarding SB 2 specific to the charter she led. She specifically addressed the concept of running a charter that serves students grades K-12:

This ties into my experience and perceptions of Senate Bill 2 because what happened was we opened [in] 2012. We went IR, all three campuses, and it's

interesting, ... We opened three K7's. If I had known about SB 2 I would have never opened K7's, I would have opened K2's and grown my little sweet ones. Instead, it was safe to open K7's in 2012 and man, did they come all their little big old gaps and everything. They came and we had waiting lists at both [City 3] and [City 3] schools. Matter of fact at our [City 3] campus location right now with a two we have almost 900 on the waiting list and we have 1,000 kids. [City 2] has been a struggle. [City 2] is in a stronger district, but the reason we went IR in [City 1] was the dirty little secret there was that we did find in Reading and Math, we went down in Science. The elementaries around us were not teaching Science. Superintendent 3 went on to say what SB 2 did during the opening year of the charter and discussed how it impacted the functioning and growth aspects of the whole charter:

Certainly, by making it [SB 2] retroactive, instead of giving us a benchmark year that they should have given us in 2012, it's our first year, kids from other districts don't count it. Use it as a benchmark. They very much counted it and made it retroactive and so that meant that, especially [City 2]. [City 2] had the one year. It hadn't been IR since, but between Senate Bill 2 and the changing of the accountability system and us adding weeks. We opened Texas largest charter with 800 kids between the three campuses in 2012 and we're now to 1400 kids. We are growing, growing, growing which they're still bringing their gaps. Why are we growing? Well, why haven't we played it safe? We haven't really been allowed to play it safe because we didn't know we were going to be moving from the



churches. Our budget for facilities was at 12%. Now, being forced out to get our own buildings, we went to 18%.

This reality and perception of Superintendent 3 of SB 2 shows provides a real case scenario that SB 2 challenged the overall operations and leadership of a newly opened, struggling charter school dealing with students enrolling who had an overall lack of academic skills as they came from surrounding traditional school systems. The charter had to address deficits the newly enrolled students had due to weak curriculum in the previous school systems. This problem became a factor for the accountability and viability of the new charter school.

The following statement from Superintendent 3 brought out the depth of her perception of SB 2:

I think it [SB2] changes your behavior. I talked to an ISD superintendent who is put into low performing districts and he was very fierce about the fact that, "Look," I told him, "I walk the campuses." He said, "Oh, my God, what?" He said, "I just tell those principals if they can't hack it they're gone. I don't waste time walking the campuses." I'm thinking, "Buddy, I know walking the campuses has saved us." I'm not arguing with him, but yeah. I have a sense of urgency, and I have to make sure that our teachers feel it. That our campus leadership feels it. My central staff feels it. I made somebody cry the other day.

We have to be looking at every campus and know that we get punished as a district. Whereas, in an ISD they just don't. They might have to close those three schools down, but they get an article in the paper and they're done. The kids

still stay there they just change the personnel. You know what I'm saying? For us our kids have to leave and go to a school that have been IRed longer than we have and who's not showing added value in Index 2. It's a whole different playing field. It is. The fairness factor is off the chart, off.

Superintendent 4 had the least amount of experience and knowledge regarding the implementation of SB 2 simply because he had just recently returned to Texas to become a charter school superintendent. He noted the implementation of SB 2 occurred before he moved from Michigan. However, he said, "It is not dissimilar to what we experienced with the expansion of charter schools and the lifting of regulations within the state in order to increase opportunities for students, particularly in struggling urban school districts."

When asked about his understanding of SB 2, Superintendent 4 responded, "It Allows for expansion and removes stipulations that could be detrimental of charter schools." He also discussed the accountability of academics in SB 2 in the same vein as did Superintendent 3. Superintendent 4 said, "I don't really know how much of SB2 ... Was [it] all about the academics, or was it just more of a compliance on particular ratings based on the state? I didn't get into details. I'm kind of lost there."

The perceptions of all four superintendents regarding SB 2 indicated they believe its passage by the legislature was not done with consideration for the best interests of charter schools and the children they enroll. Also, the accountability factors that were included in the legislation were detrimental over time because of the various unforeseeable and uncontrollable factors of the students who enroll in and attend these

schools of choice within the ever-changing academic accountability system in the state of Texas. Interestingly, the data provided by the participants regarding HB 5 was quite different in tone and depth of content.

**HB 5 Results.** Superintendent 1 who had the most experience leading traditional school districts as a superintendent reflected on HB 5 and noticed that it focused on the graduation plan to encourage high school students to graduate in a very matter of fact manner. He stated that charter schools in and of themselves already chose their own pathways for students based on school missions. Superintendent 1 saw that HB 5 provided focus and guidelines for larger school systems and explained as follows:

It may not be so much HB 5, but it may be within the realm of a traditional ISD system as people try to identify in larger districts where you have larger high schools and the ability to concentrate on a given pathway within a school, but I kind of say the choice movement being pretty big no matter what the rationality is as we move more into parental choice in areas. . . [City 3] has got Booker T. and Darius Technology Centers and male and female gender specific campuses. The comprehensive school is not what it used to be. It seems to be going by the wayside. I don't know enough to say whether that's good or bad yet. Somewhat concerning. I think that it is something to involve the parents, but I am not sure that is good either, making students or parents choose what pathway we want because at that age we [as high school students] didn't have a clue what we wanted to be. Even when I got out of high school, they could've told me to choose something, but it wouldn't have been based on any rational idea that I wanted to

be an engineer or an architect or river boat captain. I just wouldn't have had a clue. It would have been where my friends were and which one had the most girls.

Superintendent 2 addressed the addition of the high school grade levels to his charter influenced how they set up the career pathways. He considered "using our campus improvement plan, or district improvement plan" because of a "newly opened high school." However, the high school was so young that the HB 5 "graduation requirement has no impact at this time." Nonetheless, Superintendent 2 anticipated the following:

It'll (HB 5) have some impact on us. Performance rating, we're concerned about rating, but quite frankly, I think what is happening--there's so many ratings--it's becoming a joke and more and more confusing to explain to a board, to explain how we're doing, how our performance is.

Overall changes or implications from HB 5 appeared to be received as aligned with the compliance needs and the accountability changes seen in SB 2. Superintendent 2 said: "SB 2 and HB 5, we hired additional instructional coaches for each of our campuses. Curriculum was probably impacted more than any other [function]. Instructional support services, we hired a college and career counselor in order to address some HB 5 requirements."

Superintendent 3 reflected on HB 5 and was overall very complementary of it. She explicated the following:

House Bill 5 can be a wonderful thing but it would impact all of us in a sense of if you have sophisticated parents enough to look at a broad picture thing,

"Okay, I'm in [City 3] ISD," or, "I'm in [City 3] ISD, plus I have all these charters. I think I should have a map of all the high schools around me within a 5- or 10-mile radius and then know what endorsements they're offering and how well they're doing it to their accountability system so that I know which schools I start targeting my son towards. Again, I think House Bill 5, I didn't have anything to unravel. House Bill 5 hit us right around the time that we had to put in our 9th grade so it didn't hurt us in the way for others. I don't think it was as poorly because it is what it is and the timing was okay, and we just didn't want to. . . . I always make lemonade out of lemons and so I was able to market the fact that we have endorsements and IT and make [HB 5] work for us.

Our narrative changes a lot around the changes that we're hit with. I happen to be pretty good at that that selling ice cream discs. We have to roll with the punches but the only thing that I wish that I could feel more from TEA is that they would be more supportive and less compliance-oriented to the point of absurdity. They implemented the changes that HB 5 required fairly in a timely manner and she went into detail as to how the legislation impacted her planning:

Once we figured out what our endorsements were we put those high school courses into the 8th grade for all students so all students were going in with the opportunity to have two high school credits if not four or five. No, actually 5 if they did the 7th and 8th grade high school Spanish that they start at 7th and then in 8th. Then I have to change it because after more interpretation of others came out and our CTE money, we figured it would, our high school started

and we figured out of our CTE money then we were losing CTE money with the principal's off course and down in the 8th grade. Then we moved those CTE courses to 9th grade so we could get the CTE money and we moved the overview of those classes from 7th grade and 8th grade because we wanted the kids to have half a semester of overview, Principles of Health Science and then the 2nd semester the other so that they could make a choice at the end of 8th grade into what course sequence they were going to take. We had to become very strategic in our approach to our students and their selection of their endorsements.

Superintendent 3 expounded further and said:

I think House Bill 5 changed high school. Yes, everything had to change to meet what we now had to do to have kids be able to have the correct endorsement. In that sense it created school of choices everywhere if you think about that because we all can't offer everything. In theory, market it correctly which it hasn't been to parents. TEA should market to parents the fact that because of House Bill 5 and because of the endorsements that every high school can offer every endorsement they should be looking at that. In elementary they should be looking at which high school they're going to send a kid. They used to do college, they need to do that with high school. Think about it. Your kid in elementary is showing signs of being a scientist. What are you going to do? Are you going to put him in a non-STEM school or are you going to look for a STEM school? Maybe a STEM middle school that leads to a STEM high school, but you, all of a sudden, as a parent, have school choice opportunities between your ISD and the charters

around you if you can get into where you can really offer your child those skill sets that he or she seems to be gravitating towards.

