THE EFFECT OF MANDATED SCHOOL REFORM STRATEGIES ON TEACHER

WORKING CONDITIONS AND STUDENT LEARNING IN A SECONDARY

SCHOOL DESIGNATED "IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED" BY

THE TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

by

Aaron Jason Vohl

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a Major in School Improvement
May 2019

Committee Members:

Michael P. O'Malley, Chair

Patricia L. Guerra

Melissa A. Martinez

Stephen Gordon

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94–553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Aaron Jason Vohl, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Anabel, Gavin, and Nikki.

A promise is a promise.

Something worth starting is worth finishing.

I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examined the relationship between mandatory school reform efforts and the impact these efforts have on teacher working conditions and subsequently on student learning. This study also aimed to inform educational leaders regarding the establishment teacher working conditions to maximize sustainable school improvement. **Method:** A case study was employed to illuminate social interactions occurring at a school under sanctions to improve due to poor academic performance. Qualitative analysis framed by critical theory was used to identify themes emerging from teacher interviews, observation, and review of survey data. **Findings:** Mandatory school reform impacted the school as well as the people that work there and the students whom it attempts to educate. This case study found that school reform efforts focused on improved test performance negatively impacted teacher working conditions and, as a result negatively impacted student learning. **Implications:** School leaders must navigate conflicting goals when embarking upon school reform efforts and must be mindful of teacher working conditions to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Keywords

Teacher working conditions, school reform, sanctions, student learning, school improvement

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

My destiny is not given but something that needs to be constructed and for which I must assume responsibility.

—Paolo Freire, **Pedagogy of Freedom 1998**

In the fall of 2012, I took my first administrative position at an urban middle school in central Texas. Little did I know the experiences at this school would impact my educational philosophy and professional work forever more. The school where I worked is referred to as Lady Bird Middle School for the purpose of this paper. Lady Bird Middle School was very different from the school I had worked at previously as a teacher, swim coach, and instructional specialist. At my previous school, the student body was primarily White, affluent, and, as predicted by the census patterns across race/ethnicity and socio–economic status, had a history of academic success. Teachers there were able to do what they believed was best for kids and were relied upon by administrators to make good decisions in the interest of the students.

Lady Bird was only a few miles away, but the community, as well as the approach to educational leadership, was very different indeed. Eighty four percent of the students at Lady Bird were identified as economically disadvantaged and 18.5% were English Language Learners according to the 2012 Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2013) Report Card. In the campus report card, enrollment by race/ethnicity demonstrated that Lady Bird Middle School consisted of 7.2% African American students, 82.7% Hispanic students, 8.1% White students, 0.1% American Indian students, 0.7% Asian students, 0% Pacific Islander students, and 1.2% of students who identified with two or more races.

1

Concurrently, the population of the state of Texas consisted of 12.7% African American, 51.3% Hispanic, 30% White, 0.4% American Indian, 3.6% Asian. 0.1% Pacific Islander, and 1.8% identified as being from two or more races (TEA, 2013). Working with the students of Lady Bird Middle School it was immediately clear to me that students at the school, regardless of ethnicity, were capable of very high–level scholastic work. Sure some students had hardships that may have been obstacles to their academic success, but the ability to achieve was obvious in all the students. In my experience the demographics of the students were not the most challenging part, but rather it was the impact of being designated as academically unacceptable and how the process of correcting this designation manifested itself upon the teachers and students.

Lady Bird Middle School had been designated by TEA for the past two years as an academically unacceptable school. This designation means the state has determined the school to be low performing with regard to student learning based on student performance on standardized tests in subjects such as reading and math. Such a designation also means the school must demonstrate improvement or ultimately risk closure. The first year of low performance in the state accountability system requires the campus to establish a campus intervention team made up of the professional service provider and the district coordinator for school improvement, neither employed by the low performing school, who are tasked with overseeing the process with fidelity. The intervention team acts on behalf of the Texas Accountability Intervention System, which determines campus goals and monitors progress of the campus' work. The school must also establish a campus leadership team responsible for implementing the plan on the campus. The targeted improvement plan is presented in a public hearing for approval by

the board of trustees and TEA. If the school is unsuccessful at meeting accountability the

following year, all of these same requirements remain in place, along with several

additional mandates. A school not meeting state accountability for a second year must

also engage in a reconstitution plan. If the school does not meet state accountability the

third year, the school must implement and monitor an approved reconstitution plan. A

school not meeting state accountability during a fourth or fifth year, receives increased

monitoring contact by TEA and faces additional sanctions or actions determined by the

commissioner. If the school does not meet state accountability the sixth year, the school

faces repurposing, alternative management, or even closure, per commissioner order.

The designation of the school is public information and impacts not only the

adults of the campus, but also labels the students. Anyone interested in Lady Bird

Middle School can go to the district provided school website and click on the school

report card link to find the 2011 School Accountability Rating: Academically

Unacceptable. By labeling the organization, the state also labels all who make up the

organization as academically unacceptable. Teachers and administrators who have

dedicated their lives to advancing the academic ability of their students are now identified

as academically unacceptable. The label in and of itself is a heavy weight to ask our

educators to carry, but it also amplifies scrutiny of their approach to education and

increases documentation to provide evidence of its impact. It is not impossible to

imagine teachers experience negative repercussions from this approach. How our

teachers are treated and what they feel naturally impact how students are treated and what

they feel. Gordon (2004) advanced that teachers must be empowered learners if they are

going to create empowered learners of their students stating, "if teachers are expected to

facilitate holistic student learning, then the school needs to be a place that enables continued emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development of teachers themselves" (p. 13).

This is not to say that schools should not be monitored and assessed as to their effectiveness with regard to student learning. According to Slater (2013), monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance are the foundation stones of high–quality education systems. Historically schools in the United States have generated inequitable results for students. The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* depicts the state of education in the United States as an imperative for educational reform (U.S. Department of Education). The report portrays approximately twenty–three million American adults as functionally illiterate relative to reading, writing, and comprehension although all Americans are entitled to a free and public education. School improvement must not only address shortcomings of the past, but also continue the improvement and effectiveness of our schools in a global economy for the future. But how school reform is enacted may be the difference between developing a culture consistent with generating greater student success or perpetuating the status quo.

At Lady Bird Middle School, students were placed under increased pressure to demonstrate student gains on standardized tests to remove the academically unacceptable label. Unfortunately for Lady Bird Middle School, that same year Texas was in the process of restructuring its accountability system as well as the standardized test it used to measure academic success of a school. Lady Bird had to endure the academically unacceptable ranking for two years before it would be given an opportunity to change its designation due to the new state accountability system.

Being labeled academically unacceptable in some ways became the diagnosis and our focus thus became a technical approach to address and change the diagnosis. A true understanding of the symptoms which resulted in this diagnosis as a community was foregone in the search for a prescription to amend the diagnosis, distracting our focus from the health of the institution as a whole. Lady Bird was bombarded with school improvement approaches. Teachers at Lady Bird were expected to unpack standards using protocol prior to planning lessons. Teachers were required to strictly follow district curricula and sequence administering district created Short Cycle Assessments (see Appendix A). Upon completion of assessment teachers were then responsible for analyzing data, identifying students for intervention, re–teaching as necessary, and monitoring progress of students using a prescribed data tool. Teachers had conflicting objectives of strict adherence to district scope and sequence and addressing any lack of achievement according to Short Cycle Assessments. Teachers were responsible for using English as second language strategies during lesson preparation. Positive Behavior Support strategies were implemented school wide. School administrators, as well as external campus visitors completed classroom walkthroughs. All walkthroughs and feedback were documented, and teachers were required to respond to feed back with action steps in a timely manner. Teacher teams were required to develop SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time–based) goals and identify essential learnings using Understanding by Design protocols. Teachers were required to implement new grading standards. English teachers had to monitor reading progress using Reading counts and the Lexile framework. Teachers were required to employ Marzano Vocabulary Strategies. Lady Bird Middle School also utilized Sheltered

Instruction Observation Protocol for all teachers. Six teachers were additionally asked to participate in Limited English Proficiency webinars, teacher observations, and coaching. Teachers were also required to participate in Learning Walks using a data protocol with documentation.

Teams met weekly to identify student needs using Response to Intervention monitoring and documentation. Teachers were assigned a Core Achievement Time class to analyze student progress and support student achievement. Teachers were required to meet with each student weekly to discuss goals, grades, and organization. Social Emotional Learning was introduced to staff. Math teachers were required to meet weekly with a math coach from an external educational support association. Eighth grade teachers were responsible for integrating multi–disciplinary projects using technology. Science and social studies teachers were required to follow students to the next grade level. All teachers were required to implement use of Cornell notes and an Advancement via Individual Determination binder. Thirteen teachers were asked to attend the Advancement via Individual Determination summer institute to assist in the campus wide implementation of Writing Inquiry Collaboration Organization Reading strategies.

Lady Bird Middle School also modified its bell schedule to a full block schedule consisting of four 90–minute classes on A days and four additional 90–minute classes on B days. The school implemented a standardized dress code with daily campus–wide compliance checks. Lady Bird enacted a teacher led detention program, Discipline Enhancement Network. The strategies discussed above are not an all–inclusive list for Lady Bird Middle School, but simply highlight changes listed from a 34–page Campus Improvement Plan that was enacted the year following the academically unacceptable

designation. "None of the strategies are inherently bad, but the expectation to do every strategy well was found to be very challenging, confusing, and stressful", according to one Lady Bird teacher.

An external school improvement facilitator was also assigned to the campus to oversee the improvement strategy. This person was responsible for assuring the campus had a plan to increase student success, i.e., increase test scores on standardized tests, and document and monitor progress towards school improvement goals throughout the year. Monitoring this progress involved completing highly detailed spreadsheets on individual students as well as the campus.

Certain student populations were given increased attention due to their low performance previously on the state accountability test. A large amount of time and resources were allocated to collect and analyze these data accordingly. Professionals from the district and external consultants were almost an everyday presence on the campus and in teacher classrooms. A binder was available for classroom visitors to document feedback for each teacher. Sometimes a classroom would have almost as many adults observing as it did students learning in the classroom.

Visitors to the classrooms were not the only change. Teachers were expected to follow district lesson plans, district calendars, and give benchmark assessments as dictated from the district as if there was an exact recipe to follow for student success. These benchmark assessments were administered as often as twice a week and consisted of about ten questions on average but were given in all four core subjects; math, science, social studies, and language arts. Only subjects tested by the state were subject to the district–testing schedule. In English alone, three hours of instructional time were

sacrificed by what was referred to as short cycle assessments (see Figure 2).

Additionally, two longer middle of the year assessments were conducted. The longer

formatted tests typically included 40–50 questions. Some schools would choose, or were

encouraged to choose, to mimic a state testing schedule during the longer length

assessment to simulate state testing conditions, using as much as a four–hour block of

time to give the longer formatted test. Figure 1 shows the short cycle assessment

schedule for 9th grade English. Included in the appendix is a copy of the district short

cycle assessment schedule for high schools.

TESTING WINDOW	6 WEEKS GRADING PERIOD	GRADE PERIOD TEST #	UNIT NAME	ITEM	AVERAGE TIME
ENGLISH I					
9/7-9/13	1st	TEST1	Comparing Fiction & Nonfiction	8-10	30 min
9/27-10/3	1st	TEST2	Comparing Fiction & Nonfiction	8-10	30 min
10/19-10/25	2nd	TEST1	Literary Elements & Short Stories	8-10	30 min
11/31-12/6	3rd	TEST1	Literary, and Informational Text	8-10	30 min
12/14-12/20	3rd	TEST2	Drama, Literary, and Informational Text	8-10	30 min
1/18-1/24	4th	TEST1	Poetry & Informational Text	8-10	30 min
3/21-3/27	5th	TEST1	Comprehension of Nonfiction Text	8-10	30 min
4/10-4/16	5th	TEST2	Comprehension of Nonfiction Text	8-10	30 min
5/2-5/8	6th	TEST1	Literary Themes	8-10	30 min

Figure 1. English I 6–Weeks Testing Information.

Over the course of the year students would spend close to six hours per core class

engaged in district testing. With four core subjects, approximately 24 hours of

instructional time was dedicated to benchmarking students. For such data to be useful,

the data needed to be analyzed by teachers so decisions could be made on how to address

areas with poor student performance. Addressing weak areas often involved re–teaching

the topic, or developing intervention strategies for each student.

Due to the time taken away from teaching over the course of the year and the

legislation articulated in House Bill 5, a maximum of two district benchmarks per subject

can now be imposed by a school district each year. During this process, teacher

autonomy and creativity were replaced with protocols and documentation. The teachers were expected to have certain components present in every lesson plan, such as an essential question, the state curriculum objective, a language objective, a word wall, Cornell notes, etc. Unfortunately, more emphasis was placed on having such artifacts versus knowing how to use them successfully in the name of student learning. The assumption appeared to be that having these artifacts in and of themselves automatically caused academic learning to occur. Teachers were treated more as technical conveyors of information rather than integral agents of the learning process that occurs in the classroom. Never mind understanding why something is done in the classroom, just make sure it is present in every lesson. Peter Taubman (2009) describes this trend as the utilization of practices once confined to the corporate world, such as auditing and accounting practices, that reduce complicated phenomena and experiences to quantifiable, and thus commensurable data. This mindset now structures how we think about what happens and what should happen in classrooms. Teachers were mandated to document interventions with their students who performed below expectations. Spreadsheets were completed to organize intervention strategies and address areas of poor performance. What happens when you have 120 students and 85 perform below expectations? The documentation in many ways was given more importance than the teaching that was occurring in the classroom due to the emphasis and time allocated to documenting interventions. As reported by one veteran teacher, Lady Bird teachers spent increasing amounts of time documenting interventions and less time collaborating on lesson plans. What lesson planning that did occur was formulaic and had to fit into the district scope and sequence to be acceptable. According to Bascia and Rottman (2011),

9

such approaches assume that the teachers' lack of skill is the major cause of students' inability to demonstrate academic achievement. This perspective insinuates that teachers must be directed step by step to increase student success.

Additionally, administrators were encouraged to complete and document classroom observations providing teachers with feedback. District personnel commonly used a tool referred to as the nine box that required the observer to make observations in one of nine different areas, such as student engagement. Although the tool provided a standardized design, application of the tool was not reliable. For instance, teachers were not given sufficient information or training to ensure any degree of consistency in terminology. As a result, student engagement could be defined by one observer very differently from another classroom observer. Additionally, teachers at Lady Bird middle school were then expected to respond to said feedback and make corrections to their teaching. Evaluating teachers and students became so all–encompassing that it became part of the culture. A culture of scrutiny, characterized by identifying deficits and prescribing interventions on top of interventions to move the student success dial higher, engulfed the campus. It became more important to try everything than to do anything well.

Interestingly, research focused on the supervision of teachers to improve teaching and learning supported a very different approach for school improvement. Sullivan and Glanz (2009) defined supervision as a process of engaging teachers in instructional dialogue for the purpose of improving teaching and increasing student achievement. Such supervision and dialogue are dependent upon the learner's (in this case, teacher's) involvement in constructing knowledge rather than a directive or controlling approach.

Sullivan and Glanz (2009) explain that informal or formal short visits are evaluation or monitoring practices that do not promote teacher centered improvements of instruction. Gordon (2004) remarks those teachers need to be empowered learners. "If teachers are expected to facilitate holistic student learning, then school needs to be a place that enables continued emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development of teachers themselves" (Gordon, 2004, p. 13). Consequently, the argument can be made that educational leaders need to facilitate holistic teacher learning.

At Lady Bird middle school, one could feel a loss of identity on the campus. Identity, according to the dictionary, is a condition of being oneself, and the staff at the school were effectively being told their current identity, as a teacher was insufficient. Teachers were being told how they must change rather than engaging in a dialogue about what was good for student learning. Teachers were unhappy and some sought employment elsewhere, while others changed positions or left the district, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Faculty Movement

Lady Bird	Resign	Retire	Move to Non–Teaching Job in AISD	Transfer to Other School or Location
2009–10	9.2%	2.3%	0.0%	2.3%
2010–11	15.5%	1.2%	2.4%	4.8%
2011–12	6.7%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
2012–13	14.9%	4.5%	0.0%	1.5%
2013–14	11.6%	5.8%	1.4%	2.9%
2014–15	10.4%	3.0%	3.0%	9.0%

Others retired before they had originally planned, rather than endure the new culture. The climate survey from the previous year illustrated the teachers' frustration.

Teachers were not the only ones who felt the pressure. All four assistant principals from the previous year left Lady Bird Middle School for new opportunities and at least one left the profession all together. It is not certain the assistant principals left strictly due to the environment at the school, but the occurrence, coinciding with the academically unacceptable label and its associated scrutiny and oppressive requirements, is indicative of the transitional state of the campus. The impact on the culture of the school, and perhaps more importantly the leadership of the school, was undeniably negative. Sanctioned school improvement dictated how the school was led and what would be focused on.

The following year, there was a very different climate at the school. The principal knew that the approach the previous year did not work, and a new approach would be necessary if the school was going to meet accountability requirements. Fortunately, the principal had learned from the previous year and set out to improve the school by using a different approach. He based his improvement strategies primarily on the leadership of the teachers on the campus and made a commitment to the staff to improve Lady Bird from the inside out utilizing the expertise of the personnel on the campus. The principal also took additional efforts to shield the campus and his staff from the bombardment of critique that the campus had been inundated with the previous year. He felt it more important to focus on a few improvement initiatives and do them well, rather than try to do everything and not do any very well. Lady Bird met the Texas accountability standard in 2013 and the climate of the campus also dramatically improved. I believe the improvement of the campus culture is at least partially responsible for the success of the school. The change in the culture could be attributed to many things, such as a new

administration team, less academic initiatives, clear focus, and articulation of the plan, but ultimately the campus came together as a team. When we carry a burden together, the weight feels a little lighter at times and at other times you feel like you can carry a little more because you know that you have teammates who are doing the same and we are counting on each other. Together we were able to achieve more.

Lady Bird still has pressure to perform, but the staff at Lady Bird is more cautious with regard to adopting the "flavor of the week" school improvement approach. Regrettably, this story is not uncommon in today's high stakes accountability environment and worse yet, the school and the people who make them up do not always have happy endings. Many times, the school does not improve academic achievement on the state standardized test. Many times, the schools have a revolving door of teachers leaving for employment elsewhere. Sometimes school leadership is replaced. And other times the school is closed down all together. In 2002, No Child Left Behind included school closures as a possible sanction to address schools that chronically fail to meet accountability standards. According to Engberg, Gill, Zamarrow, and Zimmer (2012), results show that students displaced by school closures can experience adverse effects on test scores and attendance.

It was my experience at Lady Bird that many of the school improvement strategies that were catapulted upon Lady Bird made it even more difficult for the teachers to do their job of teaching students and may have driven many talented teachers to seek employment at schools with less pressure and more autonomy. I think that Lady Bird was lucky to have overcome so many obstacles but could very easily fall under the same control and scrutiny if it receives a low ranking from the state again. The learned

experiences of leadership and the campus may have assisted Lady Bird this time, but what about next time? What about all the other schools in the state and the country that find themselves under state sanctions to improve?

Statement of the Problem

Around the country educational reform efforts impact schools. Although many of the reform efforts have good intentions, unintended consequences of top down reform efforts have become commonplace. Booher–Jennings (2006) asserts that No Child Left Behind, although created to address disparities in education, has resulted in certain unintended consequences such as classifying students as special education to exclude them from high stakes testing, retaining students in–grade to delay test taking, diverting attention away from subjects not evaluated on high stakes testing, teaching to the test, and cheating. These change forces have redefined the work and lives of teachers and school leaders in many intended and unintended ways (Fink, 2003). For example, No Child Left Behind placed additional pressure on schools to assure that all students learn at high levels as evidenced on state assessments. Schools that do not achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all student populations find themselves under sanctions to improve, and if not, the school may eventually face closure.

Closure of poor performing school seems on the surface to make sense, but Engberg et al. (2012) have found that closures can result in poor attendance and increased difficulty on standardized tests for transferred students. Also, the majority of schools that do face sanctions are found among populations classified at low socioeconomic levels with high percentages of ethnic minorities. These struggling schools oftentimes use external consultants to oversee implementation of the campus improvement plan.

Struggling campuses have to document interventions and progress monitoring to assure compliance with school improvement efforts. The impact of school reform efforts in these schools is of considerable interest due to their overarching reach across so many schools in the country and because many of these schools continue to struggle even after school improvement plans have been executed.

Additionally, teacher attrition rates have increased, and teachers have expressed less satisfaction with their jobs overall. Based upon a longitudinal study that began with teachers in 2007–08, 12% of the nation's teachers left the profession within the first two years of employment (Kaiser, 2011). This has been increasingly prevalent at struggling schools. Schools with a higher percentage of poorer students have a greater difficulty retaining teachers (Ingersoll, 2003). It is fair to question whether these school change initiatives have a negative impact on teachers and whether that impact ultimately produces negative consequences for students. This is not to say that schools should not be held accountable, but school improvement efforts should generate positive student outcomes.

The working conditions of teachers have been impacted greatly over the last 20 years. Louis and Smith (1991) posit that working conditions affect the degree to which teachers actively commit and engage with teaching. These same conditions affect the likelihood that teachers will work hard to create engaging and exciting environments for students in their classrooms. Working conditions provide intrinsic incentives that affect the intensity and quality of teacher work (Bascia & Rottman, 2011; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Firestone and Pennell (1993) state that "without a sense of influence over outcomes, support from others, and positive expectations about work outcomes, teaching

is experienced as an insignificant activity" (p. 498). Literature suggests that although working conditions for teachers have been explored in relative isolation from one another, there is still a need for a more well–defined comprehensive approach to address teacher working conditions (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011; King, 2004; Little, 1993; Randi & Zeichner, 2004).

To reiterate, teacher attrition rates at struggling schools are higher than at non–struggling schools. Guin (2004) affirms that schools with high teacher turnover rates are more likely to be the schools with low income and minority students. Besides the challenge to teach effectively at a school with poor teacher working conditions, poor teacher working conditions may in fact drive teachers out of the profession prematurely or cause them to seek employment at a school with better conditions for employment. Ingersoll (2007) clearly demonstrates that the quality of teaching conditions is the difference between teachers' willingness to stay at a school or to leave the school. If the school cannot keep teachers, the school will in turn have less experienced teachers and, in some cases, a lower quality of teacher. According to Goodwin (1999), the quality of a teacher has a larger impact on improving student test scores than class size, parent education, income, or language background. A study by Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005), which analyzed reading and mathematical gains in more than 200,000 students in the United States, found that teachers matter, and achievement gains were systematically related to teacher and school characteristics. According to Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005) low achieving students are often taught by the least qualified teachers because the most qualified teachers are substantially more likely to leave schools having the lowest achieving students, and because low performing schools generally have higher

teacher turnover. Therefore, it is even more important for struggling schools to provide teacher working conditions that encourage teachers to develop professionally and to stay at the schools that need the most assistance. Teachers are more likely to move on to new opportunities when they are not heard by or supported by school leadership (Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2012). The medicine the state uses to make the struggling schools better may in fact be worse than the illness and may have a variety of unintended consequences, such as higher attrition rates from the schools that need high quality teachers the most. Schools struggling with achievement tend to have higher teacher turnover than high achieving schools (Boyd, et al, 2005), and this higher turnover impedes the school's stability and consistency in articulation of, and fidelity to, school vision.

Purpose of Study

In this study I proposed to understand the relationship between top down school reform efforts and the impact these efforts have on teachers' working conditions and subsequently on students' learning. This qualitative research study was framed by critical theory. Within this inquiry paradigm, knowledge is often gained through praxis within power and emancipation, specifically between the oppressor and the oppressed. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) asserted,

> a critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class, and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. (p. 90)

17

In this case the oppressed may in fact have been the teachers, students, administration, and/or community of the school. Ultimately, the project strove to reach some form of critical consciousness liberating the oppressed to work for the betterment of the people and the school rather than arbitrarily following directives to achieve state and national accountability.

According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2000), "the discourse of possibility implicit within the constructed nature of social experience suggest to these scholars that a reconstruction of the social sciences could eventually lead to a more egalitarian and democratic social order" (p. 185). As described by Morrow and Brown (1994), this study attempted to theorize the social and systemic relations that constitute society in a struggling school to better comprehend and transform the underlying orders of social life. In an effort to accomplish this, a case study approach was used to illuminate social interactions occurring at a school that was under sanctions to improve due to poor academic performance. For this case study, academic performance was defined and indicated by state assessment results according to the Texas accountability system. Yin (2014) explained a case study investigates an existing phenomenon in its real–world context using data collection features such as triangulation to address the distinctive technical condition where a case study has more variables of interest than data points. It has been my experience that schools such as these experience significant amounts of pressure that impact teachers' ability to do their jobs effectively. Kinchloe (1991) recommended the critical theorist expose the assumptions of existing research orientations, critiquing the knowledge base, and through these critiques uncover ideological effects on teachers and the community. I believe a better understanding of

the impact of top down school reform can enlighten educational leaders including teachers, administrators, and policy makers, and encourage the use of more effective strategies in the future. As a novice administrator and researcher, I believe navigating conflicting agendas and priorities are critical antecedents to effective school reform.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2000), in an effort to reconceptualize critical theory, addressed ten important elements: (a) critical enlightenment; (b) critical emancipation; (c) rejection of economic determinism; (d) critique of instrumental or technical rationality; (e) impact of desire; (f) reconceptualized critical theory of power: hegemony; (g) reconceptualized theory of power: ideology; (h) reconceptualized theory of power: linguistics/discursive power; (i) focus on the relationship among culture, power, and domination; and (j) the role of cultural pedagogy in critical theory. Critical enlightenment articulates how critical theory analyzes competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society to identify who wins and loses in specific situations. Critical emancipation addresses those who seek emancipation in an attempt to gain power over, or control of, their own lives as well as expose the forces that prevent such emancipation. The rejection of economic determinism describes the belief by critical theorists that economic factors do not dictate the nature of all other aspects of human existence. The critique of instrumental or technical rationality describes the critical theorist claim that instrumental/technological rationality as an oppressive feature of contemporary society that is more interested with method and efficiency than purpose. The impact of desire embraces the critical theorist's appreciation of poststructuralist psychoanalysis in an effort to dig deeper into the complexity of the human psyche to facilitate understanding and emancipation. As a critical theory of power, a

conceptualization of hegemony highlights the critical theorist's need to understand the complex ways that power operates to dominate and shape consciousness. In this case, it is comprised of a focus on the oppressive aspects of power. A reconceptualized theory of power and ideology addresses the understanding that dominant ideological practices and discourses socially construct our vision of reality (Lemke, 1995). Similarly, a reconceptualized critical theory of linguistic/discursive power describes a critical theorist's attention to language and its unstable existence, which finds its meaning shifting, dependent upon the context in which it is used serving as a form of regulation and domination. Focusing on the relationship among culture, power, and domination highlights the interplay of culture on power and domination, such as the bombardment of media images from around the world distorting notions of time, community, self, and history. And the role of cultural pedagogy in critical theory addresses the educational dynamic of culture specifically referring to the ways particular cultural agents produce particular hegemonic ways of seeing.

Consistent with the methodological beliefs of critical theory, the study started with the assumptions of power and identity struggles and used these documented data to call for action and change (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Analysis of interviews with teachers and administrators at a school currently subjected to sanctions to improve may demonstrate underlying power and identity struggles infringing upon educators and impeding their ability to facilitate true school reform. Only when this is brought to light can we find a path for better, more effective practices for teachers and educational leaders alike. It was the mission of this study to recognize the power of the school community, those who know their schools best, to make decisions and establish goals in the best

interests of their community. Without such autonomy external school reform efforts will continue to fall short and continue to oppress the very people it originally intended to help. This is not to say that accountability does not have its place in facilitating equitable school reform for all students. Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) argue that increased educational equity can be leveraged through careful use of accountability measures. Unfortunately, the phenomena under study here suggest the manifestation of how policy is articulated in struggling schools may not only further impede their ability to improve but perpetuate the status quo rather than facilitate sustainable school improvement as well.

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to describe and understand how a current reform initiative at a struggling school impacted the working conditions of its teachers and the learning of its students. The study investigated the following iterative research questions in relation to one school that had been defined by the state as academically unacceptable:

1. How do mandatory school reform initiatives impact teacher working conditions?

2. How do teachers believe working conditions impact student learning?

Implication and Significance

This case study was relatively narrow with regard to generalizability, due to the naturalistic study of one specific case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Creswell (2013), there is a tradeoff between studying more than one case and diluting the findings or studying just one case and limiting the generalizability of the study. In this study, the

purpose was to understand how externally derived school improvement affected teacher

working conditions and therefore impacted student learning at the case study school.

Only after we have a clear understanding of the case study at hand and the context in

which it occurs can we explore commonalities between and across different cases (Yin,

2014). For this reason, this study focused on one case in order to generate an in–depth

base understanding in one school that can then later be used in a cross–case analysis.

With the illumination gained from this study, the school can take additional steps to

improve upon teacher working conditions and impact student success positively. Multi

case studies may ultimately give additional insight into unintended consequences of state

sanctioned school improvement but before we can hope to compare findings between and

within schools, I focused on capturing and understanding the complexity of the

phenomenon through the study of one case.

The learning gained by this study is essential to improving our accountability

system in Texas and across the country. Practitioners can take additional efforts to utilize

more effective school improvement practices and policy makers can use this information

to inform education reform policy. Many scholars have spoken to the importance of

teacher working conditions in creating a sustainable and effective public education

system in the United States, yet much of the policy at the state and national levels does

not address teacher working conditions in any formal way with regard to school

improvement. According to Mizzelle and Kaniuka (2013), teacher working conditions do

impact student achievement and school leaders must be aware of teacher needs. By

exposing the impact of current state policy on an individual school, a dialogue can begin

that could bring the topic to the forefront of what is necessary to help students, teachers,

and educational leaders. Most importantly for the school participating in the case study, if external pressures of school reform did in fact cause a negative impact on teacher working conditions, the campus may learn what additional steps could have been taken to empower the community of the school, including teachers, to create a culture of change that was developed from within the school. A culture of change that embraces all stakeholders and supports teacher working conditions promotes a common purpose and aligns resources with objectives. Teachers are a campus' most effective tool and as such, it is reasonable to assume that conditions within the school should support the operation and functionality of that tool. If the tool is neglected or misused, it will not have the same fidelity or impact.

