

WHAT WOULD MY MOTHER SAY? AN INQUIRY INTO PARENT  
ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

by

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate the work and efforts of this study to my wife, Yolanda, and my children, Anyssa, Benjamin, Isabel, Anabel, and Santiago, who inspired my commitment to reach a personal dream I once desired—to become a doctor.

*Con todo mi amor, le dedico este trabajo a mi madre Aurora Vasquez. Tú  
escencia la llevo conmigo donde quiera que este.*

*¡¡Adelante mi capitán!!*



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was a comparative policy analysis of three state policies (Nebraska, Colorado, and Texas) related to parent, family, and community engagement. The study involved an analysis of current literature, conventional practices, and social views of parent, family, and community engagement. The personal story of the researcher was embedded in the study to introduce the topic, inform the analysis, and make meaning of the recommendations. Two analytical lenses were applied to compare the policies of the three states. Scheurich's policy archaeology emerges from a poststructuralist theoretical lens to analyze the social construction of policy that fundamentally examines how the issue of parent, family, and community engagement evolved in each state. Policy archaeology challenges the conventional postpositivist policy analysis, which results in symbolic changes rather than fundamental reforms to policy and practice. The second analytical lens derives from Elazar's three political cultures, which examine the social and political views that influence policy. The application of both analytical lenses exposed the outside influences that affected the way parent, family, and community engagement is addressed in policy, negotiated socially, and practiced. Inductive analysis were utilized to review archival documents from the state legislatures in combination with other social mediums such as newspaper articles, journals, political documents, and social media to provide a wider perspective to the implications surrounding the creation of such laws. The community learning exchange framework informed the



recommendations of this study that emerged from a genuine approach of engagement with all members of the community.

## I. A JOURNEY TO A NEW WORLD

Growing up in Sunland Park, New Mexico, I enjoyed and flourished in the realities of my surroundings, allowing myself to learn and adapt to the world around me. Sunland Park is a small town lost in the southeast corner of New Mexico within the bordering trenches of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. My mother, Aurora Vazquez, raised five children (Ramon, Gerardo, Benjamin, Cesar, and Eloisa) by herself. Her hope was to raise her children to become self-sufficient and hard-working citizens. Settling in Sunland Park became a challenge for our family as we transitioned from our first home located across the border in *Infonavit San Lorenzo* in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Life in Ciudad Juarez is different. People are friendlier, more caring, and, for some reason, seem happier. However, my mother would often say Juarez was no longer the same place she once knew.

My mother was raised in Juarez and she knew people almost everywhere we went. Being a proud owner of a small *tienda de abarrotes* (convenience store), “*El Gallito*,” she was able to associate with other business owners who sold goods for her *tiendita*. She felt our neighborhood was changing and she constantly worried about our safety. Several unfortunate violent incidents in our neighborhood led my mother to make a life changing decision for our family. For some time, my mother struggled with the binary of having U.S. born children raised across the border in Mexico. The decision to move came at a moment in time when our neighborhood experienced the murder of two teens down the block from our house. My mother believed these violent acts were caused by the high drug use, limited spaces where children could play, and the lack of police presence in the neighborhood. These conditions awakened my mother’s survival instincts

and she relocated our family to the country she had admired as a child, the United States of America. She had always hoped to one day become one of its citizens.

By the early 1980s, as I reached my seventh birthday, *mi madre* (my mother) decided she could no longer raise her five children in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, and we embarked on a new journey to begin the next chapter of our lives across the border in the United States. By the time I reached third grade, our family had moved six different times until we finally settled in Sunland Park, NM. My three brothers, my sister, and I were very young during this time of high mobility. The oldest, Ramon, was 9 years old, and the youngest, Eloisa, was only a year old. Born in El Paso, yet raised in Juarez, Mexico, made the complexity of adjusting to our new surroundings difficult at times. Our family journey unraveled the many intricacies of our new reality where different types of social norms were negotiated by what González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) referred to as funds of knowledge. My *tía* Coyo and *tía* Estela, who settled in El Paso years before our move, eased our transition into our new world. These two beautiful ladies not only opened their doors to our family but took on an unwritten commitment for our well-being that has lasted to this day. In the midst of poverty, challenges, and sacrifices, they helped raise us with love, respect, and dignity.

During these social, economic, and political adjustments, my mother's quest for normalcy was a constant challenge. In Juarez, my mother left behind a successful business that afforded us the comforts of economic stability and social status. This new journey forced her to redefine herself in multiple roles: a mother, entrepreneur, citizen, feminist, and single parent. The transition brought a high level of anxiety as we navigated through the unknown in a new country we admired through the lens of a

foreigner and an outsider. My mother could no longer depend on the business she left back in Juarez and she was determined to redefine herself in this new country and leave the past behind. At this moment in time, my mother's natural optimism would reach new heights in pursuit of a better life in the new world. Nowhere was this more evidenced than in her desire to make sure we took full advantage of educational opportunities.

### **Parent Engagement Policy: Brief Overview and Ontological Position of Researcher**

Seeking to understand the complexities parents face in the educational journey of their children continues to challenge my perceptions, understanding, and desire to create change regarding this issue. Perhaps the mystery to this phenomenon begins with how the term parent engagement is defined and perceived among students, parents, educators, advocates, politicians, and scholars. The participation of parents in the educational experiences of their children has evolved over the years and those who study the field of education have tried to define it using variations in how parents assist, guide, advocate, and promote the learning of their children. To facilitate the exploration of the parent engagement phenomenon, I use my mother's experiences as her children first arrived as foreigners despite being born in the United States and traveled through the K-12 public education system. The application of my personal historical account of the parent engagement phenomenon illustrated a different perspective that will hopefully influence change in the ways in which we perceive and practice the efforts of parents with children attending public education. The hope was to also prompt educators, politicians, and advocates to reimagine the landscape of parent engagement policy and practices.

## **Purpose of Research**

According to Moles and Fege (2011), the term *parent involvement* has been recognized as a component of social justice, equity, and quality education within the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Moles and Fege argued that the ESEA of 1965 was implemented in direct response to the educational realities of the time mediated through federal legislation. These realities encompassed addressing the historical educational traumas caused by the inequities of instructional quality among students of color, assessment data, and lack of parent involvement experienced by parents of low-income families (Moles & Fege, 2011).

The legislative efforts to address the needs of students from low socioeconomic families in the mid-1960s strengthened the role of parents by establishing Title I funds targeting the specific services responsive to low-income students and supporting the programmatic efforts established by the War on Poverty, therefore holding schools accountable for students' academic progress through parent involvement efforts (Davies et al., 1979). The 1970s are known as the decade of "parents as advisors" (Moles & Fege, 2011). In the ESEA Amendments of 1974, specific laws required school districts to establish parent advisory councils (PACs; Moles & Fege, 2011). This requirement was a response to the idea of valuing parent input as an opportunity to affect student learning. By 1978, additional amendments to the ESEA provided a more comprehensive approach to parent involvement under the Title I program (Moles & Fege, 2011). In the amendments, local education agencies (LEAs) were required to involve the PACs in their Title I program planning and implementation. Moles and Fege (2011) suggested:

The planning and implementation included the representation of Title I parents, required schools to provide information to parents in their native language, evaluate parent and instructional programs, develop procedures to address parent grievances, funding for PACs, provide the opportunity to approve or veto a district's Title I plan, and consider developing parent resource centers, liaison staff, and resources for home learning. (p. 6)

These reform efforts provided parents a greater opportunity for decision-making as a requirement of the Title I funding. As a result of these efforts, many consider this the “watch dog” (Moles & Fege, 2011) era as federal legislation demanded equity in public education by ensuring parents were at the forefront demanding change. Educators, on the other hand, felt these efforts were too prescriptive and lacked clarity as to how the amendments were affecting student progress.

At the time the ESEA and Title I legislation were passed during the 1970s, our family was living across the border in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. These specific policies did not affect our reality while living across the border. Interestingly, when we visited *tía* Coyito in El Paso, I recall conversations between my *tía* Coyo and my mother about my *tía*'s school visits. My *tía* appreciated the education her children were receiving at Beal Elementary. In part, my *tía*'s perception of a good education was associated with my cousins' ability to acquire the English language and strengthen their math skills. In the realm of parent involvement, my *tía* experienced a certain level of discomfort as she navigated the school system. Because of her personality and emerging ability to speak English, her interactions with school personnel were hierarchal in nature and lacked a

genuine sense of belonging. She shared these experiences with my mother at the time when our family was about to transition to the United States.

The election of Ronald Reagan brought a different approach to federal legislation as the 1980s became known as the era of deregulation (Moles & Fege, 2011). According to Moles and Fege (2011), LEAs lobbied for less regulation attached to Title I funding and advocated for a less restrictive approach to parent involvement. The ESEA was replaced with the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, and Title I became Chapter 1 (Sunderman, 2009). Such deregulation reduced the parent involvement language to a single requirement that LEAs had to hold an annual meeting with Title I parents to inform them of the program. This deregulatory approach led to weaker parent involvement and the inexistence of PACs (Moles & Fege, 2011). Consequently, in the last two amendments to the ESEA, federal legislation reform efforts did not clearly define parent involvement (Moles & Fege, 2011). Those amendments only prescribed parameters and superficial structures for LEAs that had a limited impact on the relationships among parents and educators in relation to student progress. In essence, the term parent involvement gave parents, educators, and school leaders a list of ambiguous actions lacking the guidance of the collaborative efforts among educators and parents. Moles and Fege argued that these legislative efforts had a negative impact on the interactions of parents and educators as the standards for encouraging parent involvement were reduced to a yearly parent meeting informing parents of the Title I program. The impact of the deregulation reform efforts enacted in the 1980s shaped the experiences of our family as we transitioned to the new world and social structure.

## **Oppression of a Social Capital**

Once my mother enrolled her three oldest children at Beal Elementary in El Paso ISD, Aurora was introduced to the U.S. educational experience. Her experience was transformative for several reasons. First, my mother, a business entrepreneur, had the means to pay for us to enroll in a preparatory school (*El Colegio Independencia*) in Juarez. This experience provided my mother access and opportunities to collaborate with teachers and administrators. These opportunities to collaborate with teachers and administrators affected my learning and those of my brothers. Second, my mother knew she had to develop a social network now that she had moved to the United States. This social and relationship building process was facilitated through the established social networks of *tía* Coyito and *tía* Estela in their neighborhoods. These social networks encouraged my mother to build capacity in her new reality and helped buffer the institutional conditions she encountered. Third, as part of this transformative journey, my mother endured a physical, emotional, and spiritual acclimatization process affecting the way in which she engaged with her family, other individuals, and social institutions. Despite my mother's ability to be a strong woman and proving to herself and others that a Mexican woman had a place in business and politics, the social conditions of the new world challenged the ideals she had once formulated under a different social and political climate back in Juarez. A clear challenge she faced was learning a new language, English. Aside from the social networks to which she was introduced by my *tía* Coyito and *tía* Estela, English was the dominant language spoken in most social service agencies, including public schools. My mother's inability to articulate her ideas, hopes, concerns, and questions brought a level of anxiety. It was difficult to witness a strong



business woman, feminist, and entrepreneur come to terms with the idea that her inability to dominate the English language limited her options of finding success in the new world. The stress of finding herself in this new world and her anxiety related to learning English undoubtedly affected her ability and agency in addressing the needs of her children.

The social, political, emotional, physical, and spiritual conditions our family experienced as we arrived in a new community represent the unique reality many Latino families face as they arrive and settle in the United States. In the 1980s, state and federal educational mandates, along with the change in vernacular as described by Moles and Fege (2011), addressed a superficial experience of families like ours. The idea of enrolling her children in a new school was difficult for my mother, to say the least. Having to navigate the new educational conditions with limited means of understanding the norms, my mother entrusted her children to teachers, administrators, and support staff. In addressing the needs of her children, my mother depended on several neighbors who knew both Spanish and English and could serve as translators. In seeking the help of her new neighbors, my mother was exploring and mining the cultural wealth of her new community (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Yosso, 2005). The codependency was actually frowned upon by those in the campus administration. The unwillingness to address her child's needs while having another person present to translate for her was something the school administration personnel strictly enforced. Their claim was privacy despite my mother's willingness to allow another parent to be present and assist her with translating information. Ironically, when school matters would favor their agenda, the campus administration would call a bilingual parent to help translate the information they were trying to communicate. What the campus administration failed to recognize and

value were the assets of the social network my *tías* and my mother had established with other parents who spoke both languages. My mother continued to participate in school functions but did so with a level of discomfort that emerged from similar experiences. The acclimation to the new education system also raised an awareness of her own agency in navigating this complex system (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011).

I recall when my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Morales, delivered a message about the campus Parent Teacher Association (PTA). She explained the important role the PTA played at our campus and how parents could join. I recall seeing the PTA moms who helped the teachers. They often came to our class to help Mrs. Morales. I also recall that most PTA moms did not look like my mother. They were Caucasian, looked younger, and only spoke English. When I gave my mother the PTA flyer that was written in English, she asked for me to explain it to her. She was very excited to join the PTA. When I mentioned that the PTA meetings were scheduled in the morning and she needed to pay a fee to join, the enthusiasm on her face slowly faded. I later found out that when my mother had gone to school to get information about *el PTA* (the PTA), her desire to join was crushed by the norms of the campus. The planning meetings were conducted in the mornings, facilitated in English, and there was no one available to translate for her. At the time, my mother worked three jobs and could not participate in planning meetings. Many parents in our neighborhood valued what *el PTA* offered and felt this organization was good for students and supported teachers. The message my mother received from teachers and school administrators was that joining the PTA was essentially the only form of parent participation.

This brief historical perspective provides a glimpse into the micro-politics of parent involvement used to isolate parents who did not fit a particular mold: Caucasian, available to volunteer during the day, portrayed a middle-class profile, and spoke English. As a young child, these experiences led me to believe that my mother's efforts were not good enough and therefore she did not care about my education because she did not join the PTA, did not speak English, could not attend school meetings, and did not look like the other White parents who could attend meetings during school hours. During the years that followed, I learned better and constructed a different narrative of my mother and other parents that resembled her life in schools.

### **Parent and Family Engagement and the Dominant Political Culture**

Extensive research in the field of parent and family engagement has been documented during the education reform efforts of the past 40 years (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Wilder, 2013). Topics related to parent and family engagement, from defining the different forms of parent and family engagement to the impact of parent and family engagement on student achievement, have been the focus of most research. A variety of parent advocacy organizations, such as the Harvard Family Project, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Families and Schools Together, National Parent Teacher Association, and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, to name a few, have expanded on the development of online social networks to support the efforts of parent and family engagement. There has also been research of state and federal legislative policies that recognize, support, and promote parent and family engagement. Federal laws like the Improving America's Schools Act, which evolved from the ESEA Title I legislation set back in 1965 that has been subsequently revised and

reauthorized over the decades, added the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) intended to improve student achievement by strengthening partnerships between parents and educators. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which was passed in 2001, helped define parent involvement by providing guidelines that expanded, promoted, and supported the efforts of parents across all states (Moles & Fege, 2011). However, some legislative reform efforts have used parent and family engagement to promote a different agenda. The parent engagement movement has become a vehicle to promote the idea of “parents’ choice” for the charter and privatization movement (Ravitch, 2013). According to Ravitch (2013), private venture capitalists and for-profit organizations have funded organizations like the Parent Revolution, based out of California, to use the “parents’ choice” movement to promote charter schools set to profit from educational institutions with the use of public funds. In doing so, students, parents, and educators lose the checks and balances of elected school board members, mediation, and other education processes that allow them to resolve issues within our education institutions. Couching the privatization of schools by promoting “parents’ choice” sends the perception to parents that our public education system is broken without understanding the complexities of the legislative reform efforts that have negatively affected public education. To support this agenda, parents have been misled by legislators who promote the idea that student learning should be defined by passing an annual standardized test. This has created doubt and anxiety among parents. When federal and state reform efforts focus on standards-based and accountability measures, parents will focus only on test scores and devalue the hard work of their children and that of educators to a standardized test score. This has created a perfect formula for venture

capitalists and those who promote the privatization of public education. In part, we (educators, school leaders, school boards, and legislators) are to blame for creating this perfect formula. A public (parents, students, and community members) that has been advised through federal and state legislative reform efforts that we (educators, school leaders, school boards, and legislators) know how to best serve students without considering parents' perspectives and input has perpetuated a sentiment of distrust. Public distrust in the public school system has evolved over decades of ignoring the assets parents bring as experts of their own children. Many of the educational reform efforts in the past 30 years have created a disconnect between parents and educators (Moles & Fege, 2011). The disconnect has led to the development of a contentious and adversarial relationship between parents and educators instead of the partnerships that are necessary to address critical educational, social, and economic issues facing our country. A public that has been ignored, uninformed, and seen as part of a problem by educators can be easily misled by capitalists who believe outsourcing public education is the solution for fixing the education system.