Superintendent 4 once again stated that he was new to Texas and that he was currently going through his 120-day entrance plan. However, there were specifics to HB 5 that he was trying to understand and emphasized his efforts out several times during the interview process. He was transparent about the process of his review of how his charter was dealing with HB 5:

There were a lot of pieces that were missing. I think they were just trying to get the school up and running, it wasn't in alignment with some of the graduation requirements. Now this summer, they are becoming more aligned with what the state is needing them to do, and technically they didn't really have to last year. They just had freshman courses, and now they need to really start thinking about what happens. He further expounded on the problem and stated "I think that this was more a learning curve for the past year regarding HB 5, because [the charter] was just starting a high school, last year was our first year of high school, we only had ninth graders. I don't think it was in their mind. You're thinking about what some of the specifics a high school as a charter. I know this as a seasoned superintendent to look for these problems, because part of my 120-day plan was to come in with a plan... Checking the alignment of the pathways to success college and career life readiness.

He expressed some frustration in the compliance pieces of HB 5 and shared the following:

There's probably pros and cons. There are things that we're dealing with that we wouldn't be able to deal with had we combined with HB 5, because we're brand new, getting into this may be easier, but other things will be harder. The certifications create a big problem, having certified teachers, for all the different areas and career pathways. That's going to be tough.

Superintendent 4's experience as a superintendent in another state seemed to be helpful to him with understanding the purpose of HB 5. He shared an interesting contrast:

Well, because I've dealt with the traditional I understand ... The pathways, that typically you don't want to have a lot of them even as an ISD, you don't want to identify more than 3. We can't be that much of a specialist, in fact I question whether we can do 3 right now. Jury's still out on it.

Overall, the four superintendents seemed to have a clear understanding of the purpose of HB 5 and what the intent of the legislation was for all public schools in Texas. HB 5 was a compliance piece for all public schools in Texas serving Grades 9 through 12 whereas SB 2 targeted and only applied to charter schools and applied to all grade levels, Kindergarten through Grade 12. The decision-making processes shared by the superintendents showed that there was concern about external factors that might be capable of influencing the outcomes of the charter to be compliant with the legislation and implementation of the graduation pathways for students.

## **Research Question 2**

This research question asked the following: What functions of charter schools were most affected by SB 2 and HB 5 according to superintendents of charter schools



open at the time SB 2 and HB 5 went into effect? The four superintendents based on their responses to the interview questions repeatedly implicated three functions throughout all four interviews. The primary functions most affected by SB 2 and HB 5 for these participants were Governance and Operations, Curriculum and Instruction, and Finance. Therefore, the findings for the second research question focus on each of those three functions separately.

### **Governance and Operations**

Superintendent 1 responded as follows:

The biggest [impact] is the automatic closure due to SB 2, if there are three consecutive strikes. It provides an urgency towards paying attention to that accountability. It made an awareness of the importance of if you don't do well in one of the accountabilities to make sure you appeal that accountability rating because there's no due process built into SB 2 once you get to the closure stage. ... SB 2 was bad legislation specifically for charter schools.

Superintendent 1 responded including the "TEA and the board of managers" in all decision making for the closed charter campuses. The decision-making teams for all three charters presented as unique between each charter school. Superintendent 1 offered a unique perspective about the impact of SB 2: "I am still serving as superintendent of two districts, because there's still facilities running, and people still requesting information. Without SB 2, I probably would not be working."

Superintendent 2 discussed implementing strategic planning as using a "site based decision-making committee" and preferring "local control." However, Superintendent 2

also noted:

We're told how to do it and who's going to be on the committee and what you're going to talk about and not talk about. Local control, we talk about those things that are specific to the needs of a given district or unit campus, but then we're told how to do it. Exception to that and the way it's structured.

Regarding specifically the requirements of SB 2, Superintendent 3 spoke plainly: "We have no choice in that matter. I am kind of a minion of the state of Texas in regard to that. [I] go and do as I am told." Superintendent 2 reported that SB 2 affected "my leadership team in decision making. [The legislation] took some decisions out of our board's hands, so things became informational that might have been management prior to" the passage of these state laws. Superintendent 2 admitted that SB 2 influenced him to think differently about advocating for his charter school. Superintendent 2 offered the following insights:

I became a little bit more active legislatively and through the state association. I became aware that our state association was heavily supportive of SB 2, and there are pieces and parts of SB2 that we liked and didn't like that we feel like we're getting attention from our state association. I guess political activism especially as it relates to the state association. Being available and ready to testify at the TEA and at the senate hearings, house hearings, made me more active with politically with both the state association and state legislature.

Superintendent 3 spoke at length regarding the function of Governance and Operations:

How is it affecting my governance and my operations? Well, I've had to be principal. I've had to be more hands on. I mean, I walk the campuses every week with my directors and we do observations. We do debriefs. It's not enough for them to have my central staff do it...Well, everything I do, human resources, facilities, everything is about making sure that our schools can function efficiently.

Superintendent 3 reflected on her relationship with her board:

I'm in contact with Byron, my board chair, all the time through text. Before every meeting, board meeting, we go to lunch so that I bring the agenda and the notes because he likes to look like he knows. Even though they're all my bosses he's my primary boss, and so we have very good relationship. We had a 5-year anniversary last month. My board has never been an issue to the charter operations. We're very lucky that way. . . . I'm very lucky in that I have a board that nobody has an agenda, a personal agenda. That's very rare. Five folks who care about the school and the kids. . . . The board has been very strategically brought together. My board share and I went down and present it together. I didn't know him [the board president] before that time and we had to get to know each other.

Superintendent 3 noted that working in the functions of Governance and Operations as a Superintendent have taken their toll:

You have 56 ways of closing the charter and you think that makes you look good? In what universe? When it's safe to do it, I'm going on the road, and I'm going to

talk about this. If one is safe then it's not going to hurt. Because right now it would, it would hurt the charter especially during this five-year renewal. I'll tell you something else, I don't know how much longer I'm going to last. I can't work at this level, function at this level, fight like this every day. People leaving because they're getting no money, TEA having their crazy request, accountability systems that continue to change and people are okay with that. I'm not understanding how we're allowing a government agency who is underfunded, understaffed, misinterpret statute, and closed-down schools and send them [the students] to schools that are worse off. Why is that not out there? I don't get it but that is the way it is, you know.

Superintendent 4 was very reflective about being a newly hired superintendent into a charter school, and his responses during the interview reflected just that:

There's so many things that are involved, not just with the 120-day plan, but just from experience. A lot of people, they get into those organizations, they have not experienced working with board. They don't understand the board dynamics, the team approach. They don't understand policy. They may be experts in certain things, but what I learned being an ISD superintendent, you [as a charter superintendent] have to be an expert in just about everything... There's so many things that are involved, not just with the 120-day plan, but just from experience. A lot of people, they get into those organizations, they have not experienced working with board. They don't understand the board dynamics, the team approach. They don't understand policy. They may be experts in certain things,

but what I learned being an ISD superintendent, you [charter superintendent] have to be an expert in just about everything.

Superintendent 4 talked pointedly about the difference of working with a charter board and ISD board:

In the charter world, I think we as superintendents have a little bit of an advantage over traditional ISDs, because we can really talk about the compliance issue. We can get our boards to understand the compliance issue, so when decisions have to be made as a team of eight, I think charter boards come together more so a team of eight, because of the compliance issues. Whether that's good or bad, I'm not sure. . . . Like I said before, I've dealt with some crazy boards, their hearts are in the right place, but their agendas are hidden agendas, or sometimes. Get in the way of what you need to do, and what's right for children. I think the conversations that we as superintendents, are easier to have with boards in the charter world, than it is in the ISD world, because in the ISD world they're always thinking about whatever hidden agenda it is, or whatever they were running for, to become a board member for.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Superintendent 1 discussed how most charter schools are small and function like small ISDs in their day-to-day curriculum function:

ISDs and little ISD and class A and class double A superintendent is going to be making sure the buses start in the morning or maybe helping change the tire to see where the leak is trying to patch it themselves. Plus [superintendent] being the

only curriculum person for the district so it's a matter of how much time you actually have to put into each of the functions themselves.

Superintendent 2 offered pragmatic thinking when responding to the interview questions and stated that this function was important within both legislative bills, HB 5 and SB 2. Superintendent 2 reported "using our campus improvement plan, or district improvement plan" because of a "newly opened high school." However, the high school was so young that the HB 5 "graduation requirement has no impact at this time."

However, Superintendent 2 said due to:

SB 2 and HB 5, we hired additional instructional coaches for each of our campuses. Curriculum was probably impacted more than any other [function]. [For] instructional Support services, we hired a college and career counselor in order to address some HB 5 requirements. Getting people to faithfully do it to where they value the practice, which is the key.

Superintendent 4 supported the idea of pragmatism and referred to curriculum and instruction as a critical area for his 120-day entrance plan and he was "checking the alignment of the pathways to success college and career life readiness."

Superintendent 3 poignantly described at length her concerns about the impact of SB 2 and HB 5 on the Curriculum and Instruction function. Because of the accountability, she became more hands on with this function:

I've had to be principal. I've had to be more hands on. I mean, I walk the campuses every week with my directors and we do observations. We do debriefs. It's not enough for them to have my central staff do it. My central staff's in the

classroom supporting all these new teachers that we have to get every year because of our turnover. I don't have the luxury of sitting at my little desk with my feet up every day here.