This study was of particular significance due to the fact that teachers were less satisfied with their work environment (Andreasen, 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Tsang, 2012) and national teacher attrition rates have been on the rise (Ingersoll & May, 2011). According to Grissom, Nicholson–Crotty, and Harrington (2014), "A limited number of studies have examined the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)– or the state accountability reforms that predated NCLB–on teacher attitudes, such as anxiety, job security, and satisfaction" (p. 3). If we cannot find a way to keep teachers in the profession working with students at a high level, we will never be able to assure a viable sustainable education for all students. If current reform initiatives are a cause of declining teacher working conditions, we must identify it as such so we can make improved efforts at school change that support the teachers and the students. Existing research explores teacher surveys across large populations and makes very broad generalizations. A more focused approach such as a case study explores the impact of

external school reform at a struggling campus and gives a more comprehensive picture of its nature within and across the community it originally hoped to help.

Definition of Terms

Teacher working conditions in its most simplistic definition are the conditions that allow a teacher to work successfully towards educating his or her students. The conditions described herein are consistent with those identified by Bascia and Rottmann (2011) and included: class size and manageable work load, time available for professional work (non–teaching time), resource adequacy, collegiality and professional interactions, opportunities to learn and improve, support for professional risk taking, ability to influence school direction, and congruence between individual goals and organizational goals. While I explored the impact of school reform efforts on teacher working conditions as well as their effect on student learning, the following operational definitions are provided to ensure consistency throughout this research study.

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) – the measure by which schools, districts, and states are held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Critical theory – theory that seeks human emancipation, "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer 1982, p. 244)

Efficacy – capacity producing a desired result or effect; effectiveness

Intervention or *Response to Intervention* (RTI) – the practice of providing high–quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress

24

frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decision (Batsche et al, 2005)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2001.

Progress monitoring – documentation necessary to inform progress of new school initiatives, generally of a quantitative nature.

Sanctions – a provision of a law enacting a penalty for disobedience or a reward for obedience

Struggling school – school identified by the state to be in need of improvement.

Teacher autonomy – the degree of control and choice that the teacher is able to exercise regarding teaching curriculum, planning, and approach to the lesson (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

Texas Education Agency (TEA) – entity responsible for overseeing governance of Texas public schools according to Texas Education Code (Walsh, Kemerer, & Maniotis, 2005).

Texas Education Code (TEC) – law passed by the Texas Legislature that directly affects education in Texas (Walsh et al., 2005).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For the last 30 years policy makers have struggled to meet the demand for effective comprehensive educational reform to help all students succeed and to assure the country's competitive edge in a global market (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011). With stakes so high, school improvement initiatives have become commonplace throughout the country. Unfortunately, many of the reform efforts have had questionable and controversial outcomes with regard to improving the quality of education in U.S. public schools (Dee & Jacobs, 2011). Nichols and Berliner (2007) attest that test–based school accountability has had several unintended, negative consequences for the development of children, including shifting resources from non–tested curricula such as the fine arts, as well as a focus on a relatively narrow scope of tested material such as math and reading. Waite (2014) articulates that technical fixes are not likely to address what currently ails our schools. While policy makers argue about what approach has been least effective, teachers and students hang in the balance.

In an effort to meet growing demand for improvement, educational reform initiatives have generated standards, such as the Common Core State Standards Initiative and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, to guarantee a viable curriculum that should be learned in all classrooms. Educator quality has been addressed by encouraging merit–based pay. Schools are being held to strict guidelines to meet an ever–inflating accountability system. And in that time, many different approaches have fallen short of the mark. The United States continues to be well behind other successful countries with regard to testing. Perhaps the most well–known comparison is the Program for

26

International Student Assessment, also referred to as PISA. PISA measures performance

of 15–year–old students across the world every three years. In the 2012 survey (see

Figure 2), 9% of U.S. students scored proficient at a level 5 or above in math, compared

to 55% of Chinese students. On average, 13% of students in other participating countries

scored at this level. The U.S. percentage in math was lower than 27 other educational

systems, higher than 22 educational systems, and not measurably different from 13

Table R2. Average scores of 15-year-old students on PISA reading literacy scale, by education system: 2012

Education system	Average score		s.e.	Education system	Average score		s.e.
OECD average	496		0.5				
Shanghai-China	570	▲	2.9	Iceland	483	▼	1.8
Hong Kong-China	545	▲	2.8	Slovenia	481	▼	1.2
Singapore	542	▲	1.4	Lithuania	477	▼	2.5
Japan	538	▲	3.7	Greece	477	▼	3.3
Korea, Republic of	536	▲	3.9	Turkey	475	▼	4.2
Finland	524	▲	2.4	Russian Federation	475	▼	3.0
Ireland	523	▲	2.6	Slovak Republic	463	▼	4.2
Canada	523	▲	1.9	Cyprus	449	▼	1.2
Chinese Taipei	523	▲	3.0	Serbia, Republic of	446	▼	3.4
Poland	518	▲	3.1	United Arab Emirates	442	▼	2.5
Estonia	516	▲	2.0	Chile	441	▼	2.9
Liechtenstein	516	▲	4.1	Thailand	441	▼	3.1
New Zealand	512	▲	2.4	Costa Rica	441	▼	3.5
Australia	512	▲	1.6	Romania	438	▼	4.0
Netherlands	511	▲	3.5	Bulgaria	436	▼	6.0
Switzerland	509	▲	2.6	Mexico	424	▼	1.5
Macao-China	509	▲	0.9	Montenegro, Republic of	422	▼	1.2
Belgium	509	▲	2.3	Uruguay	411	▼	3.2
Vietnam	508		4.4	Brazil	410	▼	2.1
Germany	508	▲	2.8	Tunisia	404	▼	4.5
France	505		2.8	Colombia	403	▼	3.4
Norway	504		3.2	Jordan	399	▼	3.6
United Kingdom	499		3.5	Malaysia	398	▼	3.3
United States	**498**		**3.7**	Indonesia	396	▼	4.2
Denmark	496		2.6	Argentina	396	▼	3.7
Czech Republic	493		2.9	Albania	394	▼	3.2
Italy	490		2.0	Kazakhstan	393	▼	2.7
Austria	490		2.8	Qatar	388	▼	0.8
Latvia	489	▼	2.4	Peru	384	▼	4.3
Hungary	488		3.2				
Spain	488	▼	1.9				
Luxembourg	488	▼	1.5	**U.S. state education**			
Portugal	488		3.8	**systems**			
Israel	486		5.0	Massachusetts	527	▲	6.1
Croatia	485	▼	3.3	Connecticut	521	▲	6.5
Sweden	483	▼	3.0	Florida	492		6.1

▲ Average score is higher than U.S. average score.
▼ Average score is lower than U.S. average score.
NOTE: Education systems are ordered by 2012 average score. The OECD average is the average of the national averages of the OECD member countries, with each country weighted equally. Scores are reported on a scale from 0 to 1,000. All average scores reported as higher or lower than the U.S. average score are different at the05 level of statistical significance. Standard error is noted by *s.e.* Italics indicate non-OECD countries and education systems. Results for Connecticut, Florida, and Massachusetts are for public school students only. This table corresponds to table 3 in Performance of U.S. 15-Year-Old Students in Mathematics, Science, and Reading Literacy in an International Context (NCES 2014-024).
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2012.

Figure 2. Average Scores of 15–Year Old Students. (Kelly et al., 2013)

Educational systems (Kelly et al., 2013). The average score for U.S. science students was 497, lower than 22 educational systems around the world. In reading literacy, the US averaged 498, lower than 19 educational systems (Kelly et al., 2013).

According to PISA, U.S. average scores in math, science, and reading literacy are not measurably different from previous PISA assessment results in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009. Almost all efforts to close educational gaps between racial/ethnic and economic populations have yielded little to no gains. Dee and Jacobs (2011) did find broad gains in math achievement in 4th grade, and to a lesser extent in 8th grade, but found no consistent evidence of influence on reading achievement. PISA results from 2000 to 2012 demonstrate no measurable gain in science, math, or reading literacy. Dee and Jacobs (2011) additionally report the reforms' limited contributions to reducing the achievement gaps between students. The question begs to be answered, what does effective educational reform look like for U.S. public schools? And why have a number of previous reform efforts failed?

One particular area of reform that has been talked about, but rarely addressed in a comprehensive approach, is teacher working conditions. Teaching conditions are those that allow a teacher to work successfully toward the goal of student learning. In this proposal, consideration and improvement of teacher working conditions was used as the criteria for future school reform efforts. Through a review of current educational literature working conditions for teachers were explored and studied with an emphasis on: how teacher work conditions have been utilized (or considered) in educational reform, and what recommendations the literature offers to improve current work

conditions. First, however, it is important to discuss critical theory, the lens that framed the research conducted in this study.

Theoretical Framework—Critical Pedagogy

Critical theory in general is a theoretical framework that in its core analyzes a phenomenon that is essentially broken. It presumes the power dynamic that surrounds the issue flows from top down. This approach makes sense discussing the improvement of struggling schools by imposing sanctions upon these schools without undeniable proof that the sanctions for improvement are effective. Also, as briefly discussed previously, this improvement model may actually make the job of educating students more difficult for teachers.

According to St. Pierre (2006), critical theory was developed in order to work for social justice that might right the failures of an exhausted liberalism with its false promises of equality and a science that ignored the voices of the disenfranchised. Teacher working conditions at schools that experience sanctions due to poor performance may be severely impacted depending on how leadership imposes the school reform effort on the campus. Under NCLB, teachers must teach to the test whether they believe that it is in the best interest of the students or not; teachers have less control over their curriculum; and the schools, students, and teachers are easily designated as failures if they do not meet AYP (St. Pierre, 2006). In essence, the conditions in which the work of teaching is performed are largely out of the control of the people held responsible for educating the students, the teachers. This marginalization, led by people external to the school, depicts a phenomenon which critical theory may help us understand.

In the case under study, we evaluated how empowering the people most directly impacted by the school reform effort, the teachers, administrators, and the students of the school, affects outcomes. The system of educational reform is obviously in need of attention when across the country struggling schools continue to labor year after year, even when traditional school reform efforts have been tried. A positivistic approach has been used, but St. Pierre (2002) argues that qualitative methodology, such as critical theory, may be particularly useful because it is grounded in face–to–face interactions with particular people and not a random sample. It is important to talk with and observe people in order to find out what they think about their lives (St. Pierre, 2002).

According to Carspecken (1996) critical qualitative research is a type of inquiry into the non–quantifiable features of social life concerned about social inequalities, working toward positive social change. The aim of this study was consistent with this description in that it intended to highlight inequalities that participants experience in an effort to formulate better, and more just approaches of school reform for the future. Many times, the schools under sanctions have undergone school reform efforts for several years. The sanctions placed upon these schools are not improving student success. In fact, it could be argued that they are actually perpetuating the status quo. What makes a study critical is that the goal is not to just understand and describe a phenomenon, but rather to critique and change the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) define a

Criticalist as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: a) that

all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constituted; b) that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; c) that the relationship between concept and object and signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; d) that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); e) that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression which characterizes contemporary societies is more forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as neutral, necessary or inevitable; f) that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others often eludes the interconnections among them; and finally g) that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression. (pp. 139–140)

Although verbose in nature, essentially the critical theorist accepts: (a) that power relations are fundamental in society, (b) facts cannot be isolated from the context within which they are derived, (c) the state of oppressed and oppressor is ever changing and is reinforced by capitalistic culture, (d) language impacts how we perceive reality, how certain groups in society are marginalized and often this marginalization continues unless marginalized group is conscious and active, (e) oppression is complex and can't be studied in isolation, and (f) mainstream practices often times perpetuate the status quo. For teacher working conditions to be understood more completely they need to be

considered within the context of study. In this case, I studied a school that was under

sanctions to improve, in order to formulate a better understanding of how such sanctions

impact teacher working conditions. If this phenomenon is not brought to light, then it

may very well continue to happen and the cycle of oppression will continue as well. A

critical framework was utilized to study the oppressive nature of school reform through

sanctions and to understand how to break the cycle of marginalizing the very people who

are responsible for impacting student learning . . . the teachers. This is not to say that all

school reform is oppressive. Without critical reflection of the past and present, the state

of schools would remain stagnant. School improvement needs to address performance

gaps and continue to improve our educational system for the future.

Interestingly, sanctions are placed upon a school in an effort to improve academic

success and performance of the students but may in fact handcuff teachers perpetuating

the continuation of the same performance. It may be argued that schools that are not

under such sanctions to improve are given the flexibility and autonomy to meet their

students' needs and in turn positively impact student performance where the opposite is

true if your school is considered academically unacceptable. Pearson and Moomaw

(2005) state that teachers need autonomy to be able to address the needs of their students.

Giving teachers the freedom to make choices about what and how they teach has been

argued to be a key component in solving the problems of today's schools (Pearson &

Moomaw, 2005; Short, 1994). Generally speaking, struggling schools more often than

not have higher percentages of minorities and economically disadvantaged students.

Ogbu (1983) notes a growing concern about disproportionate school failures for some

minority groups, despite efforts to improve their schools' successes. Due to the

requirements of NCLB that all demographic groups make AYP, several studies have concluded that schools with more diverse student bodies are far more likely to fail than schools lacking in diversity (Kane & Staiger, 2002; Novak & Fuller, 2003). Jennings and Rentner (2006) assert that a greater number of urban schools are identified as needing improvement than suburban and rural schools. Stein (2012) confirms that barely 1% of low–performing schools manage to dramatically improve their academic performance during the first five years after designation as low performing, and less than 10% accomplish marginal gains. Minority populations and economically disadvantaged people have faced a history of marginalization and oppression that continues in our public–school system today. A critical analysis of these struggling schools' improvement strategies is necessary to gain understanding of what is and what is not working.

Consistent with the views of critical theory is the belief that schools should operate in a democratic fashion utilizing a critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, as a political and moral practice, should make clear the dynamic nature and complexity of history as a narrative. This empowers students and educators to actively participate as part of the critical dialogue rather than accept conditions unquestioningly (Giroux, 2013). As with critical theory in general, an aim of critical pedagogy is to provide people with the knowledge of the debate and develop the agency to participate in a democratic process. Giroux (2013) argues

> education as moral and political project means, in part making a commitment to the future, and it remains the task of educators to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world – a world in which the discourse of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality

function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which

life is lived. (p. 126)

According to Aronowitz (1998) the aim of critical pedagogy is not political

indoctrination, but to allow education "to encourage human agency, not mold it in the

manner of Pygmalion" (p.10–11). This unfinished nature of people and society, as well

as the agency to impact each, is a crucial competency in molding a better more

sustainable future. It can be postulated that if teachers are not given such autonomy to

interact with their students, it is less likely that our future workforce and citizens will

have the critical ability to participate in the governance of America. Giroux (2013)

states,

> Connecting education to the possibility of a better world means the difference
>
> between teachers being technicians and teachers being self–reflective educators
>
> who are more than the instruments of a safely approved curriculum and officially
>
> sanctioned worldview. (p. 127)

Teacher authority rests on the pedagogical practice that rejects the notion that the role of

the student is a passive recipient of knowledge. Instead, it embraces the view that the

student critically engages in diverse ideas, acting on them and transforming them

(Mohanty, 1990).

Critical pedagogy provides a meaningful lens through which school improvement

can be a successful school reform approach. Bernhardt (2013) explains that schooling

focused primarily on student deficits and test scores can neither be innovative nor create a

future that looks different than the status quo. Critical pedagogy argues for modes of

education that foster teacher autonomy in the classroom and nurture the capacity for

students to read widely, learning from the best that humanity has produced, and develop the skills necessary to both critique existing social forms and institution, and transform them whenever necessary (Giroux, 2013). This is all for naught if the teacher does not recognize and value the students that they are responsible for teaching and learning with. Gordon (2004) remarked teachers also must be empowered learners, noting that "If teachers are expected to facilitate holistic student learning, then school needs to be a place that enables continued emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development of the teachers themselves" (p. 13). Educators must first address underlying beliefs of teachers and educational leaders to significantly improve learning for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Guerra and Nelson posited, "Individuals with an additive view see diversity as a rich resource that can be tapped to bridge cultural differences and maximize learning for all students" (p.355).

Critical pedagogy argues against an authoritative test–driven approach and for a student–centered approach that recognizes the value of teacher and student alike and empowers each to grow and learn. Giroux (2013) argues "critical pedagogy insists that knowledge is crucial to democratic citizenship because it provides young people with the tools to act responsibly in the service of civic courage" (p. 124). Rather than drill academic content without context, critical pedagogical practices aim to unlock value and agency in the student and use academic learnings as a tool to support such agency. A teacher must have the working conditions and expertise to make such an effort a possibility. Giroux (2013) states "Such authority provides the space and experience in which pedagogy goes beyond providing the conditions for simple acts of knowing and

understanding and includes the very power of self–definition and critical agency" (pp. 127–128).

These are the same qualities that the critical theorist hopes to evoke through their research. Such analysis may bring to the surface factors of school reform that may impede or improve the degree of success for school improvement efforts. Through a critical lens, I hoped to enlighten and reinvigorate the democratic process of teaching and learning, as well as address how such efforts are fostered.

School Reform

National Policy & Teacher Working Conditions

To understand the school reform efforts for struggling schools and their broad implications, an understanding of current policy at both the state and national levels is necessary. At the national level, the congressionally enacted legislation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2001. In the legislation, the first section describes Title I efforts to improve academic achievement of the disadvantaged. The purpose of Title I is described as "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high–quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (Sec. 1001). This may be achieved by twelve means: (1) high quality academic assessments that measure performance toward common state standards assuring common expectations for student academic achievement; (2) meeting educational needs of students in need of reading assistance; (3) closing the achievement gap between low and high performing children; (4) holding schools, local educational agencies, and states accountable for improving the academic achievement by identifying

and turning around low performing schools while offering alternatives to students in such schools so that they may have a high quality education; (5) targeting and distributing resources to schools in the greatest need; (6) improving and strengthening accountability by using state assessment system; (7) providing greater decision making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance; (8) providing children with enriched and accelerated educational program including services that increase amount and quality of instruction time; (9) promoting school wide reform with scientifically based strategies; (10) elevating quality of instruction by providing opportunities for professional development; (11) coordinating services under all parts of the title to the extent feasible with other services provided by other agencies for youth, children, and family, and (12) affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children (Sec. 1001).

At the core of the legislation there is an obvious effort to improve education with an emphasis on disadvantaged students. This improvement is designed to occur through annual measures of progress emphasizing accountability for high levels of student achievement on state derived standards and assessments. Besides state assessments, a sample of students would also be required to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for reading and math to provide a point for state comparison. According to the policy, states are required to bring all students to a level of proficient by the 2013–14 school year (Sec. 1001). Individual schools are required to meet state adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward this goal both for student populations as a whole and for certain demographic sub populations. Schools receiving federal funding under Title I receive technical assistance if the school fails to meet AYP goals

for two consecutive years. In this event, the students would be offered a choice of other public schools to attend. For students at a Title I school that fails to meet AYP objectives for three consecutive years, students will be offered additional educational services including private tutoring. According to the statute, schools that continue to fail to meet progress are subject to outside corrective measures, possibly including changes in governance.

Beginning in 2002 states had to provide an annual report card demonstrating academic performance of school districts disaggregated by subgroups, such as economically disadvantaged and English language learner (ELL). The U.S. Department of Education defines an English Language Learner as a national–origin–minority student who is limited–English–proficient. School districts must provide a similar report card depicting academic performance of each school. In addition, according to the legislation, as of 2005–06, all core subjects must be taught by teachers considered to be highly qualified in their subject areas (Jennings & Rentner, 2006).

The idea behind the legislation was that increased monitoring, sanctions, and accountability would lead educators to be more purposeful about the performance of students and the lever for this monitoring became state level accountability tests (Sergiovanni, Starratt, & Cho, 2014). Sergiovanni et al. (2014) posit that this places a burden of blame upon the educators for poor performance on test. Poor test results can lead to termination of staff and/or school closings. Poor performance of a school impacts the perception of a district. Suddenly the emphasis for all public educators becomes test scores due to the nature of the accountability system. How the classroom is looked at and what constitutes good teaching then become attached to an emphasis on impact to

positive test performance. In this day and time, the pendulum swings back in an effort to meet the criteria set by policy. In their analysis of the effects of NCLB, Jennings and Rentner (2006) found that although there have been gains in achievement on state tests, the degree to which students are gaining remains unclear. For example, their analysis asserts that although schools spend more time learning math and reading, it often comes at the expense of other subjects that aren't tested. In fact, 71% of districts they studied reduced time spent on other subjects in elementary schools and 97% of high poverty districts required a specific amount of reading time in elementary school, compared to about 55% in more affluent districts (Jennings & Rentner, 2006).

Since the introduction of the legislation, NCLB has been a source of controversy and debate regarding the feasibility and the fairness of its goals. In many ways the climate now is a considerable departure from the ideology in which public schools originated. Sergiovanni et al. (2014) explain that the idea of learning objectives and standards are not new, but their place in accountability has greatly impacted the environment in which teachers and their supervisors now find themselves.

The Obama administration offered relief from the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) for efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability, and ensure that students were on track to graduate and graduate college– and career–ready. This relief came about by the Obama administration's Race To The Top (RTTT) competitive grant program. Since NCLB enactment, many schools have struggled with school funding to meet all the criteria of the legislation (Jennings & Rentner, 2006). RTTT offers competitive grants and waivers from NCLB for innovative

data driven processes for school improvement, such as teacher evaluations that include student growth as part of the criterion of evaluation.

One thing that national policy does not address is the demand for schools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students and families. The policy was enacted in large degree to address historically marginalized populations with regard to education, yet the only measure of success is performance on a test. Therefore, the majority of improvement efforts focus on test performance. According to Sergiovanni et al. (2014), to meet the needs of our students, leaders must be called upon to provide a linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum. Sergiovanni et al. (2014) state,

> One may be aware of the students' cultural heritage but that is no guarantee that the teacher can or will include that knowledge in specific pedagogical strategies that improve that student's grasp of curriculum units framed in cultural assumptions foreign to his or her own cultural heritage. (pp. 10–11)

In accordance with how policy is written, it fails to place proper emphasis on meeting student needs where they are, and contrarily places it on testing outputs that misdirect educational leaders. Sergiovanni et al. lead us to believe that we meet students' needs through linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy, yet a test that has no connection to either is used to measure success. Rather than develop school improvement strategies to support linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy, schools focus on what they are measured by. This is further supported through the additional attention and time devoted to tested curricula versus non–tested curricula (Jennings & Rentner, 2006). The current policy asks for homogeneous performance by

all students on the test, as well as uniform curriculum and assessments, when the country has a growing proportion of diverse students including ELLs, and economically disadvantaged families. The needs of students and demands of policy place educators at a crossroads that may impact both students and educators negatively. This questions whether our current accountability systems use the best measures to promote desirable school improvements. With conflicting agendas of accountability and meeting the needs of students, educational leaders must be able to negotiate goals that are often in conflict with each other. Sergiovanni et al. (2014) stipulate that educational leaders need substantial professional development to support the development of teachers' capacities to meet the policy demands of the accountability system.

The No Child Left Behind policy is designed to systematize and align learning for all students. The policy targets student outcomes described by articulated standards and measured by standardized tests and imposes consequences for poor performance. The idea is that consequences should give schools incentives to find ways to improve (Manna, 2011). Grissom et al. (2014), explain that change is difficult. Further, inducing enough change in the instructional environment to impact student learning is likely to affect teachers with both intended and unintended consequences. Instead, stronger accountability is likely to generate performance pressure for teachers and is arguably an intended consequence of the policy. Although Grissom et al. (2014) state that if pressure is too great, unintended consequences such as increased teacher stress, and feelings of burnout may result, particularly if teachers feel the test scores are an inadequate measure or the goals are unattainable. Additionally, accountability may lead schools and/or teachers to focus on some material while ignoring other material, or some students'

performance rather than others, causing internal conflict and frustration on the part of the educator (Grissom et al., 2014). Stresses such as these, in addition to those that may accompany working at a school labeled (or soon to be labeled) as *failing* or *unacceptable* or facing sanctions can be demoralizing for teachers (Santoro, 2011). Monitoring schools for effectiveness is a necessary part of school improvement, but how student success is measured and articulated impacts the manifestation of such improvement efforts in the school itself. For example, a school that is designated academically unacceptable due to poor test performance may implement increased time on test taking strategies, and less time on non–tested curricula such as electives. While this focus may improve test scores, it fails to support pedagogies that are both linguistically and culturally responsive, as Sergiovanni et al. encourage. This may cause additional stress for educators when improvement strategies and/ or measures are not consistent with education philosophy.

A limited number of studies have examined the impact of NCLB on teacher attitudes, job security, and satisfaction (Grissom et al., 2014). Grissom et al. (2014) state the results of such studies have been mixed, but generally suggest a negative relationship between accountability and teacher feelings about their work. Haladyna, Haas, and Allison (1998) found that accountability policy creates tension and anxiety in teachers' feelings about their work. Haladyna et al (1998) report achievement tests were first administered and documented from 1840 to 1875, when educators changed focus from educating the elite to educating the masses. The earliest of tests were intended for individual analysis, but test results were inappropriately used to compare students and schools without regard to non–school influences (Cremin, 1964). Mulvenson, Stegman, and Ritter (2005) found that teachers mandated to use standardized tests had higher levels

of anxiety than those who were not, and the level of anxiety correlated with a negative impact with student performance. Reback, Rockoff, and Schwartz (2011) found schools that performed close to the state's performance threshold had lower levels of job security. These schools were consequently also in the greatest danger of not making adequate yearly progress according to NCLB guidelines. Reback et al. (2011) also found that teachers who taught subjects tested by the accountability system, at schools close to the performance threshold, worked longer hours than similar teachers at schools not impacted by accountability pressures. Byrd–Blake et al. (2010) posit teachers report retrospectively that their morale has declined since the inception of NCLB and a test–driven instructional culture.

Some researchers have found a positive impact on teachers' work environment for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A recent study by Grissom et al. (2014) demonstrated positive trends in many work environment measures, such as job satisfaction and commitment since the inception of NCLB. Grissom et al. (2014) state that research provides evidence that the law has negatively affected perceptions of teacher cooperation, but positively affected feelings of classroom control and administrator support. Academically, NCLB has had a small but positive effect on student achievement, particularly in math (Dee & Jacob, 2011). According to Murnane and Papay (2010), teachers report that NCLB has benefitted schools by providing them with clearer expectations, as well as highlighting the needs of disadvantaged students. Hamilton et al. (2007) found that teachers felt increased autonomy and believed their schools had generally changed for the better. Dee, Jacob, and Schwartz (2013) demonstrated that NCLB, according to teacher perceptions, had a positive impact on student engagement.

Byrd–Blake et al. (2010) found positive changes in the instructional climate including student engagement and student involvement although teachers had felt a decline in teacher morale.

Texas School Policy

National policy has had a ripple effect on state education agencies. Many states find themselves scrambling to adopt policy that supports the national movement. Texas, on the other hand, is the state that No Child Left Behind was derived from, but schools in Texas are feeling the same pressure of the high stakes accountability system.

In the state of Texas there are more than 8,000 public schools. Every year each of those schools will get one of two ratings, met standard or improvement required. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) looks at four areas to determine a school district's accountability rating: student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, and post–secondary readiness (see Figure 3). Student achievement is based upon State of Texas Assessment Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores for the year. Tested subjects include: reading and math in Grades 3–8, writing in Grades 4 and 7, science in Grades 5 and 8, social studies in Grade 8, as well as end of course Exams (EOC) for English I, English II, Algebra I, biology, and U.S. history, which are necessary for high school graduation.
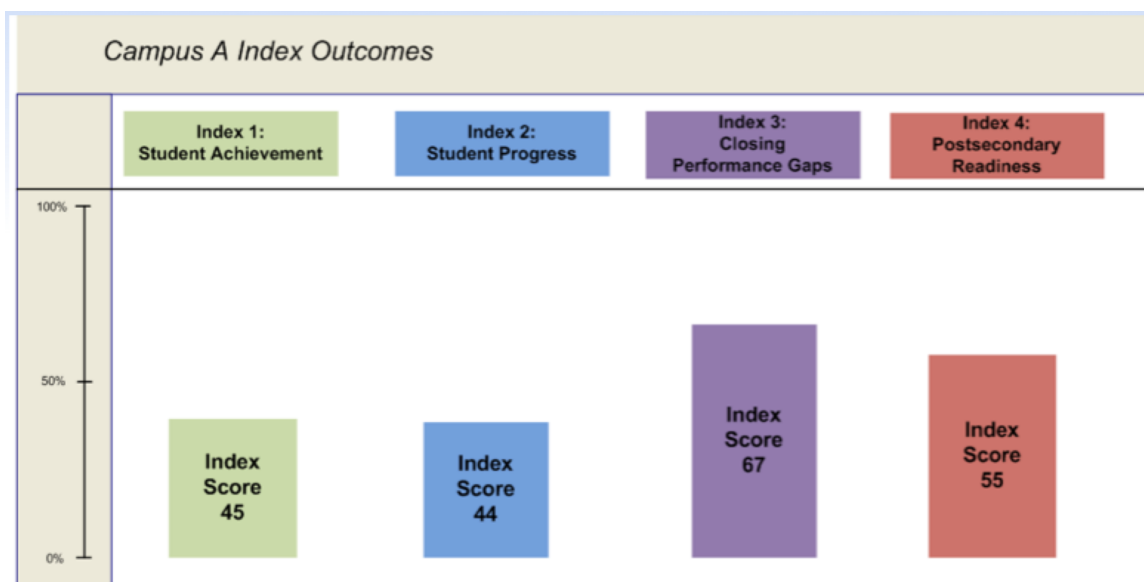
Figure 3. Campus *A* Index Outcomes.

Student Progress is a comparative measure in subjects like math and reading from one year to the next, comparing a student's progress in a subject, year over year (see Figure 4). Student progress is measured by group, such as all students, ELLs, students with disabilities, African American students, American Indian students, Asian students, Hispanic students, Pacific Islander students, White students, and students of two or more races. The student progress index for the school is calculated by adding together the percentage of students making progress of each of the different groups measured and dividing by the total percentage available for all groups.

Index 2: Student Progress

Index 2 Construction

Indicator	All	African Amer.	Amer. Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Two or More	ELL	Special Ed.	Total Points	Max. Points
STAAR Reading % Met Growth Standard	49%	36%		60%	43%		58%	40%	35%	56%	377	800
STAAR Mathematics % Met Growth Standard	45%	31%		65%	48%		52%	45%	30%	50%	366	800
STAAR Writing % Met Growth Standard	36%				30%		40%		28%		134	400
STAAR Science % Met Growth Standard	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
STAAR Social Studies % Met Growth Standard	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total											877	2000
Index Score (total points divided by maximum points)												44

* Science and Social Studies will be evaluated if growth measures are developed for these subjects.

Figure 4. Index 2: Student Progress.

Closing performance gaps looks specifically at the testing performance of low performing sub–groups such as economically disadvantaged and the two lowest performing racial/ethnic groups based on STAAR performance from the previous year. Postsecondary readiness uses graduation rates and diploma plans as well as STAAR performance to evaluate performance (see Figure 5).

Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness

Index 4 Construction

Indicator	All	African Amer.	Amer. Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Two or More	ELL	Special Ed.	Total Points	Max. Points
4-year graduation rate	84.3%	78.8%			78.8%		91.6%	86.0%	44.2%	69.8%	~~533.5~~	~~700~~
5-year graduation rate	85.1%	78.8%			80.0%		92.1%	84.0%	48.9%	77.5%	546.4	700
RHSP/AHSP	82.7%	76.4%			83.6%		83.0%				325.7	400
Graduation Total											872.1	1100
Graduation Score (graduation total points divided by maximum points)											79	
2014 and beyond: STAAR All Subjects* % Met Level III	29%	16%		40%	23%		38%	36%			182	600
STAAR Score (STAAR total points divided by maximum points)											30	
Index Score (average of Graduation Score and STAAR Score: 79 + 30 / 2 = 55)											55	

Figure 5. Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness.

All four indices directly or indirectly use standardized test performance to determine the rating of the school. The STAAR test in Texas is composed primarily of multiple–choice questions in the four core academic areas, Math, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. To graduate from high school in the state of Texas a student must pass the biology EOC assessment, Algebra I EOC, English I EOC, English II EOC, and U.S. history EOC, according to House Bill 5 passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature and signed by the governor.

Schools receiving the met standard rating may qualify for special distinctions such as: academic achievement in specific areas such as reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies; top 25%: student progress; top 25%: closing

performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness. If a school does not make the standard in one of the four indices, the school will be ineligible for such distinctions.

As of 2013 schools which do not meet accountability standards according to state requirements are classified as improvement required. By name alone, it is agreed that this designation is a vast improvement on the recently retired designation of academically unacceptable, a term that was very derogatory and implied that the school, the educators, and the students were academically unacceptable. Although the name has changed, many of the same mandated improvements or sanctions remain the same. Schools with an improvement required designation are required to participate in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process consisting of the following actions: (a) conducting a thorough data analysis to identify trends and patterns that point to problem areas, (b) conducting a needs assessment to identify root causes of the problems identified in through the data analysis, (c) engaging in an improvement planning process to develop an improvement plan that targets the areas that contributed to areas of low performance for the campus, and (d) implementing and monitoring the targeted improvement plan and making ongoing adjustments as needed (Texas Education Agency). According to Texas Education Code (TEC) §39 schools must participate in the TAIS improvement process if the school received a rating of IR due to failing to meet the target on one or more of the performance indexes or failed to meet the target for one more system safeguards.

Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §97.1063 and TEC §39.106 stipulate that a campus intervention team shall be assigned to a campus when it is rated IR. The campus intervention team will be composed of a professional service provider

(PSP), and a district coordinator of school improvement. The PSPs are experienced

educators (former principals, superintendents, and district administrators) who provide

technical assistance to campuses with required interventions in the Texas Accountability

Intervention System (TAIS). According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2014),

the PSP provides assistance and oversight in building the capacity of campus/district

leaders, teachers, and staff to understand the TAIS continuous improvement process and

to identify and address gaps in the following critical success factors (CSFs): academic

performance, family and community engagement, teacher quality, use of quality data to

drive instruction, school climate, leadership effectiveness, and increased learning time.

The PSPs also assist in submitting all campus documentation to the Texas Center for

District and School Support (TCDSS) and TEA through the Intervention and Stage

Activity Monitor (ISAM). District coordinators of school improvement are district–level

leaders designated by a local education agency (LEA) to ensure district support for the

academic achievement at low–performing campuses and implementation of all

intervention requirements and to serve as a key member of the district leadership team

(DLT), which is responsible for overseeing district–level accountability and/or

performance–based monitoring interventions. The district coordinator of school

improvement may also assist in the replacement of ineffective staff and the recruitment

and retention of effective staff. Both of these positions are external to the campus and

function to support the campus to increase student performance and meet accountability

goals as directed by Texas Administrative Code (TAC).

Targeted improvement plans created by the campus improvement team must be presented in a public hearing and receive approval by the board of trustees. Plans must also be submitted to Texas Education Agency (TEA) for approval.

Schools identified as improvement required will need to designate a campus leadership team (CLT) to conduct and monitor activities of the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) process. The CLT will be responsible for monitoring the targeted improvement plan, monitoring student performance, and determining needed student interventions and support services. The CLT will consist of the campus principal, other campus leaders, content area department chairs, counseling department, content area coaches, a bilingual and/or English as a second language representative, a special education representative, and a career and technology education (CTE) representative. Quarterly progress reports will be submitted via an Intervention, Stage, and Activity Monitor (ISAM), Professional Service Provider reports, and Targeted Improvement Plan reports. Measurable goals by quantifiable data are necessary to determine progress toward obtaining such goals.

Schools that fail to meet accountability for multiple consecutive years will have additional layers of monitoring and support. In the second consecutive year of being designated as an improvement required campus, the school will be required to engage in reconstitution planning. Reconstitution is the removal or reassignment of some or all campus administrative or instructional personnel (19 TAC§97.1051). According to TEC§39.107(a)–(d), the campus leadership team will create and submit for approval an updated targeted improvement plan. The updated plan will then need approval by the

commissioner. The reconstitution plan will go into place after two years designation as an improvement required campus. Texas Education Code also states,

> A principal who has been employed by the campus in that capacity during the full period described by Subsection (a) may not be retained at that campus unless the campus intervention team determines that retention of the principal would be more beneficial to the student achievement and campus stability than removal. (TEC§39.107(a)–(d))

A teacher of a subject assessed by an assessment instrument under Section 39.023 may be retained only if; the campus intervention team determines that a pattern of significant academic improvement by students taught by the teacher exists. If an educator is not retained, the educator may be assigned to another position in the district. In addition to the reconstitution plan, the commissioner may appoint a monitor, conservator, management team, or board of managers to the district to ensure and oversee district–level support to low–performing campuses and the implementation of the updated targeted improvement plan.

If after implementing the reconstitution plan the campus is still rated improvement required for the fourth and fifth consecutive years, the campus will be required to increase monitoring contact with TEA, representatives may be required to attend a hearing before the commissioner and may face additional sanctions and actions as determined by the commissioner. Schools that are rated improvement required for a sixth consecutive year will face repurposing, alternative management, or closure, per commissioner order.

Impact of Standards and Accountability

According to Taubman (2009), in the last ten years the climate of education has become one that has been reduced to numbers; numbers on test scores, numbers of dollars attached to merit pay or to be made from profit hungry corporations, or the number of outcomes met. CEOs and politicians have determined how and what we teach as well as targeting prescribed performance outcomes. In *Teaching Numbers*, Taubman draws similarities to the nation's movement to embrace outcomes that can be generated, directed, and simplified to numbers. Taubman compares this transformation in education to a similar phenomenon that occurred with the simplification of art to 'paint by number.' What was originally understood to be complex and abstract had been simplified to following a prescribed sequence to generate a consistent outcome for anyone who follow the steps. Although this systematic approach has measurable outcomes that can be accomplished, it over simplifies the process and fails to generate the quality and variety of outcomes that are possible by true artistic endeavors. Taubman (2009) states, "these numbers give the impression that what happens in classrooms–extraordinarily complex, psychically tumultuous and potentially both ecstatic and maddening places of teaching–is best understood as objective, transparent, and measurable" (p. 2). For education, this transformation has occurred under the national movement referred to as standards and accountability. "Driving this transformation is the desire for money, but that desire has disguised its mercenary intent in the purported altruism of standards and accountability" (Taubman, 2009, p. 2).

Other movements may have preempted the current state of our educational system such as *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* described by Raymond Callahan occurring

in the first quarter of the twentieth century, from 1910 to 1930, and more recently the massive infusion of math and science education in the early 1960s. Taubman states the current transformation is different and much more dangerous.

> Its uniqueness lies in its pervasiveness, its threat to the very foundations of public education, its wide embrace by the educational establishment, its direct assault on the intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical life of teachers, and its radical misunderstanding of teaching. (Taubman, 2009, p. 3)

Taubman identifies the use of many terms and concepts that once found their origin confined to the corporate world such as; performance outcomes, best practices, data driven, metacognitive strategies, learning environments, and evidence–based research. According to Taubman, practices that were utilized in auditing and accounting, now used in education, reduce complicated phenomena and experiences to quantifiable and thus commensurable data, and structure how we think about what happens and what should happen in classrooms (2009). Discussions on campuses slowly became less organically derived, evolving into discussions about how to comply with directives and how to ensure standardization across the school.

Over time, the nation's view of education and educators has changed. This phenomenon may have reached a critical mass with the 1983 publication of A *Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (U.S. Department of Education). The publication was part of President Ronald Reagan's national commission on excellence in education. The commission was brought together by the then Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell. As the title suggests the publication found that our educational system was not meeting the needs of a competitive work force and was in desperate need of reform.

Authored by James J. Harvey, who summarized the following in the first few pages of the report,

> Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility.... We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well–being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (para. 1)

The pendulum of schools had essentially swung from an atmosphere where the teachers were the experts, to one in which our schools were horrible and it was the teachers' fault.

Although authors have offered conflicting views of the state of education (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 2004; Rothstein, 1998), the perception of the populous was that our schools and our teachers were failing our students. Consistent with the acquired belief that our schools were failing came the urgency to fix our schools and teachers. Policy makers and educators were willing to hand over a great deal of power to anyone who claimed to offer the magic cure (Klein, 2007). According to Taubman (2009), the transformation has proceeded under the two banners of standards and accountability, profoundly impacting all aspects of teaching, schooling, and teacher

education for the last decade, and now threatens public education itself. The very cure for what is wrong with schools may ultimately lead to the dismantling of public education. The focus on standardization and quantification of the educational experience has created an educational market worth billions of dollars (Taubman, 2009). The echoing message of the reform effort is that if we take a measured scientifically based approach, we can have outcomes consistent with professional industry.

The ultimate measure of such approaches is *the test*. Teachers now utilize *the test* to inform all aspects of the instruction of the classroom. Teachers start with *the test* to determine how to get their students to the ultimate goal. To demonstrate a teacher's impact in the classroom a growing reform movement utilizes a value–added approach, asking how much did the teacher impact the students' learning experience. To measure such student growth, a pre–test and a post–test are utilized to determine how much the student has improved. Consistent with race to the top, value added measures have found their way to appraising teachers of their effectiveness as educators. According to Taubman (2009),

> we have arrived at a moment when students and teachers are subjected to a curriculum driven by disconnected multiple–choice questions or essay prompts that must be answered in a set amount of time and that have little if any relationship to problems, interest, or speculations that we might associate with thinking, erudition, creativity, or a curriculum animated by and responding to the flux of a classroom. (p. 17)

We have come to rely upon a measure of academic success that does not necessarily measure learning or student success. Can student success be measured by a multiple–

choice question test? As a country and state, we have not sufficiently defined student success to proclaim that we have a measure for such a thing.

In many states, including Texas, benchmark testing was used to measure students' progress through the year to help inform instructional strategies and interventions to reach accountability goals. Some school districts began mandating these benchmark tests as often as biweekly. In many cases instructional time was sacrificed to allow for more testing. We had become so enamored by the data rich culture of monitoring our student's progress that we lost opportunities for student learning in the classroom, so we could test more. Ravitch (2007) affirms that accountability not only destroys the joy of learning, but also destroys learning itself.

Standards are not inherently bad and may have come from initial good intentions, such as high expectations for all learners regardless of race, geographic locale, or socio economic level. But, as Taubman (2009) points out, "it is impossible to separate standards from standardization" (p. 112). Schools serve a diverse population and approaches to instruction are dependent upon the students you teach. The idea that we can standardize education would necessitate the standardization of the inputs to get a standardization of the outputs, the students. Even if the accomplishment of this is possible, would a nation built upon honoring diversity want to generate homogenous students?

Reducing the complexities of an individual to test scores, attendance rates, and other quantitative measures discounts the dynamics of teaching and learning. Reductive approaches such as this generate a plethora of simplified data from which decisions can be made, but only represent one piece of the character and qualities that comprise a

student or group of students. This audit culture of standardization and accountability, which has infiltrated public education, has been imported from institutions of accounting, business, finance, and insurance, and currently serves to regulate institutions of education (Taubman, 2009). Power (1997) states that the practice of audits is a response to a loss of trust and anxiety that is itself exacerbated by the implementation of these practices.

Taubman (2009) suggests that there are four reasons why we have found ourselves in the current situation in public education reform: (1) fear of chaos in the classroom and dwindling resources, (2) shame about how educators are depicted in the media, (3) fantasies of grandiosity and worthlessness, and (4) unresolved mourning for the lost ideals of racial integration and the eradication of poverty. Regardless of why we are in this predicament, it is apparent that our educators are carrying an ever–increasing burden. The question, which begs to be asked, is how will our educators ever overcome such challenges and give our children the education they deserve?

Giroux (2013) proclaims, "the time–honored concepts of literacy and critical thinking are under assault by those on the right who view education at best as a profit–making and training organization and at worst as a disciplinary apparatus and object of oppression" (p. 32). For example, standards in some states have redirected teachers from teaching history as a matter of interpretation and debate to a series of facts that must be learned (Giroux, 2013). Standardization of learning and multiple–choice assessments emphasizes a right and wrong approach to learning when reality demonstrates that life is very dynamic and complex. Solutions are rarely right or wrong but are dependent upon context and critical analysis. Multiple–choice assessments by design cannot capture such

thinking and analysis. Giroux (2013) posits that what is being taught and valued in today's school reform efforts is that critical thinking has no place in the classroom.

Bill Moyers, journalist and White House press secretary to President Lyndon B. Johnson, participated in "Messing with Texas Textbooks" on the Public Broadcast System in 2012 (Riley, 2012). In this segment Moyers outlined how the adoption of Texas Standards and the large textbook industry of Texas is impacting what is learned not only in Texas, but also across the country wherever these textbooks are being utilized. Giroux (2013) stipulates, "what has resulted is a pedagogy of censorship and ignorance" (p. 118). Conservative beliefs have found their way into the textbooks, and history that could be in conflict with these beliefs has been removed. For example, many of the newly adopted textbooks have removed Thomas Jefferson's name (known for coining the phrase *separation of church and state*) from a list of Enlightenment philosophers. In essence, these standards as well as the texts that support their learning are impacting what is acceptable for learning and what is not.

Critical pedagogy argues for modes of education that foster teacher autonomy in the classroom and nurture the capacities of students to read widely, learn the best that humanity has produced, and develop the skills necessary to both critique existing social forms and institutions, and transform them whenever necessary (Giroux, 2013). Rather than adopting an unquestioning passive transmission of information, critical pedagogy arms its participants, both teacher and student, with the skills and knowledge to question right and wrong as well as the agency to act on its behalf. This is a skill set that is exemplified in a true democratic society and not merely a society of one group being in power. Such an approach to educating our students can't be found in a standardized

curriculum, because in essence it places value on some knowledge and skills over others. According to Aronowitz (1998) the aim is not political indoctrination, but to allow education "to encourage human agency, not mold it in the manner of Pygmalion" (pp. 10–11).

The educational impact at the state and national level regarding our educational accountability system has yielded mixed reviews. Following publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the standards–based education movement has spread across the country. Lee and Wong (2004) depict the focus of education policy shifting from school inputs to student outcomes, and from minimum competencies to high proficiency standards. Despite adjusting goals and implementing more rigorous accountability, Barton (2002) reveals that states made little progress in narrowing persistent gaps in mathematic achievement between Whites and minorities, as well as between poor and more affluent students. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act aimed at accomplishing high standards for all schools and closing their achievement gaps. Historically proven approaches like reduction of class size and improved teacher quality were excluded from the debate that focused primarily on test driven accountability (Valencia, Valenzuela, Sloan & Foley, 2004). NCLB forced states to change many of their educational policies, but political influences and a lack of capacity at the state level lead to a more superficial impact (McGuinn, 2012). Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) affirm that the law did not generate as much meaningful school improvement or progress in closing gaps as originally intended.

McGuinn (2006) posits that the Race to The Top act of 2009 was an attempt to circumvent perceived failings of NCLB, specifically the law's reliance on coercive federal mandates and a compliance culture that it fostered at the state level. RTTT made

grants available to states and districts to encourage and reward innovation satisfying certain educational policies such as performance–based evaluations, adopting common standards, turning around the lowest performing schools, and the utilization of data systems.

Case studies have depicted exemplar schools and districts that have made significant progress on standardized tests, capitalizing on accountability policies to improve equity (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Nonetheless, Skrla and Scheurich (2001) go on to expound that well–established accountability systems, such as those in North Carolina and Texas, play a key role in such success. McGuinn (2012) proclaims that despite imperfections of RTTT, it has generated considerable movement behind educational reform in the United States and has pressed states into very public deliberations about educational reform, such as common standards, assessments, teacher evaluation, and tenure. The dialogue occurring may be complex and challenging on all sides, but it is necessary to address the needs and opportunities of the U.S. public education system. McGuinn (2012) states that the focus on competition has generated a "coalition of the willing" by enlisting states with proven track records of reform or ambitious reform agendas, to serve as role models and laboratories for school improvement (p. 152).

Darling–Hammond (2015) posits that as schools across the country take on preparing all children for success in college, career, and life states, they must move toward creating a more aligned system of assessment and accountability that focuses on meaningful learning, enabled by professional and skilled educators, and supported by appropriate resources. In part, teachers and their teaching must be supported and fostered

to positively impact student learning, and at the same time be aligned to curricula and objectives focused on meaningful learning. McGuinn (2012) states that NCLB has reinforced the understanding that there is a major difference between states' "compliance" with federal mandates and the enactment of real "change" and an even bigger gap between state, district, and school "change," and meaningful "improvement" (p. 153). McGuinn (2012) surmises, the "spirit" of compliance matters more than the measurable "facts" of compliance" (p. 153). For instance, a state mandated adoption of common standards for a school is articulated very differently in a school that is following a mandate and a school that has determined and believes that common standards are in the best interest of their students. The same may be true for a school facing sanctions to improve due to poor student performance on a state test. Accountability systems such as NCLB are based upon a theoretical assumption that consequences will motivate schools to perform at higher levels and focus their attention on student outcomes (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Finnigan and Gross (2007) state that teacher performance and ultimately student performance are linked to the ability of the staff, the motivation level of the staff, or some combination of both. Sanctions or top down accountability in, and of themselves may not promote school improvement. How school improvement is articulated at the school level determines whether such reform strategies are successful.

Teacher Working Conditions

Teaching conditions have been important to teachers since the incarnation of public schools in North America (King & Peart, 1992). And since that time, many different working conditions have been addressed in isolation. The conditions discussed herein are consistent with those identified by Bascia and Rottmann (2011) and include:

class size and manageable work load, time available for professional work (non–teaching time), resource adequacy, collegiality and professional interactions, opportunities to learn and improve, support for professional risk taking, ability to influence school direction, and congruence between individual and organizational goals. Bascia and Rottman identified specific factors of teacher working conditions that impact achievement. They noted these factors were chosen due to their comprehensive nature, as cited in research literature, as well as Bascia and Rottman's own extensive work focused on teacher working conditions. The factors cited by Bascia and Rottman (2011) have repeatedly been identified by teachers as critical to the quality of their work. Louis and Smith (1991) posit that working conditions affect the degree to which teachers actively commit and engage with teaching. These same conditions affect the likelihood that teachers will work hard to create engaging and exciting environments for the students in their classrooms. Working conditions provide intrinsic incentives that affect the intensity and quality of teacher work (Bascia & Rottman; 2011; Firestone & Pennell; 1993). Firestone and Pennell (1993) state that "without a sense of influence over outcomes, support from others, and positive expectations about work outcomes, teaching is experienced as an insignificant activity" (p. 498). Literature suggests that although working conditions have been explored in relative isolation of one another, there is still a need for a better–defined comprehensive approach to addressing teacher working conditions (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011; King, 2004; Little, 1993; Randi & Zeichner, 2004).

The basic assumption of the proposed study is that teacher working conditions impact teacher performance and teacher performance, in turn, impacts student performance. Therefore, school improvement efforts should purposefully consider the

conditions that their teachers work in when embarking upon school reform. Wenglinsky (2002) confirms that higher levels of teacher performance increase the performance of students. Wenglinsky (2002) surmises, "through their teachers, schools can be the key mechanism for helping students reach high standards" (p. 24). Leithwood (2006) asserts, "What teachers actually do in their schools and classrooms depends on how teachers perceive and respond to their working conditions" (p. 14). Louis and Smith (1991) expound that teacher working conditions affect the degree to which teachers are actively committed and engaged with teaching, and therefore affects the likelihood that the teacher will create an engaging learning environment that fosters learning for students. It is not to say that teacher working conditions in and of themselves cause teachers to be more successful with their students, the assumption is that certain conditions of work are a necessary foundation for teachers to have the ability to do their job at the highest level.

In addition, teaching working conditions impact teacher retention. Bascia and Rottman (2011) affirm U.S. policy researchers' attention was drawn to teaching conditions by compelling evidence that teaching conditions influence job satisfaction and appear to have a direct effect on teacher retention. Consistent with the research of this study, this begs to question if sanctions on struggling schools have a negative impact on teacher working conditions and lead to a greater turnover of teachers. In other words, do these sanctions in fact lead to a more challenging sustainable school change environment that in some way perpetuates the status quo of low performing schools. Studies investigating the reasons teachers leave the school they are working in clearly identify the quality of teacher working conditions as a determining factor of a teacher's willingness to stay or leave (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Quartz, Barraza–Lyons, & Thomas, 2005). Bascia

and Rottman (2011) surmise that while research attempts to link teacher effectiveness to teacher working conditions, it is limited in its explanatory power because the relationship is described as indirect and seemingly diffused. The research in this study hopes to shed light on a specific case study so that educational leaders may navigate school reform efforts more effectively.

Current Working Conditions for Teachers

Recent studies have found that more and more teachers have negative feelings towards their work, resulting in feelings of dissatisfaction, meaningless, and powerlessness (Tsang, 2012). Negative emotional experiences are harmful to teachers' psychological well–being and therefore impact the quality of teaching negatively as well (Hargreaves, 1998). Tsang (2012) believes the large number of dissatisfied teachers suggests these negative emotional experiences go beyond individual teachers to represent a wider social issue as well. Educational demands for teachers to provide more complex, intellectually challenging approaches to teaching and learning will make schools more dependent upon teachers' discretion and therefore ultimately increase demand for appropriate teacher commitment in our schools (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). In contrast, the standards movement and high stakes testing generate a more prescribed approach to teaching pedagogy, leaving the teacher in the middle of conflicting needs from students and district/state/administrative directives.

Negative perceptions of recent school reform efforts are not solely the purview of teachers but have also infiltrated public perception. Shaker and Heilman (2004) included the following statements reflecting a part of public perception and support for new policy decisions related to public education:

Standardized tests are the sine qua non of assessing school quality; our public

schools are failed and cynical institutions; teachers are self–interested unionist;

there is no correlation between school quality and school funding; the punitive

imposition of high stakes tests and centralized standards will "shape up"

malingering students and teachers; research in education should exclusively

follow certain quantitative methods; voucher advocates are the true sponsors of

minority advancement. (p. 1453)

These statements are not included to serve as an indicator of the state of public

education, but to highlight the toxic environment that our teachers find themselves in the

middle of. It is little wonder that the United States Department of Education reported that

teacher attrition has grown by 50% in the last 15 years. And the national teacher turnover

rate was at 16.8% in 2005 (20% in many urban areas). The teacher dropout rate is

actually higher than student dropout rate in some schools and districts. When the U.S.

Department of Education (2005) asked teachers why such a high turnover rate for

teachers existed, teachers cited lack of planning time, workload, and lack of influence

over school policy. Teachers are caught in the middle of a system where they have all the

pressure to get results but are afforded none of the control over conditions in which they

can deliver.

How Teacher Work Conditions Have Been Utilized in Educational Reform

One teaching condition that has been researched for many years is that of class

size. Although the research is relatively inconclusive regarding the optimal class size for

student success, these findings may be indicative of why it is time to look at these

conditions, inclusive of one another, to understand how conditions as a whole impact

teaching and ultimately student learning. Bascia and Rottman (2011) found that "for administrators at all education system levels, policy compliance was more pressing issue than teaching conditions and even student opportunities to learn" (p. 798). They further asserted ensuring educational reforms actually work requires a fundamental move from the factory model paradigm to one that values the centrality of teacher working conditions to better understand their role in educational reform. According to teachers, work load does not diminish with fewer students in the classroom but does improve teachers' ability to identify and address individual student needs, as well as an increased ability to build quality relationships in the classroom (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011).

School reform efforts such as President Obama's Race to the Top initiative only exasperate declining working conditions for teachers by focusing solely on student performance on standardized math and reading tests (Yakabuski, 2010). This climate encourages districts to value teaching conditions less, placing the greater emphasis on generating test results. In an effort to meet such demands districts began to micromanage teachers more by implementing rigid curricula that many times includes benchmark tests being given to students as often as once every two weeks to monitor student progress. Rather than testing being the measure of student learning, testing has become the student learning. Teacher autonomy becomes valued less and less. Teacher autonomy is indicative of professional risk taking and one's ability to influence school direction and is necessary for teachers to differentiate effectively in order to meet the needs of their student population. Here again, autonomy does not have a causal impact on student success but allows for conditions to be in place for educators to do what is necessary for students to succeed. Autonomy is exchanged for a data driven process that may in fact

cause teacher disenfranchisement and ultimately student disenfranchisement as well. Teachers consistently report dissatisfaction with efforts to reduce their autonomy in the classroom, which may be indicative of the reason why efforts to promote change through increased administrative control have generally been ineffective (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Darling–Hammond, et al. (2005) assert, "teachers need to be able to figure out how to organize their curriculum around the most important learning elements implied by the standards and configure a sensible sequence and set of activities for the particular students they teach" (p. 185). Taubman (2009) posits, stripping teachers of autonomy and intentionality, reducing them to following protocols and prescribed instruction, does not address the complex, dynamic, and aesthetic nature of teaching and learning.

Many school reform initiatives have reduced teacher autonomy in an effort to provide a viable and consistent education for all students. *Teacher proof* curricula of the 50s and 60s attempted to prescribe curricula that would be effective in meeting learning goals regardless of teacher skills, knowledge, and experience (Sarason, 1971). In many cases *teacher proof* curricula included activities and scripts that the teacher was not to deviate from. Taubman (2009) confirms that since the enactment of NCLB, a sizeable percentage of educators have spent more time teaching test taking strategies and teaching to the test. Standardized testing, or minimum competency testing, from the 80s to the present has reduced teacher autonomy and commitment (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Tsang, 2012). Efforts to tie student test results, curricular requirements, and mandated instructional and classroom management approaches to teacher evaluation have generated decreased teacher autonomy, less opportunity for teachers to experiment or be creative, and less teacher influence on school goals

(Firestone & Pennell, 1993). In many ways, teachers are being undervalued and underappreciated, ultimately causing student learning to suffer. Bascia and Rottman (2011) reveal, it is difficult to disentangle factors that influence teaching from those that influence learning, but the degree of satisfaction teachers experience appears to correlate positively with the extent to which teachers believe they can successfully meet students' academic, social, and emotional needs, as fostered by certain teacher working conditions.

Recommendations for Improvement of Working Conditions

Considering any one condition in isolation neglects the impact of other factors on the educational environment as a whole. Literature suggests that working conditions for teachers are contingent upon the context of the organization (Bascia & Rottman, 2011; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). Firestone & Pennell suggest that teacher commitment is instrumental for effective school change and should be considered from the beginning when planning reform efforts. They go on to recommend acknowledging the current state of teacher commitment so the campus can then examine the effects of working conditions on the level of commitment and thus be considerate of policies and initiatives that will improve upon teacher working conditions and therefore positively impact commitment (Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Rather than using differential policies to produce results for schools, it would be better to use a teacher working condition framework to identify a broader set of policies to support a more strategic reform strategy (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Firestone and Pennell (1993) suggest developing a framework that includes four parts: (1) increased teacher participation, (2) strategies to encourage collaboration and learning opportunities, (3) increased feedback, and (4) enhanced teacher commitment to work that is more

68

challenging, stimulating, and interactive (pp. 519–520). The suggested framework is conceptually and practically interrelated in nature, and failure to incorporate this structure may lead to less effective reform.

Teachers have grown less satisfied with their work environment as indicated by researchers (Andreasen, 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; King & Peart, 1992; Tsang, 2012) and national teacher attrition rates. These feelings ultimately affect the well–being of teachers and the quality of teaching, therefore affecting student learning. Placing value on an environment that fosters conditions for teachers to be successful is consistent with providing an environment that promotes student success. The context and the goal of school improvement must be developed and shared by all stakeholders if true school reform is to be accomplished. This includes the consideration of working conditions that encourage efficacy and ownership and provide space to work effectively. Unless stakeholders work collaboratively towards the common good of the school, initiatives may fall flat and fail to raise student performance. Failure to positively affect teacher–working environments spells failure to positively affect student–working environments.

School Leadership

Principals were originally described as the principal teacher of a school. This statement recognizes that the principal is not only responsible for leading the school, but additionally responsible for educating the teachers with whom he or she works. The principal's role in many ways is responsible for developing the culture of the school which directly affects how all students learn. Many philosophies of effective school leadership have been explored, and we will address these to convey an understanding of what good school leadership looks like according to the literature. This is important

because the implications of school leadership dictate the school environment and the conditions in which teachers work.

Understanding a principal's role necessitates understanding a school's role in society. Unfortunately, societal views of the principal's role vary widely among stakeholder groups, and have evolved considerably over time. Glickman and Kanawati (1998) credit Thomas Jefferson with articulating the belief that schools exist to provide a free universal education, which is an essential condition of a democratic society. Such an education protects against the abuse of power by giving people free access to ideas, so that people can define for themselves what their role is as a participant in society.

As our society becomes more diverse it is important for schools to make connections with all of their students to foster identity formation and understanding across cultural groups. Instruction that students do not relate to alienates students from participation. Culturally responsive education should highlight strengths and foster student participation. According to Sergiovanni et al. (2014), "culturally responsive pedagogy invites all students, regardless of their social or cultural backgrounds, to come into dialogue with their worlds and contest the injustices they might find" (p. 46). Sergiovanni et al. (2014) identify three areas of need for culturally responsive leadership. First leaders need to develop their own sense of sociopolitical and cultural awareness. This entails learning from the contextual issue and dynamics of their school community. Leaders must become well versed in cultural perspectives of teachers and students. Secondly, school leaders should develop school level supports for cultural responsiveness. Examples include parent support specialists and/or community organizers who can address neighborhood concerns. And thirdly, Sergiovanni et al.