A majority of state and federal legislative research on parent and family engagement has contained a focus on issues of equity, accountability, training parents on school-related issues, and the quality of education (Moles & Fege, 2011). Research surrounding legislative efforts seeking genuine and meaningful opportunities for parent engagement responsive to local social, economic, and political issues in communities has been scarce. There is limited research on the legislative reform efforts supporting parents and families and federal and state policy have fallen behind in addressing the current realities of what parents are experiencing. Moles and Fege (2011) argued that in many

cases, educators, parents, and community members have limited expertise and skills in knowing how to partner with each other, causing them to struggle over issues of culture, racial, ethnic, and gender differences that often do not relate to the traditional middle class parent involvement framework. Moles and Fege suggested the limited expertise and skills of parents and educators to develop partnerships have failed to execute the federal and state parental involvement requirements. Gill Kressley (2008) supported the struggles mentioned by Moles and Fege (2011) by explaining that conventional parent and family engagement practices often consist of separate and uncoordinated programs experienced through “random acts of family involvement” (p. 22).

The random acts of family involvement that may seem uncoordinated perhaps are the result of state legislative efforts that have restricted the ways in which parent and family engagement is defined and framed by legislators. When states are left to interpret federal legislation, such as ESEA Title I and NCLB, the political climate of each state will affect what constitutes parent and family engagement at a state level (Elazar, 1984). The multiple approaches in implementing parent and family engagement results in a variety of interpretations among states and also from each LEA across a state. The LEAs are in charge of determining how parent and family engagement is interpreted and defined at a local level.

Another factor that makes this a more complex issue is the impact of the political environment within which such laws have been crafted and passed through the legislative process. Elazar (1984) argued that laws are drafted in response to the political environment of the state and locality. He supported his claim based on historical, geographical, and demographic data informed by his theory of three political cultures

(i.e., moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic) in the United States. In essence, these three political cultures drive the ideology and methods by which state legislatures interpret and define social issues. Each political culture drastically affects the way parent and family engagement is perceived, interpreted, and ultimately defined. The conventional practice of calling the Title I annual presentation that is mandated by federal law parent engagement creates a norm or industry standard. The following is an example of the industry standard approach to parent engagement.

The school sends out a flyer to parents and invites them to hear about the Title I program. A small, diverse group of parents gathers in the cafeteria during the evening to view a 20-minute PowerPoint overview presented by the principal of the school. The presentation is in English and the parents attending the meeting do not ask any questions. These meetings happen often and neither parents nor teachers really understand what constitutes a Title I program. However, the district met the compliance requirement of “parent involvement” under federal law by meeting with parents once a year to explain the Title I program. There are no meaningful interactions among parents and educators. In addition, this type of interaction may reach a certain group of parents and ignore others who speak other languages. Elazar’s (1984) theory becomes an important factor for parent and family engagement because each political culture supports an ideology that filters how this issue is perceived and supported through legislative efforts. In doing so, the political culture inclination of each community will respond to certain values of parent and family engagement and not respond to other values that promote a different form of engagement. Dominant political cultures create a sense of division among members of society that marginalizes individuals or groups of citizens from defining and

supporting other methods of parent and family engagement. The marginalization of certain individuals or groups then becomes the movement for valuing different perspectives in the way parents and families engage in their children's education. The sentiment and practice of involving parents then becomes the norm or the industry standard to which educators, school leaders, and parents become accustomed.

### **Scope of the Study**

The regional application of such federal interpretation set forth a social movement centered on valuing the efforts of parents in their children's education in Texas. This social movement energized a group of school superintendents across the state, known as the Public Education Institute, that helped advance the passage of House Bill 5, known as HB5: Community and Parent Engagement, by the 83rd Texas Legislature (Texas Association of School Administrators [TASA], 2013). The passage of HB5: Community and Parent Engagement fulfilled the ambitions of many parents, students, educators, advocacy groups, and legislators who were seeking to address the importance and value of parent and family engagement efforts in the education of children. In this study, I analyzed how the State of Texas interpreted and defined federal legislation regarding parent and family engagement. I then compared the analysis of Texas's interpretation of the law to similar laws in two other states (i.e., Colorado and Nebraska). This comparative policy analysis revealed the different interpretations of parent, family, and community engagement as it relates to the values, beliefs, and cultural traditions informing the political underpinnings influencing this topic. This comparative policy analysis is critical in understanding how mandates, such as HB5, shape the role of parents in their children's education. Focus was placed on how educators respond to the



compliance of a mandate instead of the needs of parents and their community. A final focus in this study was to explore practices that reshape parent engagement and respond to local needs.

This study was grounded in the premise that a healthy community relies on an active citizenry. An active citizenry is informed about the critical issues affecting the well-being of its citizens. A citizenry that is active and informed is not only continuously inquiring and challenging the status quo but also creating the space where trust becomes not only an idea, but an active element among educators, community members, students, parents, and community leaders (Freire, 1998). In a community, values, beliefs, and traditions are quilted together to represent a holistic perspective. However, one must understand that each patch of the quilt represents an individual, a family, a neighborhood, or a section of the greater community that embraces a divergence of the holistic perspective.

The hope was for this study to foster an opportunity to challenge the social and political hierarchal structures that influence local, state, and federal educational policies such as parent, family, and community engagement. This hope was inspired by my own experiences as a father, educator, citizen, and activist as well as by those of the students, parents, educators, and community members I serve in central Texas in the communities of Lockhart, New Braunfels, Seguin, and San Marcos. The exploration and inquiry of this issue was equally inspired by the legacy and memory of my mother, *una mujer bien trabajadora!*

### **Research Questions**

1. How has culture informed community engagement policy?

2. How do we make meaning of policy?
3. How has policy informed community engagement practices?

### **Beyond a Definition of Parent Engagement**

Although the term parent involvement continues to be used to define the efforts of parents, the term has evolved and adapted to represent the realities of the current conditions in the field of education. The most common terms used to define and label the efforts of parents in their children's educational experiences are parent involvement; parent participation; parent engagement; parent, family, and community engagement; and family engagement. Though the latest term, family engagement, is used in the scholarly literature, the term parent engagement is more often used by educators, parents, and politicians (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The term family engagement recognizes that parents, grandparents, other family members, and even neighbors are also responsible for the care and upbringing of children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Moles & Fege, 2011). Family engagement supports the ideology of a deeper level of commitment, engagement, and participation than parent involvement (Moles & Fege, 2011). Though the vernacular to define a parent's efforts in their children's educational experiences has changed over the years, the exploration of why parents participate tends to be an issue that is typically taken for granted but becomes the driving force behind the efforts of parents. Analyzing why parents participate allows for a better understanding of the driving forces behind the efforts of parents. This analysis is critical because it affords educators, advocates, parents, and politicians a better understanding of the various reasons parents become involved and how policies are typically crafted to meet the needs

of White middle class women. Without this analysis, we fail to explore how perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes are shaped by educators, politicians, and advocates of certain parents of different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, and economic conditions.

Taking a step back and exploring the reasons why parents or family members participate in the educational experiences of children can also shed light on the phenomenon that affects students' educational experiences. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) and Reed, Jones, Walker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2000) suggested that parents become involved in their children's education for reasons that fall under the following major themes: parents' construction of the parental role; parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school; and general invitations, demand, and opportunities for parental involvement. Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) suggested there are similar themes that motivate parents to become involved, including actual and perceived school invitations and opportunities to be involved, sense of place in their children's education, knowledge and skills about how to be involved, concept of parenting, and aspirations and love for their children. Understanding a parent's reason for engaging in his or her child's educational experiences provides insight into the student's needs, family history, and developed perceptions of the educational system (Bailey, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Thompson, 2008). Existing studies have obviously informed the change in the vernacular and the perceptions from educators to the value of parent and family engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The reasons or motivations behind why parents become engaged have influenced the way we perceive and explore the phenomenon of parent and family engagement. The way we identify and categorize efforts by parents has also evolved from parent involvement to parent

engagement to the current term of family engagement (Moles & Fege, 2011). This evolutionary process that has affected the motivations of parents and terminology used to describe their efforts has also been affected by changes in society over time. The social, political, and economic transformations that communities across the country have experienced over the years have inevitably provoked changes affecting educational reform efforts (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Ravitch, 2013). In the following section, I explore key events in our national history that fundamentally changed the education system and therefore affected efforts in parent and family engagement.

### **Parent Engagement in the Era of Deregulation**

Parent advocacy groups assisted in the reinstitution of parent involvement language lost in the 1981 EASE reauthorization through the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Amendments. The new amendments required LEAs to develop policies to ensure parents were informed of Title I funding and involved in the planning and implementation of the program, and that the policies were communicated in a language and format they could understand (Moles & Fege, 2011). In part, these reform efforts encouraged the development of resource centers, liaison staff, and resources for learning at home (D'Agostino, Hedges, Wong, & Borman, 2001). However, these provisions did not have the necessary monitoring and enforcement structure to ensure their implementation and success. Moles and Fege (2011) argued that part of these new reform efforts also deviated from a collective approach to parental organizing toward advocacy for an individualistic approach to parent engagement.

According to Ravitch (2013), the 1980s delivered a significant shift in educational policy and marked the beginning of the standards and accountability era. Many experts in the field of education point to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which triggered an avalanche of reform efforts to the public education system (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Moles & Fege, 2011; Ravitch, 2013) that affected the very nature of parental engagement in many communities. My mother did not know it at the time, but this educational shift clearly had an impact in our home once I reached the third grade at Sunland Park Elementary. My mother believed a child's learning should be holistic and focus on academic success, and math, reading, science, social studies, the arts, physical education, and good student behavior should be supported by teachers and parents. This holistic view was informed through the multiple *pláticas* (conversations) she had with *tía* Lulu and *tía* Leti, who were teachers in Mexico. My mother knew teachers had a difficult job and felt her children would benefit from this holistic approach to schooling. In addition, my mother had an admiration for teachers. "*Yo admiro a los maestros por su empeño y dedicación a la juventud del futuro!*" (I admire teachers for their commitment and dedication to the youth of the future!).

This holistic view of schooling was also commonly shared among our *tías* and *tíos* who lived in the United States. In contrast, this holistic view toward schooling was challenged by the new social norms of our neighborhood and by teachers and school leaders within Gadsden School District. Reflecting back to this time, I can identify how my mother's view shifted from a holistic view to an individualistic view of schooling. By the time I reached the third grade, our family had moved five times, and my mother

worked three jobs, was receiving food stamps, was a single parent of five children, and was new to a neighborhood where she had to reestablish herself. I do not feel sorry for the challenges my mother faced nor use this to portray a picture of despair. This was simply our reality. My family's portrayal supports the common conditions many immigrant families experience that reshape their thinking and understanding of the new social politics as they settle into new neighborhoods across the United States. Most of my mother's energy was focused on providing us with food, shelter, and the simple necessities of life. She wanted to spend more time with her children. She would have loved to be home when we returned from school. She desired to read more often with her children. She wanted to attend all teacher conferences and school functions but the reality was different for us, as attending teacher conferences and school functions meant less money to make ends meet. At a minimum, my mother felt supporting teachers and school leaders meant responding to any medical or disciplinary concerns. My mother entrusted teachers and school leaders to provide a safe environment where her children could learn. She saw herself marginalized from her children's educational experience because the message she received from educators was that good grades meant learning and parent involvement meant joining the PTA and attending teacher conferences. My mother's experiences are supported by a growing volume of literature in parent engagement. Teachers, school leaders, and the school board had certain expectations for parents like my mother when it came to parent engagement. These expectations were to assist in educating her children but under a hierarchal system set by particular conditions and assigned roles. In other words, my mother had to learn the "system" (the established local conditions or policies) in order to benefit from the "system." My mother was never

asked how to best serve the needs of her children because “they” (i.e., teachers, school leaders, the school board, and policymakers) already knew what her children needed to be successful. In the book, *Parental Involvement and the Political Principle*, Saranson (1995) argued:

The political principle justifying parent involvement is that when decisions are made affecting you and your possessions, you should have a role, a voice in the process of decision making. You may call it a principle, a value, a right. It is not a formal rule, law, or a contract mutually agreed upon. It is a principle undergirding and embodied in our legal and political systems. (p. 19)

They [educators] avoid public discussion of the principle except to say that *of course* parents are vital to the education process, without implying that that affirmation of principle requires some alteration in existing power relationships. (p. 26)

As I progressed in the elementary grades, I noticed my mother’s growing impatience with the way her children were educated. Part of her impatience grew from the difficulty she experienced in trying to communicate with educators the hopes, aspirations, and dreams she had for her children. The reality of living in a disjointed partnership with those who helped educate her children became a constant challenge. Clearly my mother blamed herself as well for her lack of time to meet the needs of her children, having limited knowledge of the education system, and her level of agency to address her concerns with educators and school leaders. Saranson (1995) argued that the governance structure of our public school system complicates how the relationships are determined by rules and goals of the larger structure. Therefore, dissatisfaction with our

schools is directed toward those who are visible within the public school structure, which are our students, parents, teachers, school leaders, and school board members. Although policies that govern the public education structure affect the relationships among all who are involved, the interpretation and the implementation of the policy will look different in reality.

In 1994, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) became the reauthorization of ESEA and Title I. A significant difference was a shift away from the fundamental reasons behind the creation of the ESEA legislation in the 1960s. The civil rights movement and the war on poverty that once became the central argument for the ESEA legislative reforms pivoted to a focus on aligning standards monitored through assessments and reinforced with consequences for schools not meeting expectations set by federal and state governments (Fullan, 2016; Moles & Fege, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). By this period in time, my mother was more aware and understood the public school structure but continued to see herself as an outsider of the system, not as part of the system. It seemed parent conferences and school events were the only avenues of engaging with educators and school leaders. In 1991, I went to live with my uncle, Fernando, who lived in the lower valley area of El Paso. It was at this time that I noticed my mother's notion of success had been molded in response to the rhetoric pushed by the standards-based reform efforts in Texas. When I became a junior at Del Valle High School in El Paso, my mother and I had multiple conversations about the importance of passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The State of Texas required all students to complete the necessary courses and pass the TAAS in order to receive a high school diploma. My mother and I felt immense pressure to focus on passing the



TAAS for fear of not receiving a high school diploma. The majority of my learning and school resources were invested in TAAS test preparation, including tutoring, Saturday school, and learning testing strategies. This became the norm for many of my friends as well. Unfortunately, the consequences of this federal policy delivered a blow to many of my friends when they met the high school course requirements but failed to pass the TAAS requirement to receive their high school diploma. There is no doubt their future was affected by this mandate.