Superintendent 3 spoke about the follow through for curriculum and instruction as far as professional development with her teaching staff and emphasized the embedded instruction to staff as critical in the following:

I tell you, we are PD assembly line factory for the ISD. Especially, because we do such good quality PD because I have such good people with me that after a couple of years with us, man you can talk the talk. You may not be doing it, too bad you didn't catch me on that one, but you can talk it because we have PD days off and we have early release for the data and then we have you tracking your data on Eduphoria and we do mile markers where the kids do the mile markers and we monitor and make sure the kids do the mile markers so that they can reflect and goal set for the next assessment that we are lined up to teach. We do all that.

## **Finance**

Superintendent 1 spoke a great deal about the function of Finance and how it was impacted by SB 2 and HB 5:

In general, what I had seen and we talked about schools that will get in trouble to the point of state takeover, it is generally the financial component that gets them in trouble and in many cases ... in a lot of cases people who have applied for Charters are well intentioned but don't have a financial background and have not asked our help or don't know where to get the help financially. Because the

function of PEIMS and the function of school finance is foreign to most non-educators and people who haven't been through an academic or administrative training component to even be aware of how confusing it can be and how important it is to deal with compliance issues and even to the point about what software we should use and how often reporting takes place. I think the state has got to do a better job when they approve charters of assuring that the people they approve the charters for have a thorough understanding of the financial component.

Superintendent 1 further added the specific issues that cause problems with SB 2 and the financial accountability of the three strikes rule that hurts most day to day operations of finance:

Because it's the finances that get people in trouble. Academics are academics. To me, the finances are primary as far as staying open and keeping what you need to do together. The academics fall under that, and we all know we need to have the academics and what happens with accountability system, but too many times we see charter schools [for whom] the business component is run by a clerk or somebody. They don't have CPAs in place. They don't have educators in place. They don't have people who actually understand the financial component and assuring that the federal dollars go where the federal dollars need to go and that discussion of supplement as opposed to supplant which is big right now too. They're already talking about taking away money at the federal level, but we understand that supplement as opposed to supplant still needs to be in place, what



the requirements are to validate a reimbursement. I just can't send you a note saying I spent \$35 over at Walmart to buy some food for my kids. I need to be reimbursed. Well, I need the receipt. I need to know what you were doing with it. That's a small thing.

Superintendent 1 further added information about the implications of how finances are addressed in independent school districts when monetary mismanagement occurs:

It took 20 years at Wilmer [a traditional ISD within the DFW metroplex]. With charters and the way people are looking at ISDs right now, it's happening a lot faster. Michael Williams had one movement and was moving more aggressively in the direction of closing ISDs or consolidating ISDs and charters that were not performing. TEA and the legislature currently are pushing even at the next level of that.

Superintendent 1 was appointed to by the TEA to lead a charter school for the solely because of "their failure to submit audits. They did not file their audits."

Superintendent 1 noted the following:

One audit was 3 years late. One audit was 2 years late, and the last one was just late. And they were all done within a period of about 6 months. . . . No audits were provided to the state of Texas. They were recently closed because of their failure to complete a criminal history check. They were allowed a year to get their act together, and at the end of that year, they were allowed to reopen. However, they didn't submit their audit reports with one statement that they

didn't think that they needed to submit an audit report for the year that they weren't closed. They just weren't allowed to have kids, and they didn't think they needed to have an audit report for the year.

Superintendent 2 throughout his interview spoke about the financial operations of the charter school being important because of the need to hire additional staff. He stated because of "SB 2 and HB 5, we hired additional instructional coaches for each of our campuses. . . . We hired a college and career counselor in order to address some HB 5 requirements."

Superintendent 3, throughout her interview, emphasized the relationship between finance and all the other charter school functions: "Everything we do has to do with accountability. What that means is I put more money in the instructional side." She also mirrored what Superintendent 1 said about superintendents who are a part of charter schools at startup by noting the following:

I was an innocent babe. I was just a hard-working hack in a big district. I was asked to write the educational piece. I said, "I can do that," because I'd been teaching at the university level for many years, and I knew all the research. I knew what we needed to do. I didn't know how much it was going to cost. . . . I was able to start working on opening three campuses, which was the stupidest thing ever. Don't open three campuses at the same time. No help. That's been amazing to me. TEA gives me \$6 million with no manual, no mentor. I knew no one. Superintendent group wasn't open then. I knew no one. We just did stuff and hoped it was compliant. Then, when we were in trouble, we knew we were in

trouble because they called. The only time we knew something was late is because they called or emailed. . . . We had to borrow a million bucks, which is important to the story because it's still haunting me, because my other partners who had an \$800,000 credit letter in part of the packet said, "Oh, that's just paper. We don't really have [the money]. You're going to have to go and get a loan from somebody." . . . Luckily, my dad was a banker so we put a bank proposal together. With the help of [a colleague's dad and his brother], I will give him credit, it was [these two men] who sort of had this little business going of putting together charters and finding superintendents and then collecting fees."

Superintendent 3 shared that when the charter began they rented rooms from churches for their facilities but were forced to move out. This unforeseen move caused the huge issue of instability in their finances, and Superintendent 3 explained:

We haven't really been allowed to play it safe because we didn't know we were going to be moving from the churches. Our budget for facilities was at 12%.

Now, being forced out to get our own buildings, we went to 18%.

This change in budget then forced other issues with growth and accountability in regard to academics and Superintendent 3 added:

I have a shitty fund balance. I can't seem to get a fund balance, but you know why? Because I have extra positions, because every year I make the decision to put my money in personnel that might actually save us versus growing our sweet little fund balance. This year, I used up \$400,000 of my fund balance that I didn't have to put in portables in [City 3] so I could bring more kids in. I added another

kinder, first, and second [grades], so I added 75 more kids at the bottom, not testing grades. And then, I sprinkled in a few more that I could afford to put in at the top, so I added 300 kids in [City 3] which will give me about a million more bucks or something. You know, I had to justify it that way.

Superintendent 4 relied heavily on his past experience and knowledge as a superintendent, particularly when it came to the area of finance:

It seems like every district I've been in has financial problems. . . . I wouldn't say that [Superintendent 4's charter school] has financial problems but upon investigating, looking at the financial records, looking at the facilities and operations, I did have to take over transportation for a short period of time, because of our staffing situation that we had. Financially, we have been struggling with trying to make sure that we have the right amount of people in place to get the things done that need to be done. This is the same thing I've faced in every district.

He further explained what was done "to correct or right the budget" as follows: In order to right size, we have been looking at our financial accountability, and what that meant for us. Since we have to now come in and do the layoffs we needed to do, we actually had to RIFT some staff. In the past 2 months, we had to RIFT staff, and reduce staff, and absorb a lot of staff from positions that were being filled. Of course all the components of having qualified staff come into play. . . . When you're hiring new staff at this point, . . .there were a lot of conversations about the compliance issues with the state. As we move forward

with the transitioning to the right size for the district. Again, as I said we were talking a lot about the components of SB 2 without really calling it the components of SB 2. Just keeping track of everything.

As this effort directly related to the processes by which charters receive funding through enrollment, Superintendent 4 explicated:

I wouldn't say [the charter has] problems, but when we realized that our budget was coming in a little bit shorter than what we intended, because of the transition time, some parents pulled their kids out, because they were nervous about the transition of the new superintendent. Now, we bring a lot of those parents back already because of word of mouth. They were like, "Oh yeah we heard really good things about the new administration and hear that all is going well."

Referring to his previous experiences of working with regular public school districts and finance as a compliance item, Superintendent 4 echoed Superintendent 1's discussion about the effects of all the components of SB 2 in regard to finance. He noted that what charter superintendents need to know to successfully run a district and what he had integrated into his 120-day transition plan "will relate to SB 2, in fact most of them will relate to SB 2. The components in SB 2 are probably found in every piece of my 120-day plan. That's just how you run a school district."

HB 5 was a part of Superintendent 4's conversation about the Finance function because of the career pathways schools need to implement for compliance with HB 5 which enabled him to gain additional funding for his charter: "We've never drawn any money from CT [aka, career technology]. This will be the first year that we'll be able to

actually claim career technology funding, because of the courses that we're actually offering." The finance function was dominated by compliance needs designated in HB 5 and SB 2 by the legislature. Superintendent 4 noted these bills indicated the TEA and legislature wanted to dictate "here's what you've got to do, and oh, by the way, charters get less money to do it."

In summary, Research Question 2 was answered with multiple explanations by the four superintendents about how any of the 10 functions were affected by HB 5 and SB 2. The three functions of Finance, Governance and Operations, and Curriculum and Instruction were interwoven into the functioning of the charter schools that were operating in compliance with this legislation. Ultimately, based on the data, the function of Finance was the most important function to be fulfilled by a viable charter school working to meet accountability through both SB 2 and HB 5.

### **Research Question 3**

This research question asked the following: What adjustments to the 10 functions of the school districts may be necessary for applying this model of school functioning to public charter schools in Texas? The references to each of the 10 functions are addressed as part of answering this research question. In each function's section, both the data and the potential adjustments are provided.

**Governance and Operations.** Superintendent 1 and Superintendent 2 noted that they had "a closer working relationship" with their board members. For governance and operations, Superintendent 2 said, "Other than the stuff that we did with the school board member that resigned [because of nepotism], that hasn't changed." Superintendent 2

reported including “my leadership team in decision making. [The legislation] took some decisions out of our board’s hands, so things became informational that might have been management prior to the passage of these state laws.”