(2014) recommend supervisors foster culturally responsive changes to instructional

practices. Such practices include instruction that is rich in culturally consistent texts, and

assignments that foster the knowledge of one's community.

Effective school leaders promote continuous growth of their teachers. Leadership

should encourage teachers to take risks in their methodology and instruction in an effort

to generate new and better ways of educating students. Many times, the only growth that

is fostered by school leaders is professional growth of content and pedagogial practices.

Sergiovanni et al. (2014) would argue that personal growth that develops fuller more

mature human beings is equally, or even more, important. For the leader, this includes

supervisors who are more sensitive to challenges that create conflicting demands on

instructional practices, such as meeting accountability requirements as well as the needs

of the whole student. According to Fullan (2007), "significant educational change

consists of changes in beliefs, teaching style, and materials, which can only come through

a process of personal development in a social context" (pp. 138–139).

It is not enough for teachers to blindly follow directives. According to Werner

(1980), implementation requires, at a minimum, shared understanding among participants

concerning implied presuppositions, values and assumptions, which underlie the

program. Werner (1980) goes on to state, "implementation is an ongoing construction of

a shared reality among group members through their interaction with one another within

the program" (pp. 62–63). Therefore, even the level of implementation necessitates

shared understanding and common beliefs. Without this, implementation will be at the

weakest level of fidelity and inauthentic in nature.

Sergiovanni et al. (2014) suggest that school leaders see their work as much more than a process of mastering techniques or memorizing specific steps in a learning process. Instead, they see their collective work as a human work, expressive of the larger collective human drama, participating in the renewal of a society through its struggles, shortcomings, and breakthroughs. True school reform does not have leaders who just put into place the latest policy, it means changing the culture of classrooms, schools, districts, and universities (Fullan, 2007). Placing sanctions upon a school in an effort to command performance places school leaders in a conundrum trying to select strategies that will be both successful for their school, and simultaneously following directives from outside entities such as superintendents, school boards, consultants and monitoring personal. The pressure is so great that school leaders may find themselves blindly trying to follow all agendas to assure that they are doing everything. In fact, doing everything usually results in not doing anything well. While the ultimate impact may be on the teacher as the *tool* employed to achieve the directives, it fails to recognize the teacher as *craftsman,* wielding the tool. If school reform was as easy as following a road map, human teachers would likely have already been replaced by some sort of digital alternative. That time has not come, because schools reflect the complexities of the social beings who inhabit them.

Teachers make up the vast majority of the adult personnel in a school. For instance, in one middle school in an urban school district, 73 of its 108 staff members are teachers. According to Fullan (2007), "engaging the entire system is at the heart of fundamental reform" (p. 144). If a reform effort fails to include teachers in the decision–making process it may in fact be doomed to fail from the beginning. Not only does an

authoritative form of leadership fail to acknowledge teachers as the experts, it also fails to recognize them as capable and available problem solvers who can make up 68% of a school's workforce. The community of the school is the greatest asset a school has at accomplishing true and sustainable school reform. New and popular initiatives will not accomplish this…people working together towards a common goal will.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) point out that the movement from "*power over* to *power with* is a struggle, but it is for the good of society" (p. 9). For society to prosper in a future world of limited resources, growing population, and increasing diversity, it must focus on solutions that are shared among all people. Positive solutions do not consider winners and losers, but shared outcomes. In order to harness the available human energy, leaders must recognize the capital that each person brings to a team and foster its development. Hargreaves and Fullan argue for greater recognition of the professional capital of teachers. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012),

> a professional capital view recognizes good teaching for six traits: good teaching is technically sophisticated and difficult, good teaching requires high levels of training and education, good teaching is perfected through continuous improvement, good teaching involves wise judgment informed by evidence and experience, good teaching is a collective accomplishment, and good teaching maximizes, mediates, and moderates online instruction. (p. 14)

This description of teaching contrasts with the prevailing business capital view of instruction that has dominated the last 25 years of school reform. In the business capital view, good teaching is considered emotionally demanding, but technically simple, requiring only moderate intellectual ability. In the business capital view, good teaching

should be driven by hard performance data about what works and where best to target one's efforts (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The business capital view undermines the expertise and artistry that is required of a good teacher. It is no wonder that such reform efforts have fallen flat due to their simplistic conception of the inner working of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

For the last 30 years, school accountability has become a technical enterprise that has led to more technical approaches in the governance and management of schools (Taubman, 2009). This technical approach has been borrowed from our success in industry systematizing, streamlining, and monitoring inputs and outputs for productivity. Such technical approaches may be implemented to a greater degree in schools considered to be struggling according to state and national accountability systems, based on standardized test results. According to St. Pierre (2006) critical theory was developed in order to work for social justice that might right the failures of an exhausted liberalism with its false promises of equality and a science that ignored the voices of the disenfranchised. Schools that do best on standardized tests have historically been those with higher affluence and lower minority populations. Williams (2003) states that socioeconomic status is the strongest correlate of standardized test scores, and poverty rates are highest in areas of large concentrations of people of color. The schools that do not do well on standardized tests face increased pressure to improve performance through sanctions. Such sanctions, imposed externally and articulated internally, may negatively impact the ability of teachers to do their work. Sizer (2004) posits, "The more school systems dictate…the greater the likelihood that the schools will be mediocre" (p. 88).

The system of educational reform and accountability described here may further perpetuate the status quo for disadvantaged populations rather than helping struggling schools to improve. The research demonstrates that teachers have the greatest ability to increase student achievement; therefore, it is important for school reform efforts to be mindful of the working conditions of teachers. Teacher working conditions describe the environment in which teachers prepare and engage with students in schools. By analyzing teacher working conditions such as: class size and manageable work load; time available for professional work; resource adequacy; collegiality and professional interactions; opportunities to learn and improve; support for professional risk taking; ability to influence school direction; and the congruence between individual goals and organizational goals, we may gain insights that help us develop more sustainable school improvement efforts.

The aim of this study is to determine whether such mandates, implemented in struggling schools, may in fact impede the success of those schools. The following questions will provide the lens for research design and analysis of the case study: How do mandatory school reform initiatives impact teacher working conditions? How do teacher working conditions impact student learning? How can educational leaders improve teacher working conditions in order to maximize sustainable school improvement?

Although teacher working conditions may not be a causal indicator of good teaching and learning, they may in fact represent prerequisites for allowing teachers the opportunity to meet the needs of their students. By using teacher working conditions as a framework of necessary circumstances for student success we may ascertain whether struggling schools face pressures that jeopardize the working environment for teachers to

increase student success in a sustainable fashion. If this is indeed the trend at struggling

schools, educational leaders must be aware of this phenomenon to gain insight to leading

school change at struggling schools and to inform future legislation.

III. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Design

In an effort to understand the complexity of school reform in today's high stakes accountability system, a qualitative methodology was utilized. It is Merriam's (2009) belief that qualitative research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people's lives. The research described here hoped to achieve just that. By listening, analyzing the data, and reporting from the people who were most affected by school reforms, I hoped to gain insight as to how sanctioned school reform efforts impact teaching and learning. More specifically, I hoped to understand from educators' perspectives how these school initiatives impacted teacher working conditions in a school rated as improvement required, and implications for student learning that ensued. If, ultimately, the school reform efforts diminished the quality of teaching and learning at the campus, how could school leaders have navigated the sea of conflicting agendas thrust upon them and the school community?

According to Creswell (2013), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). For the purpose of this study I hoped to gain an understanding as to why and how teacher working conditions were impacted by sanctioned school reform efforts. It is important to understand the perceptions of the people in the school and how those perceptions were impacted when the school reform efforts were applied. If school reform efforts derive from external sanctions, what are the implications on teacher working conditions and ultimately how

does that impact student learning? Through careful analysis of the experiences of community members we can gain better understanding of how to implement school reforms more successfully.

There are four primary characteristics of qualitative research including: "a focus on process, understanding, and meaning; the primary data collection instrument is the researcher; the process is inductive; and the process is descriptive in nature" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). The qualitative researcher places a priority on understanding how meaning is derived by the subjects of the study. Rather than focusing on the outcome of the phenomenon, the qualitative researcher attempts to determine how the phenomenon came to be. If this can be understood, it is believed that choices can be made and acted upon to change outcomes. The depth of understanding is the focus of the study and therefore the study is normally specific to the context in which it is studied and not intended for broad generalizability. If a goal of qualitative research is to formulate understanding, which is a human undertaking, it makes sense that the researcher is considered the primary instrument in the investigation to form such understanding. With that in mind, it goes without saying that there is often a direct relationship between the quality of research and the skills of the researcher. This also contributes to the subjective nature of qualitative studies. But consistent with the focus of understanding, rather than attempting to eliminate bias, it is important for the researcher to identify and monitor subjectivity to understand the phenomenon within its overall context (Merriam, 2009). Due to the researcher's experiences as an educator certain biases were identified. As an administrator at a school that was at one time designated as struggling, I had personal experiences that played a role in my understanding of the case study. While my

experiences benefitted the study at hand, I nonetheless had to monitor them to gain a true understanding of the phenomenon that occurred. Chavez (2008) illustrates that this insider positionality as a researcher comes with several advantages such as equalized relationship between researcher and participants, access to participants and case of study, and nuanced perspective for observation and interpretation. With this being the case, Chavez (2008) also warns of complications to be mindful of as an insider researcher, such as over reliance on status, expectations of community, and selective reporting. A mindful and reflective researcher can benefit from the insider positionality while avoiding and addressing possible complications along the way.

Qualitative researchers gather data to formulate hypothesis and theory, rather than generating a hypothesis to be tested. According to Merriam (2009), "qualitative researchers build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gleaned from being in the field" (p. 15). Rich description of the phenomenon is utilized to convey the story of the investigation and includes tools such as interviews, artifacts, vignettes, video footage, time lines, personal narrative, and poetry. Often times a combination of tools is necessary to portray the complete story.

Due to the characteristics of qualitative analysis, the researcher's role in deriving meaning from the data is important to understand practical implications. Qualitative analysis is not overtly generalizable to other situations or schools but is necessary to understand the complexity of social behaviors within a system such as a school. If the researcher is the primary instrument of analysis, it can be extrapolated that the analysis is also subjective with regards to the researcher. Coincidentally it may also be argued that

all research is subjective due to how the information is filtered (i.e. human component, experimental sample, etc.).

Case Study

The qualitative method chosen to shed some light on the research questions that framed this investigation was case study. According to Yin (2014), "a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real–world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 2). This was the case concerning the impact of sanctioned school reform on teacher working conditions. It was my hope to clarify how teacher working conditions suffered in these circumstances and negatively impacted the students whom the reform had originally intended to help. Merriam (2009) points out that case studies are richly descriptive in order to share with the reader the vicarious experience of the phenomenon under study. Detailed descriptions of the setting are necessary for the reader to assess the evidence upon which the analysis is based (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014).

Case studies have been utilized in several disciplines such as anthropology, political science, psychology, and sociology, as well as the following professions: accounting, business, education, marketing, evaluation, public health, public administration, and social work. Yin (2014) posits that three conditions make a good argument for conducting a case study: (a) how or why research questions, (b) minimal extent of control a researcher has over behavioral events, and (c) a degree of focus on contemporary events. Who, what, and where questions can be better addressed by quantitative inquiry such as a survey? How and why questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than the sole consideration of frequency or

incidence (Yin, 2014). Case studies allow the researcher to consider several different

pieces of evidence to draw a conclusion. As Yin (2014) detailed, the two primary

sources of evidence include direct observation of the events being studied and interviews

of the persons involved in the events. Additionally, case studies can also draw upon a

variety of other sources such as, documents, and artifacts from the case.

Yin (2014) offers a twofold definition to inform case study researchers:

1) A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon within in its real–world context, when boundaries

between the phenomenon and context may not clearly be evident;

2) A case study inquiry copes with technically distinctive situation which

there are many more variables of interest than data points and relies

upon multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a

triangulation fashion that benefit from development of theoretical

propositions to guide collection and analysis. (pp. 16–17)

Understanding the complex nature of a school that had recently been labeled as

struggling was just such a case to be studied. Although teacher working conditions could

have been studied in isolation from the phenomenon of a struggling school, our

understanding of the implications of sanctions on these schools and the intense need to

improve quickly would have gone unaddressed. These sanctions are a major component

in the school reform initiatives occurring throughout the state and country. It was my

belief that failure to consider the current reform model within its context would fail to

succinctly question the reform efforts, and furthermore how they impacted teachers and

ultimately students.

Yin (2014) acknowledges five components of a research design: the case study's question, its propositions, its unit of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the data. This case study's question was, how do mandatory school reform initiatives impact teacher–working conditions? The other four components are explored in greater detail in later sub–sections.

School Case

The unit of analysis for this research was a school that had successfully navigated an improvement required designation, subsequently achieving an academically acceptable rating according to the state. Schools that are designated improvement required are commonly in a sensitive state of uncertainty. Several schools that were contacted in an effort to complete the study respectfully declined. It was the researcher's plan to utilize a school that had recently overcome an improvement required designation to describe and learn from the experience. A school that had successfully completed this task was more likely to allow such a study to take place. The preferred population of study would have been rated as improvement required for two consecutive years before accomplishing an academically acceptable rating during the 2015–16 school year. Such a school could offer a rich story of what worked and what did not which would greatly benefit our understanding of this phenomenon. Additionally, schools that are currently under sanctions to improve may be under additional pressure to not openly welcome researchers investigating this sort of phenomenon, believing it could undermine their leadership. As a current long–standing employee of the district and who has lived through the phenomenon of interest, it was my hope that I would be able to gain access to the school to conduct accurate and respectful research.

In anticipation of an identified school, I assumed the school would be an urban high school. According to district data, the Hispanic population was the fastest growing ethnic population; as such, the school would be expected to have a large number of English language learners, as well as students facing economic difficulties. These qualities were consistent with schools in the district that have faced sanctions to improve within the last five years, including the school at which I had been employed for the last three years.

Finding a school to perform my case study with was fraught with challenges. As an administrator who has worked at a school under sanctions to improve, I felt like gaining access would be easier due to the common experience from another school in the same district. The first school that I inquired about researching pleasantly informed me that research at that school would not be a possibility. The principal told me their school does not allow any internal or external research entities to undertake research at their school. He explained that when their school had originally been rated academically unacceptable a research team from a nearby institution had conducted an examination that undermined the leadership team at the campus and created an environment that was unhelpful in moving the campus forward. From that point on, not only did the campus not participate in any research that might or might not benefit the campus, the school district placed a freeze on any type of research for that school. I found this to be true at more than one of the campuses that were mandated to make improvements.

Upon encountering this roadblock, I enquired which campus would permit me to complete research and attempted to gain access from the principal of that school. Unfortunately, the principal of the school failed to return my correspondence and I was

83

unable to reach the principal for a face–to–face discussion. Unwilling to give up on my

case study, I contacted principals who worked with the principal of my target school to

vouch for my credibility and intentions. With some additional colleague support I was

able to obtain a response from the targeted school. The principal said he would be happy

to work with me, but I would need district permission to begin. I did explain that not

only was my research design approved by a team of faculty members at a respected

university, but the design was also approved by an Internal Review Board that judged the

research design to involve only minimal risk, it did not include intentional deception, did

not employ sensitive populations or topics, and included appropriate informed consent

procedures (APUS, 2016). The principal reiterated that I would still need district

approval to begin my research. Ultimately, I was able to gain permission from the school

district and began my study. I believe that the numbers of safe guards and protections

that are in place to protect these schools are indicative of the environment that both the

administration and the faculty of a school under sanctions must navigate each and every

day. Finnigan and Stewart (2009) posit these are not just the general pressures of

accountability, but rather the more immediate pressures of not only being placed on

probation but also facing the requirement to improve or face additional sanctions, such as

reconstitution or school closure, as well as the stigma of the associated status. Punishing

schools based upon performance outcomes was an integral part of a number of state and

district accountability policies across the country (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). A school

such as this presents as vulnerable or fragile even prior to meeting with any teachers. As

a researcher, I felt as if I was walking on eggshells just to gain access to such a school. If

this impacts me as a researcher, must it not also impact the educators and the students of

the school as well? I had not even begun my research yet, but I felt the intensity of the environment immediately.

For this case study the school community; inclusive of teachers, administrators, and students; constituted the unit of analysis. Teachers were the primary focus because they were directly implicated within the context of teacher working conditions. Administrators were also a part of the analysis because of their leadership role within the organization as to how initiatives were orchestrated, and decisions were made. Students were also included because ultimately, they are the measure of the successfulness of school reform initiatives. The three different components of the case will also serve for triangulation purposes during the data analysis phase.

According to Yin (2014), bounding the case is important to give the case of study boundaries. One way of bounding the case is with regard to time. In this particular study, a school that had undergone an unfavorable designation from the state accountability system was crucial to understanding the phenomenon. It was important to capture the testimony of the participants while the experience was still fresh in their minds to assure accurate portrayal of the experience. With this in mind, the study was bounded by data collection occurring within two–years post state identification.

Role of Researcher

The researcher is responsible for planning, designing, preparing, collecting, analyzing, and sharing the data in congruence with the case studies' primary objective of answering the research question. Merriam (2009) articulates that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The researcher is

therefore the lens through which these experiences are shared with the public. A researcher who does a good job on all five objectives will add clarity that may have not been seen otherwise, where a researcher who is unable to facilitate the research plan effectively may distort the subject of interest even further.

Yin (2014) places additional emphasis for the case study researcher to identify and address rival explanations for the findings. The more rivals that are addressed and rejected, the stronger the findings of the case study. Yin (2014) posits that it is important for the researcher to anticipate such rivals during the design phase so that data may be purposefully collected regarding such rivals. One such rival that was addressed in the literature review is the concept that teacher working conditions are the primary factor influencing whether effective learning occurs in the classroom. Great effort by the researcher was afforded to describe connections made by the literature.

Yin (2014) addresses several skills and values of importance to the case study researcher including: the ability to ask good questions, being a good listener, staying adaptive, having a firm grasp on the issues being studied, as well as avoiding biases by being sensitive to contrary evidence. It is a desired result for the researcher to create a rich dialogue with the evidence from the research. Yin (2014) states that a good prediction of quality work is that the researcher will be mentally and emotionally exhausted at the end of each day of fieldwork. Case studies are adaptive in nature. Although the case study researcher anticipates needs of the study during the design phase, he or she must be able to adapt as data from the study dictates in an effort to be true to the research question. Such adaptations need be acknowledged and documented to illustrate the path of understanding by the researcher.

A critical philosophical foundation positions this researcher to critique the current system in an effort to emancipate those whom the system oppresses (Merriam, 2009). In the case of schools under directives to improve it may be argued that such sanctions or restrictions are primarily placed on schools with student populations with high percentages of minorities and economically disadvantaged individuals. These same sanctions may stifle teachers' abilities to meet their student's needs and thus impede the teachers' ability to help students achieve. This could be interpreted as an approach to propagate the status quo. If this was indeed the case, it is worthy of investigation to bring such practices to light so real change can be achieved.

A final requirement for all researchers is to conduct their research ethically. Therefore, the researcher must take steps to protect participants as well as the organization from undo harm. For this study, the researcher gained informed consent from the principal of the school as well as all participants and informed them of the nature of the study. Yin (2014) stipulates that this includes avoiding any use of deception in the study. This not only entails transparency between the researcher and all participants but sharing the topic and research question(s) prior to the study might inadvertently change some actions of the participants and impact the findings. Nonetheless, it is a necessary component of the trust necessary to complete the study. For instance, after reviewing the research plan, the principal might have unknowingly or knowingly impacted teacher working conditions negatively through their reform efforts, thus influencing the findings of the research. Transparency of this fashion is a necessary component of ethical research and the acknowledgment of this phenomenon was considered during the data analysis phase of the case study.

The researcher also made additional efforts to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants of the case study. All published work from the study uses aliases to protect the identity of the participants including the school and the district in which the school is located. Interviews with children were avoided. The research design proposed by this case study was reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board, as well as the chair for this dissertation, Dr. Michael O'Malley, an experienced social researcher.

Information Collection

It is important to gather data when the phenomenon is occurring to witness the phenomenon in real time. Therefore, the study took place within two years of the school having been identified as improvement required. It is an understatement that schools falling into this category are already in a state of scrutiny and that additional scrutiny by a researcher would not be welcomed. It was my hope that my own experience at a school once designated as academically unacceptable would not only make me less threatening but might actually cause me to be seen as a resource. For this same reason I began my school search within my own district. Just as I would never do anything to jeopardize my own employment and good standing with the district, I would not undermine the leadership of the school under study or cause undue stress on the school or its community. It was also important to be transparent as to my intentions and research with the leadership of the campus to encourage their participation.

Therefore, during the summer when schools are recognized by the state, I approached the principal at Central High School about conducting this research during the coming school year, as the school met the criteria for the study. After permission for

88

the research was granted, I shared the research design with the principal. I explained to principal Williams that the study would consist of a review of campus accountability and historical data, informal school observations, review of district campus survey with district averages, conduct and review teacher survey specific to teacher working conditions and research questions, teacher interviews with six teachers, and ultimately principal interview with Mr. Williams.

Ultimately access to this campus was granted by Mr. Williams, but many roadblocks along the way impeded my progress. Two other district campuses declined participating in my case study. Another campus was protected by the district of any research projects of any kind due to the sensitive nature of the campus. According to non–identified personnel the prior year the campus had worked with a third–party research university that the campus leadership really felt undermined their school improvement efforts and negatively impacted the campus climate. Granted that principal Williams ultimately said yes to my research proposal, but this was only after several attempts to contact him personally and even through mutual associates, ultimately I believe it was the phone call from one of Mr. Williams' previous principals and that encouraged my access and Central High School's participation in the case study.
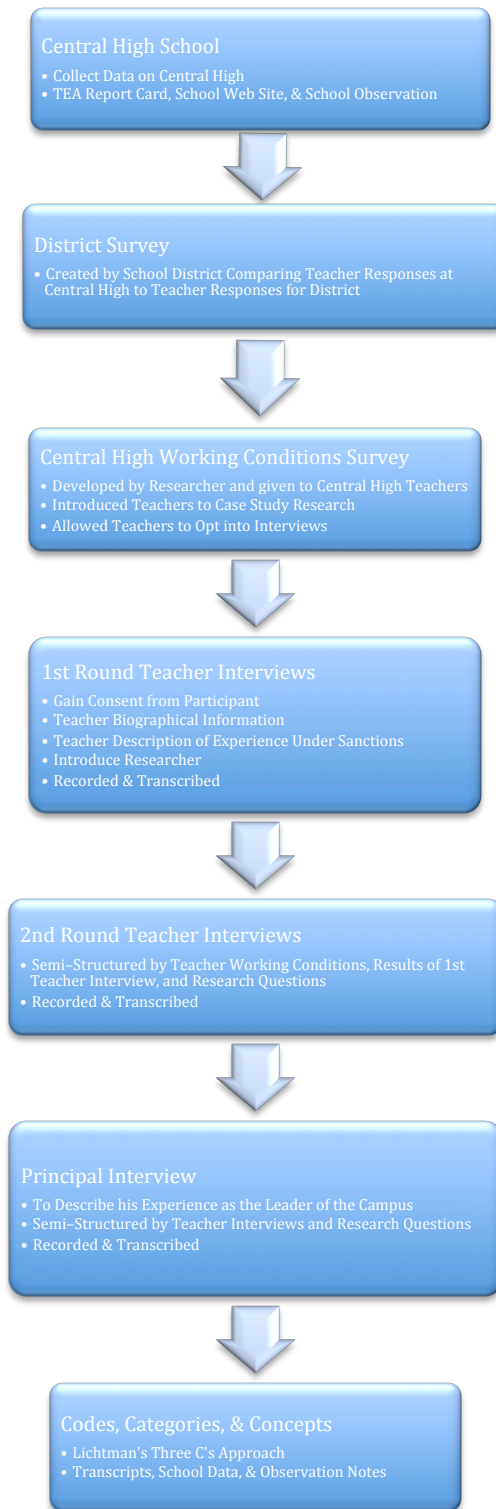
Figure 6. Data Collection Flow Chart.

School Observation Visit

To gain a feel for the school, an informal school visit was conducted. The purpose of this visit was to establish the tenor of the school. The initial school visit was non–evaluative and did not include any identifiable information regarding students or faculty. Additional school visits occurred as interviews with teachers and the principal were completed primarily on campus. As a researcher, I noted my impressions as I entered the school. Time was spent checking into the front office as a visitor, touring the campus during passing periods as well as when classes were in session, and visiting classrooms where instruction was in progress. Conditions of the immediate environment or of workspaces were observed to indicate insights into the culture of the organization (Yin, 2014).

Prior to interviews, school initiatives were identified in the school improvement plan outlined as part of the requirements necessary according to sanctions. School artifacts were also collected for data analysis. One of the strengths of a case study is its openness to use several different forms of data collection (Yin, 2014). Meeting minutes and summaries of meeting outcomes were collected to understand how decisions were made on the campus, as well as how they were implemented. Lesson planning templates and procedures also inform research but were only considered if the protocol had changed due to reform efforts.

School District Survey

The district of Central High administers a climate survey to each teacher at every school in the district. The use of the district survey in conjunction with the Teacher Working Conditions survey designed by this researcher may assist with the development

of converging lines of inquiry. The district survey is given to every school and every teacher in the district. The district survey provides the responses from the district on average, as well as the percent response from the teachers at Central High. The district survey is made up a range of questions from educational leadership to resource allocation. The district survey is given once a year through email to each teacher. Teachers and administrators are highly encouraged to solicit strong participation in the survey at every campus. This comparison of district response on average to Central High teacher responses may highlight areas of need for Central High as well as how the Central High climate may be different due in part to improvement efforts at the school. The district survey takes responses on a Likert scale. Teachers may respond; strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. Survey questions from the district survey are also included in its entirety in Appendix C.

Central High Working Conditions Survey

A second survey was created specifically for Central High by the researcher. The survey that was created included several demographic questions, as well as eight questions addressing each of the teacher working conditions identified by Bascia and Rottmann (2011). The working condition questions were scored on a Likert scale. Response options ranged from 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree (see Appendix B). Participants were required to answer all demographic questions, but teacher working condition questions included an opportunity to opt out. Demographic questions allowed the researcher to analyze responses based upon differing work experiences to gain additional understanding of trends at the school. All the questions helped to formulate a semi–structured interview for participating teachers.

At the end of the survey, teachers were given the opportunity to contact me to agree to participate in teacher interviews. Interested teachers were asked to contact me via email to indicate their desire to participate. Subjects taught, teaching experience, number of years teaching at the campus, and demographic information were shared to purposefully select diverse teachers to interview that met the research design. Participants were selected using the concept of purposeful sampling, choosing participants who would inform the understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2013). Every teacher at Central High was sent an email including the Central High Working Condition survey. All teachers were asked to participate, as well as given an opportunity to opt in and participate in teacher interviews. A few teachers that opted in were not selected because they were not at Central High when the school was under sanctions to improve. Teachers who expressed an interest to participate but were not selected were notified and thanked. The Central High Working Conditions survey was emailed to every teacher at Central High and teachers were respectfully informed of the intent and asked to participate. In the data analysis, these two different surveys, District survey and the Central High Working Condition surveys, were compared to one another, as they are designed with very different intentions and come from different resources with very different participation models as well. Response rate for the district survey was 85.8% and response rate for the Central High working conditions survey was 46.5%.

Teacher Interviews

According to Yin (2014), "one of the most important sources for case study evidence is the interview" (p. 110). For this case study, six teachers were interviewed using a semi structured format and conversational in nature. Each interview was 30 to 45

minutes in length. The first interview was used to gain rapport with the interviewee and gain some background information from the teacher. The second interview drilled down into the state of teacher working conditions at the school and as well as the impact of such conditions on the student learner. During data collection, the original research questions assisted in framing the time with each interviewee. The two research questions that frame this data collection:

- How do mandatory school reform initiatives impact teacher working conditions?
- How do teachers believe teacher working conditions impact student learning?

It was important to the researcher that the teachers interviewed gave a well–represented depiction of teacher voice at Central High including teachers from multiple perspectives and experiences during the 2014–15 school year. Of the six teachers interviewed, four of the teachers were female and two were male. Two of the six teachers teach an academic area that includes an End of Course test that directly impacts accountability of the school. One of the teachers is an athletic coach. Two of the teachers serve in a leadership capacity, department head and instructional coach. Four of the teachers teach core subject areas such as math, science, English, and social studies. Three of the teachers teach classes that college credit can be earned for successful completion of the course and sufficient learning demonstrated on an Advance Placement test. Teacher names have been changed to protect the identity of each participant. In this research the teachers will be referred to by the names Jennifer, Jackie, Christian, Kim, Andrea, and Miguel. Andrea and Miguel also teach populations that receive additional support, such as Special Education students and English as a Second Language (ESL)

student. It should be noted that all six teachers taught at Central High during the time when Central High was under sanctions to improve based upon the accountability system. The 2014–15 school year was the last year that Central High was under sanctions to improve after receiving a state accountability of Improvement Required (IR) for the 2012–13 school year and 2013–14 school year. Five of the six teachers first started teaching at Central High and do not have experience teaching at any other schools. Christian taught for five years prior to starting at Central High and working there for the last ten years. Three of the teachers have 10 or more years of experience and three of the teachers are in their first six years of teaching.

I interviewed six academic core teachers, of whom four taught a curriculum that necessitates an End Of Course exam necessary for high school graduation. End Of Course exams are a primary component of state accountability for a school. Core subject areas are likely to be impacted the most by reform efforts due to their direct bearing on accountability for the school. Educators teaching core classes such as math, science, social studies, and language arts as well as elective classes were chosen. The elective teacher provided insight as to how nonacademic teachers were impacted. Additional effort was made to have a relatively diverse (e.g., teaching experience, race, and gender) group of teachers. All interview participants were given pseudonyms to protect identity. Participant demographics are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Study Participants

Name	Approx. Age	Ethnicity	Role
Jennifer	~26	Hispanic	Social Studies*
Jackie	~32	White	Social Studies*
Christian	~37	Hispanic	Social Studies
Kim	~27	White	Science*
Andrea	~47	White	Special Education
Miguel	~50	Hispanic	English/ESOL*
Williams	~45	Hispanic	Principal

All interviews followed a semi–structured format, which allowed un–scripted dialogue, as warranted by the research questions, and the goal of exploring rivalries (see Appendix for interview protocol). Yin (2014) explains that a major and important alternative strategy is to identify and address rival explanations for case study findings. As these rival explanations are identified, the researcher is mindful of their exploration in the research design. Yin (2014) states that the more rivals that can be considered and eliminated through data analysis, the better the study. Initial interviews targeted a 30–minute length to respect participants' time, while gaining an initial understanding of the phenomenon. Follow–up interviews were conducted as further understanding of the research question and rival explanations warranted.