By the turn of the century, in 2001, NCLB was passed as a means to strengthen the standards-based and accountability reform efforts initiated in previous decades (Fullan, 2016; Moles & Fege, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). According to Moles and Fege (2011), this was also the first time that the ESEA clearly defined parent involvement. The act defines parental participation as:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning . . . and are full partners in their child's education. (NCLB, 2002, Sec. 9101[32])

NCLB also provided parents the option to choose to transfer their children from a failing school. In this new era, the conditions in our public education system only reinforced the need to tighten accountability efforts and focus on one source of data that would determine learning, the standardized test. In Texas, the standardized test era continues despite changes made to the name of the state exams. The name changes evolved from TABS (Texas Assessment of Basic Skills) to TEAMS (Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills) to TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) to TAKS (Texas

Academic Knowledge Skills) to STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness), but student success continues to be measured by scores on the standardized test.

By the time I graduated in 1993, my mother's agency to advocate for her children had been refined. However, her agency and awareness of the public school system came with a cost. By this time, her three older children were out of high school. She had experienced how the education system had worked for her older children as the two younger children continued attending school. Her impatience with the lack of overall transparency within the school system and lack of collaboration among parents and educators were two issues of dissension. It was clear that by this time my mother had developed ways to address particular issues at school. She became familiar with the social politics of the public school system. In particular, when she needed to address a difficult issue, she would invite one of my *tías* or *tíos* (aunts or uncles) to help facilitate the conversation. In addition, she would ask for an interpreter who worked in the school with whom she felt comfortable to be part of the conversation. Finally, she would ask for a set date to revisit the conversation or address the issue. What did not change was the gratitude she had for the many educators who helped educate her children, valuing their work and efforts of creating a better future by working with the youth. My mother's efforts in addressing the needs of her children were always intentional but never to disrespect those who cared for her children.

### **The Journey Continues**

The experiences and challenges we endured throughout our constant quest to fulfill our innermost desires, dreams, and hopes in the United States were not unique to

our family. Many of my extended family members, our neighbors, friends, and others who touched our lives also encountered similar circumstances, challenges, and times of transition. Upon reflecting on these experiences, I recognize and admire the work and tenacity of the many who have immigrated to this country in the quest of seeking a new life and reshaping the future of their families. Like my family, the thousands who immigrate and find a new place to call home become new members of a community. Their talents contribute to the development and prosperity of their new neighborhoods, their new states, and their new nation. There is little doubt in my mind that these experiences have guided my personal and professional development to positively affect the lives of others, especially those who consequently face similar circumstances as my family and I once encountered.

At every opportunity, my wife Yolanda and I take our children, Benjamin, Isabel, Anabel, and Santiago, to visit El Paso. The opportunity to revisit our past becomes an inspiring experience that redefines our work as educators, advocates, and scholars. During my experiences in the pursuit of my master's degree at Texas State University, I learned to appreciate my past and admire the efforts of my mother at a much deeper level. Appreciating my past and the efforts of my mother emerged through my work as a doctoral student and my service as an educator. In particular, a course I took called Understanding Self, facilitated by Dr. Miguel Guajardo, is what propelled me to unearth my past, reshape my present, and inspire my future. With his guidance, I analyzed my historical self through the various lenses that have reshaped the way I see my physical, spiritual, political, and cultural identities. This reflective journey exposed my vulnerabilities and reaffirmed my desire and determination to one day find myself writing

and defending this dissertation and becoming a *doctorado* (a doctor). An influential part of this experience has been the work of Paulo Freire. In particular, I am intrigued with the way Freire (1998) framed the importance of developing our critical consciousness. Freire suggested the development of a critical consciousness encompasses a level of humility and vulnerability. Humility to recognize that our own past experiences shape the way we see others and vulnerability that allows us to be open to alternate points of views. His work continues to encourage me to become a better listener by respecting differences of ideologies, remaining curious, questioning the status-quo, and valuing the talents and conditions of others. His work has enabled me to reflect on my past with a critical lens to help inform and guide my practices within my personal, spiritual, and professional environments. Freire encouraged educators to become observant, critical, and purposeful as they serve students and their families. A great influence of Freire's philosophy is the development of agency among those we serve. This begins by creating an environment where the spirit of hope is always present. He informed us that creating social change has a greater impact when it derives from those who are marginalized in society and negatively affected by reforms crafted by those with political influence and financial wealth. Freire's reflective and critical work illustrated a pedagogy of benevolence to the development of these qualities as the understanding of our continuous thirst for knowledge and therefore making us unfinished human beings.

The purpose of reflecting on and acknowledging our past to help shape our present and future embodies a continuous self-analysis in the way we relate, connect, and respond to those around us and the environments and spaces we occupy. Trueba (1999) explained:

As we grow and mature, we form a new self-concept, the *situated self* (or *situated selves*), which reflects successive and sequential adaptations of the person to the changing environment. New human experiences require changes in behavior and a “new” presentation of the self . . . Adequate coping with these changes demands a reconceptualization of the self. (p. 22)

My unfinishedness (Freire, 1998), therefore, garnishes my past experiences and has informed my personal, scholarly, and professional work while serving students, parents, and citizens in the Texas cities of Lockhart, New Braunfels, Seguin, and San Marcos. The term service can, at times, be easily couched or perceived by different professions, individuals, or groups as a way to place a “person who serves others” within a traditional hierarchal order that limits a broader meaning of the term. Through my personal, scholarly, and professional experiences, I have learned that the term has multiple meanings and perceptions, developing a critical consciousness perspective in serving others. Freire (1970) referred to critical consciousness as a time where an individual develops an understanding of the multiple realities that exist in society manifesting oppressive social and political structures that oppress certain groups in society while benefiting other groups. My critical consciousness has conditioned my situated self (Trueba, 1999) to adapt my culture, talents, skills, and epistemological frames to serve others. Through the growth and application of my critical consciousness, I have learned to ground my work (as a professional, social agent of change in my personal life, and as a scholar) using a theoretical lens and applying an epistemological framework. With an understanding that my situated self will evolve, one thing that remains constant is the quest to affect the families I serve. In *The Alchemist*, Coelho

(1988) wrote about how the path to our personal growth shapes our *personal legend*; that is, the evolution of our situated selves (Trueba, 1999). In his book, *Latinos Unidos*, Trueba (1999) supported *mi sendero como lider* (my leadership journey) by asserting:

New ethnic leadership is exercised by educated persons who not only understand well (through their personal experiences) the nature of hegemonic structures, poverty, oppression, and ignorance, but who know the importance of education as the key requirement for conscientization, participation in the democratic process, and ultimately, empowerment. Political action is presented as culturally and linguistically congruent with the new Latino self-definitions (the situated selves) by leaders who exemplify successful adaptation without losing their cultural identity. Political socialization is clearly embedded in the educational process, in teaching and learning. Attitudes about the social system, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity, about exploitation and multicultural curricula, are an integral part of teaching. (pp. 23-24)

I have been conditioned to become aware that my personal, professional, social agent of change, and scholarly experiences can inform my growth and how this growth affects the lives of those I serve. In my quest to serve others, I have had the opportunity to advocate for others through the lenses of a teacher, leader, advocate, and scholar. These opportunities have evolved and presented themselves in different forms, from guiding a lesson for a group of kindergarten students to facilitating a group discussion with teachers and parents. The opportunity to serve students, teachers, and parents has become a true honor but also satisfies my innermost desire to create change in the field of education, build community, challenge the status quo of oppressive structures within the

educational system, and improve the conditions for those who face similar challenges I once faced as a child. The opportunities to serve others and my selfish desire to create change have guided me to the topic of my dissertation. In addition to having many opportunities to advocate and affect the lives of those I serve, I have studied a phenomenon that has become a complex issue within education. This phenomenon involves the complexities parents face as they engage in the educational experiences of their children.

In the next two chapters, I provide a historical analysis of parent and community engagement in public schools in the United States followed by the methods of analysis. In Chapter II, I explain the educational historical underpinnings that have manifested the current conditions in parent and community engagement. In part, I explore the social issue of parent and community engagement from different perspectives to provide the reader a comprehensive understanding of the challenges parents and community members face. The chapter includes information about policies supporting parent and community engagement, such as Texas House Bill 5 of the 83rd Legislature, which became the impetus of this comparative policy analysis. Part of this chapter contains a brief review of the literature surrounding the current innovative community development efforts responsive to local needs that foster an alternative form of parent and community engagement.

Chapter II continues with a historical analysis of how student learning is assessed, measured, and ultimately valued under a capitalist ideology of the accountability and standards-based reform efforts of the past 35 years (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Ravitch, 2013). The section provides details of the accountability and standards-based reform

efforts followed by their impact on parents and educators. An important section of this chapter is the presentation of the HB5: Parent and Community Engagement mandate followed by a brief critique supporting the capitalist ideology. The concluding sections of Chapter II focus on the framework of the comparative policy analysis. Whereas one section provides a traditional lens for the comparative policy analysis, another section contains an explanation of the importance of a deeper and more fundamental approach in examining this social issue.

Chapter III contains details of the methodology I used to conduct this study. I begin the chapter by identifying and comparing two other states with laws similar to HB5: Parent and Community Engagement. I also identify the type of study and theoretical constructs guiding the comparative policy analysis. The final section of this chapter is the data analysis followed by the ethical considerations of the study.

The focus of Chapter IV is on the analysis of the three state (i.e., Texas, Colorado, and Nebraska) policies regarding parent, family, and community engagement. For the policy analysis, I employed Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology as a first layer of analysis exposing the social dynamics of parent, family, and community engagement. The second layer of analysis emerged from the application of Elazar's (1984) three political cultures informing the political cultures affecting policy, practice, and social environments.

Chapter V contains recommendations for the comparative policy analysis. The recommendations were informed by Scheurich's policy archaeology, Elazar's three political cultures, and the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) framework. The work of the CLE framework becomes the practical application of Scheurich's policy



archaeology where community members are engaged in a dialogical process examining the social construction of parent, family, and community engagement. The CLE framework is theory of change responsive to the ecologies of knowing; the self, the organization, and the community (Guajardo, Guajardo, Janson, & Militello, 2016). Each recommendation involves a level of action and critical awareness on this issue guided by the five axioms within the CLE framework.

### **What Would My Mother Say About the Introduction of this Issue?**

This is a very important issue, *mijo*, because we are humans. Humans need to talk about things. I can imagine that it will help students, their parents and the community, if we can communicate better. I think teachers and principals need parents because parents know their children. The insight parents provide about their children can be invaluable for educators if it is accepted and valued. The information you collected should be given to parents and teachers to help them educate children. I am glad you were able to use my experiences to help others, and please do not forget to tell your coworkers that everyone needs to be treated with dignity and respect.

## **II. A GENEALOGY OF A SOCIAL ISSUE, POLICY, AND ANALYSIS**

A historical analysis on issues surrounding parent and community engagement is necessary to better understand the importance of this social issue. It is important to understand that the perceptions and the realities of parents differ because one individual's perception is not necessarily someone else's reality. Many factors affect how parents become involved or engaged in their children's educational experiences.

In looking at the historical analysis of parent engagement, it is vital to recall its impact on student learning. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Henderson and Mapp provided a historical lens in the field of parent and community engagement. In doing so, they accumulated and researched about 80 studies in a 10-year period (i.e., 1993-2002) pertaining to this topic. Their research has affected the field of education in relation to community and parent engagement along with research conducted by other experts in the field, such as Joyce L. Epstein, K. C. Salinas, Beth S. Simon, M. G. Sanders, and Gerardo R. López, among others.

### **Impact of Parent Involvement on Student Learning**

Researchers studying parent involvement and family engagement have concluded that students with parents who are involved, regardless of income or background, earn higher grades and test scores; are more likely to be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits; attend school regularly; have better social skills, show improvements in behavior, and adapt well to school; and graduate and go on to postsecondary education (Davies, Henderson, Johnson, & Mapp, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Redding, 2011; Shepard

& Rose, 1995). Dotger and Bennett (2010) suggested that the diverse students and families of the 21st century continue to challenge the competencies of educators, requiring new forms of engagement efforts among education agencies, social services institutions, public and public organizations, and citizens. School leaders must support and enable parents, especially those who are marginalized by their level of income, to build social and political capital within the educational system (Redding, 2011).

### **Perceptions of Parents and Communities**

When parents send their children to school, it is understood that educators will influence the lives of their children. Parents want what is best for their children regardless of socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds. As a result, it is only natural for parents to support their children's educational experiences. Unfortunately, some educators, school leaders, and administrators continue to have a deficit view (Nelson & Guerra, 2014) of the efforts by parents, underestimating the importance of their efforts in affecting student learning (Henderson, Johnson, & Mapp, 2007; Redding, 2011). Yet, research continues to support the positive impact of parent or family engagement on student learning (Henderson et al., 2007; Redding, 2011; Shepard & Rose, 1995). According to Redding (2011), the current factory model school was not designed for partnership, involvement, or collaboration; it was designated for efficiency that did not value the input of participation of the citizen. McKnight and Block (2012) supported Redding's view when they explained the perception of citizens as consumers where school systems have managers who dictate to parents. Under this system and management paradigm, relationships are designed as instruments of engagement where there is little or no incentive to build relationships because the educator is only there to

teach students. Without establishing and fostering relationships, parents and educators will engage under the fallacy of commercial trust (McKnight & Block, 2012) where children become the currency that holds the interest of both parties.

### **Involvement or Engagement: Which is it?**

Since the passage of the ESEA in 1965, parent involvement (which has been expanded to include family engagement) has been recognized as a component of social justice, equity, and quality education (Redding, 2011). Over the years, the term “parent involvement” has evolved to encompass a broader meaning. Ferlazzo (2011) suggested parent and family involvement often leads to identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. In contrast, parent engagement involves listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. Ultimately, the goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners. Redding (2011) suggested the term parent involvement is being supplanted by the term family engagement in recognizing that grandparents and other family members may also be responsible for the care and upbringing of children. Therefore, family engagement indicates there is a deeper level of commitment and participation than involvement that produces even better results for students, families, schools, and communities (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Ferlazzo (2011) argued that it is important to understand the difference between parent involvement and parent engagement to truly capture the significance of how this relationship affects student achievement, improves local communities, and increases public support. He used the example given in a dictionary as he deconstructed the terms involvement and engagement. Involve is “to unfold or envelope,” whereas one of the meanings of engage is “to come together and interlock.” He elaborated by suggesting

involvement implies doing to; in contrast, engagement implies doing with. His research as a proponent in field of community development and parent and community relations has led to positive results in the communities he has served. Ferlazzo suggested parent involvement efforts often are easier to implement because those in leadership positions in schools have the power to manipulate the framework through which parents and community members become involved. In contrast, parent engagement enables educators, community members, and families to come together as mutual partners to collaborate and values the assets of parents and families as experts in addressing the needs of their children. The simple distinction between the terms involvement and engagement does not mean that relationships, stereotypes, and perceptions will change. It is important to understand that terms may signify a change in direction but may not necessarily change behaviors, attitudes, or perceptions. Guajardo et al. (2016) argued that there are alternative forms of meaningful engagement that foster stronger relationships and deeper learning among parents, community members, educators, leaders, activists, youth, and elders. These alternative forms of engagement reframe the ways in which schools and communities genuinely engage through a CLE. The CLE process is explored further in subsequent paragraphs. Henderson and Mapp (2002) also concluded that schools that are successful in engaging families from very diverse backgrounds share three key practices: (a) focus on building trust through collaborative efforts among teachers, families, and community members; (b) recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences; and (c) embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared (p. 47).