Superintendent 3 shared, “I’m very lucky in that I have a board that nobody has an agenda, a personal agenda. That’s very rare. Five folks who work only for the school. . . . The board has been very strategically brought together.” She expounded further regarding her working relationship with her board saying the following:

I’m in contact with Byron, my board chair, all the time through text. Before every meeting, board meeting, we go to lunch so that I bring the agenda and the notes because he likes to look like he knows. Even though they’re all my bosses he’s my primary boss, and so we have very good relationship. We had a 5-year anniversary last month. My board has never been an issue to [the charter] except to keep moving the work forward. We’re very lucky that way.

Superintendent 4 provided insight to this function in comparison to his experiences as a superintendent of a traditional school system. When asked about charters being different from ISDs, he explained:

Yes, without a doubt. There’s so many things that are involved, not just with the 120-day plan, but just from experience. A lot of people, they get into those organizations, they have not experienced working with board. They don’t understand the board dynamics, the team approach. They don’t understand policy. They may be experts in certain things, but what I learned being an ISD superintendent, you [charter superintendent] have to be an expert in just about

everything. . . . Like I said before, I've dealt with some crazy boards, their hearts are in the right place, but their agendas are hidden agendas, or sometimes their political ambitions get in the way of what you need to do, and what's right for children. I think the conversations that we as superintendents, are easier to have with boards in the charter world, than it is in the ISD world, because in the ISD world they're always thinking about whatever hidden agenda it is, or whatever they were running for, to become a board member for.

Superintendent 4 added:

I think we as superintendents have a little bit of an advantage over that, because we can really talk about the compliance issue. We can get our boards to understand the compliance issue, so when decisions have to be made as a team of eight, I think charter boards come together more so a team of eight, because of the compliance issues.

**Curriculum and Instruction.** Superintendent 1 surmised the following:

Small charters and little ISD and Class A and Class Double A superintendents are going to be making sure the buses start in the morning or maybe helping change the tire to see where the leak is trying to patch it themselves, plus [the superintendent] being the only curriculum person for the district. So, it's a matter of how much time you actually have to put into each of the functions themselves. I think if you have good people and you delegate their responsibility and your job is to coordinate those efforts and to make sure that you're educated about what each one of them is doing on a regular basis and provide an input on how much



time you have to spend on each one of those are very dependent on how big you are and how much time you have. I think the functions will vary but they're not going to go away.

Superintendent 2 preferred to “always like to have the curriculum management audit done. I believe that there are some guidelines about what needs to be done and attacked in each district that I have worked in.” All four superintendents held positive perceptions of the regional service centers geographically located near their charter schools. In fact, Superintendent 2 noted that professional development in curriculum was important and because of “SB 2 and HB 5 we hired additional instructional coaches for each of our campuses. Curriculum was probably impacted more than any other [function]” by these two bills. However, Superintendent 1 did not experience any impact from HB 5 and by the curriculum issues due to the two charter schools he ran being closed by the state.

Superintendent 3 stated that her charter’s curriculum was impacted because of the district her students came. She specifically mentioned campuses located in two districts as follows:

It was fifth grade Science that got us [in one district]. The next year we went up 40 points with those fourth graders that had been with us the first year and then we had them two years, we went up 40 points and went distinguished in Science. It’s been a tougher road in [City 4] because even though we’ve stayed off IR [improvement required] for 3 years, the scores aren’t great. Not like I think they should be great, but our poverty level is higher. [City 4’s] ISD has a 30% poverty.

Ours is 47% last year. It's inching up, but we're attracting SPED, and we're attracting second language and poverty kids in [City 2]. We're at 42 or 45 by now, so that's sort of an interesting study as to why we would be attracting kids who are free-lunchers more than the [City 4] schools.

Superintendent 3 also shared that this function is directly impacted by the location of the charter school. She noted, "The reason we went IR in [City 1] was the dirty little secret there was that we did find in reading and math, we went down in science. The elementaries around us were not teaching science."

Superintendent 4 spoke with parsimony regarding curriculum and instruction: "We've been above what we should be with academics. We're doing a pretty decent job with the academics." He admitted to shifting his curriculum focus to the secondary level because of HB 5

There were a lot of pieces that were missing. I think they were just trying to get the school up and running. It wasn't in alignment with some of the graduation requirements. Now this summer, they are becoming more aligned with what the state is needing them to do, and technically they didn't really have to last year.

They just had freshman courses, and now they need to really start thinking about what happens.

**Elementary and Secondary Campus Operations.** Due to the impact of SB 2 and HB 5, Superintendent 2 stated including the school leadership team in the decision making for the district added "credibility within the organization. They also had a perspective that was different from mine." Superintendent 1 noted campus operations is a

focus of his attention because the charter schools he is appointed to run have been shut down. His primary problems involved student records because he received daily requests for “verification of handicapping conditions of kids.” Superintendent 1 also spent time:

Making sure people know where to go to get their student records if they’re checking into another district. I’ve had a couple of districts back in East Texas contact me and want to know how we get the records of these kids. They haven’t any luck because nobody’s answered the phones or checked [the charter] for the last 4 months.

Superintendent 3 noted that charters have the power to determine the grade levels included in the structure of the school district. However, she said, a traditional district does not have flexibility to operate with significant difference in regard to this function. Superintendent 3 said forthrightly about how she first structured her grade configurations prior to SB 2:

If I had known about SB 2, I would have never opened K7s. I would have opened K2s and grown my little sweet ones. Instead, it was safe to open K7s in 2012, and man, did they come all their little big old [academic] gaps and everything.

Superintendent 4 spoke about campus operations in the light of his recent employment at the charter school and his 120-day transition plan

I wouldn’t say they have problems, but when we realized that our budget was coming in a little bit shorter than what we intended because of the transition time, some parents, they pull their kids out because they were nervous. Now, we bring a lot of those parents back already because of word of mouth. They were like, “Oh

yeah, we heard really good things about the new superintendent going well.”

**Instructional Support Services.** This function produced very little data; however, as with curriculum and instruction, Superintendent 2 noted he “hired a college and career counselor in order to address some HB 5 requirements.” Superintendent 3 shared hiring specific individuals as well to provide instructional support to the school’s teachers. In fact, Superintendent 3 hired “a PBL [problem based learning] coach that used to work for me as my secondary because she wanted more time with her kids. She comes twice a week, and she supports our secondary people in PBL.”

**Human Resources.** Superintendent 1 responded at length about managing human resources. He also made comparisons about this function in relation to running smaller school districts because of his many of years of experience as a superintendent of a traditional school district in Texas:

Yeah, who you hire for what. The board’s questioning why you hired this person. Why not my cousin. They’re really more qualified. Why’d you hire so and so? There seems to be a lot more questions. A charter school board doesn’t seem quite as personal in regards [sic] to this function ... let’s turn the personnel function over to you in its entirety with a nice charter school board. Superintendents in the administration of charter schools don’t have to follow Chapter 21 usually has the responsibility for hiring and firing employees without taking those names or actions to the board. If they’re contract employees the board will maintain the hiring and firing authority. Large districts like [City 3] maybe not so much because there’s just not enough time and not enough ability when you’re hiring

thousands of people. I believe that they pretty well turn that over to the superintendent.

Superintendent 3 reported the following about human resources:

I have very little here at central office to our operations. I have an HR manager. I have a payroll clerk/benefits. I helped her. I have a receptionist that does requisitions, and I have a part-timer who sort of helps with the travel, because we do [attend] conferences. That's it. For 140 employees, I put my money in instruction.

Superintendent 3 related that one of her big concerns about human resources is staff retention because "turnover's gone down from 58% to 44%, but I tell you, we are a PD [professional development] assembly line factory for the ISD." She emphasized that "we do such good quality PD because I have such good people with me that after a couple of years with us, man you can talk the talk."

She also said she had learned to sever ties to staff when necessary to achieve the school's mission as follows:

What do we have, we have employment agreements, right? We're not Chapter 21. We have dismissed three teachers this last couple of weeks: "We're not putting up with your nonsense." We have several teachers who we've had to let go of. Senior Math teachers who refuse to do accommodations: "You're done."

She expressed her frustrations regarding hiring bilingual highly qualified teachers as well:

Now, we have done some other things to try to retain our teachers. One of the

things that you may have heard is that I go to Puerto Rico. I've been 3 years. I think I'm going to stop going because those doggone teachers can't pass their test. TEA has made the test harder. They've broken it up into five doggone parts, and they've only given you five chances to do it. Now it used to be I could keep them at least 2 years while they have enough waiver, [the TEA has] taken away the waiver. . . . Now, I'm going to Spain. With Spain, they can stay 3 years. They don't have to pass the test, and if they want staff for 3 years then they, I think, they go back for a little bit, but they can't come back and so. . . if I keep going to Spain and bring back bilingual teachers as they need them I can have a teacher for 3 doggone years instead of this constant turnover because the Puerto Ricans can't pass their test. There's just not enough of the American citizen bilingual teacher [sic] to go around [that] we're all fighting over. Those are some of the strategies that we're having to do so that we can try to keep bilingual teachers longer.

Superintendent 4 shared different human resources related experiences in the following explanation:

It wasn't as difficult as I thought it was going to be to fill those [teaching] slots. There's been a lot of them. Then again, whenever you do late hires, when you hire in August, you run into problems where you're not getting the cream of the crop. You're starting to get teachers who wouldn't be the first choice in other locations, other charters, and ISDs. We actually had to release one teacher just recently, because they were still within their 90-day window where we could release individuals, because it just wasn't working out.