Prior to interviewing teachers on impact of sanctions and teacher working conditions, I began by gaining consent from each teacher and then asking them to share a brief biography of themselves. The first formal interview introduced myself and the research to be completed to the interviewee, as well as learn more about the interviewee and gain some preliminary data regarding their experience during the time Central High

was under sanctions to improve. The second interview used preliminary findings from the first six interviews to better focus on teacher working condition impact to the teacher as it applies to the research questions. Both interviews with each teacher were recorded and transcribed to allow for data analysis and to inform next steps by the researcher. The biography served two functions. First, it assisted in creating a safe environment for the volunteers to share openly and it added to my understanding of each teacher. The teachers were then tasked with answering the following question, "Of all the professions in the world, why did you decide to be a teacher?" The teachers were given the option to use an artifact as a metaphor or simile, share a personal story, or use a poem or artwork to assist in the task. Teachers' personal stories were shared one on one with the researcher during the initial interview.

During that first interview teacher biographies were shared and semi–structured interview was conducted. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Information gained was analyzed and is described in more detail hereafter. Themes across all of the teachers were identified and used to facilitate a second semi–structured interview with teachers. Concepts that emerged from the interviews and analysis were ultimately shared with the principal of the school.

Principal Interview

After all teachers were interviewed two times and transcripts were reviewed, the principal of Central High was interviewed. I interviewed the principal to learn how decisions were negotiated and implemented. The principal interview offered insight as to the vantage point of leadership with current school reform efforts.

Learnings from the teacher interviews were shared with the principal to bring teacher experiences to the person ultimately responsible for the leadership of the school. This step was completed in an effort to illuminate findings and give the principal an opportunity to comment. Teacher interview participants' identities were not shared with the principal to encourage teachers to share openly and to protect participants from any perceived recourse.

Themes from the teacher interviews were shared to highlight the perceptions of the school change initiative as it was occurring, as well as to establish the lasting impact such reform efforts have made. What makes a study critical is that the goal is not to just understand and describe a phenomenon, but rather to critique and change the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Upon principal reflection on the data shared and the journey negotiated, the principal and leadership team can take steps to increase their effectiveness in the future.

Data Analysis

As data were collected, they were analyzed in a timely manner to take advantage of its freshness as well as to inform research in successive steps. Several steps were taken to protect the identity of all participants. Transcribed materials were saved in a password protected file on my computer with all identifiable elements removed to protect the identity of all research participants and the school. A document containing cross–references for all aliases was kept in a safe, accessible only by the researcher.

All interviews, observation notes, and artifacts were analyzed using Lichtman's (2009), Three Cs approach. This approach first analyzes the data to generate a set of codes. The codes are then used to identify categories, which are then finally used to

uncover more global concepts that inform our understanding. It was my preliminary perspective that Bascia and Rottman's teacher working conditions could develop into categories for data analysis. Lichtman (2009) articulates that the process of coding begins with organizing and categorizing the text, such as the transcription of an interview. The material is dissected and categorized into codes. As additional texts are analyzed previous codes may be sufficient, or new codes may be added. The iterative process continues until all text has been coded. At this point the researcher reviews the codes, looking for gaps or redundancy (Lichtman, 2009). These codes were then organized into hierarchal categories. Lichtman (2009) stated that a researcher may have 80 to 100 codes that are then distilled into 15 to 20 categories. These categories can be further refined into five to seven concepts. Concepts reflect the meaning the researcher attaches to the data. Lichtman (2009) pointed out that even large data sets do not reveal more than a small number of central, meaningful concepts about the topic of interest. Some researchers take the stance that research of this kind is a reductionist practice and over simplifies the meaning of what is said (Chase, 2005; Riessman 2005). In this case study, with several texts to analyze such as interviews, meeting minutes, and notes from observations, coding allowed the researcher to control the breadth of the research describing the phenomenon of the case. Stake (1995) posited that these choices by the researcher are necessary to describe the case of study and the phenomenon of interest. Lichtman (2009) defined the goal of qualitative analysis to take a large amount of data and interact with it in such a way that you can make sense of what was gathered.

All interviews were transcribed and compared with data collected in both surveys, District survey and Central High Working Condition survey, as well as informal

observation data. This was then analyzed by hand to generate codes such as "time".

Codes were then revisited, and redundancy minimized to develop categories such as

"sanctions impact on teacher time". Ultimately the categories were framed within the

research questions to generate concepts informing an understanding of the case study.

In this effort of data analysis two different types of data analysis were utilized to

ground understandings from the research. Denzin (1978) identified four types of

triangulation. This study lent itself to multiple sources of data consisting of interviews,

observations, and documentation such as Campus Improvement Plan and Central High

biographical data, well as multiple theories such as the exploration of rivals. These two

forms of triangulation were utilized to converge and confirm emerging findings.

IV. FINDINGS

The Case Study School

I first arrived at Central High School approximately 15 minutes prior to school being released. Many students were walking around the halls in anticipation of the bell ringing. Central High is near a major highway close to downtown. Adults on the campus are friendly and seemed to be looking for my visitor's badge or district ID. Many of the walls have motivational slogans written on them such as "Why not us?" There was a class of 2017 painting on the wall (see Figure 7) that incorporates the graduating class' year and is separated into smaller areas each with a number.

Figure 7. Class of 2017 Wall Mural.

It almost looked as if it the numbers dictated what color to paint each space, but it was not that at all. The spaces with numbers were to designate each graduating senior's portion to decorate, thus adding their own mark to the Central High graduating class of

2017. Some spaces still were not complete although graduation was right around the corner. I hope to see the completed 2017 mural indicating to me that all of the senior class graduated.

I walked into a hallway with graduation pictures dating back to the first graduating class of 1953. The groups of students standing with their teachers and administrators evolved from one year to the next changing in class size, as well as the styles and haircuts of the times. The student pictures also changed with regard to the students who made up the population. Early on, Central High had been predominantly White but over time became more and more racially diverse until the vast majority of the students were students of color.

As I continued through the school, I walked up on some students sitting in the stairwell. They seemed to be hiding out, yet it was obvious that they were not intimidated by my district identification badge indicating I was an administrator. Not being there to interact with the students, I smiled and continued walking through the building.

During my tour, I ran into one student in the attendance office. He was very respectful and seemed to be assisting the attendance staff. It was hard to miss the full sleeve tattoo on his right arm. Such a large tattoo is rarely seen at my current high school and must have taken a large investment of time, money, and energy. I could not help but wonder if what this student deems important is very different from another student at a high school just a few miles away. Schools as well as the students they serve may have very different backgrounds and needs. It is important to recognize their individuality rather than blindly diagnose interventions to improve academic success.

As I walked through the hall, I could hear a fire truck siren in the background. The bell rang shortly thereafter, and all the students entered the hallways. Spanish was immediately present and seemed to be spoken by many of the students of Latin descent. As I continued to walk down the hallway, two of the students had a look of surprise and changed direction, heading straight toward me. They started to pick up speed and then both gave me huge hugs. To my surprise they were two of my students from Lady Bird Middle School. They immediately asked me if I was coming to work at Central High School. I responded, "Y'all haven't offered me a job yet. What's up with that?" They smiled and laughed. My whole soul just brightened up seeing them. Although Lady Bird Middle School did not feed directly into Central High, many students attending schools with a large percentage of economically disadvantaged students also have high numbers of students and families moving from one school to another. I chatted with the students for a while and ended with "I'll talk to your principal about that job" as we parted ways.

Central High may have had a larger number of students of color, but really and truly every school regardless of demographics has one thing in common…amazing young people who are trying to find their way through life and need our support to help navigate the way.

Central High School

Opening in the early 1950s, Central High is considered one of the older high schools in the state. In mid–1950s the first five African–American students began attending Central High as part of desegregation. That same year there was a total of 13 Black students attending White schools in the district. The school currently serves a population of 1,315 students. For the 2016–17 school year, Central High was 9.6%

African American, 83.5% Hispanic, and 4% White. Of those students, 77.6% were considered economically disadvantaged, 25.5% were English language learners, and 16.3% received special education services. In contrast, according to the 2010 census, the city was 8.1% African American, 35.1% Hispanic, and 48.7% White. Central High also had a mobility rate of 25.8%, indicating the percentage of students who have been in membership with the school for less than 83% of the school year (Texas Academic Performance Report, 2015).

In 1993, Senate Bill 7 passed in Texas not only reshaping the funding of Texas schools, but creating the state's education accountability system as well (TEA, 2017). The 2002 federal education plan, *No Child Left Behind*, measured and held schools and districts accountable for student performance on tests and dropout rates. Campuses and districts received annual accountability ratings based on the percentage of all students, as well as percentage of White, Hispanic, African American, and economically disadvantaged students who pass state assessments. State assessments are given to students in Grades 3–11. In 2015, President Obama reauthorized the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), tasking states with a greater responsibility for designing and building their state accountability systems and for determining supports and interventions for schools and districts. Darling–Hammond et al. (2016) stated the "ESSA marks an important move toward a more holistic approach to accountability by encouraging multiple measures of school and student success" (p. 1). The case study of Central High represents primarily a school phenomenon prior to ESSA but recognizes legislation's recent attempt to address shortcomings in our educational system.

Central High School was rated as academically acceptable for the first couple of years in the new state accountability system when No Child Left Behind was enacted in 2003. But in 2006–07, Central High received a rating of academically unacceptable. Interestingly enough, the previous year Central High had received gold performance acknowledgement: recommended high school program. In 2007–08, Central regained its rating of academically acceptable. In 2012, the state of Texas moved from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to the more rigorous assessments of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness or commonly referred to as the STAAR. In addition, high school students were responsible for taking content assessments that were mandatory for graduation. These are called the End of Course (EOC) tests. Currently, high school students need to pass: English I EOC, English II EOC, algebra EOC, biology EOC, and U.S. history EOC as well as accumulate 26 credits of course work to graduate high school. In its original iteration the Texas Education Agency sought to require 15 EOC tests to graduate high school. This was quickly pared down to the current requirements after it was realized that the amount of testing had gone too far.

With the newer accountability system and newer assessments in place, Central High found itself under sanctions to improve again in 2013 with the newer rating terminology of improvement required (IR) as opposed to the former term of academically unacceptable. The designation was due to poor performance in Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness. Texas' current accountability rating is based upon four performance indices: Index 1: Student Achievement, Index 2: Student Progress, Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps, and Index 4: Post–Secondary Success. At the time, postsecondary readiness was

based on high school graduation rates and diploma plans. Now postsecondary readiness

also includes a higher standard of performance on the STAAR test indicating being ready

for postsecondary studies. At the time, Central High was 89.2% economically

disadvantaged and had a student mobility rate of 30.8%, almost 13% higher than the state

average.

In 2014, Central High again was rated as improvement required and again fell short

in Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness. Consistent with not meeting the accountability

standard, Central High had to participate in the Texas Accountability Intervention System

(TAIS). Central High also had to participate in campus turnaround planning and

implementation, hearings, increased interaction with TEA support specialists, and the

assignment of a monitor, conservator, or management team. And now that they were on

their second year of not making the accountability standard, Central High also had to

develop and submit a turnaround plan explaining the systemic approach to produce

significant and sustainable gains in achievement. "Campuses not meeting this standard in

two years are subject to further sanctions, including campus closure" (TEA, 2017).

According to TEA, TAIS is the aligned intervention process for both state and federal

accountability requirements. This system is a research–based school improvement

process that is aligned to critical success factors and combines: data analysis, needs

assessment, improvement planning, and continuous monitoring (2017). These

technologies have been imported from institutions of accounting, business finance, and

insurance, and now they serve to regulate institutions of education, as well as the teaching

and curriculum found therein (Taubman, 2009). Power (1997) stated that the practice of

audit responds to a loss of trust or anxiety that is itself exacerbated by the implementation of these practices.

In 2015, Central High did overcome by receiving an accountability rating of met standard. Not only did Central High meet the standard in each of the four indices, but also received six distinction designations in reading/ELA, science, mathematics, social studies, top 25% student progress, and postsecondary readiness. Postsecondary readiness was the index that had caused Central High to not meet accountability for two years and the following year it became a distinction designation. There is a total of seven distinction designations that a met standard school can be eligible for. In 2016, Central High again received an accountability rating of met standard. This time, Central High received distinction designations in mathematics, social studies, and top 25% closing performance gaps.

From the 2013 to the 2016 school year, Central High has seen some changes in their school and student data. Attendance rates increased 3.2% to 90.9% (still below state the average of 95.7%). The mobility rate of Central High students decreased 5%. The number of students qualifying as economically disadvantaged also decreased by 6.3% to 82.9%. English language learners had been 18.6% of the population and for the 2016 school year Central High had 24.2% English language learners and had begun a dual language program. Unfortunately index scores are not comparable during this time due to the fact that the target score for each index has changed as well as the criteria for determining the target score.

In 2013–14 according to the Federal Report Card for Central High, 43.1% of the total staff identified as a minority. African Americans made up 11.7% of teachers at

Central High, Hispanic teachers 25.3%, and 60.7% white teachers. Thirty–six percent of teachers had 5 or less years of experience. From interviews with teachers as well as the principal, teacher turnover during this time was high due to pressure experienced at the campus.

Findings from Teacher Surveys

Data were collected via the survey I created specifically addressing teacher working conditions (see Appendix B) as well as some information retrieved from the district survey (see Appendix C) that is administered to the faculty of each school in the district. The two different surveys are not directly comparable to one another, but both give insight into the case study and the perceived experience of the teachers. It is important to note that the Central High Working Condition survey was used to help find potential teachers to interview and introduce the research topic to the campus, as well as help inform semi–structured interviews. Of the approximately 103 teachers at Central High School, 43 completed the teacher working conditions survey and 46.5% of these had been working at Central High School for 11 or more years (see Figure 8).
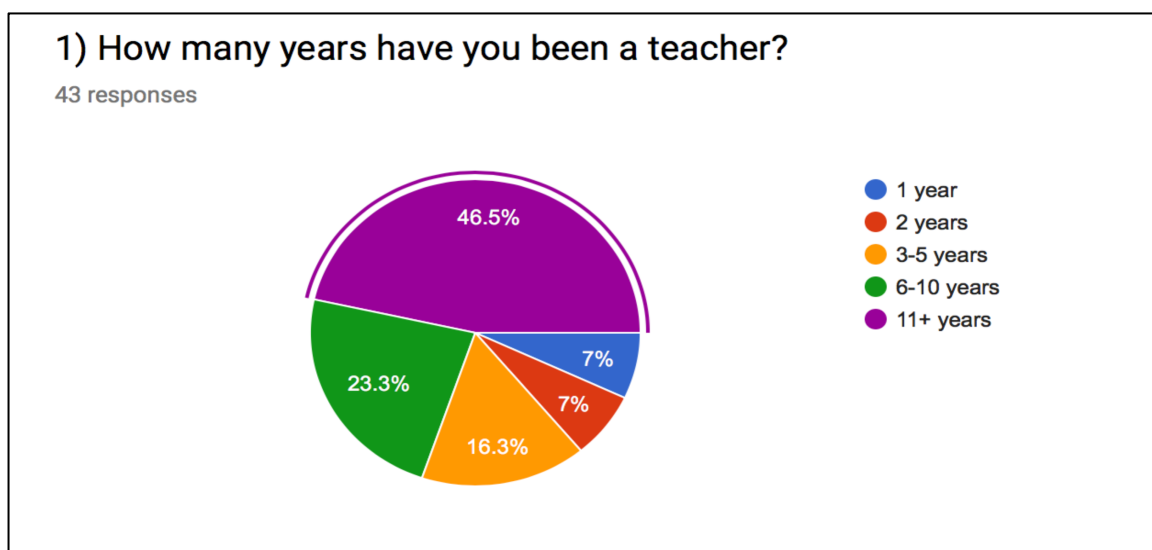
Figure 8. Teaching Experience of Surveyed Teachers at Central High.

Just over 72% of the teachers had worked at Central High for three or more years. Five of the teachers were currently teaching their first year at Central. Teachers from each of the four core subjects as well as electives were represented (see Figure 9).
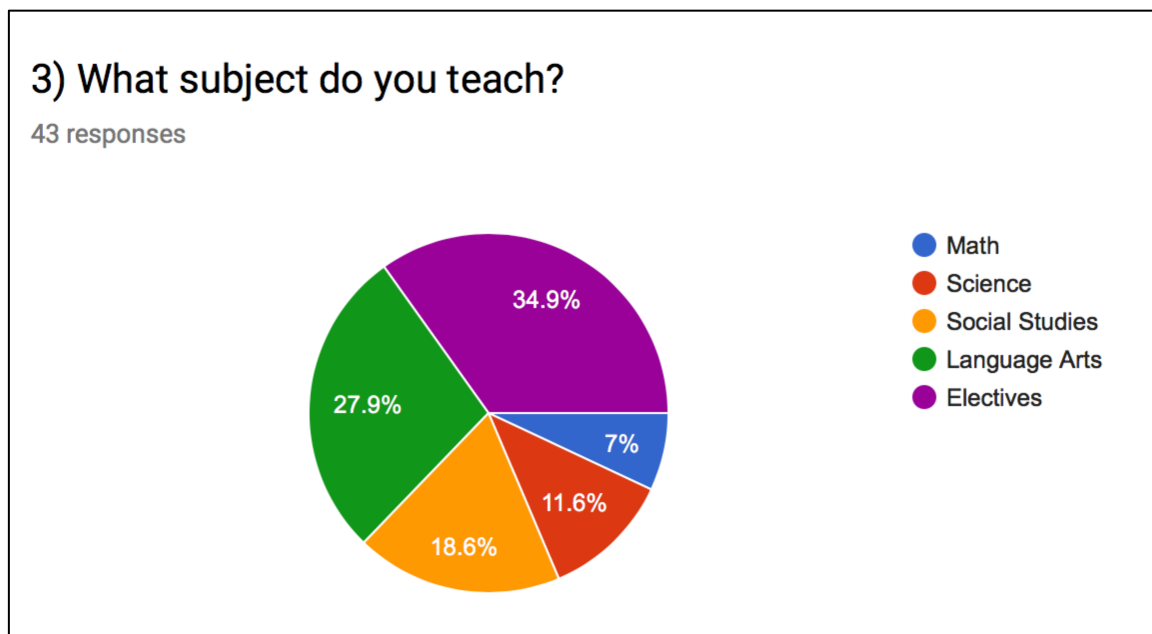
Figure 9. Subjects Taught by Surveyed Teachers at Central High.

Slightly more than 48% of the teachers taught a subject that is tested with and EOC exams and therefore have a direct impact on accountability.

When teachers were asked if "School improvement efforts during the 2014–15 school year led to smaller classroom size," 62.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Interestingly, according to the TEA annual report card class size was slightly smaller for all core subject areas and foreign language. Class size as a correlation to student achievement has been studied for many years. Bourke (1986) reported "For most, the issue seems to be settled: smaller classes promote higher achievement, better attitudes, different instructional practices, and higher teacher satisfaction and morale" (p. 558). The discrepancy between survey responses demonstrating that the majority of teachers

did not feel class size decreased in their school when the school report card demonstrates that class size was reduced may show that class sizes were only reduced in some classes. This questions what classes were targeted for class size reduction at the expense of which classes actually increased in size. If classes directly impacting accountability are targeted for size reduction and other classes become larger, teacher working conditions across the campus may be different, as well as tensions between teachers and also with administration as a result of such an approach. Class size has extensively been studied in the research and a preponderance of evidence demonstrates that class size in and of itself, does not increase achievement, but it's the teaching practices and student experiences that are more likely to occur in a smaller class that positively impact student achievement (Bascia & Rottman, 2011; Bourke, 1986; Dee & West, 2011; Leithwood, 2006). It has been shown that clarifying questions by teacher, direct teacher/student interaction, more flexible teaching, student questions, and monitoring of student work all occurred more often in smaller classrooms and student achievement increased (Bourke, 1986; Dee & West, 2011). Not only does class size impact the ability of a teacher to meet the needs of their students, it is also a demonstration of the value system of the organization.

According to Bascia and Rottmann (2011) one of the teacher conditions necessary for teachers to provide quality teaching and learning is providing teachers time to work professionally with colleagues. Of the 43 teachers surveyed, 71.4% agreed that they had been provided more time to work professionally with colleagues during the 2014–15 year. However, 57.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed that in 2014–15 school improvement efforts included increased resource adequacy. Just over half, or 51%, of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that collegiality and professional interactions increased

110

during the school year. When teachers were asked whether they disagreed or agreed with the statement, "During the 2014–15 school year, there have been more opportunities for me to learn and improve," 59.5% said they agreed.

One of the most striking responses from the Teacher Working Condition Survey was to the statement "My principal has supported me taking professional risks to meet the needs of our students." (See Figure 10).
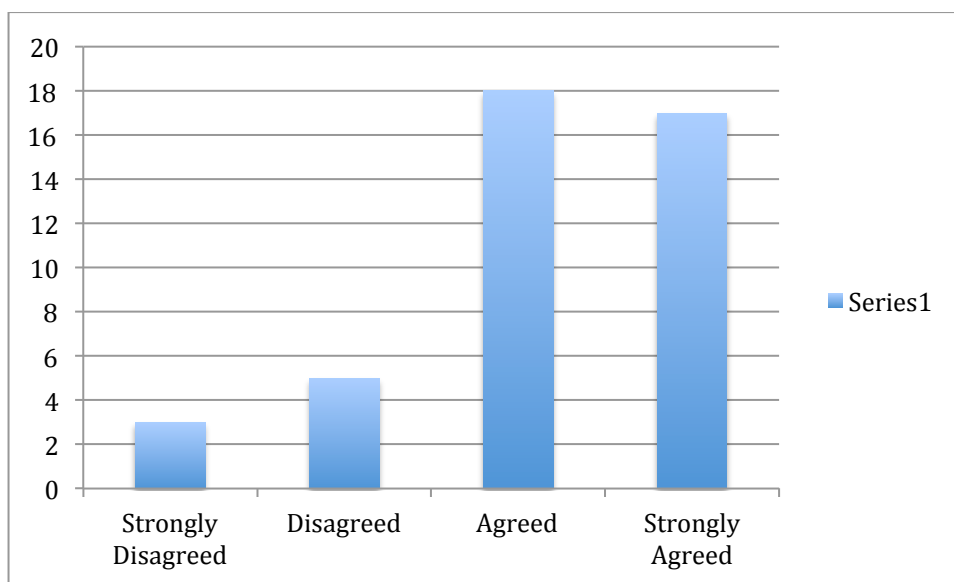
Figure 10. Perception of Principal Support for Teacher Risk Taking

Just over 81% of the teachers surveyed agreed that their principal supported them taking risks to meet the need of their students, and 74.5% agreed they have the ability to influence school improvement. Only one teacher strongly disagreed about their ability to influence school improvement at Central. Many teachers also felt that Central High goals were consistent with their own goals (53.5% agreed and 18.6% strongly agreed).

One of the teachers who disagreed with the majority of the teacher working condition questions taught an EOC tested curriculum, had been teaching for 11 or more years, but had only been at Central for two years. The teacher's first year at Central High

was when the school was in its first year after being under sanctions to improve. Another teacher who disagreed with the majority of the questions did not teach a tested curriculum, had 6–10 years' experience, and had been teaching at Central for three or more years. Yet another teacher who had disagreed with the majority of the statements taught an EOC tested curriculum, had 11 or more years' experience, and three or more years teaching at another high school. Each of these three teachers came from very different backgrounds yet disagreed with the majority of the questions regarding teacher working conditions in their school. They were also in the minority for the population surveyed. Teachers' experiences and perceptions at this time in Central High's history depend on a number of factors including their experience or lack of experience working at other schools prior to coming to Central High, and their role at the school (department head, elective teacher, instructional coach, etc.). At the very least, this demonstrates some teachers' working conditions did not improve during this time and that not all teachers felt appropriately supported. This is important to note because it represents a divide in the community at Central High, which can be representative of additional tensions at the school.

Major takeaways from the Central High Working Condition survey included that teachers that taught subjects directly impacting accountability, End–of–Course tested subjects such as English I, English II, Biology, US History, and Algebra, were impacted differently in the school. Therefore, it would be important to work with both types of teachers to gain a representative understanding of the campus. It also was made evident that Central High Leadership was working with some teachers providing opportunities to take professional risk, as well as the ability to influence the school. But perhaps most

importantly the survey introduced the campus briefly to the intended research, as well as solicited teachers to participate in teacher interviews.

Findings from District Climate Survey

Multiple sources of evidence in a case study allow the researcher to address a broader range of historical and behavioral issues (Yin, 2014). Yardley (2009) describes that the desired triangulation follows from the principle in navigation where the intersection of different reference points is used to calculate the precise location of the object. The survey the district uses to assess climate of schools from the teacher's perspective does not give a purposeful design to address teacher working conditions but does offer some glimpses into rival explanations. Yin states (2014) "the more rivals that your analysis addresses and rejects, the more confidence you can place in your findings." According to the district, the survey that they implement annually to teachers is administered to support "sound education based on the views of teachers, principals and other educators in our schools" (see appendix C). One question that stood out from the others asked teachers whether they agreed "parents exert pressure to maintain high standards". Sixty–seven percent of the teachers agreed with the statement where the average for the district was 99%. Additionally, 70% of the teachers believe that "parents press for school improvement" in contrast to 94% of district teachers agreeing with that statement. Seventy–three percent of teachers at Central believe their students seek extra work so they can get good grades and the district average was 88%. Only 73% of Central High teachers believe that parents and guardians are influential decision makers in the school while on average 100% of teachers around the district agree. District averages of 100% of teachers believe parents know what is going on in their school, whereas Central

High teachers only agreed 84%. Eighty–two percent of Central High teachers agreed that parents/guardian support teachers contributing to their success with students and district teachers on average agreed 100%.   According to this data, Central High parent and guardian support and participation is an outlier when compared to other schools in the district. This indicates something may be contributing to this specifically at Central High and not at other schools, such as over 85% of the families are economically disadvantaged or the high mobility rate of 27%. Families experiencing economic hardship may have more difficulty engaging with the school, especially if measured by traditional indicators. Families that experience higher mobility are not in one place long enough to learn ways to support the school. This is not to ascribe a fault to the families that have students who attend Central High, but a description of the perception of the teachers at Central High as well as an indicator of a need for differentiated school improvement approach.

The district survey offered a glimpse into teacher working conditions as well. The survey asked teachers whether they agreed or disagreed that, "Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, printers, software and internet access." As a district, 90% of teachers agreed with the statement, and at Central 74% of teachers agreed. The margin of difference illustrates that the teachers at Central High do not feel as well supported as teachers at other schools in the district. A school that is performing low and has a population of over 85% economically disadvantaged arguably has a greater need to have sufficient access to technology, computers, printers, software and internet access.

One of the teacher working conditions that Bascia and Rottman (2011) address is that teachers need collegiality and professional interactions with their peers. Central High teachers were asked whether they agree or disagree with, "teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues". District teachers said they agreed at a percentage of 98, where Central High teachers, agreed at a percentage rate of 84. Ninety–nine percent of district teachers and 97% of Central High teachers agreed that they work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices. Teachers were asked to respond to whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "[they] work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices." Ninety–five percent of teachers at Central agreed and 99% of the district agreed. When teachers were asked whether they have the autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery, Central teachers agreed 92% and district teachers agreed 100%. Teacher working conditions such as resource adequacy and the ability to learn and improve have a symbiotic relationship with students' opportunities to learn (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011). Ninety–nine percent of district teachers and 89% of Central High teachers believe they have sufficient resources for professional development in their schools. According to Bascia and Rottmann (2011) the opportunity to learn refers to factors such as teachers' and other educators' opportunities to diagnose and respond effectively to individual students' academic, social, and emotional states; opportunities for students to interact productively with peers; access to instructional and human resources; interesting, varied, and well–paced instructional activities with some degree of student choice and flexibility – factors that parents and teachers perceive as important influences on student learning" (p. 789). Eighty–nine percent of Central High teachers

believe they have adequate time provided for professional development and the district

responded agreeing 98% (see Table 3).

Table 3

School Climate Survey Questions

School Climate Survey Questions asked of Teachers	Agree/Strongly Agree Central High Teachers	Agree/Strongly Agree District Teachers
Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices	87%	99%
Faculty and leadership have a shared vision	90%	96%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	85%	97%
School leadership consistently supports teachers	86%	97%
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect at their schools	86%	96%
Teachers at this school trust the principal to make sound professional decisions about instruction	88%	98%

When Central High teachers were asked if they agree that professional development

provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching

practices, 87% agreed and district teachers as a whole agreed 99%. In fact, 90% of

Central High teachers believe that the faculty and leadership have a shared vision. And,

96% of teachers of the district agreed that faculty and leadership have a shared vision.

Only 85% of Central High teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns

that are important to them. When the same question was posed to all teachers of the

district, 97% of district teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns. At the

district level, 97% of all district teachers feel school leadership consistently supports

teachers. At Central High, 86% agreed with the same statement. In the district wide

survey given to all teachers, 96% of district teachers believe there is an atmosphere of

trust and mutual respect at their schools. Most, 86% of Central High teachers, agreed that Central High has an atmosphere of trust and mutual support (see Table 3).

Teachers at Central High were asked if they agreed that teachers at this school trust the principal to make sound professional decisions about instruction. Eighty–eight percent of teachers at Central agreed where district wide, 98% of district teachers feel like they can trust their principal to make sound decisions regarding instruction.

The results of the school climate survey shared here shows a relatively wide margin of difference between the teachers' perceived climate at Central High and that of other schools in the district. The school district for Central High has approximately 130 other schools included in the district survey results. Such a disparity between Central and other district school demonstrates that something else is leading these differences. In fact, 52% of the students in the school district come from low–income families and 25% of the school district students are English Language Learners. Other schools in the district enroll students that historically need more support, but do not experience the same margins of difference in school climate that Central demonstrates here. This really illustrates that the school sanctions applied to Central High may be impacting the campus in unintended ways. The difference in the teacher climate section indicates that the Central High teachers feel as though their needs are not being met and they are not being heard. As has been stated in the identification of teacher working conditions (Bascia & Rottman 2011), collegiality and professional interactions are an important component yet there is a 12% difference in how the teachers of Central High responded to the survey question and how the district on average responded.