### **Policies Supporting Parent Engagement**

Policies such as NCLB helped define parent involvement (Redding, 2011). According to Redding (2011), under NCLB, parent involvement was defined as regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. He argued that where such interactions flourish, partnerships of mutual respect, trust, and support can more easily develop a shared vision linking public education, parents, community, and policymakers. The reauthorization and amendments added to the ESEA of 1994 created PIRCs. The idea behind the PIRCs was to help implement parent involvement policies and programs designed to improve student achievement, strengthen partnerships between parents and educators, and coordinate Title I (Redding, 2011) and other parent involvement services under NCLB. According to the National Coalition of Parental Information and Resource Centers (2010), PIRCs had a significant impact on changing the practices of families used in supporting children's learning. However, funding for PIRCs has not been awarded through federal funding since 2011, crippling the critical efforts of evolving community partnerships.

### **Community Development and Family Engagement**

The work being done through the CLE framework offers a dynamic and genuine way to address the issues facing schools, parents, and communities. These growing networks of citizens, groups, private and public organizations, scholars, and youth gather frequently across the country to build capacity and transform communities through interactive place-based pedagogical exchanges. The CLE organization emerged from a national initiative through the Kellogg Foundation called the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change in 2002. The CLE organization is led by a group of dedicated social

activists from various disciplines in a dozen states. The group converges in a community and engages community members to address the social issues that are unique to the community hosting the CLE. The CLEs are grounded through the work of Myles Horton done at the Highlander Folk School, also known as the Highlander Center for Research and Development, in New Market, Tennessee. Leading researchers and practitioners in the field of community development and school improvement, Guajardo et al. (2016), used a collective leadership approach to address local issues in communities through five axioms:

(a) learning and leadership are a dynamic social process, (b) conversations are critical and center pedagogies, (c) the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local questions and problems, (d) crossing boundaries enriches how we develop and learn, and (e) hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities. (pp. 22-27)

Although there are practices that embody the five axioms and give structure to the CLE work, it deviates from the traditional step-by-step linear model. The CLE develops and uses strategies to empower local people to find solutions that are organic and meet their local needs. A key structure in a CLE is the use of circle, an ancient practice where participants sit in a circle, pass a talking piece along, and share their gifts. Circle facilitates the processes of trust, belonging, and reciprocity (Guajardo et al., 2016).

The CLE model offers a variety of dynamic approaches or pedagogies to community development that can offer students, parents, educators, and community members the flexibility to address issues they deem important and necessary to voice. This level of flexibility in applying a pedagogy to help address a particular issue is what

makes CLEs a great tool for addressing local transformational change. The work of CLEs has been documented and shared in Texas and in many spaces across the United States. The review of the collective work of CLEs (Guajardo et al., 2016) unfolds a multitude of stories around the country where participants value this type of active participation that fosters genuine relationship building capacity among members and builds trust and hope. Unlike the Community-Based Accountability System (Guajardo et al., 2016), the CLE is not measured via a quantifiable approach using numbers, tallies, percentages, or a monetary cost. The CLE model delineates from the commodification of services approach suggested by McKnight and Block (2012).

### **A Historical Analysis of Student Assessment and its Impact**

Those who work in the field of public education have continually faced a harsh reality about the work they do and its impact on the communities they serve. Their work at times is overshadowed and minimized by those outside the field of public education. For those who have had the pleasure, honor, and, above all, the commitment of serving students, their families, and communities, there is a greater purpose. In understanding and acknowledging the complexity and dynamics in the work being done by those in the education field, teaching and learning go beyond the simple acts of teaching and learning. Teachers, counselors, nurses, custodians, cafeteria workers, educational aides, bus drivers, office staff, administrators, superintendents, school board members, and the many others who work to support student learning recognize that their work is important, relevant, and critical to the progress and prosperity of their communities, their states, the country, and the world in which we live.



The relevant work being done by those in the field of education has been systematically undermined and attacked by those outside the field of education (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Ravitch, 2013). The systematic attack has become an outcry for the many who work in the field of education. The overemphasis on standardized test scores has become the most critical element in determining the level of student learning that has had years of deteriorating consequences in the field of education and the misperception and stigmatization of communities (Ravitch, 2013). Student learning has become big business for publishing companies, a competitive game for politicians, and an untamable beast for those in the field of education because of the overemphasis on standardized test scores. The historical analysis of the relationship between student assessments and its impact on community has shaped the argument for a more comprehensive approach in evaluating the work done in the field of education, and in particular parent, family, and community engagement. The law passed by the 83rd Legislature in Texas known as House Bill 5: Community and Parent Engagement (HB5: Community and Parent Engagement) is the focus of this comparative policy analysis. The historical analysis provides a lens in the evolution and systematic attack in the field of education from capitalists who advocate for the privatization of the public school system. The consistent attack through the utility of an accountability and standards-based reform efforts within the educational system has created confusion and distrust among students, parents, educators, and community members about what constitutes learning. The confusion and distrust have negatively affected the relationships among students, parents, educators, and school leaders, resulting in the creation of a division among all members of the community.

Scholars in the field of education, theorists, students, teachers, multiple unions affiliated with education, administrators of public schools, parents, and activists, among others, have argued for and supported a more comprehensive approach to determining the level of success and progress of student learning. Organizations such as TASA, Texas AFT, and Texas Classroom Teachers Association were notable institutions calling for the comprehensive changes in public education originally proposed through House Bill 5. In particular, many theorists and scholars, such as Paulo Freire, John Dewey, Thomas J. Sergiovanni, Peter Block, Myles Horton, Miguel A. Guajardo, Francisco Guajardo, John Oliver, Christopher Janson, Matthew Militello, Diane Ravitch, A. Wade Boykin, Pedro Noriega, and Karen L. Mapp, among others, have consistently written, discussed, promoted, and encouraged alternative forms of community engagement as it relates to student learning. Many of these individuals, scholars, and organizations have echoed the call for a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the ways in which student progress is measured and interpreted, and the implications of the interpretations.

The following provides a historical lens that helped support one of the main arguments for change in the fractured relationships among students, parents, schools, and entities that govern our schools. The overemphasis on standardized testing has affected the ways in which communities engage in the education of children and has had a detrimental effect on student learning, community development, and economic progress in many communities across the United States (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

According to Ravitch (2013), reform efforts in public education have been driven from a business model where deliberate efforts have been made to replace public education with a privately managed, free-market system of schooling. These business

model reform efforts date back to 1955 when University of Chicago economist, Milton Friedman, proposed the idea of vouchers to the public. Under the pretext of the business model, schools are expected to perform like private businesses where only the bottom line becomes the measurement of success or failure. This business approach to evaluating public schools exposes several critical questions in its application. Who determines what success looks like? How will success or failure be measured? What resources are necessary to achieve success? Who determines what happens when success is not achieved? What happens to the school and students when success is not achieved?

These questions begin to unfold the critical elements of the foundation in the application of the business model. The current school accountability system does answer some of these questions and provides a parallel comparison to the business model. For instance, standardized test scores ultimately determine the success of schools. Ravitch (2013) argued that the current framework of the school accountability system resembles the business model approach. The business model that prompted the privatization of the public school system intensified when NCLB was implemented in 2001. The gates opened for the privatization of our public schools as a narrative of free choice, and deregulation and a market-driven mentality captured the attention of those in Washington, DC. These federal policies have clearly defined the ways in which we assess student progress in Texas as written by Representative Aycock and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick in the bill analyses of HB5 (Legislative Reference Library of Texas, 2016). According to Ravitch (2013), NCLB brought about a drastic change in testing and accountability. First, the law required that all students in Grades 3 through 8 be tested every year. Another change was the manner in which the school accountability

system was implemented to achieve a level of success. The changes to the public education system proposed by the Obama Administration (under the “Race to the Top” initiative) continued the cycle and reliance on standardized test scores to determine student progress. These complicated federal and state evaluating guidelines have promoted a culture of compliance, uniformity, top down approach, and data-driven euphoria that focuses on one thing only, on test scores, not students. The State of Texas has continued to follow this path of accountability relying on standardized test scores. Despite changes to the names or acronyms of the standardized tests (i.e., TABS, TEAMS, TAAS, TAKS, STAAR) and the supposed changes to the rigor of the tests, the way we measure student success and progress continues to be based on a single instrument, the standardized test.

The accumulation of 30 years of standardized testing in Texas has yielded several results. The following data provide a clear indication of an authentic form of addressing and assessing the needs of students and the community in which they live. According to the TEA (2016), the current academic accountability system ratings inform the public on student achievement, student progress, efforts of closing the achievement gap, and postsecondary readiness. There is evidence to support that student standardized test scores have become the sole factor in determining student learning, progress, and success (Boykin & Noriega, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). This one-dimensional view of assessing student learning, progress, and success has created a false sense of accountability in the nation’s public school systems (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

## **Progression of the Impact**

The impact of the accountability and standardization era extends beyond the classroom, campus, and district (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Ravitch, 2013). The impact of basing student learning on a one-dimensional view has larger complications within communities (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Ravitch, 2013). These set accountability systems have historically manifested conditions that ultimately benefit certain groups and marginalize others. This has placed hierarchal value structures based on communities, their schools, neighborhoods, families, and individuals. Student scores ultimately affect home values, the local job industry, and community resources. When people or companies seek to relocate to a new community, they look at the accountability ratings of the schools. In doing so, they may not necessarily gather a complete overview of the work being done in the schools. Upon internal testing that forecasts the performance of students on the standardized tests or the first round of standardized tests, districts go through a drastic shift in the way resources are allocated in schools. Resources such as personnel, time, and instructional materials are reallocated to help improve the test scores each year. This shifting and reallocation of resources is focused on the testing grades (i.e., Grades 3 through 12). In the meantime, the lower grades (i.e., Pre-K through Grade 2) become a secondary issue or not the top priority in addressing the needs of students. The drastic reallocation of resources to the upper grades creates a larger academic gap in the lower grades. This cycle will then continue year after year, all based on the accountability standings of the school. Teaching to the test has and continues to be a pervasive method of instruction in our public education system (Boykin & Noriega, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). Teaching to the test mainly focuses on helping

students meet the required test score set by state education agencies. The main reason why teachers teach to the test is because it continues to be the most important factor in assessing student success and teacher performance. In Texas, the TEA continues to evaluate the work of teachers, administrators, and supporting staff using standardized test scores. This teaching approach limits the opportunities of learning for students and devalues the work done by students, educators, parents, and supporting staff. The use of student test scores to evaluate the work done in a particular school has created a division between the needs of the community as a whole and the needs of the schools to help serve the same citizens. The needs of the students inside or outside the school are the same regardless of setting. It is important to evaluate the needs of the entire community to help guide the underlying academic, social, health, and economic needs of students (Blankstein & Noriega, 2004). A more comprehensive approach in assessing student learning, progress, and success is desperately needed in Texas.

### **A Policy is Crafted: House Bill 5 (83rd Legislature)**

In analyzing a particular policy, a historical reflection on the creation of such policy is needed to help develop a better understanding of why the policy was created in the first place. In particular, House Bill 5 (HB5) raises questions such as how much did the law change from its original intent? What social political issues influenced the creation of HB5? Who were the major players who helped craft the mandate? What political elements can be identified as the mandate was being crafted?

As part of the historical analysis, it is important to start by providing the policy as stated by Texas Legislature Online (2016) during the 83rd Legislature that convened in the spring of 2013 that enacted HB5. The following section is the complete description

of House Bill 5. The bill has various components that encompass the different dimensions of community and parent engagement. As listed below, HB5 provides an insight to its intent, listing eight themes that factor in the performance of the level of community and parent engagement and compliance to the law. Posting the description of the law (HB5) as listed by the Texas Legislature Online website allows the reader to review the entirety of the law and begins to draw attention to the third factor of House Bill 5, Community and Parent Engagement, which was the focus of the current study. House Bill 5: Community and Parent Engagement also provides three ways in which students, parents, and community members can measure the level of parent and community engagement. House Bill 5 was enacted under the Texas Education Code, Title 2: Public Education, Subtitle H: Public School System Accountability, Chapter 39 Subchapter B: Assessment of Academic Skills:

Sec. 39.0545. SCHOOL DISTRICT EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE IN COMMUNITY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT; COMPLIANCE. (a) Each school district shall evaluate the district's performance and the performance of each campus in the district in community and student engagement and in compliance as provided by this section and assign the district and each campus a performance rating of exemplary, recognized, acceptable, or unacceptable for both overall performance and each individual evaluation factor listed under Subsection (b). Not later than August 8 of each year, the district shall report each performance rating to the agency and make the performance ratings publicly available as provided by commissioner rule.

(b) For purposes of assigning the performance ratings under Subsection (a), a school district must evaluate:

(1) the following programs or specific categories of performance at each campus:

(A) fine arts;

(B) wellness and physical education;

(C) community and parental involvement, such as:

(i) opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments under Section 39.023;

(ii) tutoring programs that support students taking assessments under Section 39.023; and

(iii) opportunities for students to participate in community service projects;

(D) the 21st Century Workforce Development program;

(E) the second language acquisition program;

(F) the digital learning environment;

(G) dropout prevention strategies; and

(H) educational programs for gifted and talented students; and

(2) the record of the district and each campus regarding compliance with statutory reporting and policy requirements.

(c) A school district shall use criteria developed by a local committee to evaluate:

(1) the performance of the district's campus programs and categories of performance under Subsection (b)(1); and

(2) the record of the district and each campus regarding compliance under Subsection (b)(2).



Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 211 (H.B. 5), Sec. 46(a), eff. June 10, 2013.

The following section of the Texas Education Code mandates how a district and each school should report to the TEA as part of the compliance piece of Section 39.0545 listed above. This section provides the procedures by which each school district will evaluate its performance in terms of student, parent, and community engagement. Each district is given the latitude to create its own criteria and choose three particular programs that will ultimately determine the compliance of the law.

Sec. 39.0546. PERFORMANCE IN COMMUNITY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AS COMPONENT OF OVERALL DISTRICT AND CAMPUS RATING. (a) For purposes of including the local evaluation of districts and campuses under Section 39.053(c)(5) and assigning an overall rating under Section 39.054, before the beginning of each school year:

(1) each school district shall:

(A) select and report to the agency three programs or categories under Section 39.0545(b)(1), as added by Chapter 211 (H.B. 5), Acts of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, under which the district will evaluate district performance;

(B) submit to the agency the criteria the district will use to evaluate district performance and assign the district a performance rating; and

(C) make the information described by Paragraphs (A) and (B) available on the district's Internet website; and

(2) each campus shall:

(A) select and report to the agency three programs or categories under Section 39.0545(b)(1), as added by Chapter 211 (H.B. 5), Acts of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, under which the campus will evaluate campus performance;

(B) submit to the agency the criteria the campus will use to evaluate campus performance and assign the campus a performance rating; and

(C) make the information described by Paragraphs (A) and (B) available on the Internet website of the campus.