Superintendent 4 also referred back to his 120-day transition plan as a new superintendent in the district needing to evaluate each function's activities:

In order to right size, we have been looking at our financial accountability, and what that meant for us. Since we have to now come in, and done the layoffs we needed to do, we actually had to RIFT some staff. In the past 2 months we had to RIFT staff, and reduce staff, and absorb a lot of staff from positions that were being filled. Of course, all the components of having qualified staff come into play. . . . When you're hiring new staff at this point, . . . there were a lot of conversations about the compliance issues with the state. As we move forward with the transitioning to the right size for the district. Again, as I said, we were talking a lot about the components of SB 2 without really calling it the components of SB 2. Just keeping track of everything.

**Administrative, Finance, and Operations.** Superintendent 1 responded to this question based not only on his experience as a seasoned traditional superintendent but also with knowledge of a how this function affects a charter school or district forced to close by the state:

Yeah. I think the clarification about the different steps that you go through when I served as a monitor, which is trying to help districts and campuses be successful to the level of conservator, which is more directive to the level of appointment of the board of managers. Once you're appointed as a board of managers or a superintendent, you're no longer trying to save the school, now you're trying to go through the closure process which is ensuring that employees have received

their paychecks and vendors are being paid what is due to them in a timely manner and returning the leased equipment from water bottles to copiers. I think the finances are the main thing, the chief control factor and the most difficult to keep up with. . . In general, what I had seen and we talked about schools that will get in trouble to the point of state takeover, it is generally the financial component that gets them in trouble and in many cases.

In your case, you'd been able to overcome that, but in a lot of cases people who have applied for a charter school are well intentioned but don't have a financial background and have not asked for help or don't know where to get the help financially. Because the function of the business office and the function of school finance is foreign to most non-educators and people who haven't been through an academic or administrative training component to even be aware of how confusing it can be and how important it is to deal with compliance issues and even to the point about what software we should use and how often reporting takes place. I think the state has got to do a better job when they approve charters of assuring that the people they approve the charters for have a thorough understanding of the financial component.

Superintendent 1 discussed specific information about the financial component of operating a charter school in Texas:

That's what I'm saying because it's the finances that get people in trouble. Academics are academics. To me the finances are primary as far as staying open and keeping what you need to do together. The academics falls under that and we



all know we need to have the academics and what happens with accountability system but too many times we see charter schools who the business component is run by a clerk or somebody. They don't have CPAs in place. They don't have educators in place. They don't have people who actually understand the financial component and assuring that the federal dollars go where the federal dollars need to go and that discussion of supplement as opposed to supplant which is big right now too.

They're already talking about changing the funding at the federal level but we understand that supplement as opposed to supplant still needs to be in place [about] what the requirements are to validate a reimbursement. I just can't send you a note saying, "I spent \$35 over at Walmart to buy some food for my kids, I need to be reimbursed." Well, I need the receipt. I need to know what you were doing with it. That's a small thing.

Superintendent 1 gave an example about the length of time needed for the state to close a traditional public school district in Texas based on financial issues:

It took 20 years at [a traditional school district near DFW]. With charters and the way people are looking at ISDs right now, it's happening a lot faster. [TEA Commissioner] Michael Williams had one movement and was moving more aggressively in the direction of closing ISDs or consolidating ISDs and charters that were not performing. [TEA Commissioner] Mike Morath is moving even at the next level of that.

Superintendent 3 validated what Superintendent 1 said in regard to her own

experience with finances:

I was able to start working on opening three campuses, which was the stupidest thing ever. Don't open three campuses at the same time. No help. That's been amazing to me. TEA gives me \$6 million with no manual. No mentor. I knew no one. Superintendent group wasn't open then. I knew no one. We just did stuff and hoped it was compliant. Then when we were in trouble we knew we were in trouble because they called. The only time we knew something was late is because they called or emailed. . . . Because I'd been teaching at the University levels for many years and I knew all the research, I knew what we needed to do. I didn't know how much it was going to cost.

Superintendent 4 responded to the questions of this function with his previous knowledge from being a seasoned superintendent transitioning into the role in a new charter school:

It seems like every district I've been in has financial problems. I wouldn't say they [referring to the charter] have problems, but when we realized that our budget was coming in a little bit shorter, than what we intended, because of the transition time [and] in order to right size, we have been looking at our financial accountability, and what that meant for us.

Superintendent 4 did express the following about relationship between the charter school environment and the two bills, SB 2 and HB 5. He said, "Yeah. Them [the TEA and legislature] saying, 'Here's what you've got to do, and oh, by the way, charter get less money to do it.'" Therefore, the majority of the superintendents expressed that

legislation did impact how they addressed aspects, particularly the financial aspect, of the Administrative, Finance, and Operations function.

**Facilities Planning and Management.** Superintendent 1 responded to the questions about this function in detail about the charter schools he was appointed to manage by the TEA. He noted that he “had to hire a locksmith, had to have somebody come and assist, and making sure the security system and the alarm system was still operational.” He also discussed dealing with vendors about the facilities:

We’ve had the review from the fire alarm people who basically say they can’t fix it, because it’s tied in with the air conditioning units in the roof and will cause the compressors and electrical system to the air conditioning units to knock out then the fire alarm systems continue to fire like there’s a breach. So, I’ve got a continually annoying humming sound in the building I can’t get rid of now. It was not a well-built building . . . and I’ll say too I’ve heard from others who have been through this process, and I would say had it happened here, I would anticipate the same thing that they have gone to some of the places that they have shut down. The people they worked with were very accommodating [but in] this particular case, they’re very bitter and not very accommodating.

Superintendent 3 also spoke at length about “facility management plan operations” as follows:

If my teachers aren’t happy and my principals aren’t happy with their facilities, it impacts classroom instruction. If you come in a second day in a row and your garbage isn’t pulled that’s a conversation, because the teacher is going to take it

out on her kids. I talk with custodians all the time. I walk into a building on a Monday, and I see full trash cans. That's a conversation I'm having with them. Did you notice that? I picked up a bag full of paper outside your building before I came in. That means your people aren't looking at your building, and you're not looking at your building because you all walked in here and you left that out there. Uh-uh, not okay.

She spoke specifically about the geographic locations of her charter campuses:

We were in [City 1] and [City 2] and [City 3] in three churches and by the third year, I had to close down the [City 1] church because the pastor died there a month before we were approved, and his son-in-law, the assistant pastor who had only done it a year, inherited the church, and we weren't his dream. We had to find another place. Lots of stories, but by the start of our third year we had to find our building. We did find a building in [City 4] and then by the start of our fourth year we had to close down the [City 2] and [City 3] churches because they were afraid of our IR2 standing. Our budget for facilities was at 12%. Now, being forced out to get our own buildings, we went to 18%.

Superintendent 4 mentioned this function in the context of his new position and said, "Investigating, looking at the financial records, looking at the facilities and operations. I did have to take over transportation for a short period of time, because of our staffing situation that we had."

**Accountability, Information Management, and Technology Services.** For this function in regard to how this function caused the TEA to close charter school he led,

Superintendent 1 said, “Poor record keeping, absolutely. [A colleague] used to call it accumulated misbehavior. Why are you giving me a whipping? It wasn’t that big of a deal. Accumulated misbehavior.” He added that failing to provide audits to the state represented one accumulation of misbehavior but noted the school was closed “because of their failure to complete a criminal history check. They were allowed a year to get their act together, and at the end of that year they were allowed to reopen” after they had submitted their audits. Moreover, he added:

They didn’t submit their audit reports with one statement that they didn’t think that they needed to submit an audit report for the year that they weren’t closed.

They just weren’t allowed to have kids, and they didn’t think they needed to have audit report for the year.

He noted further in his response this accountability and information management function is critical in his view “because of his circumstance and experience.” He identified a need for professional development for charter school leaders as follows:

I think the clarification about the different steps that you go through when I served as a monitor, which is trying to help districts and campuses be successful to the level of conservator, which is more directive to the level of appointment of the board of managers, but . . . once you’re appointed as a board of managers or a superintendent, you’re no longer trying to save the school. Now you’re trying to go through the closure process which is ensuring that employees have received their paychecks and vendors are being paid what is due to them in a timely manner and returning the leased equipment from water bottles to copiers.

Superintendent 2 identified “the biggest [impact] is the automatic closure due to SB 2, if there are three consecutive strikes. It provides an urgency towards paying attention to that accountability.” He recommended based on SB 2, “if you don’t do well in one of the accountabilities to make sure you appeal that accountability rating because there’s no due process built into SB 2 once you get to the closure stage.” However, he also admitted, “We’re concerned about rating, but quite frankly, I think what is happening--there’s so many ratings--it’s becoming a joke and more and more confusing to explain to a board, to explain how we’re doing, how our performance is.”

Superintendent 3 highlighted how this function enabled her to “start working on opening three campuses,” even though she labeled that effort as “the stupidest thing ever. Don’t open three campuses at the same time.” She said she had “no help,” “no manual,” “no mentor,” and the “superintendent group wasn’t open then. I knew no one. We just did stuff and hoped it was compliant.” She recalled, “We were in trouble because they called. The only time we knew something was late is because they called or emailed.