Table 4

School Leadership Survey Questions

School Leadership Survey Questions asked of Teachers	Agree/Strongly Agree Central High Teachers	Agree/Strongly Agree District Teachers
Teachers feel school leadership makes sustained efforts to address teacher concerns about use of teachers' time	86%	98%
School leadership addresses teacher concerns about facilities and resources	85%	98%
School leadership is addressing teacher concerns regarding managing student conduct	85%	97%
Teacher concerns are being addressed regarding the support of new teachers	86%	99%
Teachers feel like school leadership addresses concerns about school climate	91%	99%
Teachers feel that students follow rules of conduct	78%	92%
Teachers believe that their administration consistently enforces rules for student conduct.	80%	92%
Teachers in the school consistently enforcing rules for student code of conduct	76%	81%

Some of the questions on the district survey specifically refer to school leadership's efforts to address teacher concerns (see Table 4). At Central High 86% of teachers feel school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about use of teachers' time. Across the district, teachers agreed 98%. When asked if school leadership is addressing teacher concerns about facilities and resources, Central High teachers agreed 85% of the time compared to the district teachers agreeing 98% of the time. According to the same survey 97% of all district teachers feel as if school leadership is addressing teacher concerns regarding managing student conduct were only 85% agreed at Central High. Across the district 99% of teachers feel their concerns are being addressed regarding the support of new teachers. Most, 86%, of teachers at Central High felt the same way. Almost all teachers (99%) in the district feel like school

leadership addresses concerns about general school climate. At Central High 91% of teachers agreed. District wide, 92% teachers agree that students follow rules of conduct. Central High teachers only agreed that students followed rules of conduct 78% of the time. And, 80% of Central teachers agreed that Administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct. Further, 92% of district teachers believe that their administration consistently enforces rules for student conduct. Interestingly, when teachers were asked about teachers in the school consistently enforcing rules for student code of conduct, 76% of Central High teachers agreed and the district on average agreed 81% of the time.

Teachers at Central High do not feel like they are treated often as the educational experts on their campus. In fact, 90% of Central High teachers feel they are the educational experts where across the district 98% of teachers feel they are the educational expert at their campus. Similar results were found when teachers were asked if they were to make sound professional decisions about instruction. Only 92% agreed with the statement where across the district teachers feel they are trusted 99% of the time.

One of the teacher working conditions that Bascia and Rottmann (2011) found was crucial for teachers to be able to meet their students' needs was a teachers ability to influence school direction. At the district level, 96% of all district teachers feel they have an appropriate level of influence. Only 82% of Central High teachers feel the same way.

Collegiality and professional interactions can be significant in allowing teachers to support student success (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011). According to the district survey, 90% of teachers at Central plan lessons and units together and 93% of teachers district wide said the same.

Major takeaways from the District survey included questions of major contrast between the district on average response and the Central High teachers' response. This really allowed the researcher to see where Central High, a school under sanctions to improve, may differ from the vast majority of other schools in the district that were not under sanctions to improve. Also, important to note is the fact that over 85% of all the teachers in the district responded to the District survey and 46.5% of Central High Teachers responded to the Central High Working Conditions survey. Although the district survey is voluntary, employees are highly encouraged by school leadership to participate. Areas where this contrast was most evident included the perception of Central High teachers have of community support, student engagement, and time available for professional work. And in turn these areas of interest were explored more by informing the semi–structured interviews conducted with teachers as well as the principal.

Teacher and Principal Interviews

Interviewing the teachers gave me a great opportunity to get to know these teachers better, but also gave the teachers an opportunity to learn about the researcher, the research, and ask any questions that they may have. The following section presents brief professional biography statements for each participant in order to introduce them.

Jennifer

Jennifer is one of the teachers that participated in two interviews for the research presented in this dissertation. Jennifer teaches social studies and currently is responsible for three different courses, Advance Placement (AP) World History, AP Psychology, and U. S. History. Students that take an AP class prepare all year to take a test to determine

whether they will receive college credit. Scores range between 1 and 5. Scores 3 and

higher often times get college credit, but ultimately it is determined by the college where

the student will attend. U. S. History is one of the five major high school tests in the state

of Texas that students are required to pass for graduation and have a large impact on

accountability. Jennifer started her career teaching at Central High four years ago.

Jennifer grew up in Texas and moved to her current city of residence when she

started college eight years ago. She knew she loved teaching when she experienced

student teaching. Jennifer though it was cool that she could be herself and could

encourage and impart wisdom upon her students. What Jennifer did not expect was the

students would also influence her. Jennifer had developed a love for social studies in

middle school when her middle school teacher got her interested in geography. Jennifer

is approximately a 26–year–old social studies teacher that identifies as Latina.

Christian

Christian has taught at Central for the last ten years and has been a teacher for 15

years, teaching everything from 6th grade to 12th grade. Most of his work has been

around teaching U. S. History, World Geography, World History, and Government. As

of this last year Christian has begun to teach world history and world geography in

Spanish. Although Christian had never read a book in Spanish, he grew up in a Hispanic

family close to the border and learned from his environment. The new approach has been

challenging, but Christian sees it as a beautiful objective celebrating other cultures rather

than just having a monolingual approach.

Christian came from a family where his father and brother were businessmen and

his mother and sister were teachers. During Christian' third year of college he decided to

move to Northern Greece and attended university there. While in Greece he met his wife. Teaching seemed to be the best option to allow her to finish her studies and give them time to travel between families during the summers. Christian always felt that teaching came easy to him, but he does recognize it as a skill.

Christian began teaching in McAllen, Texas. McAllen is in the very southern part of Texas and has a close proximity to the border of Mexico. Christian also coaches athletics at Central High. Christian is Hispanic and is approximately 37 years old.

Kim

Kim started teaching five years ago when she got her first teaching job at Central High. Kim is a science teacher and has taught all the life science courses, such as biology, AP Biology, and Environmental Systems. Kim explains that she "stumbled into teaching" and did not originally plan on attending college. Kim waited till the last day of college admissions to apply and when she got in she choose engineering for a major. The first science class that Kim had to take in college was biology and she loved it. Ultimately, she changed her major to natural sciences and decided she wanted to teach. She knew immediately that she did not want to teach middle school or elementary school.

Kim also knew that she did not want to teach kids like the ones she had gone to school with. Kim had lived in an area of Texas that was mostly affluent and White. She did not believe those were the kids she could make the most difference with. Central seemed like a school that she could make an impact. The student population is what brought Kim to Central High and the student population is what keeps her there. Kim says, "I love our kids here." Kim is approximately 27 years old and identifies as a White.

Andrea

Andrea is a teacher who currently teaches life skills at Central High. Life skills is a program for special education students that teaches students with learning disabilities focused on academic, daily living, occupational, and interpersonal skills to support students living and working in the community. Andrea began her career at Central High 14 years ago. Andrea had already received her bachelor's degree when she began her teacher preparation program in graduate school. During her teacher preparation program Andrea had been a substitute where she was given the assignment of being a one–on–one for a student with autism. One–on–one personnel are assigned to students when they need additional support and supervision throughout the school day. Her experience supporting this student lead to Andrea not only getting certified to teach social studies, but to continue graduate school and become certified in special education. Andrea went on to say that, "It was the best decision [she] had ever made."

Andrea has never taught at any other school and has been in education for a lengthy period of time. I had asked what has drawn her to Central High. Andrea stated that, "It's the spirit of family here with faculty, staff, and administration." Andrea has lived and grown up in the Central High attendance area. Andrea is approximately 50 years old and identifies as White.

Miguel

Miguel is a teacher at Central High who teaches English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Miguel works with students who may be new to the country or just grew up in a home where English was not the first language. Many of his students are from Mexico, but other countries of origin and languages spoken are also represented in

his classroom, such as Arabic or Burmese. Some of the students have different degrees of formal education prior to coming to Central High and may have other learning gaps other than English acquisition. Miguel does speak Spanish but uses predominately English in his lessons.

Miguel has been teaching at Central High for the past seven years. Miguel was originally was an anthropology major but says that he has always dreamed of being a teacher. Miguel left Texas at to live in Boston where he became interested in theatre. He then moved to New York and later Los Angeles. After many different jobs including acting, agent, and being a theatrical manager, Miguel went back to Boston to pursue graduate school for teaching. Miguel admits he loves teaching but is sick of being poor and having to work second jobs. Miguel is approximately 40 years old and identifies as Hispanic.

Jackie

Jackie teaches AP U.S. History, AP government, AP economics, and is also the social studies instructional coach at Central High. An instructional coach assists with teacher support and learning improvement. Often times the instructional coach also works closely with administration to support intervention and learning initiatives. Jackie teaches three social studies classes and uses three classes for the instructional coach role.

Jackie has wanted to be a teacher ever since she was four years old. From that time she has never wavered in what she has wanted to do or be. Jackie first realized her love of history in her sophomore year in high school. Central High is the first and only school that she has taught at. She admits that the first year of teaching was really tough, but the kids and the staff has made Central High her home. Jackie grew up attending a magnet

school and found Central High to be very different. Originally Jackie wanted to change students' lives but found that her life was just as much changed because of them. Jackie prides herself on building relationships first and teaching the content second. Jackie is approximately 32 years old and has been teaching for ten years. Jackie identifies as White.

Principal Williams

When Mr. Williams was growing up, teaching was not a consideration and was not even on his radar. As he got older, he knew he needed to go to college. After what may have been four unsuccessful attempts at getting accepted, he finally received his acceptance letter from a large state university. While in college Williams changed majors six different times trying to find his calling. During his junior year of college Williams started working at a private school as an after–school counselor. Immediately Williams found that he enjoyed this work and it came easy to him right from the beginning. "I felt like I was stealing money from the school…working with kids was so dang easy." It was this time that led Williams to go back to college to become the "world's greatest football coach and teach some kind of social studies." Williams also began teaching at the private school during the day. State teaching certification was not a mandate, so Williams was teaching and going to college at the same time. Prior to graduation, Williams taught seven different courses ranging from Spanish pre–K through 7th grade students' history of rock–n–roll.

Mr. Williams had to return to the Valley due to family reasons. Back home Williams became a teacher and coach at his old middle school that he had once attended as a student. "It was kind of weird," Williams was now on teaching teams with teachers

that had once taught him. To add to the strangeness, none of the other teachers wanted to be the team leader. Williams took on the leadership position his first year in public school. During his experience teaching, Williams has now taught at every level elementary, middle, and high school, both public and private.

After leaving the Valley to return to the part of the state where he went to college, Williams found himself working for a principal who was also from the Valley. Williams was approached to go with his new principal to a school that was at Academically Unacceptable according to state accountability and was in jeopardy of being closed. Through the hard work of leadership, teachers, and students the school made gains and was able to stay open. Once again Williams' principal comes to him, asking for his assistance. This time the principal told Williams that he needs to become an administrator. Williams immediately said, "it is not possible for me to be the world's greatest coach, administrator, and teacher." The principal responded, "You need to choose one." Williams was not ready to choose but did agree to take a graduate level course to learn more. The course that he took that summer took him to San Marcos, Brownsville, and even Mexico working with educators and professors. Having a great time reflecting on his work, he then made the choice to pursue administration.

Williams has been an educational leader at four different schools that have been under sanctions to improve. He has now been at Central High for eight years. Central High has made accountability ever since the 2014–15 school year. Williams is approximately 45 years old and identifies as Hispanic. Williams prides himself on a desire to work with students who have difficulties economically, culturally, linguistically,

and/or emotionally. These are the students that remind him of where Williams' comes from.

Major takeaways from interviews conducted was how the conversations with teachers helped describe how the sanctions impacted the teachers and students of Central High. The completion of the interviews and analysis of data yielded more descriptive themes of the phenomenon that occurred in this case study. It became apparent that these sanctions impacted the time teachers have available for professional work. Professional interactions between staff had actually diminished. Teachers of Central High believed they had a lack of community support. It was also made evident that school reform initiatives were focused increasingly on test and that this was in turn impacting motivations and efforts of not only teachers, but students as well.

Time Available for Professional Work

From interviews with teachers and the principal, the survey data, and artifacts such as Campus Improvement Plan, it was immediately evident that time was a valuable commodity. Teachers found that time available to complete normal teaching responsibilities such as lesson planning, grading, and calling parents was being infringed upon by the demands of new school improvement initiatives. The concept of "Time Available for Professional Work" depicts the impact of school sanctions on the time teachers generally used by teachers to complete normal teacher day to day responsibilities and collaborative work as teachers perceived needed to meet the basic needs of their students.

One trend that emerged from the teacher interviews was the amount of initiatives that seemed to come as a result of Central High being under sanctions to improve. Some

of the initiatives that the teachers referenced included Professional Learning

Communities (PLC), Standards Based Grading, developing power standards for each

content area, writing initiative in all subjects, focus on Open Ended Response questions,

as well as implementing and creating pre–test and post–test that would determine and

incentivize financially teachers that demonstrated the most growth in their students'

achievement from pre–test to post–test. There just was not enough time in the day to get

everything done. The survey administered at the beginning of this research found that

71.4% of Central High teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they had been provided

more time to work professionally with colleagues. According to the district survey,

teachers of Central High agreed with the following statement at a rate of 86% compared

to teachers from other schools agreeing 98% with the statement, teachers feel school

leadership makes sustained efforts to address teacher concerns about use of teachers'

time. It is extrapolated from this that teachers at other schools, predominately higher

performing, have more time to use as they see best. Some of the schools in the district

survey average response may indeed be low preforming, but the vast majority of the

schools in the district met the accountability standard and therefore were not mandated to

implement reform efforts.

Teachers consistently referred to all the initiatives and responsibilities that they

were responsible for. Often times using periods that they are not responsible for teaching

or Off Periods that are used for planning, preparation, and conferencing with parents, and

working with their Professional Learning communities (PLC). The PLCs consist of other

teachers that teach the same content area. The U. S. history PLC, for instance, will

consist of all the teachers that teach U. S. history and they will be tasked with working

together to lesson plan and create common assessments. Jennifer stated, "I think that utilizing that time sometimes it becomes difficult because you have so many different strings to pull." Teachers are expected to work with a PLC for every content area that they teach. Christian stated, "My planning time got cut in half. I would get close to about 900 minutes every two weeks, went down to the bare minimum; 450 minutes every two weeks." From the researcher's perspective, this time did not disappear, but it was used to support all the other initiatives that must be planned to implement. For example, to implement Standards Based Grading, teachers must be trained.

Teachers worked together to established agreed on power standards to focus their learning and teaching on. For each power standard the team of teachers have to agree on what mastery looks like. The teachers will have to create a rubric describing different levels of skill attainment. One of the key components of Standard Based Grading is that the teacher is not just responsible for providing the material to learn but must also give the student multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery. This means teachers must give opportunities to retest again and again throughout the year. Standards Based Grading was just one of the initiatives. Similar planning is also necessary to do Social Emotional Learning, focusing on Open Ended writing responses in every class, as well as any of the other initiatives that the school was currently putting in place. Christian shared, commenting on "everything" that must be done during Off Periods,

> We got screwed. We really did because that planning time is crucial. How are we supposed to grade papers, how are we supposed to give feedback to students, how do we plan? In our planning meetings, we are just talking about planning not actually doing it, just turning the wheels.

Kim added,

> The extra meetings. There weren't a ton of them. But every late start and every
>
> time we had a PD day, we got reminded that we were in accountability hell. It was
>
> one of those things that really brought you down. So, it was not a happy time.
>
> Time was brought up as a critical factor by many of the teachers interviewed, but

what bothered many of the teachers was how the time was spent and whether they

supported that or not. Jackie said,

> My teachers like the writing and they like to know what students know but it is time
>
> consuming and often times they didn't think it had a big enough impact on the
>
> writing test and it took away from their subject that they were teaching and they
>
> didn't see the results that they wanted to on the writing.

Kim stated,

> So, I had to build that from scratch so not having time, so whenever I brought that
>
> up that I didn't have time to plan for my other classes or contact parents, a lot of
>
> things that I think are very valuable, I didn't get a chance to do it.

Time was limited due to everything the teachers were trying to accomplish. Teachers did

not get as much time to do the other responsibilities that they also valued.

Collegiality and Professional Interactions

Another concept that the data illustrated was that of "Collegiality and Professional

Interactions". Collegiality and professional interactions speak to cooperative interactions

between staff, as well as administrators, where the teacher is treated as a fellow expert in

learning and teaching. Mandates and authoritative approaches may stifle creative and

innovative practices by teachers to meet the needs of their students and may lead to a

deskilling in which teachers are perceived more as technicians and less as professionals (Taubman, 2009). In some cases, teachers did not feel that they could speak honestly about the working conditions at Central High. Christian said, "You want to be the squeaky wheel, sometimes they get greased, sometimes they get replaced. So, we all kind of adapted." The teacher's statement is indicative of a teacher not knowing whether they should speak up or not. Rather than the teacher feeling empowered as a professional to address needs, the teachers are unsure of how to advocate for themselves and their students. In essence the teacher operates in a constant state of fear not knowing where to turn or what to do. Interestingly enough during my conversation with Principal Williams he addressed the impact of sanctions on schools and spoke about fear. Principal Williams commented,

> I don't know if there is anything in this world that fear creates a better product. So, scaring people by saying we are going to close you down. It stirs things up. Initially people dot their I's and cross their T's a little more, but at some point, the fear wears off and what happens is if you use fear too much the people that you scare do what they need to and burn out and leave. Then you are scaring a new group and a new group and a new group. It creates a culture that nobody wants to work.

The dictionary definition for collegiality states a cooperative interaction among colleagues. This cooperative interaction is breached if the teacher is operating out of fear. Kim shared, "I'm counting down the days until the end of the year". Even Kim who seems very dedicated to the craft of teaching and learning is impacted by the environment of the campus. Central high teachers agreed 10% less of the time that there

131

is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect at their schools when compared to teachers from other schools around the district.

In some ways the teachers received mix messages on what they should be teaching in the classroom. Kim stated,

> At the time our district science specialists told us that if we were teaching biology in environmental systems that we would lose our teaching license, so while were designing this fusion class where we were taking the elements of Environmental Systems but really emphasizing the Biology topics and figuring out which Biology TEKS we could tie into these Environmental Systems TEKS. We were trying to be very conscience of not teaching biology because we wanted to keep our jobs.

An inner conflict caused by mixed messages was common in the interviews with teachers from Central High. This inner conflict manifested itself by teachers attempting to balance two different conflicting goals or agendas, in many cases demonstrating a state of fear for the teacher.

During the time the school was under sanctions to improve teachers would have visitors to their classroom performing observations. Ideally these observations would generate support for the teacher to improve upon student learning, but this was not always the case. Kim shares another teacher's experience with a classroom visitor,

> She was so angry, that she got no feedback, at all, from all the people in fancy suits. She said that she did all this work to let them know what I was doing, so if they were interrupted during the lesson, they would know what she was doing and figuring out what the kids should be doing. She was very frustrated that she got back no feedback.

Christian also stated, "But I do feel we had some good conversations at the end of the year that will hopefully will not go unheard." This demonstrates that at least this teacher was unsure of whether their voice was valued. It is nice that "good conversations" were had but does not show a lot of faith that the conversation will impact the future. Jillian shared, "Even with picking power standards, which they advocated. They said you pick these and teach them, simple. It wasn't that simple, it never is." Teachers asked to do the work but did not have the preparation and support to take on the new initiative with confidence.

Although Principal Williams clearly does not agree with using fear as a motivation for school improvement, fear persists in a school that has been identified as Academically Unacceptable. Schools under sanctions to improve can face closure if improvement is not made. The pressure from which makes collegiality between staff difficult because it is undermined by fear. The Irish author and philosopher Edmund Burke, once wrote "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its power of acting and reasoning as fear." Unfortunately, the approach to school reform seems to be built upon instilling fear in the very people responsible for making a difference. Finnigan & Gross (2007) assert that *No Child Left Behind* is based on the assumption that consequences will motivate school staff to perform at higher levels and focus their attention on student outcomes.

One approach to remedy this to increase teacher autonomy, allowing them to take part in developing the plan to best support student learning. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) posited,

If teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for

133

their students as doctors/lawyers do for their patients/clients; and the freedom to do

such has been defined by some as teacher autonomy. (p. 38)

Lack of Community Support

The theme of "Lack of Community Support" arose from the data. Community

support here is from the perception of the teachers according to surveys and teacher

interviews. I recognize some teachers' view of a lack of community support indicates a

deficit perspective regarding families, but it also may be indicative of a need for a greater

systemic approach to community engagement in the work of improving low performing

schools. Community as described in the dictionary refers to a group whose members

share common characteristics, and/or interests. Teachers indicated that they do not

believe the parents are supporting the success of the school or the teachers. Christian

declared,

> The success and failures of the campus are determined by its community. The
>
> support a child has at home makes all the difference and you can put whatever
>
> model or strategies into the building, it's the community what really makes it work.
>
> You could probably go to Brooks County Prep School and put in any system there
>
> and it will be successful to any larger degree than it would be at Central High. And
>
> it's because those parents are watching and paying attention. I think with a high
>
> immigrant population you have parents that want to fly under the radar. They don't
>
> want to be noticed, maybe they are not documented. So they are gone, they don't
>
> exist as a voice so when things happen on campus we don't have the parents swoop
>
> in and say No, you can't do that.

Over 86% of the families are economically disadvantaged at Central High. Some parents might not be able to be as visible for their children in the ways that the teachers and the school system might traditionally expect, frequently on the school's schedule and timeline. This speaks to a need to focus on authentic forms of community engagement and parent relations as part of the school's continuous improvement work.

Christian went on to recommend, "…if more could be done to include the community and embrace the culture and allow the culture to be successful." In my conversation with Christian he shared, "You got to get them to buy in. If they don't buy in, then it doesn't matter." This really depicts that teachers do not believe the school can do it without the support of the community. School improvement may not be possible without community support improvement. Guhn (2008) acknowledged that reform efforts are commonly unsuccessful and unsustainable because schools alone cannot overcome developmental challenges of poverty and ethno–cultural segregation. Literature suggests that a school's community, teachers, students, and parents, are vital to increasing a school's performance (Ngalaw, Simmt, & Glanfield, 2015; UNESCO, 2012).

Additionally, Christian's statement, "The success and failures of the campus are determined by its community," demonstrates that some of the teachers do not believe they have the power to impact student success at Central High. A growing amount of literature has provided evidence revealing that the relationship of teachers' beliefs about their capability to impact students' motivation and achievement to important processes and outcomes in school (Tschannen–Moran & Hoy, 2007). If teachers do not feel supported by their leadership, parents, and community, students are not as likely to be successful. In the district survey only 86% of Central High teachers compared to 98% of

district teachers agreed that they feel school leadership makes sustained efforts to address teacher concerns about use of teachers' time. This is a striking difference when the challenges of Central High are considered. The argument could be made that teacher time and support are even more important at a school that has been historically underperforming, has a high mobility rate, a high number of English Language Learners, and a high number of economically disadvantaged children. School leadership questions to Central teachers were answered consistently 10 percentage points lower than the average for other district schools. The teachers of Central High do not believe they have the support of their community to accomplish their task. This may point to a need for professional development that builds teachers' capacity to engage with the community, and particularly families, in mutually supportive ways (Guerra & Nelson, 2009).

Focus on Testing Results

When the accountability system using test scores as a primary indication of whether the school is successful, it is understandable that leadership will make plans for school improvement by focusing on raising test scores.   According to the district survey, teachers from other school discussed data less than Central High teachers. Central High teachers agreed with the statement, "Teachers discuss assessment data for individual students" at a rate of 76% while other school teachers agreed at a rate of 67%. Central High has placed additional emphasis, importance, and time on testing results.

Teachers teaching different curricula were also treated differently if the curriculum is not tested that impacts accountability. Jennifer described some of the differences in with how teachers were treated if you taught a tested subject that directly impacts the

136

school's accountability or taught a non–tested subject that does not impact accountability at all.

> So, you saw a huge move to just the STAAR tested subjects, which at the time, I did not teach, so I was left high and dry to figure other things out, other ways to get support because there was such a huge move. I mean it was such crazy dramatic on the amount of support that was pushed into the U.S. history PLC.

> Some decisions for school improvement were made from test results from a test

that had only been used by the state once. Additionally, not only would the test have different questions the following year but would also have different standards. Adding to the challenge originally test questions were not released to schools. Jessica described her experience,

> So that specific year was the year district Social Studies department came down and other high school specialists came down and actually observed in the classroom and they were forced to tailor their lesson plans to what those expectations were even though you could argue at the time there had been only one roll out of the U. S. history STAAR. What would they have been tailoring to when that was the only thing we had to base it off? So, you saw this huge change. They were very stressed out.

One approach was getting non–tested classes to also support tested classes.

> If anything they were just trying to make sure that world history overlapped with the U.S. history, so that was just supplemented, not to change because that was against the law, but be sure that we were supplementing that and it was almost like

pulling teeth to get people to come in to see what we were doing in World History and if we needed support on a project or ideas.

Kim shared another example that occurs in science. "We designed our environmental system class as a step in, like an intro to biology class to help our kids meet the scores they needed for the STAAR test." Biology is commonly taught at the freshmen level in high schools, but by placing environmental systems first in the course sequence the course is postponed until the sophomore year. This also postpones the EOC exam which impacts accountability in the sophomore year. There are standards that must be taught in environmental systems, but Kim implied they also intentionally preload instruction to support the biology exam.

Jessica stated, "The kids were moving so fast through the content I don't think we get to create those meaningful connections for kids because we are forced to go through the content so quickly." U. S. history has 130 standards and skills that must be taught as part of the curriculum and all of which could be tested on the EOC exam. Most schools in Texas operate on a 180–day schedule. End of course testing this year fell on May 7– 11. This means that a U. S. history teacher must teach all 130 TEKS in only 168 days. Central High is on a block schedule, so students go to four classes one day and four different classes the next day. Teachers really only have 84 days of instruction with each student to master 130 standards and skills.

The focus on testing results is evident in everything Central High does and therefore impacts teachers and ultimately students. In the district survey, data play a bigger role in Central High than they do for other district schools in seven different indicator questions. Taubman (2009) shared that this use of data has become touted as

educational reform and occurring under the twin banners of standards and accountability, and has ultimately affected every aspect of schooling, teaching, and teacher education in the United States. Taubman (2009) went on to compare this over simplification of teaching and learning to that of painting a piece art but doing so by number. The latter can never measure up to the original. Yet use of data is believed to be very important by many researchers. Bernhardt (2013) stated,

> When only some data are used, the focus is typically on the gaps and improving individual students who are not achieving on the one measure that is used for compliance, and not on what or how teachers are teaching, or how to improve learning for ALL students. (p. 2)

Most teachers and educators do disagree with the over use of data and its possible failures, but few know how to move away from doing so especially at underperforming schools where staying open is resting on those numbers improving (see Table 5).

Table 5

District Data Use Survey Questions

District Data Use Survey Questions: How Often Does Your Department/Team…?	Frequently/Often Central High Teachers	Frequently/Often District Teachers
Discuss your department/team's professional development needs and goals	86%	75%
Discuss assessment data for individual students	76%	67%
Set learning goals for groups of students	83%	73%
Group students across classes based on learning needs.	71%	62%
Provide support for new teachers	90%	77%
Provide support for struggling teachers	83%	73%
Share instructional strategies	95%	83%

Achievement on test has become the ultimate target for school improvement. This one–dimensional approach is an oversimplification of student success and is not

consistent with the skill and learning that is necessary to be successful in life. Taubman (2009) expressed that we have come to a time when students and teachers are subjected to a curriculum driven by disconnected multiple–choice questions or essay prompts that must be answered in a set amount of time and which have little if any relationship to problems, interest, or speculation that we might associate with thinking, erudition, creativity, or curriculum responding to the needs of a classroom. To focus so much energy on test results is to ignore the vast majority of the needs of our students. It may not be surprising that a school that does not make accountability often times continues to struggle in the future.

Impact on Teachers Is an Impact on Students

As I was developing concepts from emerging categories, teachers commonly spoke of their own experiences, as well as how those circumstances consequently impacted their students. This may seem like a simple takeaway, but it is important to note that a failure to meet teacher needs commonly results in a failure to meet student needs. It may consequently be true as well that if teachers are given appropriate support, time, and leadership, positive outcomes may result for teaching, as well as student learning. Analysis here demonstrates how an "Impact on Teachers Is an Impact on Students."

Jessica shared how some of the initiatives not only impact teachers, but the students as well.

> I venture to say it was probably more the bad part of that or the harder part for them
> I think that creating that structure and being so hard on them. We had also been
> transitioning to standard base grading, which was awesome, is awesome. But that

transition and that reinforcement created a big burden for kids to get through so
much content so fast.

Pressure was on the teachers to perform and make gains for students learning. Pressure
was also on the students, if they did not pass the test they would not graduate.

But in addition to that not only was that it was very much present, but it was the
pressure to do very well. You have to perform at these levels and at the time, the
assessments that we created were really like, if you don't do well on this, you are
not going to pass the STAAR and that's what matters right now. That's what
matters for accountability what the teachers were told but that stress from them
comes through the student and you have to pass this.

Teachers felt like the academic initiatives impacted the students. Kim shared,

I think our big focus on campus, especially at that time, was getting our writing
scores up, which would get our English scores up which we were really concerned
about and so trying to work that in every single class was hard and I think as I
mentioned last time the fatigue on the students and keeping them motivated to write
over and over again. It was extremely challenging.

Student motivation suffered due to pushing writing goals into all subjects.

Interestingly enough, the 'drill & kill' pedagogical model that was taken up with students
is reflected in a similar 'drill & kill' used with the development of teachers.

Kim described the emotional and physical impact that she went through the year
that Central High was Academically Unacceptable,

As someone to get biology from where it was while also trying to develop
environmental systems and that was also my first–year teaching AP biology, I cried

every single day on my way to work. Every single day. I'm still here, but it was

incredibly a rough year and as much support as we did get, I think asking teachers

to care so much, who do want to do so well, at so many different things, I don't

want to say unfair, but I don't know what kind of word to put on it.

It must be incredibly challenging to give students your best teaching when the teacher is

impacted in such a profound way.

Central High experiences a large amount of teacher turnover. Kim shares the

emotional roller coaster that she experiences at Central High,

I will say that every year about November, so right before Thanksgiving everyone,

even me, and my best friend teachers, we have been here and done all the hard

work and we will continue to do the hard work…. say this is the last year, I'm not

coming back, this is my last year, this is it.

Even dedicated teachers feel the pressure of working at Central High. When a school

loses teachers every year, the school is in a state of flux always preparing new teachers.

The most common element can be the students with a kaleidoscope of changing elements

around them making meaningful relationships and student buy in challenging.

The naming of a school as Academically Unacceptable impacts a campus and the

people who are a part of it in many ways. There is a fear of closure. There is feeling of

urgency to improve. All the initiatives and change occurring increases an unsteadiness.

And there is also a stigma of defeat. Kim describes the feelings she felt occurring in the

school,

I feel like Travis has got some of the best teachers, we work our butts off to help

kids bridge gaps that are unbelievable so by no means do I actually think that we

suck, it was actually a vibe or feeling that went around.