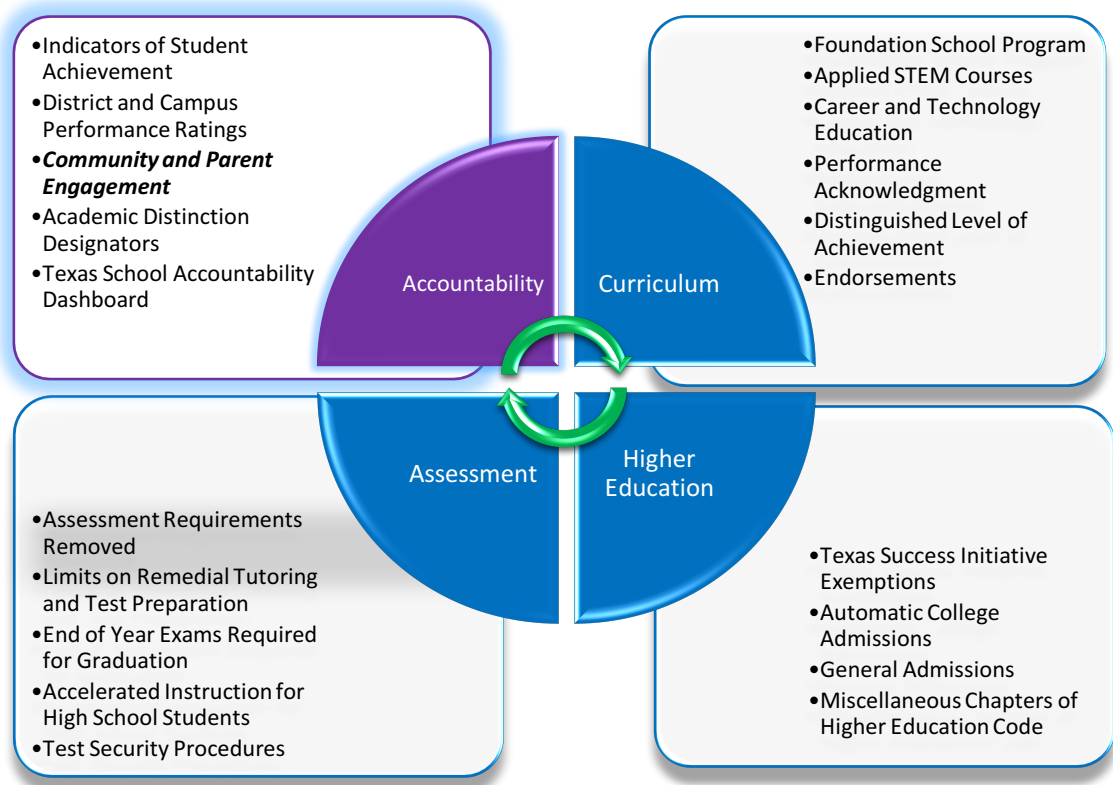
(b) Based on the evaluation under this section, each school district shall assign the district and each campus shall assign the campus a performance rating of A, B, C, D, or F, for both overall performance and for each program or category evaluated.

An overall or a program or category performance rating of A reflects exemplary performance. An overall or a program or category performance rating of B reflects recognized performance. An overall or a program or category performance rating of C reflects acceptable performance. An overall or a program or category performance rating of D or F reflects unacceptable performance.

(c) On or before the date determined by the commissioner by rule, each school district and campus shall report each performance rating to the agency for the purpose of including the rating in evaluating school district and campus performance and assigning an overall rating under Section 39.054.

The previous two sections (Sec. 39.0545 and Sec. 39.0546) of HB5 are the performance and compliance components of the mandate. The two sections below define the law as it relates to community and parent involvement. It is important to point out

that HB5 has other components that are not related to community and parent engagement. These components relate to student assessments, curriculum, accountability, and postsecondary requirements. The focus of the current study was on the community and parent engagement section of the legislation. Figure 1 is presented to help the reader understand the complexity of HB5 as numerous social issues were addressed through a single bill.



*Figure 1.* Components of House Bill 5.

The focus in the current study was on a comparison of similar laws relating to community and parent engagement implemented in other states. Although the other three components (i.e., curriculum, assessment, and higher education) ultimately affect the accountability area of the bill, the focus in this study was on the component that

addresses community and parent engagement as it relates to student learning. The following section supports the importance of seeking a different metric of valuing the impact of community and parent engagement as the overemphasis of student learning continues to be heavily dependent on standardized test performance.

Subsequent revisions to HB5: Community and Parent Engagement were implemented through the 84th Legislature under House Bill 2804: Relating to evaluation of public school performance (HB2804). According to the bill analysis presented on May 22, 2015, the purpose of the HB2804 was to limit the use of state standardized tests in the school accountability system and expand the use of other indicators of student success and school performance. Under HB2804, the state legislature presented two changes. First, the law instructs the commissioner of education to adopt a set of indicators for quality of learning and achievement with a focus on improving student preparedness for success in subsequent grade levels and entering the workforce, the military, or postsecondary education; reducing, with the goal of eliminating, academic achievement differentials among students from different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds; and informing parents and the community regarding campus and district performance. Second, the law focuses on evaluating school districts and campuses based on five domains that fall under the three achievement indicators. Domains one, two, and three rely on student performance on standardized tests. Domain four focuses on other factors such as dropout and graduation rates, military enlistment, advanced placement enrollment, endorsements and distinguished achievement, postsecondary credit, and industry certification. The fifth domain focuses on the performance of three specific programs related to community and student engagement that are selected locally. Third,

the law attributes a set percentage that determines the overall rating of the district. The law indicated 55% of the performance evaluation falls under the first, second, and third domains; 35% falls under the fourth domain; and 10% under the fifth domain.

Both HB5 and the subsequent revisions through HB2804 shaped the landscape and the scope by which the work in public schools in Texas is evaluated. Legislators have clearly made an attempt to address the role of standardized testing and its impact on students, their families, schools, districts, and communities. The following section of the study begins the policy analysis of HB5: Community and Parent Engagement.

### **Brief Critique of House Bill 5**

With growing pressure from the public, educators, and scholars in the field of education, legislators in Texas felt the need to evaluate the way communities (in particular parents) engaged in the learning of students. According to the TEA (2016), a significant change occurred when districts were encouraged to develop their own accountability systems to help assess local issues related to student learning and parent engagement. House Bill 5 provided an opportunity for communities and districts to engage in an authentic way to address the needs of students and the community.

In examining historical records from different sources, it becomes clear that there were multiple visions of the HB5 community and parent engagement piece. These versions had similarities and differences depending on the lens of those advocating for the passing of the law. According to the Legislative Reference Library of Texas (2016), the original intent of HB5: Community and Parent Engagement was to provide opportunities for community and parent involvement in three particular areas of (a) opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments, (b) tutoring

programs to support students taking assessments, and (c) opportunities for students to participate in the community. After going through several revisions through the State House and Senate, this interpretation was presented and passed by legislators during the 83rd Legislative session. The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA, 2016) cited a different intent and provided an interpretation that focused on the broader perspective. The website states:

HB 5 also included a local evaluation requirement that is frequently referred to as the *community engagement* component. The community engagement component is an opportunity for districts to showcase areas of excellence and success as well as recognize areas in need of improvement and set future goals valued in the community.

The statute requires each district to evaluate and designate a performance rating for the district and each of its campuses in the district based on criteria set by a local committee. (TEC 39.0545)

The interpretation of TASA describes a broader lens to the application of HB5. Here, HB5 begins to demonstrate flexibility in the interpretation of the law. The three items listed by the bill analyses (Legislative Reference Library of Texas, 2016) are specific areas where TASA (2016) leaves room for interpretation.

House Bill 5 Community and Parent Engagement has an accountability component embedded to rate the performance of a district and its campuses. According to this accountability component (Texas Legislature Online, 2016) each district chooses three programs or categories (fine arts, wellness and physical education, community and parental involvement, 21st century workforce development program, second language

acquisition program, digital learning environment, dropout prevention strategies, educational programs for gifted and talented students) and submits the criteria to a district committee that will then use them to evaluate the district and assign a performance rating. Each campus goes through the same process, creating a committee that will evaluate the same three programs or categories chosen by the district committee and assign a rating. The performance ratings have a letter grade (A-F) similar to that of a student report card. A performance rating of an A reflects exemplary performance, a performance rating of a B reflects recognized performance, a performance rating of a C reflects acceptable performance, and a performance rating of D or F reflects unacceptable performance (House Research Organization, 2015).

The way in which HB5 was written provided flexibility for a local interpretation to fit the needs of the community. For purposes of compliance, districts are required to report their internal or self-performance ratings to the TEA. There are no penalties or sanctions mentioned in the law. According to the TEA (2016), HB5: Community and Engagement provided districts an optional local accountability system. The TEA clearly stated the local accountability system would not affect the accountability system based on the STAAR test results:

Although the statewide accountability system has been designed to address the guiding principles articulated in Chapter 1 – Introduction, it is not a comprehensive system of performance evaluation. Communities across Texas have varied needs and goals for the school districts educating their students. Local systems of accountability can best address those priorities.

Districts are encouraged to develop their own complementary local accountability systems to plan for continued student performance improvement. Such systems are entirely voluntary and for local use only. Performance on locally-defined indicators does not affect the ratings determined through the statewide system. (p. 92)

Subsequently, there remain two isolated accountability systems, one set for standardized test scores and the other for the community and parent engagement piece of HB5. The format in which these accountability systems are mandated under Texas law and how they operate are based on a patriarchal relationship. The manifestation of this patriarchal approach places greater emphasis on the accountability system based on student standardized test scores than the accountability system based on community and parent engagement of HB5. The accountability system based on standardized test outcomes can create a negative image of the community and its schools solely based on student standardized test scores (Boykin & Noriega, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). Under the current conditions set forth by the accountability system, the community and parent engagement component will be perceived as an add-on instead of a significant part of the work of students, educators, parents, and community members have done in schools. The accountability system based on standardized tests will consume the majority of attention, energy, and resources, “colonizing” (Sergiovanni, 2000, pp. 88-91) the perception that test scores matter more than the conditions, environments, and relationships of those within the system.

In an initial critique of HB5: Community and Engagement, a correlation can be identified based on what both systems are trying to assess, evaluate, and ultimately



influence. Standardized testing influences the need for predictability and standards, hence the sustainability of an institutional life (McKnight & Block, 2012). These traits can also be compared to what Sergiovanni (2000) called the systems world of a school, which comprises protocols, strategic and tactical actions, predictions, and accountability. An accountability system based solely on student standardized test scores ignores the real environmental conditions of a district and its schools. The use of such quantitative measures forces participants to live within confines of compliance, automates human functions, depersonalizes individuals, and makes relationships instrumental (McKnight & Block, 2012). The accountability system based on test scores lacks life and fails to consider the stories of the students, parents, educators, and community members who work hard in ensuring the educational needs of all students are met.

According to McKnight and Block (2012), an abundant community rejects systematic uniformity and can be identified by collective accountability that can be created and sustained through a variety of gifts from all levels of community members. This description relates to what Sergiovanni (2000) described as the lifeworld of an organization where cultural capital is created through local customs, traditions, and rituals. Applying these paradigms to the policy evaluation analysis of HB5: Community and Engagement, it is clear that the lifeworld (Sergiovanni, 2000) and the abundant community (McKnight & Block, 2012) paradigms have been colonized by the systems world (Sergiovanni, 2000) and the systematic institutional life set by standards and predictability (McKnight & Block, 2012) as measured by student standardized test scores. The HB5: Community and Engagement mandate portrays a well-intended effort by the Texas Legislature, but will need a significant deviation from the current

accountability measures to truly address the needs of students, parents, educators, and unique communities across the State of Texas.

### **Application of a Social Political Lens to House Bill 5**

An inquiry of HB5 through a social political lens is the focus of this section to provide a picture of the social political impact of HB5. A national search for similar laws can help shape a macro perspective of the need for greater collaboration among parents and educators. Evidence of community leaders and citizens can provide a more micro perspective on the way things are in Texas. The relationships among educators and parents also needed to be explored to gather a feeling of how HB5 has affected the relationships among teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Significant studies have demonstrated the strong impact of parental involvement on student success (Caspe, Lopez, & Wolos, 2007; Epstein, 1990; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). According to García and Kleifgen (2010), psychology researchers have identified three determinants of parent involvement. The first is parents' beliefs in their supporting roles in the education of their children. The second is parents' beliefs that they possess the knowledge and tools necessary to assist their children in their education. The third relates to their own perceptions regarding the school's (i.e., educators and other staff) willingness to have them participate. The last point is key to a deeper exploration of the importance of parent and teacher interactions and policies that assist in the process of building stronger relationships among parents and teachers.

The creation of House Bill 5 reveals similarities to a law in the State of Florida established in 2003 and revised since. Florida's Family and School Partnership for

Student Achievement Act (Title XLVIII; K-20 Education Code; Chapter 1002; Student and Parental Rights and Educational Choices; Section 23; 1002.23) provides insight into HB5 in Texas. The Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act in Florida details specifically the purpose and intent of the law, which is similar to HB5. Several elements of the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act in Florida are quoted to support the areas similar to HB5 as referenced by the Florida Legislature (2018):

The purpose of the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act is to:

(c) Provide a framework for building and strengthening partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, district school superintendents, and other personnel.

Each district school board, school district superintendent, and teacher shall fully support and cooperate in implementing a well-planned, inclusive, and comprehensive program to assist parents and families in effectively participating in their child's education.

(2) To facilitate meaningful parent and family involvement, the Department of Education shall develop guidelines for a parent guide to successful student achievement which describes what parents need to know about their child's educational progress and how they can help their child to succeed in school.

Other states, such as Arizona, California, Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and Missouri, have similar statutes to the HB5 section on community and parent engagement (Belway, Durán, & Spielberg, 2013).

According to Caspe et al. (2007), several implications have emerged for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers as they aspire to create systematic, developmental, and comprehensive approaches to family involvement. These implications show promise in advancing family involvement and strengthening the relationships among schools, community-based organizations, and families. Initiatives that integrate family involvement as part of the school instruction strategy instead of perceiving family involvement as an “add-on” have shown success in North Carolina.

In Texas, an article by the Mineral Wells Index published on June 12, 2016, by school board trustee Bobby J. Rigues, supported the idea of having a more comprehensive accountability system where school districts take a proactive approach to learn what parents and community leaders find important in their local schools. He implied that:

The feature of labeling schools with a letter grade is just the surface of a much larger and complicated Texas school accountability system. One aspect involves hard data and reports. The Texas Education Agency provides an entire section titled, Performance Reporting Division. Data of every imaginable kind is sliced and diced to produce columns of numbers representing outcomes at the campus, region, and state level. This data represents children of every age, ethnicity, ability and more. (para. 7)

School districts are taking a proactive approach to learn what parents and community leaders find important in their local schools. Districts like Denton ISD, Alief ISD and San Antonio's Northside ISD are aggressively pursuing these partnerships for student success. Campus goals become more realistic and high stakes testing less emphasized. Parents become better partners in the education of their children. Local school performance is better understood and valued. (para. 12)

I think they're on to something . . . the real answer to how well our schools are doing is found in the word "engagement" – not a label. A new future is upon us. Make education a priority. (para. 13)

The topic of parent and community engagement, at times, simplifies how parents, students, and educators navigate through complex interpersonal skills where personal perceptions, communication abilities, cultural awareness, the building and fostering of relationships, and conflict resolution skills affect the way individuals relate to each other (Redding, 2011). This complex web of interpersonal skills is constantly at play as people negotiate, politic, and mediate with each other in educational and community environments. It is critical to understand the complexity of human behavior because it is the underlining mechanism by which parents, students, teachers, administrators, board members, legislators, and other community members base their collective efforts toward improving the educational experiences of students. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss these complex interpersonal mechanisms that create and, at times, challenge the way we relate with each other and build trust.