Superintendent 3 admitted:

Everything I do has to do with SB2 and staying off IR. . . Operational support services, because we’re a tech school every kid 6th grade on up has a computer and we have computer centers in every elementary classroom. We have thousands of computers. How does SB2 affect? It’s all connected. Accountability. SB2 is accountability. Accountability is making sure it’s happening in the classroom and when I have kids who don’t have their laptops working and all of their PBL, their project briefcase is online. They’re ebooks. We don’t have textbooks. They’re

ebooks. They're online.

Regarding shared the following regarding assessment data for accountability,

Superintendent 3 shared:

Having to hire somebody with the sole understanding of making sure that our testing data stays clean. . . . My sense of urgency, as you may have picked up on, is rather high in regards to everything that we need to do to stay off IR, especially in this 5-year renewal. I trust little. I trust, but verify, because I believe that's the only reason we've been able to get off and stay off IR at a district level and continue to grow the campuses despite having the high turnover.

The accountability piece was emphasized again when she said:

I think it [SB2] changes your behavior. I talked to an ISD superintendent who is put into low performing districts and he was very fierce about the fact that, look I told him I walk the campuses. He said, "Oh, my God, what?" He said, "I just tell those principals if they can't hack it they're gone. I don't waste time walking the campuses." I'm thinking, "Buddy, I know walking the campuses has saved us."

I'm not arguing with him, but yeah. I have a sense of urgency, and I have to make sure that our teachers feel it. That our campus leadership feels it. My central staff feels it. . . . We have to be looking at every campus and know that we get punished as a district. Whereas, in an ISD they just don't. They might have to close those three schools down, but they get an article in the paper and they're done. The kids still stay there they just change the personnel. You know what I'm saying? For us our kids have to leave and go to a school that have been IR-ed

longer than we have and who's not showing added value in index 2. It's a whole different playing field. It is. The fairness factor is off the chart, off.

Superintendent 4 had the following comments about managing accountability in between charters and traditional public schools:

I think there were several districts that were on the watch list for over a decade, they were on the emergency watch list, and yet it just seemed like the state didn't have the capacity to take them over. Charters, it's a little bit easier, because you can just pull the plug. You can't really pull the plug on the ISDs. . . . I think there were several districts that were on the watch list for over a decade, they were on the emergency watch list, and yet it just seemed like the state didn't have the capacity to take them over. . . . Some of that I'm sure is related to SB 2, HB 5, as to whether or not it specifically is, then I could say, "Yeah. That's HB 2. That's HB 5." I don't really know that yet. I just know these are the compliance types that I have to keep track of.

**External and Internal Communications.** Superintendent 1 responded to this function saying: "The big focus was making sure that we got information out in a timely manner. In some cases, it was dealing with the press as we had emergency crisis and things." He further shared how this external communication was handled in the last traditional school district he led:

Ours [internal and external communications director] was more getting press releases out to the public, making sure the staff was educated to the best of our ability about what we needed and we also had a foundation that she assisted in



coordinating and we started community ed[ucation] program which was parents at the end of the school. Also, serving as my sounding board if I was considering something that might be considered stupid. Helped me on campus. I'm thinking about this, what's the ramifications and fortunately she was a hometown girl who knew everybody and everything and her mother was a well-respected English teacher in the district and she's been around forever and headed up the alumni association. Right person, right time. Then she became the assistant superintendent of [the ISD] after I left.

Superintendent 2 offered the following insights on using external communications for advocacy:

I became a little bit more active legislatively and through the state association. I became aware that our state association was heavily supportive of SB 2 and there are pieces and parts of SB2 that we liked and didn't like that we feel like we're getting attention from our state association, I guess political activism especially as it relates to the state association. Being available and ready to testify at the TEA and at the senate hearings, house hearings, made me more active with politically with both the state association and state legislature.

Superintendent 3 reflected and said: "It's been an interesting ride figuring it out on my own. I bless (fellow colleague) for opening up the Superintendent's group. I try to reign myself in and not talk too much there because of what we talked about earlier because I'm a rebel with a cause. I've been down to Austin three times during the last legislative session and it is all about politics and money. It's not about helping kids and

that's the shame of it. It's not about helping kids.”

About HB 5 Superintendent 3 stated:

House Bill 5 hit us right around the time that we had to put in our 9th grade so it didn't hurt us in the way for others. I don't think it was as poorly because it is what it is and the timing was okay, and we just didn't want to. . . I always make lemonade out of lemons and so I was able to market the fact that we have endorsements and IT and make [HB5] work for us. Our narrative changes a lot around the changes that we're hit with. I happen to be pretty good at that that selling ice cream discs. We have to roll with the punches but the only thing that I wish that I could feel more from TEA is that they would be more supportive and less compliance-oriented to the point of absurdity.

She shared her attempts to become active in the legislative field in communicating with the TEA and elected officials in Austin:

I had parents there, I had parents, teachers, and students, a very calm group of about 35 people and students there. We had signs and stuff and we said, “Sir [to commissioner Michael Williams], Senate Bill 2 is really hurting us as a startup. We opened case 7, that was safe to do that back in 2012. Now here we are in 2014 and it's not safe anymore.” This was before the 2015 legislative session. [TEA Commissioner Williams] said, “You were grandfathered it out.” I said, “No, sir.” Even he's the grandmaster and implementer of Senate Bill 2, even he did not understand what he had done. . . . I said, “Well, sir, can I get this from somebody that we've been grandfathered out of that?” He said, “Yeah, here's my person.”

His person never responded. Nobody wanted to own the fact that they had done the damage that they had especially to the startups. That was our hope in 2015 that they would undo some of that work, but I said I went down there three times, talked to Senate Bill 2. I never found him to be a good friend of charters but we tried.

Superintendent 4 noted the important communication involved advocating the following:

It's all about educating kids. It doesn't matter if it's charter or ISD. Then, I think people are going to realize, okay, public ed[ducation] is never going to go away. How we educate children with public dollars is going to change, 10, 15 years from now. That's what I've always said.

**Operational Support Systems: Safety and Security, Food Services, and Transportation.** Even though Superintendent 2 did not generate any data for this function, the other three superintendents offered explicit information. Superintendent 1 even for these ancillary support systems said, "ISDs and little ISDs and Class A and Class Double A superintendents are going to be making sure the buses start in the morning or maybe helping change the tire to see where the leak is trying to patch it themselves." Superintendent 4 responded about this function in the context of his new position and referred to "investigating, looking at the financial records, looking at the facilities and operations. I did have to take over transportation for a short period of time, because of our staffing situation."

Superintendent 3 stated her perceptions of this function candidly:

When the operational support systems suffer, my students suffer, and I won't have that. We have a very sophisticated system but to me, it's very simple. That is guys: It's very black and white. This is what we do and the only thing we do. The non-negotiables right there. If we veer from that you have to have a conversation with me. If you want to change something I'm open. I am always open to the discussion. Don't change it before we discuss it with a conversation. With regards to accountability technology information services, I mean, we have tech guys that are at the campuses because we cannot allow technology to be an issue. We spend thousands and thousands of dollars on infrastructure and broadband and access points and laptops. We're still growing. Every year we have to buy another 200, 300 laptops. Now we're in our fifth year so we're having to go to those almost 5-year-old laptops and do something with them.

**Conclusion to Research Question 3.** Regarding the question about the adjustments to the 10 functions of the school districts that might be necessary for applying this model of school functioning to public charter schools in Texas, the analysis of the responses by the superintendents provided no evidence of a need to adjust the 10 functions of the superintendency for the functioning of public charter schools in Texas. Superintendent 1 best summarized the lack of a need to change how duties of the superintendent address the functions as follows:

The functions are the functions are the functions. It's a matter of size and how much of ability you have to delegate to others, but they all fall under the overview of the superintendent and then once you do, some of these who we talk

about people that you've talked to already, they may be the only person who's doing the job. ISDs and little ISDs and Class A and Class Double A superintendents are going to be making sure the buses start in the morning or maybe helping change the tire to see where the leak is trying to patch it themselves. Plus, [the superintendent] being the only curriculum person for the [charter] district, so it's a matter of how much time you actually have to put into each of the functions themselves. I think if you have good people and you delegate their responsibility and your job is to coordinate those efforts and to make sure that you're educated about what each one of them is doing on a regular basis and provide an input on how much time you have to spend on each one of those are very dependent on how big you are and how much time you have. I think the functions will vary, but they're not going to go away.

In sum, the superintendents reported congruence in addressing the 10 functions whether guiding traditional public and charter schools. However, the superintendents expressed concern about the gap in knowledge that both educators and the public have about charter schools' operations in Texas. All implied there is a need for education and advocacy about charter schools in Texas. As seen in Figure 4, the summary of the coding suggested what functions among the 10 functions were most emphasized by the superintendents. Also, SB 2 was coded hierarchically as influencing Governance, which was reflected in the data presented in this chapter. The figure also shows how clearly the finances of the charter school represent these superintendents most prominently addressed function.