Conclusion

The research completed in the case study of Central High has allowed us to look

into the impact of school reform initiative on a campus under sanctions to improve. After

time spent with six educators and the principal of the school much was learned about this

special place. The school has many educators who are very passionate about their work

and choose to be at Central High because they can make a difference. These educators

know that their students come from diverse backgrounds, and many face hardships and

challenges on a daily basis. But it is also evident that pressures to meet accountability

have impacted students, teachers, staff, and learning in a monumental way.

The first research question was, *how do mandatory school reform initiatives impact*

teacher working conditions?" According to Bascia and Rottman (2017) teachers'

working conditions include class size and manageable work load, time available for

professional work, resource adequacy, collegiality and professional interactions,

opportunities to learn and improve, support for professional risk taking, the ability to

influence school directions, and congruence between individual and organizational goals.

Five key themes were developed from the series of interviews, observations, and survey

data. Specifically, it was found that school reform initiatives impacted multiple areas

consistent with teacher working conditions, including time available for professional

work, collegiality and professional interactions, and lack of community support. One

theme that was identified that was not a teacher working condition was a focus on testing

results. This might have been expected to be the case at a school where testing results literally dictate whether the school can stay open according to accountability standards. But it was very interesting how everything in Central High is impacted by this overarching veil so that even when the school is in good standing, it is still a central focus. Taubman (2009) argues that such emphasis on testing results can function to shock, interrogate, shame, and finally to abstract individuals from their context by translating them into numbers. This is apparent in merit–based pay opportunities, test taking strategies, in the way data is used, and also in the working conditions that have been identified as a theme such as, time available for professional work, collegiality and professional interactions, and lack of community support. Teachers lose their sense of purpose and community when their artistic endeavors are minimized to multiple choice questions and numbers. Bernhardt (2013) stated, "schools focused only on gaps and compliance can neither innovate nor create a future that looks different from the status quo" (p. 3).

Most importantly, the impact on students was echoed from every teacher I spoke with. If teachers are impacted negatively, students will be too. If the school is focused on test result, teachers will increase strategies to increase test results; unfortunately, most testing heavy curriculums do not motivate students to learn or teachers to teach. This was very evident when Central High teachers spoke of a writing initiative to increase writing scores. Teachers from all subjects were tasked with giving open ended response questions in their class. Kim spoke to her experience having students do open ended response questions in her science classroom,

I didn't feel competent enough to give them good solid feedback and also when you have writing across the campus, kids are writing in every single class every day and they get to your class, 7th period and they are like, no.

Central High has placed many school initiatives over the last couple of years including Standards Based Grading, Social Emotional Learning, writing across all subjects, and merit–based pay (proven by common assessments). I asked Jackie a question pertaining to their recent success and not being deemed Academically Unacceptable any more. "So what do you think made the most difference?" Jackie responded,

> I think it's just teachers caring about the students, relationship building, and the kids knowing that they have at least one person to go to with issues. We make ourselves extremely available to the kids whether that is morning, lunch or after school. How can I help you, when can I help you? Just meeting the kid where they are at instead of meeting them where you are at, it has really been the most successful thing that we have done.

When the instructional coach of the social studies department makes a statement like this, it really demonstrates that school reform has to be about more than the numbers, it has to be about the people in the school meeting their students where they are. Senge (1990) remarked that educational leaders cannot force commitment. They can nudge a little here, and provide a role model, but their primary influence is exercised through the environment they create.

Care as the teachers may about their students, if the teacher is not doing what they believe is best for kids, it will not come across authentically. Inauthentic teaching leads

to inauthentic learning. Inauthentic learning may not be even learning, but just doing enough to get by. Schools that are not under increased pressure to achieve higher test results for accountability are able to find ways of connecting with their students' passions. Such approaches can cause students to get excited about learning and therefore learn more and deeply.

From my learnings as both a researcher in this case study, a public school educator, and as a father it seems that we will continue to fall short with our schools, our teachers, and our students if we continue to use the current antiquated accountability system that reduces our monumental task in creating whole adults to that of getting desired scores on standardized test. Fullan (2007) posited, "Accountability–focused schemes fail to move the sticks forward" (p. 299). Such a focus on testing results in over simplification the work at hand and places the focus of schools on the wrong things. This in turn impacts teacher working conditions negatively. Time available for teachers to do the work they believe is important is diminished. Teachers and co–workers have less collegial and professional interactions with one another. These could be opportunities for innovative practices that make students want to learn and participate. If we do not give our teachers the tools to do their job, we are not supporting them. And in turn we are not supporting our students. When we impact teachers and teacher working conditions negatively, we impact our students negatively. In short without vast changes to our accountability system in the United States, it falls to educational leaders to be brave. They must listen to their teachers and students and work together toward the common good of the school. They have to say *no* to teaching to the test and find ways to give their students enriching experiences that foster curiosity, collaboration, and problem solving. I have found none

146

of these measured in our current accountability system. Mintzberg (2004) might put it best,

> Leadership is not about making clever decisions…. It is about energizing other people to make good decisions and do better things. In other words, it is about helping people release the positive energy that exists naturally within people. Effective leadership inspires more than it empowers; it connects more than it controls; it demonstrates more than it decides. It does all this by engaging itself above all, and consequently others.

V. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Findings and Interpretation of Results

The case study of Central High has illuminated the school's journey through the pressures of being an identified struggling school and how that identification and the mandate to improve student performance impacts the school itself as well as the people that work there and the students whom it educates. In this section, the original research questions will each be addressed using the findings from the study; as informed by observation, survey, and interview data; as well as the literature that supports such interpretation.

Mandatory School Reforms' Impact on Teacher Working Conditions

When this case study began, the first question I planned to address was *how do mandatory school reform initiatives impact teacher working conditions?* It was evident that teachers' time available for professional work is directly impacted by such school reform efforts. To review, the teacher working conditions used to frame this question included class size and manageable work load, time available for professional work, resource adequacy, collegiality and professional interactions, opportunity to learn and improve, support for professional risk taking, ability to influence school direction, and congruence between individual and organizational goals (Bascia & Rottman, 2011). This case study analysis demonstrates that the mandatory school reforms that were put into place at Central High not only impacted teacher working conditions but impacted them primarily in a negative way. Mandatory school reforms at Central High included, but were not limited to, the use of outside consultants for teacher observations, emphasis on writing in all subjects, use of pre and post testing to assess learning in the classroom as

148

well as establish merit pay for teachers associated with mandated student growth in tested subjects, standards based grading, additional emphasis placed on End Of Course (EOC) tested subjects, identification of power standards, and double blocking of EOC tested subjects such as English and Algebra. The number of mandatory reform efforts in and of itself have directly impacted teachers' time available for professional work. At Central High, teachers teach three out of four hour–and–a–half classes. Teachers interviewed for the case study commonly commented that there just was not enough time to do everything they were being asked to do. At Central High 86% of teachers feel school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about use of teachers' time. Across the district, 98% agreed. Christian stated, "My planning time got cut in half. I would get close to about 900 minutes every two weeks, went down to the bare minimum. 450 minutes every two weeks." During non–teaching time, teachers traditionally grade, communicate with parents, plan lessons for the future, and prepare materials for future lessons. With so many mandatory school reform efforts, this time is increasingly used for professional development to implement school reform initiatives such as standard based grading, common assessments, data analysis, and implementation of writing initiative. The time available to complete teachers' previous and still necessary professional work was diminished by the newly required initiatives. According to teachers, planning time used for initiatives is also the time they use for grading, inputting grades into grade book, making copies, calling parents, preparing classroom, etc. When teachers struggle to find time to complete other responsibilities that they feel are crucial, initiatives and teacher needs are in conflict of one another. Little (1990) posited that productive teacher learning communities engage in joint work with

thoughtful and explicit examination of practices and consequences that emerge from collaboration on concrete task such as curriculum development, problem solving around student learning, and peer observations. Due to the number of initiatives, nonteaching time was not always sufficient to even complete new initiative responsibilities, much less address previous tasks that had been accomplished during this time. Reback et al. (2011) also found that teachers who taught subjects tested by the accountability system, at schools close to the performance threshold, worked longer hours than similar teachers at schools not impacted by accountability pressures. This in turn lead teachers to try to juggle many different tasks and increased the amount of time needed outside of the school day to complete all teacher responsibilities. Of teachers surveyed, 57.1% believed that 2014–15 school improvement efforts had decreased resource adequacy for teachers.

Collegiality and professional interactions were also impacted by these new initiatives. Collegiality is commonly defined as cooperative interactions among colleagues. Central High teachers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed, "teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues." At the district level, 98% of teachers agreed, while at Central High only 84% of teachers agreed. As has been stated in the identification of teacher working conditions (Bascia & Rottman 2011), collegiality and professional interactions are an important component yet there is a 14% difference in how the teachers of Central High responded to the survey question and how the district on average responded. "Professional" commonly implies standards of education and training that prepare members of the profession with the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform their specific role within that profession.

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) stated that teachers need autonomy to be able to address the needs of their students. When available time for professional work is directed and inadequate to accomplish all responsibilities, interactions among colleagues are less than cooperative and less meaningful. Principal Williams commented,

> I don't know if there is anything in this world that fear creates a better product. So scaring people by saying we are going to close you down. It stirs things up. Initially people dot their I's and cross their 's a little more, but at some point the fear wears off and what happens is if you use fear too much the people that you scare do what they need to and burn out and leave. Then you are scaring a new group and a new group and a new group. It creates a culture that nobody wants to work.

That time becomes about how much can we check off versus quality and meaningfulness of the work. Firestone and Pennell (1993) stated that "without a sense of influence over outcomes, support from others, and positive expectations about work outcomes, teaching is experienced as an insignificant activity" (p. 498). And more so, such directed use of professional time marginalizes it being professional and recognizing the expertise of the teachers.

Although not identified as teacher working conditions by Bascia and Rottman (2011), two other themes that emerged from the data include teachers feeling of a lack of community support as well as a focus on testing results. Nichols and Berliner (2007) attest that test–based school accountability has had several unintended, negative consequences for the development of children, including shifting resources from non–tested curricula such as the fine arts, as well as a focus on a relatively narrow scope of

151

tested material such as math and reading. In all my conversations with teachers in this case study, specifically when asking teachers why they chose teaching, no one ever said, *I really want to increase student test scores*. When this is indeed the reality of the mandated reform initiatives and is inconsistent with teachers' educational philosophy, teacher working conditions such as ability to influence school direction and congruence between individual and organizational goals come into question. More commonly, teachers say they want to make a difference more profound than points on a test and more specific to the student. In other words, test scores are not the whole sum of teaching and learning. Work performed by an effective teacher is best differentiated for the needs of each student based upon where they are and should not be over simplified to increasing testing results as the sole measure of learning. Giroux (2013) states,

> Connecting education to the possibility of a better world means the difference between teachers being technicians and teachers being self–reflective educators who are more than the instruments of a safely approved curriculum and officially sanctioned worldview. (p. 127)

Additionally, overemphasis on test results frequently does not resonate with parents and communities, and therefore does not address one of the core concerns of Central High teachers, which was community support. One survey item that stood out from the others was whether "parents exert pressure to maintain high standards." At Central High, 67% of teacher respondents agreed with the statement, whereas the average for the district was 99%. Additionally, 70% of the Central High teachers believe "parents press for school improvement" in contrast to 94% of district teachers who agreed with that statement. This really demonstrates that the relationship between school and community is very

different at Central High from other schools in the district. Teachers may believe that parents and families are not connected to Central High for a number of reasons but, regardless of why, this makes evident an area of opportunity that the educators of Central High believe is lacking and needs additional support.

Impact of Teacher Working Conditions on Student Learning

The second research question that this case study asked was *how do teachers believe teacher working conditions impact student learning?* Findings indicated that when time available for professional work is diminished, teachers are less able to be creative and effective with their approach to meet student needs. As noted above, time was impacted in a variety of different ways due to school improvement initiatives. This impact on working time also affected motivation. Kim, a seemingly dedicated teacher, shared, "I'm counting down the days until the end of the year." When even your strongest teachers feel worn and tried, students do not benefit. Giving teachers the freedom to make choices about what and how they teach has been argued to be a key component in solving the problems of today's schools (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Short, 1994).

Procedural follow through and compliance appear to be prioritized at Central above collegiality and professional interaction that could support learning. This systematic approach has measurable outcomes that can be attained, but it over simplifies the process and fails to generate the quality and variety of outcomes that are possible through teaching enacted as an art and science by professionals. Taubman (2009) stated, "these numbers give the impression that what happens in classrooms—extraordinarily complex, psychically tumultuous and potentially both ecstatic and maddening places of

153

teaching–is best understood as objective, transparent, and measurable" (p. 2).
Unfortunately, creative approaches to motivate students to be excited about the learning
process are then not explored to create dynamic experiences to excite students about the
learning process and develop synergy in the classroom.

The focus on testing results does not motivate students to learn or come to school.
Dee and Jacob (2011) additionally report that such reforms' limited contributions to
reducing the achievement gaps between students. According to teachers, students at
Central High demonstrated lower academic motivation. In fact, 73% of teachers at
Central believed their students seek extra work so they can get good grades (the district
average was 88%). Such a focus on testing, disenfranchises students from authentic
learning experiences that schools of today could provide if not preoccupied with a
punitive system of checks and balances. According to Taubman (2009), the climate of
education since the introduction of *No Child Left Behind* has become one that has been
reduced to numbers; numbers on test scores, numbers of dollars attached to merit pay or
to be made from profit–oriented corporations, or the number of outcomes met.
Furthermore, Taubman argued that such an approach is the exact opposite as that taken
by the most successful schools and therefore perpetuates poor pedagogical practices in
the classrooms of high need schools and the status quo of schooling.

This context as a whole negatively impacts community support. If garnering
community support is not built into and/or fostered in collective time available for
professional work and interaction with colleagues, the gap between school and the
community widens and encourages a binary between school and community versus a
sense of common or mutual goals. The survey asked district teachers whether they

believed parents and guardians are influential decision makers in the school. Overwhelmingly, teachers across the district believed this to be the case (100%). Yet at Central High, only 73% teachers only believed this to be true. If the vast majority of successful schools in the district believe that parent and guardian influence and support are integral to their school, but this factor is noticeably lower at Central High, then it is reasonable to extrapolate that this could be illuminating an area of improvement necessary to support student learning. This possibility warrants further study in the context of Central High.

It is evident in this research that teachers believe an impact on teachers is an impact on students. Stein (2012) confirms that barely 1% of low–performing schools manage to dramatically improve their academic performance during the first five years after being designated as low performing, and less than 10% accomplish marginal gains. Stein's work is indicative of the fact that the current approach to mandated school reform is not effective. Mulvenson et al. (2005) found that teachers mandated to use standardized tests had higher levels of anxiety than those who were not, and the level of anxiety correlated with a negative impact on student performance. Accountability pressures may lead schools and/or teachers to focus on some material while ignoring other material, or some students' performance rather than others, causing internal conflict and frustration on the part of the educator (Grissom et al., 2014). Negatively impacted teacher working conditions limit teachers' ability to meet student learning needs and therefore can lead to negative learning outcomes. Ravitch (2007) affirms that accountability not only destroys the joy of learning, but also destroys learning itself.

Improvement of Teacher Working Conditions to Maximize School Improvement

It was established in this case study that lack of recognizing and promoting positive teacher working conditions has many negative effects on teachers' ability to do their jobs effectively and impacts student learning negatively. According to Mizzelle and Kaniuka (2013), teacher working conditions do impact student achievement and school leaders must be aware of teacher needs. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) posited,

> If teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students as doctors/lawyers do for their patients/clients; and the freedom to do such has been defined by some as teacher autonomy. (p. 37)

Critical pedagogy argues for modes of education that foster teacher autonomy in the classroom and nurture the capacities of students to read widely, learn the best that humanity has produced, and develop the skills necessary to both critique existing social forms and institutions, and transform them whenever necessary (Giroux, 2013).

Although problematic teacher working conditions commonly negatively impact student learning opportunities, maximizing teacher working conditions alone does not directly correlate to maximizing learning outcomes for students. Walls et al. (2002) expounded that ineffective teachers are commonly described as tense, boring, unproductive, hate teaching, engage in little interaction, are unreasonable, and either dominant or have no control of their class. This study does not suggest that such an ineffective teacher will become effective with optimized teacher working conditions. Additionally, Walls, Nardi, Minden, and Hoffman (2002) stated that effective teachers are described as caring about students, organized, prepared, clear, enthusiastic, provide

authentic learning experiences, are interactive, and motivate students. It is reasonable to deduce that an educational environment such as that described by Bascia and Rottman (2011) as having a manageable work load, time available for professional work, adequate resources, professional interactions, opportunities to learn and improve, support for professional risk taking, ability to influence school direction, and congruence of organizational and individual goals may in fact be a perquisite for effective teachers to thrive.

At struggling schools, such as Central High, educational leaders must develop a complex understanding of their students and communities, develop collective ways to improve the educational opportunities of the school while increasing community support, coordinate school and student growth plans while not trying to do too many initiatives, and remain mindful of the conditions in which teachers work. Guerra and Nelson (2009) reminded us that educators must first address underlying beliefs of teachers and educational leaders to significantly improve learning for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students. Sergiovanni et al. (2014) identified three areas of need for culturally responsive leadership. First, leaders need to develop their own sense of sociopolitical and cultural awareness. This entails learning from the contextual issues and dynamics of their school community. Leaders must become well versed in the cultural perspectives of teachers and students. Jarzabkowski (2002) argued that incorporating social dimensions into teacher collegiality and social interaction between colleagues across cultures and differences may be beneficial in improving quality of teaching and learning, and the social health of staff by reducing emotional stress and burnout. Secondly, school leaders should develop school level supports for cultural

responsiveness. Examples include parent support specialists and/or community organizers who can address neighborhood concerns. And thirdly, Sergiovanni et al. (2014) recommended supervisors foster culturally responsive changes to instructional practices. Guerra and Nelson (2009) posited, "Individuals with an additive view see diversity as a rich resource that can be tapped to bridge cultural differences and maximize learning for all students" (p. 355).

Providing authentic learning experience requires educators to learn from their community and deliver learning opportunities that value and empower learners. Gordon (2004) remarked teachers need to be empowered learners: "If teachers are expected to facilitate holistic student learning, then school needs to be a place that enables continued emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development of teachers themselves" (p. 13). Principals who are transformational leaders play a key role in establishing the school as an intellectual environment, and teachers—in sharing the responsibility for transformational leadership—enhance the intellectual atmosphere, model what it means to be professional educators, extend professional concern for colleagues, and inspire them to their best efforts (Printy, Marks, & Bowers, 2009).

Part of the aim of this study was to use critical theory to frame the research and findings. The findings demonstrate that the safeguards of the educational system as it is today, actually do not safeguard the system at all. Schools under sanctions tend to have high representation of students of color and low–income students. It is exposed in this case study that systems that work against teacher working conditions, and that have a negative impact on student learning, adversely affect students of color and low–income students. Therefore, the so–called safeguards of the system actually perpetuate the status

quo and insure that historically marginalized populations do not get the educational opportunity afforded to the schools of the affluent. It is only when teacher working conditions are valued and teachers are given the opportunity to create truly authentic student–centered experiences will the status quo be broken and the road to equitable change enlightened. Critical pedagogy has surfaced as a student–centered approach that necessitates appropriate teaching working conditions and expertise to engage and empower students. The empowerment of teachers and students to work collaboratively and participate in critical dialogue equips each with agency to grow and engage in democratically (Giroux, 2013). Students must recognize the value in themselves and their education to actively participate and grow. Giroux (2013) states that "connecting education to the possibility of a better world means the difference between teachers being a technicians and teachers being self–reflective educators who are more than the instruments of a safely approved curriculum and officially sanctioned worldview" (p. 127). Aronowitz (1998) reminds us that we must allow education "to encourage human agency, not mold it in the manner of Pygmalion" (pp. 10–11). It is from these findings that I hope to enlighten and reinvigorate the democratic process of teaching and learning, as well as address how such efforts can be fostered.

Ultimately the case study of Central High illuminated how mandatory school sanctions can impact teachers and students. These finding suggest that focusing solely upon test results can impact teachers' ability to positively impact students. School improvement efforts should focus at least partially on teacher working conditions to ensure that teachers have the ability to creatively address the diverse needs of students. These findings also suggest that such top down approaches to school reform do not foster

159

students or teachers to use their full capacity to learn and grow but reduce teaching and learning to a meaningless set of tasks that must be completed. The study also suggests such non–culturally responsive approaches may perpetuate low performing schools mostly impacting more marginalized populations that need to benefit most from quality education.

Limitations

Qualitative research conducted as a case study aims for depth of understanding of a specific situation rather than generalizable findings. Therefore, additional case studies may be necessary in order to develop a broader understanding of the impact of teacher working conditions across various settings. Patton (1985) described it as a process that explores specific contexts or interactions in order to improve our understanding of unique situations. The aspirations of this study are specific and limited to one school that was studied with the intent to gain understanding that may lead to improved efforts in the future. In this study, the purpose was to understand how externally derived school improvement affected teacher working conditions and therefore impacted student learning at the case study school. Only after we have a clear understanding of the case study at hand and the context in which it occurs can we explore commonalities between and across different cases (Yin, 2014).

The quality of the research and findings is largely dependent upon the quality of the researcher. Qualitative inquiry focuses on meaning in context requiring a data collection instrument that is sensitive in underlining meaning when gathering and interpreting data. The qualitative researcher, is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, must rely on his or her instincts and abilities to complete the research and

develop findings (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the merit of the study is directly impacted by the expertise of the researcher. In this particular case, as a novice researcher completing a case study for the first time, I have relied on the knowledge and skills I gained in my studies as a doctoral student of school improvement, my 15 years of experience in education, my 42 years of life experiences, as well as the expertise and guidance of my accomplished doctoral committee to guide this work. All of which impact my approach and understanding, both advancing and limiting understandings gained from this case study.

It should be noted that the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that can limit the accuracy of qualitative research. This is indeed the case for the researcher as well as the subject of research. A researcher, if unethical, could select among the data any information that supports a preconceived or desired outcome. Merriam (2009) reminds us that rather than trying to eliminate these biases, it is important to identify them and monitor how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data. This is accomplished by spending additional time examining participants' background and prior experiences in addition to those during the time of the case study as well as considering power dynamics of who benefits and why. Qualitative research such as this is an inductive process and limited to building concepts and theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research. Miriam (2009) posited that a case study is limited to describing the phenomenon rather than predicting future behavior. Due to the nature of the study, validity and reliability may come into question. Sound methodology assists with strengthening these characteristics. Strategies to address and minimize such limitations included triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement

in data collection, researcher's position, peer review, audit trail, rich and thickness of descriptions, and maximum variation (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). Such strategies were addressed and purposefully included in the methodology of this case study.

In addition, a limitation to this study is that it does not incorporate the voices of community members and students. Due to the sensitive nature of schools that are under sanctions to improve and the challenges to gain access to such schools, community and student voice were not included as part of the scope of this case study. However, the addition of both would give a more robust descriptive analysis, especially in regards to critical pedagogy's interest in an inclusive and democratic approach to pedagogical practices. .

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Although this case study's findings have illuminated some opportunities for more successful school reform efforts, additional research is still necessary. As noted previously in limitations, it will be helpful to explore the voice of the students and the community members in future case studies to better understand the impact of the reform effort. This is challenging for many reasons including the fact that the students in these studies are minors and are a protected population and additional oversight to conduct such research is required. But the student is also the intended beneficiary of the school improvement effort. To think we could possibly have a whole understanding of the phenomenon without including student voice would be like a doctor having full understanding of their patient without ever speaking to them.

Additionally, including interviews from community members would also be helpful to understand the perception of the community about school reform efforts. Some

teachers highlighted community support as an important piece of the school culture that was missing. Community voice from student parents could help our understanding of this dynamic. How are community members valued in the development of the school reform effort? Such insight is important in promoting sustainable school improvement efforts.

The findings from this case study can be used in the preparation and development of school leaders to navigate school improvement more effectively as well as to inform changes to our current accountability system to better support desired outcomes in student learning.   In the current atmosphere of high stakes testing and accountability, school leaders must navigate competing agendas. Not only must educational leaders prioritize data driven improvement results in test scores and achieving accountability measures, they must also provide the conditions to promote positive school change and motivate student and teacher engagement. This means purposefully including teacher working conditions as part of the school improvement plan, as well as continuing to monitor these conditions during the process. Darling–Hammond (2015) posited that as schools across the country take on preparing all children for success in college, career, and life, they must move toward creating a more aligned system of assessment and accountability that focuses on meaningful learning, enabled by professional and skilled educators, and supported by appropriate resources. With this in mind, our accountability system needs to revisit how it mandates sanctions and school reform efforts. This is not to say that standards are unimportant, but rather that it has been demonstrated in this case study that there are unintended consequences if test performance is the sole measure of effective schools. This study highlights that school reform efforts should include

perspectives of critical pedagogy while assuring that teacher working conditions are such

to allow reform efforts to be plausible and sustainable. Such an approach values

education as a moral and political project, "in part making a commitment to the future,

and it remains the task of educators to make sure that the future points the way to a more

socially just world – a world in which the discourse of critique and possibility in

conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of a

broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived (Giroux, 2013, p. 126).

Personal Reflection

Studying the impact of sanctions on teacher working conditions at a case study

school has influenced my views of school reform efforts. The more I learn from my

research into school reform efforts, the more I believe that our current system in Texas is

not structured to improve schools, but rather to perpetuate the status quo and/or

encourage the dismantling of public education (see Giroux, 2013). The schools that are

most likely to struggle in today's system of high stakes testing are the same schools that

enroll a disproportionate number of students of color, economically disadvantaged

students, and students for whom English was not their first language. These are the same

people and communities that have been historically marginalized, and which continue to

experience inferior and inadequate access to education and whose voices are ineffectual

when they speak up for their students. Our current accountability system favors affluent

schools by choosing outcomes for which affluent students are predicted to demonstrate

strong results. Students who have grown up speaking English reflect the cultural

mainstream. These are students who have had an economically secure childhood,

intergenerational access to quality and higher education, and someone available to read to

164

them on a regular basis, thereby making them more likely to be strong readers and perform ahead of students who have not had these same opportunities. The transformation of our accountability system to a high–stakes testing model has amplified the disadvantageous effect of these differences. Taubman (2009) stated the current transformation is different and much more dangerous than that previously experienced in the U.S. educational system:

> Its uniqueness lies in its pervasiveness, its threat to the very foundations of public education, its wide embrace by the educational establishment, its direct assault on the intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical life of teachers, and its radical misunderstanding of teaching. (p. 3)

Sarason argued that the word "teach" is more consistent with today's "standards and accountability" focus where the goal is for the teacher to fill students' minds with pre–identified knowledge and standards that can be easily demonstrated as learned by administration of a test (2004). Notably, many employers and parents do not share the same value for student educational outcomes. When top industries speak of necessary skills for success, words such as resilience, flexible, multi–faceted, collaborative, innovative, investigative, and self–directed are frequently mentioned. Unfortunately, these words are not found in the desired outcomes of targeted learning for accountability purposes. Sarason (2004) would argue that productive learning is a process that takes place in a social context where motivation, attitudes, cognitive and emotional responses are explored, and none of which is ever zero in strength. Schools that find themselves not performing well have no choice but to work on testing objectives to achieve acceptable accountability ratings or face additional sanctions or even closure. The schools that have

the opportunity to focus on the skills that industry has indicated as valued are the ones that are not worried about making accountability and have historically done well on test. Instead these schools can engage in dynamic and more motivational learning opportunities that better prepare their students for a future in the knowledge economy. Schools identified as underperforming face the possibility of sanctions and even closure if required improvement does not occur, primarily indicated by standardized testing results. Therefore, these schools unfortunately focus on testing with students rather than providing authentic enriching learning experiences. The schools that most need to motivate their students to be excited about teaching and learning unfortunately end up doing the opposite.

Although teacher working conditions, if not purposefully considered during school improvement efforts, may impact teaching and learning negatively, an accountability system that has values unaligned with teachers, students, and employers may never allow truly transformative opportunities to happen in the classroom. This diminishes the potential of teaching and learning, and of students themselves.

With this being said, I implore all educational leaders, parents, students, and all stakeholders in public education to ensure that their voices are heard regarding future school legislation and accountability efforts. In the meantime, educational leaders, regardless of dictated sanctions or required improvements, must not lose sight of the learner and the educators who work day in and day out to accomplish learning goals. These are the people who make a difference. These are the people who can save a school. Our educational leaders must be brave enough to recognize goals and directives for accountability, but also hold true to the fact if we do not take care of our teachers and

provide the appropriate circumstances for excellence, we cannot be successful. School

leaders must take note from Bascia and Rottman (2011) and ensure that schools provide

manageable class sizes and teacher workloads, assuring teachers' time to engage in

professional work beyond the specific instructional time with students is appropriately

maximized and protected. Leadership must provide the resources to accomplish goals.