Parent and teacher perceptions play a significant role in how students are educated. Efforts have been made to assist and train teachers to become aware of the growing diverse student population, cultural awareness, linguistic aptitudes, economic, and differences of home life, but work in this area needs to continue (Calzada et al., 2014; Caspe et al., 2007; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). According to Moles and Fege (2011), teachers continue to have negative views of parents and underestimate the importance of family engagement. If the research supports that parent and family engagement has a positive impact on student learning, then teacher perceptions should be a continuous topic for improvement. The idea of having teachers examine and reflect on their personal perceptions about parents should be part of a continuous professional development opportunity. Nelson and Guerra (2014) argued that the cycle of deficit thinking results in negative consequences for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and families. It also has a direct impact on failure and dropout rates, disproportion number of special education referrals, discipline referrals, placement in gifted and talented and advanced classes, and the exclusion of parents from engaging in their child's educational experiences.

### **Framework for the Analysis of Policy**

In order to better understand the impact of a particular federal, state, or local mandate, it is important to seek understanding by applying a framework by which the inquiry can be guided. A policy analysis framework can help guide this process by focusing on particular areas of the mandate. Canadian political scientist, Leslie Pal (1987), defined policy analysis as a discipline that can be applied intellectually to study collective responses to public problems. His definition is sufficient to investigate the

policy from a broader perspective. In doing so, a researcher can choose to investigate the policy from different perspectives to identify the evolution and political angles of the policy as it became law. However, it does not allow for one to take a deeper dive into the analysis of a policy.

### **Casting the Net Wide**

According to Popple and Leighninger (2004), various policy analysis frameworks are used to investigate particular areas of a policy. For instance, an analysis may concentrate on describing the impact of the policy on those it was intended to serve. A different analytical lens could be used to investigate the financial impact of the policy in comparison to the services it intended to provide. Another analytical lens may focus on the unintended consequences of the policy to those who are not served under the policy. These are critical and yet separate lenses that can be applied to thoroughly investigate a policy. Each lens serves a particular purpose and audience.

Popple and Leighninger (2004) argued that in order to effectively analyze a social policy, certain key components of the policy must be explored. The key components include a historical analysis, social analysis, economic analysis, political analysis, policy/program evaluation, and current proposals for policy reform. Applying Popple and Leighninger's policy analysis framework examines policy from a traditional perspective. Under this policy analysis framework, a traditional positivist interpretation of analysis evolves. The need for a different and yet critical lens in analyzing a policy is necessary to truly break from a traditional and positivist approach. A traditional lens will

engage the reader to explore the general underpinnings of a policy, allowing for a superficial level of interpretation.

### **Casting the Net Deep**

Foucault (1986) suggested that in investigating the politics of crafting policy, there needs to be a deeper examination of the archeological and genealogical social interactions surrounding the issue. He explained that in order to understand politics in relation to power, one must broaden the view of power from a hierarchal perspective. This deeper examination includes existing power relations that go beyond the law. These power relations are embodied in families, institutions, organizations, and bureaucracy. Through this lens, the issue of power is examined and correlated to particular groups, individuals, and organizations.

Scheurich (1994) suggested a different approach than Popple and Leighninger (2004), and more aligned to Foucault (1986), in analyzing social policies that deviate from the traditional and postpositivist approaches. Scheurich argued that although traditional and postpositivist approaches of studying and analyzing social policies seek understanding from different perspectives, both approaches view social problems from a limited scope. The traditional policy analysis approach focuses on improving social order under the presumption that social problems can be fixed. Scheurich claimed that postpositivist social policy analysis approaches are more symbolic than realistic approaches to fixing the social problem. Scheurich argued that by using a postpositivist approach, policy analysis will be exposed through different lenses: the analysis is debated, the inefficiencies of the analysis are exposed, and defects of the supporting arguments are illuminated and clarify the political implications of the analysis. He



argued that a postpositivist approach simply critiques that policy analysis but does not provide realistic solutions. A postpositivist application to a policy analysis provides symbolic solutions rather than a practical approach to solving social problems.

Scheurich (1994) presented a distinct approach to policy analysis called policy archeology. Policy archeology is used to study the social construction of social problems. It interrogates the passive compliance, the social construction of possible solutions, instead of accepting policy studies as a “neutral” social science; it questions the broader social functions of policy studies; and it examines the nature of how a social problem is socially legitimized and what policy analysis itself is. Subsequently, using his approach supports the comparative policy analysis of HB5: Parent and Community Engagement in comparison to similar policies in two other states (i.e., Colorado and Nebraska).

**Four arenas of policy archeology.** Scheurich’s (1994) policy archeology uses four particular arenas to examine a policy such as HB5: Parent and Community Engagement. He suggested the application of four arenas to study and analyze a social policy through the lens of policy archeology:

- Arena I. The first arena focuses on the study of the social construction of specific education and social problems.
- Arena II. The second arena focuses on the identification of the network of social regularities across education and social problems.
- Arena III. The third arena focuses on the study of the social construction of the range of acceptable policy solutions

- Arena IV. The fourth arena focuses on the study of the social functions of policy studies itself. (p. 300)

Although Scheurich's (1994) policy archeology framework provides a unique lens to the analysis of a policy, the terms used in describing his theory leave no room to interpret a social issue as anything other than a problem. His policy analysis limits the scope and preconditions the reader to accept his initial argument as described in the previous paragraph. As a result, a policy analysis can be strengthened by applying Derrida's (1978) deconstruction theory. Scheurich's claim to investigate beyond the surface of traditional methods of policy analysis, as proposed by Popple and Leighninger (2004), invokes an inquiry that deepens the scope of the policy analysis. However, in applying Derrida's deconstruction theory, Scheurich made a presumption that all social issues are problems. The term social problem itself limits the scope by which one can begin to explore a topic. Perhaps the use of the term social issue, rather than social problem, would help clarify and support Scheurich's initial argument. The use of the term social issue allowed for this policy analysis to study HB5: Parent and Community Engagement from a less biased perspective.

**An exploration of the four arenas.** Through the application of the four arenas in policy archeology, the HB5: Parent and Community Engagement policy analysis followed the genealogy of how the mandate became law. The application of the first arena goes deeper into the social construction of the mandate to consider the manifestation of the social issues that evolved into an educational mandate through HB5: Parent and Community Engagement. The first arena critically examines how the social issue of parent and community engagement is described and perceived by members of the

community. Equally important, this arena seeks to not only study the historical elements of this social issue but expand the archeology to include the intersections, conditions, assumptions, distinctions by which this was seen as a social issue, and any strands and traces that visibly identified this mandate as a social issue in the first place.

The first arena tries to identify the complex group relations that establish the formation of rules that eventually defined the conditions consistent with the values of the group in power (Scheurich, 1994). Foucault (1986) argued with the idea of seeking meaning from those who are involved in the decision of analyzing the socio-political relationships among individuals, groups, and organizations. Both Scheurich (1994) and Foucault (1986) challenged those conducting policy analysis to examine the social issues that affect those individuals, groups, and organizations marginalized by those who have political influence or social capital to affect legislation. In essence, those individuals, groups, and organizations that are marginalized may or may not identify a social issue that has been presented by those with political influence or a wealth in social capital. It could be argued that those marginalized individuals, groups, and organizations may perceive a particular social issue with less importance than those with political influence or a wealth in social capital. The first arena examines the naming process, the way in which the social issue is introduced in the political arena, and the why and how this issue was identified and therefore labelled as a social issue (Scheurich, 1994).

Scheurich (1994) argued that policy archeology examined through the second arena is rather complex. The second arena focuses on identifying the grid of social networks made up of individuals or groups that constituted the social issue. The presumption that these grids of social networks in power then have determined the social

issue normalizes the social issue by assigning a name to the issue for political gain. These social networks then constitute what is socially visible or credible and ultimately determine it to be a social issue. These networks of individuals, groups, and organizations then legitimize the social issue and the range of policy solutions that can help mediate the issue. This arena also examines the historical realities, conditions, and changing elements that the grid of social networks navigated to shape the social issue and determine the policy solutions. There are four additional points within the second arena that must be explored to better understand the complexity of social networks. Before exploring these four additional points within the second arena, Scheurich presented the term social regularities by taking Foucault's (1986) idea that social networks use the same rules and methods to study a social issue to develop their own theories, unconsciously constituting both categories of thought and ways of thinking in particular social issues. Both Derrida (1978) and Scheurich (1994) argued that the categorization of thought and ways of thinking unconsciously produces social regularities that define, restrict, and limit the exposure of how others inquire, analyze, and find solutions to social issues. In essence, social regularities become a set of unwritten rules.

The first point of the second arena is that no one particular individual or group consciously creates or controls the evolution of social regularities. Social regularities are not intentional. Scheurich (1994) cautioned that even if no one individual or group controls the social regularities, this does not mean that certain individuals or groups can benefit from the regularities. Scheurich captured the first point from the second arena in the following quote:

Social regularities are positively productive and reproductive without the need for conscious or intentional agency or a fully self-aware subjectivity that controls or manages those productive and reproductive processes; social orders are continuously reestablished or reproduced by the network of social regularities without the need for a controlling agency. (p. 302)

The second point to the second arena is that social regularities do not determine social issues or solutions from an outside force. Instead, social regularities constitute a set of rules or conditions with which a practice is exercised. Social regularities are productive and reproductive in what is constituted as social issue by justifying its visibility or credibility and therefore legitimizing what is socially real. Once a social issue is constituted and legitimized, the range of possible policy solutions can be prescribed. The third point of the second arena introduces the element of time from a historical perspective. Scheurich suggested all social regularities are particular to time periods. Certain eras and regions may have shaped what emerged to be a legitimate social issue and what options were available as policy solutions. This is the contribution of place, space, and time to analysis of a social issue. The fourth point of the second arena of policy archaeology focuses on a critical perspective that positions the complexity of human interactions. Scheurich argued that everything happens at the surface level within human interactions. Individuals may not be aware of the influences from others that shape their practices and perceptions of the individuals.

Applying the second arena to HB5: Parent and Community Engagement helped identify the social realities of certain individuals and groups that shape this policy. The job market emerged as a social reality where certain groups argued for educational

reform to meet the needs of certain job markets (Legislative Reference Library of Texas, 2016). This arena also explores the element of time by which this policy was legitimized as a social issue and how it responded to the social realities prior to being mandated.

The third arena of policy archeology studies the range of possible solutions shaped by the grid of social regularities. The identified social regularities not only constitute the range of policy choices as possible solutions but determine which policy choices are socially acceptable (Scheurich, 1994). In essence, the third arena focuses on the predetermined possible and impossible policy solutions to the social issue. These constituted policy choices may be relevant to some and invisible to others and privilege some choices over others. Freire (1970) would support Scheurich's (1994) idea of looking beyond solutions that perpetuate the dominant ideology and ignore the realities of those individuals and groups often marginalized by policy. In examining the third arena of Scheurich's policy archeology through Foucault's (1986) deconstruction lens, it is evident that there may not be a solution that will satisfy everyone in the community if we would have marginalized individuals or groups in power with greater influence on policymaking. Although the third arena critically examines the extent of possible solutions based on certain social regularities, it fails to provide any practical opportunities of mitigating policy.

The third arena guided the analysis of identifying the parameters by which HB5: Parent and Community Engagement was negotiated. This arena exposed the layers of how this policy was negotiated before it came to fruition. Examining the initial intent of the mandate and the final solution to the social issue helped expose the negotiating layers.

The fourth arena of policy archeology studies the conventional way in which research interrogates social issues. This approach then becomes a reflective lens with which to examine the processes and assumptions that are created by the convenient and conventional social networks of policy analysts. From a social analyst perspective, this arena becomes a way to self-evaluate the way a social problem is identified, labeled, and negotiated without perpetuating the social issue. It allows for self-analysis and legitimizes that even the policy analysis is part of a particular social network itself (Scheurich, 1994). Scheurich (1994) best defined this arena in the following quote:

Both postpositivist policy analysts and conventional policy analysts make the problem and the problem group visible through sanctioned performances, and they both discuss only those policy solutions which sanction that order . . . Both conventional and postpositivists policy studies, then, are a key facet of the social construction of problems, problem groups and the narrowly constrained range of policy solutions. (p. 311)

In essence, Scheurich promoted the idea of developing a critical consciousness (Freire, 1998) that policy analysts should embrace in their work. Scheurich argued that policy analyses should focus on developing productive behavior to citizens who are already acting in concert with the social order. The notion of normalizing or disciplining of the citizenry through policy analyses concurs with Freire's (1998) notion of educating as a form of intervention as he described:

Education never was, is not, and never can be neutral or indifferent in regard to the reproduction of the dominant ideology or the interrogation of it. It is a fundamental error to state that education is simply an instrument for the

reproduction of the dominant ideology, as it is an error to consider it no more than an instrument for unmasking that ideology, as if such a task were something that could be accomplished simplistically, fundamentally, without obstacles and difficult struggle. These attitudes are serious errors, and they indicate a defective vision of both history and consciousness. On the one hand, we have a mechanistic comprehension of history that reduces consciousness to a simple reflex of matter, and on the other, we have subjective idealism that tries to make the role of consciousness fit into the facts of history. (p. 91)

The HB5: Parent and Community Engagement mandate was examined through the fourth arena to critically investigate the layers that informed who had the most to benefit from this mandate. Peeling the layers of such mandate manifested the true intent of the mandate and helped inform those affected by the mandate of its true intent.

According to Scheurich (1994), the four arenas are flexible in the form in which they are used. For instance, in conducting a policy analysis of HB5: Parent and Community Engagement, the presumed social issue can be examined through the four arenas in any particular order. The application of each arena can be used in any order. Any particular arena may inform, contest, or transform certain elements of the other arenas. In doing so, the analysis is ongoing and produces further questioning into the social issue.

The four arenas of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology allow for a broader, deeper, and more distinct opportunity for policy analysis but also have limitations. The four arenas provide a script to analyze policy and, in doing so, the script may have the potential to become the norm or status quo, therefore promoting what it actually is



criticizing. Scheurich's postpositivist framework promotes the inquiry and analysis of social issues that marginalize individuals, groups, and organizations. Another significant criticism of Scheurich's policy archaeology is the lack of action the four arenas prescribe. Through the four arenas, it seems that Scheurich allows the analyst to go through and analyze, review, compare, and reflect but when the journey ends at the edge of the mountain, it only allows for you to view the landscape. In other words, there is no particular prescribed model for action. This lack of prescribed action therefore limits change within the same system being analyzed. A fifth arena or a prescribed action for each arena that provides a clearer message of the "how" can strengthen this framework of policy analysis.

### **What Would My Mother Say About the Literature Review?**

The information you provide in this section focuses on many different things that cause changes in the education of children. This information also has the capacity to change what happens inside and outside of schools. I lament that this social topic is not openly discussed by parents and teachers. You have given me the information that would have prompted me to begin a conversation about this topic with your aunts and uncles. I would go to Chela's house and have a *plática* about this topic and give her a copy of this information.