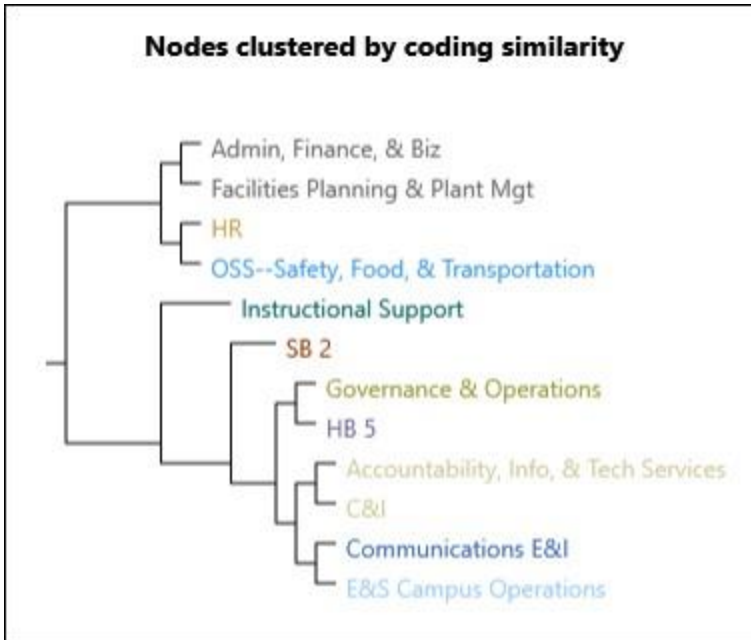


Figure 4. Hierarchical relationships between the 12 functions with HB 5 and SB 2.

### Summary

In summary, the data gathered from the four superintendents who met the qualifications for this study showed that the legislative climate of Texas as implemented following last legislative session has directly impacted charter school superintendents in the state of Texas. The data offered a clear picture that while charter school superintendents are supposed to perform and meet the same and even more stringent academic and fiscal accountability standards set up by the legislature, they operate their schools with less support and resources than what their traditional school superintendent peers have access to. The overall lack of understanding and knowledge of the needs of charter school superintendents by external entities became evident during the data analysis.

The three participating charter school superintendents had the credentials and experience to match traditional public school superintendents in the state. However, they reported a need for generating clarity of understanding about charter schools as public schools by the general and educational community as well as by the state's legislature. The results of this study are discussed in connection to literature and the theoretical framework in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of leading charter schools with superintendents of public charter schools affected by HB 5 and SB 2, both of which went into effect in 2013. This study provided information to school administrators and researchers about the effects of law as mandated by the state of Texas on charter schools. This study illuminated superintendents' leadership perceptions and the legislative issues affecting open-enrollment charter schools' operations in the state of Texas. This chapter includes a summary of the study and findings, discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of the Study**

This study was conducted to understand charter school superintendents' perceptions and leadership practices in the context of Texas' legislative climate. There was a need to employ a qualitative study of the implications of operating a public K-12 charter school under SB 2 and HB 5 in the state of Texas. An emphasis to all of the 10 areas of school functions were explored with four superintendents of charter schools found in Region 10 of Texas.

Four superintendents participated in semi-structured interviews conducted face to face, and multiple interactions with the researcher and participant occurred. Each interview lasted between 60 minutes and a few hours. The interview guide was followed. Every attempt to make the participants feel comfortable and understood in order to ensure clarity in the data was made. The participants offered candid answers, as seen in Chapter



4. The interviews gave the participants the opportunity to share their reflections according to their specific perspectives about operating charter schools under SB 2, which was retroactive as of 2011 and directed toward charter schools throughout Texas. The participants were also able to speak with authority regarding the compliance guidelines for graduation that HB 5 put into place the same year as SB 2. Member checking occurred throughout the process to ensure that the credibility and trustworthiness of the research was assured. The researcher saw that the credibility of the study was tantamount throughout the research process.

Data related to the effects of the implementation of SB 2 and HB 5 on operating charter schools as well as about the four superintendents' roles in attaining success with the 10 functions were collected to answer the study's three research questions. The data from the individual interviews were analyzed with elaborative coding because of the need to determine the veracity of the 10 functions (Saldaña, 2013). Each interview's data were reviewed in conjunction with the other interviews' data to be sure that no information or key findings were missed in the analysis process. NVivo software was used to complete the data analysis.

### **Summary of the Findings**

In Chapter 4, the three research questions were answered. Consistent throughout the data, all four superintendents had formal training and superintendent certifications. All four superintendents said they spent a great deal of their time working to meet the requirements of the accountability system, both academically and financially. The superintendents perceived no difference in being a superintendent of a charter school

versus a superintendent of a traditional school district as far as implementing the 10 functions of the school district was concerned. Superintendent 2 offered a summary of the four views as failing to see “there is a difference at all in the [superintendent] job. The biggest hurdle is that there are people who do not understand what charter schools are all about.” Superintendent 1 did not see “charter school superintendents’ jobs are different than traditional school superintendents’ jobs except that you have to have a closer working relationship with your board members.” Superintendent 1 further concluded, “The functions are the functions are the functions. It’s a matter of size and how much of ability you have to delegate to others but they all fall under the overview of the superintendent.” The four superintendents did note the greatest misunderstanding had by traditional educators and the education establishment involved a failure to comprehend the similarities between traditional, particularly rural, public and charter schools. They reported the presence of a need to inform the public and the state’s educators and legislators about charter schools and offered their perceptions with a “sense of urgency” (per Superintendent 3) in their vocal tones as part of their external communications efforts.

SB 2 directly targeted the accountability of charter schools’ finances, in particular, and did not apply to traditional school districts. Three of the superintendents underwent direct impact from the elements of the law and noted how SB 2 changed their superintendent roles politically and responded that the organizations’ changes were directly linked to the legislation. These three also reflected about the way the implementation of SB 2 changed their schools’ governance structures as well as their

charter schools' leadership structures and physical environments.

Charter school leadership was affected by the demands of SB 2 with a high sense of urgency, and differently than HB 5, according to the participants. HB 5 was seen to be mostly something that affected Curriculum and Instruction and planning but they did not view HB 5 as a factor that could lead to charter school closure by the state. The superintendents' discussions about HB 5 as impacting their schools' configurations or access to special funds, such as career technology money.

The functions that appeared to be most influenced by SB 2 and HB 5 according to the superintendents who were a part of this study were Administrative, Finance, and Business Operations; Curriculum and Instruction; and Governance and Operations. The duty to manage finances responsibly was reiterated by all four superintendents throughout the data. These four superintendents spoke of finance as specifically being the most crucial subfunction for ensuring the viability of their charter schools. The participants who had been superintendents in traditional school districts also noted that even traditional school district superintendents and school boards must maintain control over the finances to be successful and comply with the demands of the TEA and legislature. All four also noted they must maintain compliance for expenditures, budgets, and audits or undergo dire consequences, including closure, for failing to meet accountability standards.

### **Limitations**

The study suffered from limitations. First, an extremely limited number of superintendents fit the criteria for participation, composed the target population for

meeting the purpose of this study, and could maintain credibility for the study. The Region 10 Education Service Center and the TCSA were approached for gaining a list of superintendents with experience as traditional school district administrators and who were superintendents of charter schools serving Grades K-12. Out of the charter schools that operated in DFW, only five superintendents met the criteria. Four, or 80%, of these five agreed to complete the interviews.

### **Discussion**

In reviewing the literature for this study, the data gathered in this study aligns with the literature. The charter school movement began as centers of innovation, and as the movement changed from the initial Texas SB 1 that was legislated in 1995. The bill provided for a complete replacement of the Texas Education Code, the reorganization of the Central Education Agency (CEA), and the reassignment of the responsibilities of the State Board of Education as an answer to the 73rd legislature mandate (Nelson et al., 2000). The state of Texas made follow up legislation to address the need of structure for the governance of charter school boards. However, very little research has been conducted on the charter school chief executive officer (CEO) or on superintendents who run successful charter schools. The data provided in the CER report in 2011 pointed to the failures directly resulting from ineffective superintendents or CEOs. Specifically, these school failures occurred due to financial mismanagement. The results from the interviews conducted for this study showed that failure to manage finances does lead to charter school failure and closure.

CER called for research that could be used to determine the factors needed by

superintendents who effectively lead charter schools (Fusarelli, 2000; Stevens, 1999).

This study attempted to apply the 10 functions to determine the critical factors and areas needed to train charter school superintendents. As a result, the three top functions identified were Finance, Governance and Operations, and Curriculum and Instruction.

The conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2 can be applied to a full integration of legislative policy. The 10 functions of the school district and the work of Bolman and Deal (2008) to the charter school superintendent offered an integrative theoretical lens. Bolman and Deal provided understanding of the functions and operations of an education organization on a day-to-day basis that was used to evaluate the superintendents' responses about their charter school organizations. Bolman and Deal's four-domain framework applied to the overall operations of school superintendents included: (a) Structural, (b) Human Resources, (c) Political, and (c) Symbolic. In looking at the data, the 10 functions could be sorted into the four domains.

The structural frame refers to the roles and responsibilities of people within the organization. Each superintendent noted the characteristics of their leadership methods and the structures of their governing boards. Each school's organizational structure was different just as charter schools tend to be different and unique between each other (Subjinski, 2015). The organizational structure is built to fit the charter school organization's current circumstances based on workforce, goals, technology, and environment (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In this study, structure was easily applied as relating to the superintendents meeting the 10 functions of the school system.

The human resource frame in this study supported aligning the people who work

in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In this context, the superintendents noted the importance of attaining a good fit between the governance and organization of the charter school and the superintendent as necessary for human resource effectiveness (Bolman & Deal, 2008). All four superintendents referred to working well with their boards.

The integration of the human resources frame involves all stakeholders within the organization most impacted by the influences of the political and the symbolic frames. Another important notation in the responses of the superintendents involved whom they included in their charter school organizations' decision making and strategic planning. The human resources frame appeared in the interview data. While the human resources frame was represented differently by each superintendent, its application to the 10 functions of the superintendency was conspicuous in the data.