Teachers must also be given the opportunity to participate collegially with staff and

participate in professional interactions. This includes formation of the school

improvement plan and a seat at the table for school leadership decisions. Teachers must

participate in influencing the school direction. Educational leaders must assure that our

teachers have the opportunity to learn and improve. This means providing professional

development that the teachers find of value and that supports their efforts. Our

educational leaders must not only allow our teachers a seat at the table, but also support

them taking a professional risk to help students. They commonly know the students the

best and know what might help them the most. This congruence between individual and

organizational goals is paramount. Teacher buy–in and active participation in the plan

are all but assured when the teacher was a crucial part in making the plan. Paulo Freire

(1998) reminded us "teachers cannot be effective when they remain in the thrall of an

exploitative school system that robs them of their own voice" (p. 13). Give your teachers

voice and agency, and then, in the democratic spirit of critical pedagogy (Aronowitz,

1998; Giroux, 2013) ask your teachers to do the same for their students.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

Short Cycle Assessment Calendar

2011–2012 *HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS* SHORT CYCLE ASSESSMENT CALENDAR AUGUST 9, 2011

TESTING WINDOW	6 WEEKS GRADING PERIOD	GRADE PERIOD TEST #	UNIT NAME	ITEM	AVERAGE TIME
9/7–9/13	1st	TEST1	Comparing Fiction & Nonfiction	8–10	30 min
9/27–10/3	1st	TEST2	Comparing Fiction & Nonfiction	8–10	30 min
10/19–10/25	2nd	TEST1	Literary Elements & Short Stories	8–10	30 min
11/31–12/6	3rd	TEST1	Literary, and Informational Text	8–10	30 min
12/14–12/20	3rd	TEST2	Drama, Literary, and Informational Text	8–10	30 min
1/18–1/24	4th	TEST1	Poetry & Informational Text	8–10	30 min
3/21–3/27	5th	TEST1	Comprehension of Nonfiction Text	8–10	30 min
4/10–4/16	5th	TEST2	Comprehension of Nonfiction Text	8–10	30 min
5/2–5/8	6th	TEST1	Literary Themes	8–10	30 min
9/7–9/13	1st	TEST1	Comparing Fiction & Nonfiction	8–10	30 min
9/27–10/3	1st	TEST2	Comparing Fiction & Nonfiction	8–10	30 min
10/19–10/25	2nd	TEST1	Literary Elements in Short Stories	8–10	30 min
11/30–12/4	3rd	TEST1	Literary Elements	8–10	30 min
12/14–12/20	3rd	TEST2	Drama, Literary, and Informational Text	8–10	30 min
1/25–1/31	4th	TEST1	Poetry & Connecting Across Texts	8–10	30 min
2/14–2/20	4th	TEST2	Reading & Writing Nonfiction Text	8–10	30 min
3/21–3/27	5th	TEST1	Reading & Writing Nonfiction Text	8–10	30 min
4/10–4/16	5th	TEST2	Reading & Writing	8–10	30 min

			Nonfiction Text		
5/2–5/8	6th	TEST1	Literary Themes	8–10	30 min
9/7–9/13	1st	TEST1	Comprehension of Early American Literature	8–10	30 min
9/27–10/3	1st	TEST2	Comprehension of Early American Literature	8–10	30 min
10/19–10/25	2nd	TEST1	Early 19th Century American Literature	8–10	30 min
11/30–12/4	3rd	TEST1	Division, Reconciliation and Expansion	8–10	30 min
12/14–12/20	3rd	TEST2	Division, Reconciliation and Expansion	8–10	30 min
1/25–1/31	4th	TEST1	Discontent in Modern Times	8–10	30 min
2/14–2/20	4th	TEST2	Discontent in Modern Times	8–10	30 min
3/21–3/27	5th	TEST1	Post–War American Literature	8–10	30 min
4/10–4/16	5th	TEST2	Post–War American Literature	8–10	30 min
5/2–5/8	6th	TEST1	Perception	8–10	30 min

Teacher Working Conditions

Required school improvement can impact teachers and students in profound ways. With your responses we hope to learn from your experience. Please consider your answers within the 2014–15 school year context.

1) How many years have you been a teacher?

    a.   1 year

    b. 2 years

    c. 3–5 years

    d. 6–10 years

    e. 11+ years

2) How many years have you worked at Central High School?

    a. This is my first year.

    b. 1 year

    c. 2 years

    d. 3 or more years

3) What subject do you teach?

    a. Math

    b. Science

    c. Social Studies

    d. Language Arts

    e. Electives

4) Do you teach an End of Course tested curriculum?

    a. Yes

    b. No

5) School improvement efforts during the 2014–15 school year led to smaller classroom sizes.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

6) During the 2014–15 school year, teachers were given more time to work professionally with colleagues.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

7) School improvement efforts in 2014–15 included increased resource adequacy.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

8) Collegiality and professional interactions with colleagues increased during the 2014–15 school year.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

9) During the 2014–15 school year, there have been more opportunities for me to learn and improve.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

10) My principal has supported me taking professional risks to meet the needs of our students.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

11) My administrators have supported me taking professional risks to meet the needs of our students.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

12) I feel like I have the ability to influence school improvement at Central High.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

13) During the 2014–15 school year, I felt that Central High School goals were consistent with my goals.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Agree

    d. Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C

District Survey (Identifying elements blacked out or removed)

Intro

Your response is very important and is completely confidential. For more information about the confidentiality of your response, please read the DRE confidentiality statement.

Thank you so much for your time and commitment to this initiative!

When you are ready to begin, please click the arrow.

FACILITIES AND RESOURCES (TEACHING & PROFESSIONAL STAFF)

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school facilities and resources.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, printers, software and Internet access.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have sufficient training and support to fully utilize the available instructional technology.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens, etc.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional support personnel.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have adequate space to work productively.	○	○	○	○	○
My school is provided sufficient data and information to make informed decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○
The school environment is clean and well maintained.	○	○	○	○	○
The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning.	○	○	○	○	○

FACILITIES AND RESOURCES (ADMINISTRATORS)

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about resources for your

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
My school receives instructional resources commensurate with other schools in the district.	○	○	○	○	○
My school receives instructional resources commensurate with student needs.	○	○	○	○	○

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about leadership in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	○	○	○	○	○
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	○	○	○	○	○
The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher performance is assessed objectively.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	○	○	○	○	○
The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.	○	○	○	○	○
The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.	○	○	○	○	○
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.	○	○	○	○	○
School leadership effectively communicates policy.	○	○	○	○	○

The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
The use of time in my school	○	○	○	○	○
Facilities and resources	○	○	○	○	○
Community support and involvement	○	○	○	○	○
Managing student conduct	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher leadership	○	○	○	○	○
School leadership	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development	○	○	○	○	○
Instructional practices and support	○	○	○	○	○
New teacher support	○	○	○	○	○
Achievement press	○	○	○	○	○
General school climate	○	○	○	○	○

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (ADMINISTRATORS)

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
District leaders involve principals in decisions that directly impact the operations of my school.	○	○	○	○	○
District leaders clearly define expectations for schools.	○	○	○	○	○
District leaders provide constructive feedback to principals toward					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
improving their performance.	○	○	○	○	○
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within this district.	○	○	○	○	○
Central office provides principals support when they need it.	○	○	○	○	○
The district has a clearly defined mission and vision for all schools.	○	○	○	○	○
District leaders encourage cooperation among schools toward improving student performance.	○	○	○	○	○
District leaders trust principals to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	○	○	○	○	○
Principals are actively involved in district decision making about educational issues.	○	○	○	○	○
District leaders take steps to solve problems.	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your principal.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
My principal involves faculty in decisions that directly impact the operations of my school.	○	○	○	○	○
My principal clearly defines expectations for our school.	○	○	○	○	○
My principal provides constructive feedback to teachers toward improving their performance.	○	○	○	○	○
My principal has a clearly defined mission and vision for my school.	○	○	○	○	○
My principal encourages cooperation among faculty and staff toward improving student performance.	○	○	○	○	○
My principal models social and emotional competence in the way that he/she deals with students and faculty on an everyday basis.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers at this school trust the principal to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	○	○	○	○	○

TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about decision-making in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	○	○	○	○	○
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	○	○	○	○	○
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	○	○	○	○	○

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about professional development in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
school.	○	○	○	○	○
An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development offerings are data driven.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	○	○	○	○	○
Follow up is provided from professional development in this school.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.	○	○	○	○	○
Principal professional development is a priority in this district.	○	○	○	○	○
Sufficient resources are available to principals to participate in professional development opportunities.	○	○	○	○	○

ACHIEVEMENT PRESS

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about achievement press in your school:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
The school sets high standards for academic performance.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	○	○	○	○	○
Parents exert pressure to maintain high standards.	○	○	○	○	○
Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.	○	○	○	○	○
Parents press for school improvement.	○	○	○	○	○
Students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	○	○	○	○	○
Students respect others who get good grades.	○	○	○	○	○
Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.	○	○	○	○	○
Students try hard to improve on previous work.	○	○	○	○	○
The learning environment is orderly and serious.	○	○	○	○	○

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about community support and involvement in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	○	○	○	○	○
This school works directly with parents/guardians to improve the educational climate in students' homes.	○	○	○	○	○
This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community.	○	○	○	○	○
This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student					

learning.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.	○	○	○	○	○
Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	○	○	○	○	○
Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	○	○	○	○	○
The community we serve is supportive of this school.	○	○	○	○	○

GENERAL CLIMATE

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about general climate in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
All campus staff are friendly to each other.	○	○	○	○	○
All campus staff exhibit pride in their affiliation with the school.	○	○	○	○	○
All campus staff are willing to go out of their way to help.	○	○	○	○	○
All campus staff accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm.	○	○	○	○	○
All campus staff are committed to their jobs.	○	○	○	○	○
All campus staff interact with one another in a way that models social and emotional competence.	○	○	○	○	○
The goals of my school are made clear.	○	○	○	○	○

DISTRICT VISION

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about district vision.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
There are clear goals and structures for teaching and learning in AISD.	○	○	○	○	○
There is a clear vision for the use of data to inform education in AISD.	○	○	○	○	○
There is a clear vision for academic, social, and emotional learning in AISD.	○	○	○	○	○

MANAGING STUDENT CONDUCT

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about managing student conduct in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct.	○	○	○	○	○
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	○	○	○	○	○
This school's discipline practices promote social and emotional learning (e.g., developmentally appropriate consequences, restorative justice).	○	○	○	○	○
School staff received sufficient training regarding how to use the social and emotional learning approach at this school.	○	○	○	○	○
Staff have enough time to implement the social and emotional learning approach at this school.	○	○	○	○	○
School staff clearly understand policies and procedures about student conduct.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	○	○	○	○	○
Non-teaching staff consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	○	○	○	○	○
Administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	○	○	○	○	○

Administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the

classroom.

All campus staff work in a school environment that is safe.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE AND SUPPORT

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about instructional practices and support in your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Teachers in this school use assessment data to inform their instruction.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.	○	○	○	○	○
Provided supports (i.e., instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e., pacing, materials and pedagogy).	○	○	○	○	○

INTENTIONS

Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Which BEST DESCRIBES your IMMEDIATE professional plans? (Select one.)

○ Continue as an administrator at my current school

○ Continue as a campus administrator in this district but leave this school

○ Continue as a campus administrator in this state but leave this district

○ Continue as a campus administrator in another state

○ Leave campus administration for another administrative position or teaching position

○ Leave campus administration for personal reasons (e.g., health, family, etc.)

○ Retire from the campus administrator role

○ Leave the campus administrator role for another reason

Which of the following best describes your immediate professional plans? (Select one.)

○ Continue teaching at my current school

○ Continue teaching in this district, but leave this school

○ Continue teaching in this state, but leave this district

○ Continue working in education, but pursue an administrative position

○ Continue working in education, but pursue a non-administrative position

○ Leave education entirely

Which of the following best describes your immediate professional plans? (Select one.)

○ Continue working at my current school
○ Continue working in this district, but leave this school
○ Continue working in this state, but leave this district
○ Continue working in education, but pursue a different position
○ Leave education entirely

TEACHER ATTACHMENT, SELF-EFFICACY, PLC

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
I believe I've chosen the best of all possible occupations to work in.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel very little loyalty to my school.	○	○	○	○	○
I find my values and the values of my school are very similar.	○	○	○	○	○
Being a teacher is part of who I am.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel connected to my school.	○	○	○	○	○
I could easily give up teaching.	○	○	○	○	○
I often look for other non-teaching jobs.	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to remain at this school for as long as possible.	○	○	○	○	○
I would prefer a teaching job other than the one I now have.	○	○	○	○	○
I have thought seriously about leaving my school.	○	○	○	○	○
I hope to be working as a teacher until I retire.	○	○	○	○	○
I seriously intend to look for a nonteaching job within the next year.	○	○	○	○	○
If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult student.	○	○	○	○	○
Factors beyond my control have a greater influence on my students' achievement than I do.	○	○	○	○	○
I am good at helping all the students in my classes make significant improvements.	○	○	○	○	○
Some students are not going to make a lot of progress this year, no matter what I do.	○	○	○	○	○
I am certain that I am making a difference in the lives of my students.	○	○	○	○	○
There is little I can do to ensure that all my students make significant progress this year.	○	○	○	○	○
I can deal with almost any learning problem.	○	○	○	○	○
I have detailed knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by other teachers at this school.	○	○	○	○	○

How satisfied are you with your...

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Unsure/NA
Salary.	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to influence the school's policies and practices.	○	○	○	○	○
Amount of autonomy and control I have over my classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for collaboration with other teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for professional advancement (promotion) offered to teachers at this school.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunity to make a difference and contribute to the overall success of my school.	○	○	○	○	○
School's system for rewarding and recognizing outstanding teachers.	○	○	○	○	○

I participate with a group of my campus colleagues to:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Analyze student performance data	○	○	○	○	○
Discuss ways to meet objectives for specific students	○	○	○	○	○
Plan lessons and units together	○	○	○	○	○
Develop common student assessments	○	○	○	○	○
Support students' social and emotional competence	○	○	○	○	○

DATA USE

How frequently do you use data in the following ways?

	Once a year	Once a semester	Once every two months	Once a month	Twice a month	Once a week
Comparing test scores for your class across academic years (e.g., how 5th grade class as a whole performed in 3rd and 4th grade).	○	○	○	○	○	○
Examining current year benchmark scores to create classroom instructional groups.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Examining data to identify students in need of intervention.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Collaborating with other educators about data and how it relates to the learning needs of students.	○	○	○	○	○	○

How often does your department/team:

	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Unsure/NA
Discuss your department/team's professional development needs and goals.	○	○	○	○	○
Discuss assessment data for individual students.	○	○	○	○	○
Set learning goals for groups of students.	○	○	○	○	○
Group students across classes based on learning needs.	○	○	○	○	○
Provide support for new teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Provide support for struggling teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Share instructional strategies.	○	○	○	○	○

APPENDIX D

Semi–Structured Interview Prompts

Teacher Interview 1

- State name and date

- What do you teach?

- How long have you been a teacher?

- How long have you been at Central High?

- Why did you choose teaching? Or When did you know you wanted to be a

  teacher?

- Why did you choose your subject?

- What really made a difference in making accountability at Central High?

–Trying to get the teachers to elaborate on their experience without soliciting a

type of response.

- Introduce Teacher Working Conditions

–Allow them to run with Teacher Working Conditions and their experience

during school sanctions

Teacher Interview 2

- Did mandatory school reform initiatives impact teacher working conditions?

  If so how?

- Were different teachers impacted differently in the school? How?

- Tell me more about your experience

- What was the impact on students?

  - Desire, motivation to learn, what worked?

- What can school leaders do to make school reform more successful?

  - To support teachers and learning

- What made the biggest difference increasing student success?

- Is there anything else that you would like to add for this study?

Principal Interview

- State name and date

- Why did you choose teaching? Or When did you know you wanted to be a

  teacher?

- Why did you choose your subject?

- What made you choose administration?

- Tell me about how you ended up at Central High.

- Tell me about your experience being a new principal at a high school under

  sanctions to improve.

- What did ya'll do that worked and what didn't work?

- Introduce Teacher working conditions

    o Was there an impact on teacher working conditions? How?

- What was the impact in the teachers?

- What was the impact on the students?

- Is there anything else you would like to share for this case study?

REFERENCES

American Public University System (APUS). (2016). *Institutional Review Board (IRB)*. Retrieved from http://www.apus.edu/academic–community/research/institutional– review–board/index

Andreasen, F. E. (2007). *Aspects of teacher education that affect student success in Arizona public high schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304705518?accountid=5683

Aronowitz, S. (1998) *Introduction to pedagogy of freedom.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Barton, P. E. (2002). *Raising achievement and reducing gaps: Reporting progress toward goals for academic achievement in mathematics.* Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel.

Bascia, N., & Rottmann, C. (2011). What's so important about teachers' working conditions? The fatal flaw in North American educational reform. *Journal of Education Policy, 26*(6), 787–802.

Batsche, G., Elliot, J., Graden, J. L., Grimes, J., Kovaleski, J. F., Prasse, D.,…Tilly, W. D., III. (2005). *Response to intervention: Policy considerations and implementation*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Berliner, D., & Biddle, B. (1995). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public schools.* Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

Bernhardt, V. (2013). *Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement, 3rd Ed.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Booher–Jennings, J. (2006). Rationing education in an era of accountability: The push for accountability was originally cast as a way to ensure that schools would leave no child behind. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(10), 756–761.

Bourke, S. (1986). How smaller is better: Some relationships between class size, teaching practices, and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal,* 23(4), 558–571.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). Explaining the short careers of high–achieving teachers in schools with low performing students. *The American Economic Review, 95*(2), 166–171.

Bracey, G. (2004). *Setting the record straight: Responses to misconceptions about public education in the US.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Byrd–Blake, M., Afolayan, M. O., Hunt, J. W., Fabunmi, M., Pryor, B. W., & Leander, R. (2010). Morale of teachers in high poverty schools: A post–NCLB mixed methods analysis. *Education and Urban Society, 42*, 450–472.

Callahan, R. E. E. (1962). *Education and the cult of efficiency: A study of the social forces that have shaped the administration of the public schools*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research,* (3rd ed., pp. 651–679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(3), 474–494.

Cremin, J. (1964). *The transformations of the schools: Progressivism in American education, 1876–1957.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd Ed.)*.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Darling–Hammond, L., & Snyder, J. (2015). Meaningful learning in a new paradigm for educational accountability: An introduction. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 23*(7), 1–9.

Darling–Hammond, L., Bae, S., Cook–Harvey, C., Lam, L., Mercer, C., Podolsky, A., & Stosich, L. (2016). *Pathways to new accountability through the Every Student Suceeds Act.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Darling–Hammond, L., Banks, J., Zumwalt, K., Gomez, L., Gamoran, S., Griesdom, J., & Finn, L–E. (2005). Educational goals and purposes: Developing a curricular vision for teaching. In L. Darling–Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be Able to do* (pp. 169–200)*.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Dee, T., & Jacob, B. (2011). The impact of No Child Left Behind on student achievement. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 35*, 252–279.

Dee, T., & West, M. (2011). The non–cognitive returns to class size. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 33* (1), 23–46.

Dee, T., Jacob, B., Schwartz, N. (2013). The effects of NCLB on school resources and practices. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 35*, 252–279.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd ed.)*.* New York, NY: McGraw–Hill.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107 – 110, Sec. 101, 114

    Stat. 1425. (2002).

Engberg, J., Gill, B., Zamarrow, G., & Zimmer, R. (2012). Closing schools in a shrinking

    district: Do student outcomes depend on which schools are closed? *Journal of*

    Urban Economics, 71(2), 189–203.

Fink, D. (2003). The law of unintended consequences: The 'real' cost of top–down

    reform. *Journal of Educational Change, 4*(2), 105–128.

Finnigan, K. S., & Gross, B. (2007). Do accountability policy sanctions influence teacher

    motivation? Lessons from Chicago's low performing schools. *American*

    Educational Research Journal, 44(3), 594–629.

Finnigan, K., & Stewart, T. (2009). Leading change under pressure: An examination of

    principal leadership in low–performing schools. *Journal of School Leadership,*

    19(5), 586–618.

Firestone, W. A. & Pennell, J. R. (1993). Teacher commitment, working conditions,

    differential incentive policies. *Review of Educational Research, 63*(4), 489–525.

    doi:10.3102/00346543063004489

Freire, P (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage.* Lanham,

    MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th ed.). New York, NY:

    Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1991). *What's worth fighting for? Working together for*

    your schools. Andover, MA: The Regional Laboratory for Educational

    Improvement.

Giroux, H. (2013). *America's education deficit and the war on youth.* New York, NY:

    Monthly Review Press.

Glickman, C. D. & Kanawati, D. G. (1998). Future directions for school supervision. In

    G. R. Firth & E. J. Pajak (Eds.), *Handbook of research supervision, (*pp. 1248–

    1257). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Goodwin, B. (1999). Improving teaching quality: Issues and policies. *Mid–Continent*

    Regional Educational Laboratory. June 1–8. Retrieved from

    http://www.mimathandscience.org/downloads/math__professional_development/i

    mproving_teacher_quality_20110908_165855_23.pdf

Gordon, S. P. (2004). *Professional development for school improvement: Empowering*

    learning communities. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Grissom, J. A., Nicholson–Crotty, S., & Harrington, J. R. (2014). Estimating the effects

    of No Child Left Behind on teachers' work environments and job attitudes.

    Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 20(10), 1–20.

Guerra, P. & Nelson, S. (2009). Changing professional practice requires changing beliefs.

    Phi Delta Kappan. 90(5), 354–359.

Guhn, M. (2009). Insights from successful and unsuccessful implementation of school

    reform programs. *Journal of Education Change, 10*, 337–363.

Guin, K. (2004). Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools. *Education Policy*

    Analysis Archives, 12(42), 1–30.

Haladyna, T., Haas, N., & Allison, J. (1998). Continuing tensions in standardized testing.

    Childhood Education, 74, 262–273.

Hamilton, L., Stecher, B., Marsh, J., McCombs, J. S., Robyn, A., Russell, J. L., Naftel, S., & Barney, H. (2007). *Standards–based accountability under No Child Left Behind: Experiences of teachers and administrators in three states.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand.

Hargreaves, A, & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education. 14*(8), 835–854.

Horkheimer, M. (1982). *Critical theory*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.

Ingersol, R. (2003). Is there really a teacher shortage? *CPRE Research Reports, 9*. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/37

Ingersoll, R. & May, H. (2011). The minority teacher shortage: Fact or fiction. *Phi Delta Kappan. 93*(1), 62–65.

Ingersoll, R. (2007). Misdiagnosing the teacher quality problem. *CPRE Policy Briefs*. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_policybriefs/35

Jarzabkowski, L. (2002). The social dimensions of teacher collegiality. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 3*(2), 1–20.

Jennings, J., & Rentner, D. S. (2006). Ten big effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 88*(2), 110–113.

Kaiser, A. (2011). *Beginning teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the first through third waves of the 2007–08 beginning teacher longitudinal study* (NCES 2011–318). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [3–9–14] from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch

Kane, T. L., & Staiger, D. O. (2002). Volatility in school test scores: Implications for test based accountability systems. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Kelly, D., Xie, H., Nord, C. W., Jenkins, F., Chan, J. Y., & Kastberg, D. (2013). *Performance of U.S. 15–year–old students in mathematics, science, and reading literacy in an international context: First look at PISA 2012* (NCES 2014–024). U. S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Kincheloe, J. L. (1991). *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a path of empowerment.* London, UK: Falmer Press.

Kincheloe, J. L. & McLaren, P. (2000). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (p9. 90–185). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

King, A. J., & Peart, M. J. (1992). *Teachers in Canada: Their work and quality of life: A national study for the Canadian Teachers' Federation.* Ottawa, ON: Canadian Teachers' Federation.

King, M. (2004). School– and district–level leadership for teacher workforce development. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 103*(1), 303–325.

Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism.* New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.

Lee, J., & Wong, K. (2004). The impact of accountability on racial and socioeconomic equity: Considering both school resources and achievement outcomes. *American Education Research Journal, 41*(4), 797–832.

Leithwood, K. (2006). *Teacher working conditions that matter: Evidence for change.* Toronto, ON: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Lemke, J. (1995). *Textual politics: Discourse and social dynamics.* London, UK: Taylor and Francis.

Lichtman, M. (2009). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Publications.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Little, J. W. (1990). The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teacher College Record*, 91(4), 509–536.

Little, J. W. (1993). Teacher's professional development in a climate of educational reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15*(2), 129–151.

Louis, K. S., & Smith, B. (1991). Restructuring, teacher engagement, and school culture: Perspectives on school reform and the improvement of teacher's work. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 2*(1), 34–52.

Manna, P. (2011). *Education: Federal government programs and issue.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McGuinn, P. (2006). *No child left behind and the transformation of federal education policy, 1965–2005.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

McGuinn, P. (2012). Stimulating reform: Race to the top, competitive grants, and the Obama educational agenda. *Educational Policy, 26(1), 136–159.*

Merriam, S.B. 2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey–Bass.

Mintrop, H., & Sunderman, G. (2009). Predictable failure of federal sanctions–driven accountability for school improvement—and why we may retain it anyway. *Educational Researcher, 38*, 353–364. doi: 10.310/0013189X09339055

Mintrop, H., & Trujillo, T. (2005). Corrective action in low performing schools: Lessons for NCLB implementation for first–generation accountability systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13*(48).

Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers not MBAs.* San Francisco, CA: Berret–Koehler.

Mizzelle, S. J., & Kaniuka, T. S., (2013). The relationship between teacher and principal perceptions of teacher working conditions and student performance. *Journal of Educational Research, 1*(2), 20–29.

Mohanty, C. (1990). On race and voice: Challenges for liberal education in the 1990s. *Cultural Critique, 17*, 192.

Morrow, R. A., & Brown, D. D. (1994). C*ritical theory and methodology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mulvenson, S. W., Stegman, C. E., & Ritter, G. (2005). Test anxiety: A multifaceted
study on the perceptions of teachers, principals, counselors, and parents.
International Journal of Testing, 5, 37–61.

Murnane, R. J., & Papay, J. P. (2010). Teachers' views of No Child Left Behind for the
principles, concerns about the practices. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 24*,
151–166.

Ngalawa, A., Simmt, E., & Glanfield, F. (2015). Exploring the Emergence of Community
Support for School and Encouragement of Innovation for Improving Rural School
Performance: Lessons Learned at Kitamburo in Tanzania. *Global Education
Review*, *2*(4), 101–125.

Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). *Collateral damage: How high–stakes testing
corrupts American schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Novak, J. R., & Fuller, B. (2003). Penalizing diverse schools? Similar test scores but
different students bring federal sanctions. *Policy Analysis for California
Education (PACE)* policy brief 3–4.

Ogbu, J. U. (1983). Minority status and schooling in plural societies. *Comparative
Education Review, 27*(2), 168–190.

Patton, M. Q. (1985). *Quality in qualitative research: Methodological principles and
recent developments.* Invited address to Division J of the American Educational
Research Association, Chicago, April 1985.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand
Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pearson, L. C., & Moomaw, W. (2005). The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. *Educational Research Quarterly, 29*(1), 38–54.

Power, M. (1997). *The audit society: Rituals of verification.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Printy, S., Marks, H., & Bowers, A. (2009). Integrated leadership: How principals and teachers share transformational and instructional influence. *Journal of School Leadership, 19*(5), 504–532.

Quartz, K. H., Barraza–Lyons, K., & Thomas, A. (2005). Retaining teachers in high–poverty schools: A policy framework. *International Handbook of Educational Policy, 13*, 491–506.

Randi, J., & Zeichner, K. (2004). New visions of teacher professional development. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education,* 105–144.

Ravitch, D. (2007). Challenges to teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(4), 269–273.

Reback, R., Rockoff, J., & Schwartz, H. L. (2011). *Under pressure: Job security, resource allocation, and productivity in schools under NCLB* (NBER Working Paper No. 16745). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Riessman, C. (2005). Narrative analysis. In N. Kelly, C. Horrocks, K. Milnes, B. Roberts, & D. Robinson (Eds.), *Narrative, memory, and everyday life* (2nd ed., pp. 1–7). Huddersfield, UK: University of Huddersfield.

Riley, T. (2012, June 29). *Messing with Texas textbooks*. Retrieved from https://billmoyers.com/content/messing–with–texas–textbooks/

Rivkin, S., Hanushek, E., & Kain, J. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica, 73*, 417‑458.

Rothstein, R. (1998). *The way we were? The myths and realities of America's student achievement.* New York, NY: Century Foundation Press.

Santoro, D. A. (2011). Good teaching in difficult times: Demoralization in the pursuit of good work. *American Journal of Education, 118*, 1–23.

Sarason, S. (1971). *The culture of the school and the problem of change.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Sarason, S. (2004). *And what do YOU mean by learning?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of a learning organization.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J., Starratt, R. J. & Cho, V. (2014). *Supervision: A redefinition.* New York, NY: McGraw–Hill.

Shaker, P., & Heilman, E. (2004). The new common sense of education: Advocacy research. *Teacher's College Record, 106*(7), 1444–1470.

Short, P. M. (1994). Defining teacher empowerment. *Education, 114*(4), 488–493.

Sizer, T. (2004). *The red pencil: Convictions from experience in education.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Skrla, L., & Scheurich, J. J. (2001). Displacing deficit thinking in school district lead–ership. *Education and Urban Society, 33*(3), 239–255.

Skrla, L., Scheurick, J., Johnson, J., & Koschoreck, J. (2001). Accountability for equity: Can state policy leverage social justice? *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice, 4*(3), 237–260.

Slater, L. (2013). Building high–performing and improving education systems: Quality

    assurance and accountability review. *CfBT Education Trust,* 1–38.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2002). "Science" rejects postmodernism. *Educational Researcher,*

    31(8), 25–27.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2006). Scientifically based research in education: Epistemology and

    ethics. *Adult Education Quarterly, 56*(4), 239–266.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stein, L. (2012). The art of saving a failing school. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(5), 51–55.

Sullivan, S., & Glanz, J., (2009). *Supervision that improves teaching and learning:*

    Strategies and techniques. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Talbert, J., & McLaughlin, M. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school context.

    American Journal of Education, 102(2), 123–153.

Taubman, P. M. (2009). *Teaching by numbers: Deconstructing the discourse of*

    standards and accountability in education. New York, NY: Routledge.

Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2012). Retrieved from http://ncteaching

    conditions.org

Texas Academic Performance Report (2015). Retrieved from

    https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2015/glossary.pdf

Texas Education Agency (2017). Retrieved from http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA

    /Welcome_and_Overview/An_Overview_of_the_History_of_Public_Education_i

    n_Texas/

Texas Education Agency. (2013). *2012–13 school report card*. Retrieved from

    http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport//tapr/2013/index.html

Tsang, K. K. (2012). Emotion management of teaching: Conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. *New Horizons in Education, 60*(2), 83–94.

Tschannen, J., & Hoy, A. (2007). The differential antecedents of self–efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(6), 944–956.

U.S. Department of Education. (1983). *A nation at risk*. Retrieved from ww2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk.risk.html

UNESCO. (2012). Youth and skills: Putting education to work (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012). Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002180/218003e.pdf

Valencia, R. R., Valenzuela, A., Sloan, K., & Foley, D. (2004). Let's treat the cause, not the symptoms: Equity and accountability in Texas revisited. In L. Skrla & J. J. Scheurich (Eds.), *Educational equity and accountability: Paradigms, policies, and politics*, (pp. 29–38). New York, NY: Routledge.

Waite, D. (2014). Imperial hubris: The dark heart of leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, *24*(6), 1202–1232.

Walls, R., Nardi, A., Minden, A., & Hoffman, N. (2002). The characteristics of effective and ineffective teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 29*(1), 39–48.

Walsh, J., Kemerer, F., & Maniotis, L. (2005). *The educator's guide to Texas school law* (6th ed.)*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Wenglinsky, H. (2002). How schools matter: The link between teacher classroom practices and student academic performance. *Education Policy Analysis Archive, 10*(12), 1–30.

Werner, W. (1980). *Implementation: The role of belief.* Vancouver, VN: University of

British Columbia.

Williams, D. T. (2003). Closing the achievement gap: Rural schools. *CSR Connection,*

Spring, 1–12.

Yakabuski, K. (2010, March 15). Obama offers his vision for improving education. *The*

Globe and Mail. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/

opinion/obama–offers–his–vision–for–improving–education/

Yardley, L. (2009). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. A. Smith

(Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research method* (pp. 235–

251). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and method* (5th ed.) Thousand Oaks,

CA: Sage Publications.