There is something to say about the relationships between parents and teachers. Many teachers are parents and they know how important it is to have the support of the community. I hope we can motivate our neighbors and relatives to support the teachers so that our children are well educated. *Mijo*, I would like for you to talk to children about

this information so they can begin to imagine themselves as future parents and advocate for their own children.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

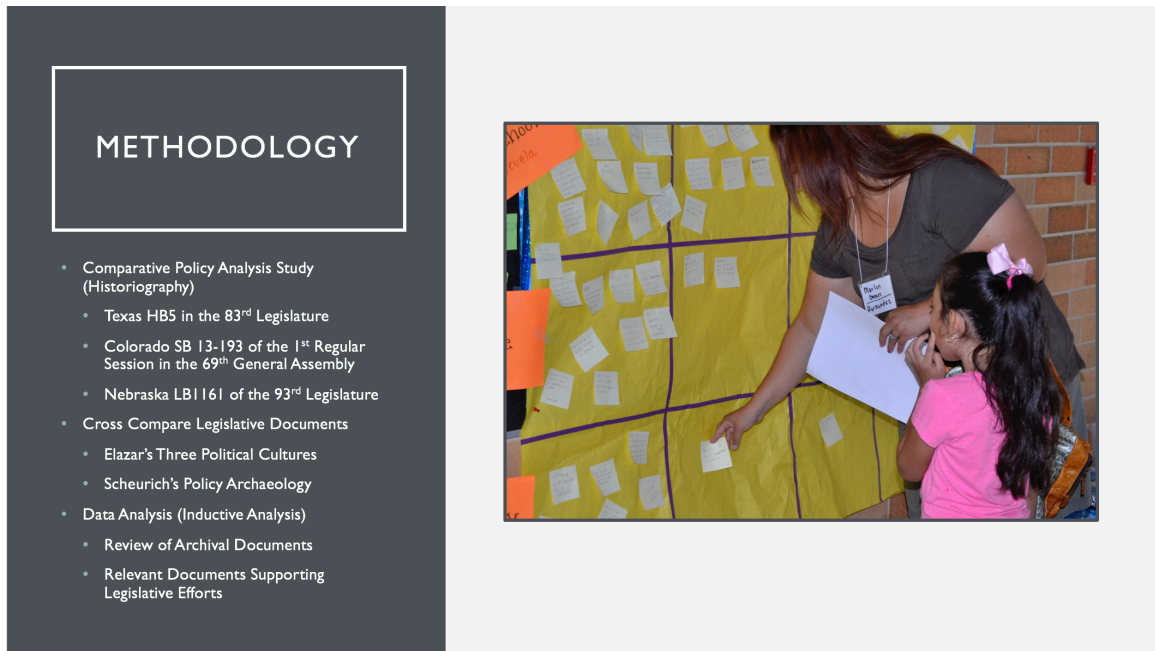
The current study was a comparative policy analysis of a law that was passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature in 2011, known as House Bill 5 (HB5). The law was multilayered as it was intended to cover many “fixes” in public education. This massive bill covered issues relating to four major categories affecting students, parents, educators, and communities. The four major categories were accountability, curriculum, assessment, and higher education (Texas Legislature Online, 2016). Under every major category, subsections addressing particular issues were ultimately added and defined within the law. One of the subsections found under the accountability category is Community and Parent Engagement. This subsection was the focus of the comparative policy analysis. The subsection is referred as HB5: Community and Parent Engagement throughout the study in order to avoid explaining the other major categories and prevent any confusion with the other major categories and subsections of the law. The comparative policy analysis included other similar laws to HB5 in Colorado and Nebraska. The significance of HB5 became the hope for parents, educators, and policymakers in addressing parent and community engagement in public schools in Texas.

In the following data analysis section of this study, I critically examined HB5: Community and Parent Engagement using a policy analysis framework to explore the different dimensions of the mandate. The use of Scheurich’s (1994) policy archaeology framework enabled me to dissect the policy from a foundational perspective using four arenas that exposed the underpinnings of the mandate before it became law. Scheurich’s

policy archaeology deviates from traditional policy analysis by analyzing information at a much deeper and wider scope.

A second layer of inquiry applied to this study was the use of ethnographic research through Elazar's (1984) three political cultures. Elazar's three political cultures provided me the opportunity to seek how groups of people and organizations create ideologies that ultimately affect the formation of laws passed by local, state, and federal governments. I chose the ethnographic research design to guide this study as a way to bridge policy and the experiences of those who helped craft the policy. Nonetheless, this inquiry method provided insight into the true nature of this comparative policy analysis. The formation of policy allows for a social issue to be present and at center stage but also hides the true intentions of those who politicized the issue.

The importance of this comparative policy analysis connects to my work and to my own experiences as a student, parent, educator, and community activist. House Bill 5: Community and Parent Engagement has been a piece of legislation in which I have been interested and followed over 12 years. This piece of legislation is the missing link between schools and the communities they serve. The anticipation of such a piece of legislation has the potential to address the critical elements to a better and sustainable educational experience for students, parents, educators, and other members of the community. Figure 2 provides an overview of the methodology that is further explored in the remainder of the chapter.



*Figure 2. Methodology.*

### **Framework for the Analysis**

I used two theoretical constructs to guide this comparative policy analysis: critical theory and constructivism. The use of critical theory (CT) assisted me in exposing critical elements that helped shape the HB5: Community and Parent Engagement mandate. I examined the mandate through the four arenas of policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994) to expose the differences between the intentions of the mandate, the voices that were present and those that were absent during the creation and development of the policy, and creative limitations of the policy. The use of CT revealed who benefitted from the mandate as it was written and implemented. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), CT can be used in critically examining power structures within the current education system, inform those marginalized about the language and culture that established the status quo, and invoke action to construct a new reality for all members of the community. I believed this theoretical framework would ultimately expose the

multiple realities and the hegemonic culture the mandate developed and how it affected the experiences of all those affected by the law. The application of CT assisted in exposing the environments, ideologies, and characters (humans and institutions) that play a role in the creation of a reality in which groups of individuals are marginalized (Freire, 1998). Noddings (2012) suggested that by applying a critical perspective, one will engage with great struggles and social movements. This process was facilitated through Freire's (1998) application of critical consciousness and Giroux's (2004) analysis of educational practices in the United States. The critical lens of Freire (1970) helped expose, analyze, and shed light to issues relevant to the development of those who have been marginalized. Freire (1970) also suggested that critical thinking challenges the normalization of oppressive narratives enacted by social institutions manifested through policy:

Critical thinking contrasts with naive thinking, which sees, historical time as a weight, a stratification of the acquisitions and experiences of the past from which the present should emerge normalized and "well-behaved." For the naive thinker, the important thing is accommodations to this normalized "today." For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, in behalf of the continuing humanization of men. (p. 92)

Noddings (2012) suggested a constructivist lens can help develop knowledge through constructed dialogue and not as a result of passive reception. The constructivist approach informed the importance of viewing the work done in schools from multiple lenses. These multiple lenses are represented by those who are directly and indirectly affected by the work of students, parents, educators, volunteers, and other community

members. According to Patton (2002), a constructivist approach is used to study the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions to their lives and interactions with others. Elazar's (1984) political cultures help pave an understanding on how the social issues are framed, negotiated by those with power and influence, and ultimately help craft a vision for what a law should look like. This constructivist approach was informed by Dewey's (1902) definition of society; a society is a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims. The common needs and aims demand a growing interchange of thought and growing unity of sympathetic feeling.

### **Policies Compared**

The policies included in the analysis were similar to HB5: Community and Parent Engagement. The policies of the two states (Colorado and Nebraska) helped develop a comparative analysis to HB5: Community and Parent Engagement. The purpose for this comparative analysis was ultimately to help guide and support a different approach to the way HB5: Parent and Community Engagement has affected the education system in Texas.

I identified Texas, Colorado, and Nebraska to represent one of Elazar's (1984) three political cultures. Each state represented a different political culture to capture the elements that helped shape such policy. In doing so, the policy analysis exposed the politics of individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations that promoted a similar piece of legislation as HB5: Parent and Community Engagement in Texas.

## **Data Analysis**

I used several processes for data analysis. The data for the comparative policy analysis were captured through the use of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. I used policy archaeology to expose the social and political elements informing each of the three similar laws. The review of archival documents from the state legislatures in combination with other social mediums such as newspaper articles, journals, political documents, and social media provided a wider perspective to the implications surrounding the creation of such laws.

I used inductive analysis for the local, state, and federal documents surrounding the comparative policy analysis of mandates referring to parent and community engagement for the three states. According to Patton (2002), inductive analysis involves the discovery of themes and patterns to categorize data, also known as open coding. Once certain patterns are identified, inductive analysis can help decode and arrange data according to a specific criterion. The deductive analysis guided the creation of a policy analysis matrix to organize the information found in the three legislative mandates being compared. I then used the policy analysis to identify emerging themes among each state mandate. The themes then formed a legislative profile for each state that I used to inform the policy recommendations set forth within this study.

I developed a policy analysis matrix, represented by Figure 3, for each state to capture critical legislative and social events that affected the educational system. The policy analysis matrix provided a visual of critical social events that may have triggered legislative action. Part of capturing these critical events was identifying and learning about the social events that may have not been reported in the mainstream media. These



unreported social events could also unearth the marginalized voices of such important factors affecting the education system, as well as parent and community engagement. The policy analysis matrix became a visual that illustrated information in a different approach, allowing viewers to process the information and reach their own conclusions.

# COMPARATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS MATRIX: THREE POLITICAL CULTURES AND POLICY ARCHAEOLOGY

Policy Archaeology by J.L. Scheurich			
Evidence Documented in Policy			
This matrix was developed to assist in the analysis of legislative documents and supporting resources in three states related to parent, family, and community engagement. The matrix utilizes Scheurich's theory of policy archaeology and Elazar's theory of three political cultures to guide the policy comparative analysis.	Three Political Cultures by D. Elazar		
	Texas	Colorado	Nebraska
<b>Individualistic: Nebraska</b>  <b>Moralistic: Colorado</b>  <b>Traditionalistic: Texas</b>	Traditionalistic	Moralistic	Individualistic
	Characteristics of the Traditionalistic Culture... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain social order</li> <li>Hierarchical structure</li> <li>Conservative approach to legislative reform</li> <li>Least bureaucratic</li> <li>View from older perspective</li> </ul>	Characteristics of the Moralistic Culture... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Betterment of the commonwealth</li> <li>Promotes desired society</li> <li>Responsive to current social issues</li> <li>Balance of bureaucratic growth</li> <li>Opportunity to influence local policy</li> </ul>	Characteristics of the Individualistic Culture... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsive to the marketplace for economic development</li> <li>Amalgam and loosely regulated</li> <li>Limit government influence</li> <li>Encourage private initiative to social issues</li> <li>Quick and easy</li> <li>Means to an end approach</li> </ul>
	Referenced Policy / Legislative Session	Senate Bill 13-193 / 1 <sup>st</sup> Regular Session of the 69 <sup>th</sup> General Assembly	Legislative Bill 1161: Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 83 <sup>rd</sup> Legislature
	<b>Arena I: What?</b> What social conditions (social or political) exist that help derive parent and community engagement as an important social issue?	<b>House Bill 5 / 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overemphasis on standardized assessments limited options for high school graduation</li> <li>Growing labor demand in the state</li> <li>Reducing / eliminating student achievement among socio racial ethnic groups</li> <li>Informing parents of district and campus performance</li> </ul>	Nebraska's Next Economy Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National themes: school culture, parent beliefs, access to quality education, equity resources, (Henderson &amp; Mapp 2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.</li> </ul>
	Arena II: Who said?	Arena III: How?	
	What evidence identifies the social agents (families, groups, or organizations) who said and did to promote parent and community engagement as a social issue?	State Rep. Aycock, Schweitzer, and Lieutenant Governor Patrick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texas Association of Schools Administrators (TASA)</li> <li>Texas High Performance Schools Consortium Concept Report</li> <li>Public Education Institute (35 Superintendents)</li> <li>TASA - Public Education Visiting Institute</li> <li>Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas</li> <li>Report</li> <li>District and campus rating system</li> <li>Parent engagement in three ways:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments</li> <li>Tutoring programs that support students taking assessments</li> <li>Opportunities for students to participate in community service projects</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Nebraska Children organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nebraska Department of Education</li> <li>Strategic Vision and Direction - 2017-2026</li> <li>Nebraska Department of Economic Development</li> </ul>
	Arena IV: So then...		
	What evidence identifies the social agents that influence how parent engagement is constructed and legitimized in legislative policy?	State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confederation of home, community and out of school actions: (1) frequent family discussions about school, (2) families encouraging their children regarding schoolwork, (3) providing resource to help with schoolwork, (4) supervision of homework, TV viewing, after-school activities</li> <li>Input and recommendations on performance of school principal, creation of school conduct and discipline, publicizing opportunities to serve in accountability committees to reflect student population,</li> <li>assist in implementing parent engagement policy, help create READ plan for students, plan for federal literacy, discuss and provide input on strategies of priority improvement or turnaround plan, and provide training to parents, teachers, and administrators on parent engagement best practices</li> <li>Colorado's Thematic Framework for Family, School, and Community Partnering</li> <li>Colorado's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)</li> <li>Governor John W. Hickenlooper Proclamation of Family and School Partnership in Education Month 2014-17</li> <li>State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) Annual Reports</li> <li>Colorado General Assembly</li> <li>House &amp; Senate Education Committees</li> </ul>	Strategic Vision and Direction - 2017-2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide access to textbooks, tests, and curriculum materials</li> <li>Handle request by parents to attend and monitor courses, assemblies, counseling sessions, and other instructional activities</li> <li>Encourage students from testing, classroom instruction, and other school experiences parents may find objectionable,</li> <li>Provide access of student records</li> <li>District's testing policy and right of parents to remove their children from district survey</li> <li>Develop policy of parental input and public hearing</li> </ul>

Elazar, D., J. (1984). *American federalism: A view from the states*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishing.  
 Scheurich, J. J. (1994). *Policy Archaeology: A New Policy Studies Methodology*. *Journal of Education Policy*, 9(4), 297-316.

Figure 3. Comparative policy analysis matrix: Three political cultures and policy archaeology.

## Setting and Ethical Considerations

The research conducted for this study involved a focus on the archeology and analysis of documents that referenced laws similar to HB5: Community and Parent

Engagement. The exploration of the political environment then became the setting of the study. Elazar (1984) suggested a law cannot be separated by the political environment from which it evolved. His explanation highlighted the fundamental argument of his theory. The three political cultures enabled an exploration of the political conditions set under each of the three state laws in the comparative analysis. In examining the historical documents that represented different political lenses affecting the creation of laws, policies, and regulations at local, state and federal levels of government, it was impossible to separate the current political conditions that affected this research. This perspective was addressed by arena four of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology theory; the study of the social functions of policy studies itself. Arena four places a mirror in front of the researcher to reiterate the importance of policy archaeology as a form of self-evaluation. In applying this arena to the exploration of historical legislative documents, I needed to understand my own bias and inclinations that have been shaped by previous experiences. This self-evaluation and reflective process allowed me to develop a critical consciousness on the topic and explore the reason why I chose this topic in the first place.

### **What Would My Mother Say About the Methodology?**

*Mijo*, it is important to always see things from different perspectives. Most importantly, from the view of those who do not have the courage to ask the difficult questions no one wants to answer. The information in this chapter gives me voice and views this topic from your mother's and our neighbors' perspective. Perhaps we did not have the influence or direction to address this topic when you were young, but it never meant that we did not think about it. Our neighbors and I cared very much about how

you and your friends were being educated. It gives me great pleasure that you see this topic from the neighborhood's view all the way to the capital where they make laws.

## **IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS: ANALYSIS OF THREE STATE POLICIES**

### **Overview of Lenses of Analysis**

This chapter presents the data compared and analyzed among the three states (i.e., Colorado, Nebraska, and Texas) within their local ecologies, including history, values, culture, and politics. It is important to put into perspective the relevance of the social issue of parent, family, and community engagement in the context of each state. The complexity of parent, family, and community engagement reminds us that even though policies (federal, state, and local) are created to help address challenges or correct social ills, a law may ultimately be interpreted, defined, and implemented in different ways. The legislation to address parent, family and community engagement in one state (i.e., Colorado) provided a multi-level approach, whereas another state (i.e., Nebraska) provided a more general regulatory approach to address the same issue. Both legislative approaches (multi-level and general) manifest differences in the way parent, family, and community engagement is communicated, practiced, and valued by educators, school leaders, parents, students, and community members. The ecology of parent, family, and community engagement has deemed this social issue an important component to student success over time (Caspe et al., 2007; Davies et al., 2007; Epstein, 1990; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). As a result, the evolution of each state's legislative reform efforts has met the needs of its communities in its own particular way.