The political frame affecting the organization was interwoven among the four participants' responses. This political dimension affected the superintendents' abilities to set agendas and attain goals (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Superintendent 1's data showed that Texas' SB 2 caused the political framework of the charter school to become important within the charter school organizational structure. SB 2 defined the political frame for the charter school organizations, both internally and externally, within the charter school's local communities, causing the charter school superintendent to be focused on the politics of the legislative arena. The state's legislative actions dictated the directions of the superintendents' goals and agendas, because the political terrain not only encompassed local stakeholders but also stakeholders within the statewide political system. Superintendent 2 reported SB 2 causing him to become "more active

legislatively and through the state association” by “being available and ready to testify at the TEA and at the senate hearings, house hearings, made me more active with politically with both the state association and state legislature.”

Superintendent 3 implicated the function of internal and external communications as part of the political frame. She stated, “I try to reign myself in and not talk too much there [in Austin] because of what we talked about earlier, because I’m a rebel with a cause. I’ve been down to Austin three times during the last legislative session, and it is all about politics and money.” The political frame was further emphasized by superintendents who did not find the outside support to meet their charter schools’ political needs.

The need for the superintendents to aligning their charter schools’ needs according to legislation such as SB 2 that initiated retroactive accountability implications became paramount among these four charter schools’ superintendents and overshadowed issues related to the implementation of HB 5 in charter schools serving Grades 9 through 12. Additionally, regarding the implementation of SB 2. An overall “sense of urgency” was explicitly indicated by Superintendent 3 and heard in the tones of the other three superintendents who suggested advocacy for charter schools is needed in the areas of finance, mission and goals, and functions of charter schools based on legislation and regulation in Texas. With the current accountability system for financial accountability in charter schools via SB 2, the lack of a clear understanding about financial accountability in Texas for charter school superintendents in their first year of the position is very concerning (Educational Resources Information Center, 2002).

The final piece of the Bolman and Deal (2008) framework involves the symbolic frame. The symbolic frame includes the thought provoking side of the 10 functions of the school district. The symbolic frame is focused on how humans use meaning, belief, and faith to create a culture as exhibited through the superintendents' responses to the interview questions. Although Superintendent 1's current position did not allow him to represent this frame in an explicit example, he described applying it in his past school leadership positions.

Symbolic processes and events, such as site-based decision making committees and campus and district improvement plans as mentioned by Superintendent 2, appeared in the data. The symbolic frame is essential to maintaining a higher understanding of how charter schools function. The superintendents' descriptions of utilizing key people in decision making, despite the state dictating accountability processes to superintendents, affirmed this frame. Sharing decision making practices as part of leadership showed the superintendents strove to create positive, motivational cultures within their charter schools' organizations. Therefore, the symbolic lens can be used to generate understanding about all the implications of SB 2 and HB 5 on charter school superintendents' leadership practices.

Charter school organizations' overall survival and successes was presented by the participants through symbols. The charter school superintendents offered discernment in this study of charter school superintendents. CER (2011) noted that charter schools are failing because of the obstacles involving financial mismanagement, academic failures by students, and facilities issues. Charter school failures are likely due to the funding



availability in Texas charter schools excluding them from receiving local tax dollars or facility funding from the state. Perceptions of charters too often come from news stories about failed charter schools, and the laws tend to be put in place as a direct result of charter schools' failing due to mismanagement of the Finance function (Weil, 2000). Based on the statistics of failed charters nationally and the information gleaned from the four superintendents, financial mismanagement causes failing charters in Texas also.

With the evidence from this study and the results of the research conducted in the review of literature shows a clear path for how superintendents make their charters successful and provides evidence about what happens when charter superintendents do not achieve the standards as set forth in the HB 5 and SB 2 accountability measures enforced by the TEA. Particularly, the accountability mandates from SB 2 lead with finality and no appeal to charter school closure. This recognition of how critical financial ability alone is for charter school superintendents clearly emphasizes the need for Charter school superintendents to have a full understanding of the 10 functions of school districts to be able to lead their charter schools successfully.

### **Implications for Practice**

The implications for practice suggest that the superintendents felt the need to train the state's charter school superintendents about the 10 functions of schools. The lack of a population of charter school superintendents who were both superintendent certified and had held any administrative position in a traditional school district is concerning from both the practice and research perspectives. There is a need to produce formally trained and certified charter school superintendents. Because of the data supporting any

documented need for ensuring adequate resources to charter schools, the data suggest there is a need for the state organizations and TEA to provide training and ongoing professional development to charter school operators and superintendents.

Regional service centers offer a cooperative and collaborative environment offering inclusive training and resources to charter schools, but the data suggest further advocacy beyond what the regional service centers provide is needed by charter school superintendents. Legislators and TEA personnel need to understand that experienced, certified superintendents do lead charter schools during stringent accountability periods and have positive viewpoints about the regional service centers. Superintendent 1 pointed out the “tremendous amount of misunderstanding” that abounds about the goals of charter schools, such as whether they are public or private schools “and about the state laws that charters have to abide by. The biggest problem faced is the huge misconception in the education world about what charter schools do and how they operate.” Additionally, Superintendent 3 noted a need for developing support tools at the TEA and the state association of charter schools that could be used to ensure superintendents opening charter schools become successful. The regional education service centers (ESC) and these organizations have a clear opportunity to accept the opportunity to provide professional development, understanding, and advocacy for educators involved in these schools of choice.

There are about 200 charter schools in Texas, but less than 10 charter school superintendents have leadership role experience in traditional school districts. State associations for superintendents and executive leadership as well as the TEA are

encouraged to provide training about aspects of the 10 functions of schools to charter school superintendents. In addition to support from ESCs, higher education programs linked into the state's political framework of traditional school superintendents can advocate for charter schools to receive acceptance and inclusion within the state's professional organizations including the major associations that educate and represent school administrators and school boards in Texas. The symbolic common purpose in public education in Texas was alluded to by Superintendent 3 who chose to do what was "best for the children's education."

Finally, the superintendents acknowledged the need to inform educational leaders about both traditional and charter schools' similarities, including both being public schools. Superintendent 2 noted a need for advocacy at a political level with the legislature. Interestingly, Superintendent 1 noted that charter school superintendents at times performed duties in very similar manner to how "Class A and Class Double A" superintendent's functioned. The similarity about how superintendents of charter schools and traditional school districts of similar sizes suggests that charter school associations could advocate for charter schools by educating the general public and state legislatures about charter schools' missions and functions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

A number of recommendations emerge from the findings. First is the need to understand the perceptions of charter school superintendents who do not have formal training for becoming superintendents nor superintendent certification. Most charter school superintendents do not have experience working in or leading traditional public

school districts, let alone Texas superintendent certification. The number of charter schools led by certified experienced superintendents at the time of this study was only 5 out of 44 charter schools in Region 10, representing 11% of the charter schools in this geographic area. The population of charter school leaders not superintendent certified represents a strong pool of candidates for a study of the 10 functions of the school district as applied to charter schools because these educators may offer a unique perspective not found in the current set of data.

At the time of this study, SB 2 and HB 5 had only been in effect for 2 years. With additional longitudinal research, further implications regarding superintendent leadership due to these three legislative mandates might emerge. Future research could be conducted to address the areas of the 10 functions supported by regional ESCs as benefits to charter school and traditional school superintendents.

Next, future researchers might investigate how higher education institutions have responded to the need to educate potential charter school superintendents and produce educational leaders who have competency and are capable of leading all types of public schools, both in the traditional and charter school sectors. Of special important to higher education, how finance classes are used to enable educators to lead charters in the SB 2 era bears investigation. The study of the role of higher education programs in educating public school leaders and superintendents about charter schools in Texas and even nationally appears to be necessary, given the participants' beliefs about lack of understanding toward charter schools in Texas.

## Appendix A: Superintendent Interview Questions

Interviewee:            1        2        3        4        5

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Open-ended Interview Questions

1. Share with me the history of this charter school from when you initially became superintendent until now?
  - a. What was the organizational structure like before SB 2?
  - b. How as the organizational structure been affected by SB 2?
2. What is your history as an educational leader?
  - a. What positions did you hold before becoming a charter school superintendent and in what types of public schools or districts?
  - b. What are the differences between leading a charter school versus a traditional public school?
3. What training have you received for strategic planning?
  - a. What are your experiences with your regional service center in relation to support for your strategic planning efforts?
4. How has SB 2 and HB 5 impacted your application of the functions of the superintendent?
  - a. How have you adjusted?
  - b. Why have you made adjustments?
  - c. What aspects of strategic planning are most affected by SB 2 and HB 5?
  - d. What do you do differently due to SB 2 and HB 5?

5. Who do you include in your decision making as a result of SB 2?
  - a. Why do you choose those designees?
6. What structures, staffing, resources, etc. have you initiated and/or invested in, as it relates to SB 2 and HB 5 and your charter school for the following:
  - a. Governance and operations
  - b. Curriculum and instruction
  - c. Elementary and secondary campus operations
  - d. Instructional support services
  - e. Human resources
  - f. Administrative, finance, and business operations
  - g. Facilities planning and plant management
  - h. Accountability, technology services, and information management
  - i. External and internal communications
  - j. Operational support systems
7. What other experiences had you had in your role as a charter school superintendent specifically in regard to SB 2 and HB 5?

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