The data sets for this study originated from archival research that included legislative documents, reports of government agencies, state legislature historical records, and digital information of other community organizations that were systematically

collected and analyzed. I entered the data collected from multiple sources into a matrix that served as a tool for organizing and analyzing the data and informing issues of parent, family, and community engagement. The matrix employed to navigate this comparative policy analysis was an innovation that borrowed from the political science literature and grounded multiple political cultures into a political framework informed by policy archeology. This hybrid framework borrowed from Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology and blended Elazar's (1984) three political cultures of traditionalistic, individualistic, and moralistic. The following sections contain brief summaries of Elazar's three political cultures followed by Scheurich's policy archaeology.

### **Summary of Three Political Cultures: Implications of Social Issues**

Elazar (1984) asserted there are three political channels that affect the relationship between state and federal reform efforts. These three political channels help organize how issues in education become viable forms of reform in the legislative process. Territorial democracy (local), a dual legal system (state and federal court system), and the political parties (the two main political parties: democrats and republicans) are the three political channels that create the organizational mechanism in which individual ideas, civic concerns, and popular topics are funneled through the state and federal legislative realms. Elazar's use of the term channels helped describe the interrelationships among larger systems (local, court systems, and political parties) that affect the organization of local, state, and federal politics.

The following section provides an explanation of the three political channels. Elazar (1984) argued that territorial democracy is the first channel that provides a unique opportunity where topics or issues are raised by a group of individuals that live in close

proximity to each other. The issue affecting those within the geographical proximity becomes the glue that enables people to take action. They meet with the legislator representing them and the legislator decides what actions he or she will take to address the issue raised by this particular group of individuals within the geographical area. The legislator may eventually propose change through a legislative bill. For the legislator, addressing this concern will produce a political influence for reelection. A new topic will eventually take center stage and the process will cycle back to what the constituents who reside in the same geographical area believe is their immediate concern. This neutral form of representation is influenced by territorial concerns.

The second political channel is the multi-layered legal system of laws and courts that tie together state and federal regulations. This channel divides the power among states and federal governance where each state has its own set of legislation. Because each state has different laws addressing similar issues, federal statutory law is used to fill in the gaps left by the states' legislation. The use of federal legislation becomes a way in which the federal government negotiates the differences among state laws by altering or, at times, supplanting them in special circumstances. The multi-layered court system then becomes the arm by which legislative bodies of the states and federal governments negotiate laws. Again, each state has its own court system that allows it to address specific territorial concerns. The federal courts will intervene when there is a dispute in the interpretation of a state law. First, the dispute is negotiated through the multi-layered state and federal court systems. If the dispute is not settled, it will reach the U.S. Supreme Court for a final review and decision. In essence, this political channel allows

for each state and the federal government to collaborate in addressing the needs of citizens.

The third political channel is the structure of our political party systems. A historical two party system (i.e., Democrat and Republican) has dominated the way political issues are presented and argued. First, the two party system allows for a clear distinction among parties that enables party members to choose their alliance. Despite the national attention given to the political parties, local and state races, finance, and power are the driving forces behind both parties. This is where territorial democracy garnishes the influence on the grand national arena. Local issues have a way to garnish national attention placing them on top of the agenda but relinquish control of the issue once it becomes an important issue at the state or national level.

Fisher (2016) argued that 4 decades after Elazar introduced his theory of three political cultures, the utility of his theory remained relevant in describing important social issues in the United States. Fisher concurred with Elazar that a dominant political culture where a person lives appears to have a significant influence on that individual's political attitudes. A territorial topic such as parent and community engagement in education settings will differ depending on the political cultures of the community, region, and state. Elazar (1984) described political culture as the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is embedded.

### **The Three Political Cultures: Individualistic, Moralistic, and Traditionalistic**

The three political cultures are individualistic, moralistic, and traditionalistic. These three political cultures are rooted in geographical and migratory evidence dating back to the formation of the United States (Elazar, 1984). Elazar (1984) noted that since



the formation of the United States, people have traveled across the nation and settled in different areas. As settlements attracted people of different origins and backgrounds, similar beliefs and ideologies began to take shape. The three political cultures are used to interpret how people expect their leaders to govern and set policies affecting commerce, social programs, and political structures (Elazar, 1984). Each of the three political cultures have a geographical area within the United States. In examining their geographical area, there are distinct sociocultural differences. These sociocultural differences are what create the variations of similar laws but, most importantly, how those variations continue to follow a pattern in addressing social issues. According to Elazar, a map of the United States (by state) is divided into the three political cultures. Each state is identified to represent one of the three political cultures using a different color.

The individualistic culture represents a utilitarian approach to governance. Under this utilitarian approach, democracy is perceived as a marketplace where individuals may improve themselves both socially and economically (Elazar, 1984). In essence, politics are seen as a business but not necessarily concerned for the good of the community. This culture relies heavily on the notion that those who help elect a politician should be provided special privileges. This culture promotes loyalty to the party rules. It is based on a system of mutual obligations rooted in personal relationships. Personal relationships can be extended to relationships with business corporations. Politicians are interested more in the distribution of favors rather than in exercising governmental power for programmatic ends (Elazar, 1984). Public officials committed to the individualistic culture typically give the public what is needed but will not initiate new programs or

open new areas of governance on their own. However, they will initiate a new program if there is overwhelming public demand. The states that represent the individualistic culture are Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Wyoming, Nevada, Alaska, and Hawaii.

The moralistic culture has a rather different approach to governance. This culture emphasizes the commonwealth view as the foundation of democratic governance. In the moralistic political culture, anyone who participates in or is elected to public office perceives this role as an opportunity to elevate society to a better state (Elazar, 1984). Based on the name “moralistic,” the politician has a moral obligation to act honestly, selflessly, and adhere to the public’s interests. This means the politician’s actions must focus on the advancement of the public with limited interference to the private enterprise. This culture adheres to serving the betterment of the community and loyalties to relationships have no significant influence in the way a politician makes decisions (Elazar, 1984). In contrast to the individualistic culture, in the moralistic culture, political party or friendship loyalties are not the main driving forces behind decision-making. Political and friendship loyalties are negotiated without sanctions because politics are considered potentially good and healthy within the context of the culture. Consequently, the moralistic politician embraces the idea that every citizen must have an opportunity to participate in the local, regional, and national political issues that affect the community. In this culture, corruption is not as common in comparison to the individualistic culture and there is less tolerance by the community (Elazar, 1984). Most of the states representing the moralistic culture are located in the Midwest and East coast

of the United States (Elazar, 1984). The states that represent the moralistic political culture are Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Washington, Oregon, and California.

The traditional culture is a political culture that conforms to a paternalistic and elitist form of governing. This culture relies on a traditional lens where hierarchal social structures play a significant role in the way citizens are governed (Elazar, 1984).

Hierarchal social structures have been developed and maintained over time to create an order of things where few individuals have greater influence and control over governing. Typically, the family name or affiliation to a family can align political aspirations to the realm of governing (Elazar, 1984). This means a head of a family will typically align and facilitate the political groundwork for a child to the family's name into the next generation of politics. When governing through the traditionalistic perspective, family ties have a greater influence than political party affiliations (Elazar, 1984). Serving under a political party may serve a particular purpose for the traditionalistic politician but it goes against the central ideal of an elite-oriented political order (Elazar, 1984). Social positions and socioeconomic status play a greater role in the way this culture governs. Those individuals or groups who fall within the social apparatus of the traditionalistic politician will be assigned to fill in cabinet roles. This political culture maintains the traditional patterns of governing and is less likely to change any conditions to disturb the political order of things (Elazar, 1984). The culture is also anti-bureaucratic but any established layer of bureaucracy is confined to ministerial functions. The states that represent the traditionalistic political culture are West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky,

Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Most of the states representing the traditionalistic culture are located in the northern part and west coast of the United States (Elazar, 1984).

### **Subcultures of the Three Political Cultures**

In analyzing the three political cultures, it is important to point out that subcultures can be formed as a combination of any of the three political cultures and can be represented by an individual, a governing body, or a political party. At times, political parties, individuals, or governing bodies find a common ground that facilitates the combination of political cultures (Elazar, 1984). A new migration pattern of individuals or a local issue can create a cultural diffusion that can ultimately create another political subculture. It is equally important that the political cultures are not necessarily substitutes for the terms conservative and liberal because politicians tend to vote differently depending on the social issue they are facing at the time (Elazar, 1984).

### **Summary of Scheurich's Policy Archaeology**

I applied the policy archaeology framework to analyze the social elements that informed the creation of the three state policies. What social regularities inside and outside the realm of public education are related to the creation of three state policies? This section is used to help identify the groups, individuals and organizations that pushed for the creation of HB5, Senate Bill 13-193, and LB1161: Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 dealing with community and parent engagement. The analysis can explain the data resources that were used to help construct the policies.

Scheurich (1994) challenged the conventional postpositivist frameworks of policy analysis that focus on superficial fixes to social issues. He argued that conventional frameworks simply critique policies but do not provide realistic solutions. There are four arenas in Scheurich's policy archaeology that study the social construction of issues. The four arenas, as described in Chapter 2, include social and political conditions, social agents, possible solutions, and constructed and legitimized. Policy archaeology interrogates the passive compliance and the social construction of possible solutions instead of accepting policy studies as a "neutral" social science. Policy archaeology also questions the broader social functions of policy studies and examines the nature of how a social issue is socially legitimized.

#### **Texas: House Bill 5 (83rd Legislature)**

This section begins with Figure 4, which demonstrates the application of both theoretical lenses introduced by Elazar's (1984) three political cultures and Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. Figure 4 captures a synthesis of the analysis of House Bill 5 of the 83rd Legislature through both theories. Figure 4 helps guide the analysis and findings throughout this section and continues with an application of each of the four arenas of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology to the analysis of Texas's House Bill 5 (HB5): Community and Parent Engagement. In the third arena of policy archaeology, I analyzed HB5 through the application of the traditionalistic political culture informed by Elazar's (1984) theory of three political cultures. I close with a synthesis of my analysis in the triangulation of policy archaeology, the traditionalistic political culture, and the public presentation of HB5 as communicated by the Texas Department of Education.

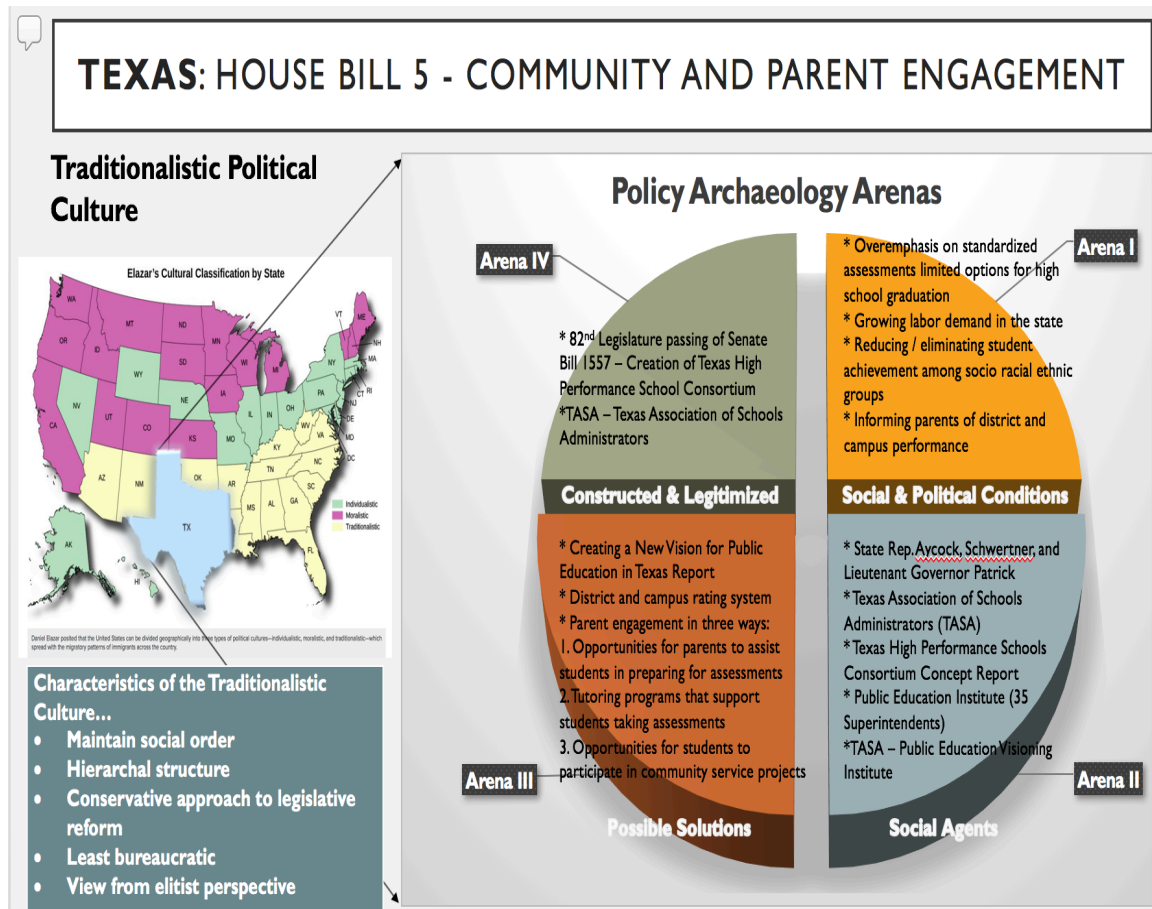


Figure 4. Synthesis of the analysis in Texas using Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology and Elazar's (1984) three political cultures.

### The First Arena: Social and Political Conditions (Texas)

Through the application of the first arena, I analyzed how HB5 garnered the attention and became a social issue that needed to be addressed under a state mandate. House Bill 5 came at a time during which parents, students, educators, and communities were voicing their concerns about the way standardized testing was so heavily used to make decisions in public education. The discussion by Texas legislators surrounding changing the way student success was measured was greeted with open arms by many. In 2011, the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium Concept Report (TASA, 2013) influenced the 82nd Texas Legislature to enact Senate Bill (SB) 1557 to create the

Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. The bill allowed 23 Texas school districts to pave the way in improving student learning by developing innovative high-priority learning standards, assessments, and accountability systems. A distinctive part of the bill was the creation of an accountability system that relied on community and parental engagement regarding student learning. Prior to the formation of the Texas High Performance School Consortium enacted through SB1557, a group of 35 school superintendents across the State of Texas discussed how to better serve the needs of students. This group of superintendents was known as the Public Education Institute. Their work in seeking ways to meet the needs of students began in 2006 and was later published in a report in 2008 titled, *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas*. The dedication and commitment of these individuals generated five central themes to better serve students in the state of Texas: (a) integrate technology in the learning process on a routine basis; (b) use curriculum derived from rigorous, high-priority learning standards; (c) create a broad-based accountability that relied on a variety of measures; (d) engage in authentic assessment of students to assist educators in customizing student learning; and (e) provide local share of control in determining the success of schools (TASA, 2013). The names of the participating districts, superintendents, government officials, and organizations were not listed in the report. The report only stated parents and community members as those entities that supported how the issue of parent and community engagement came to be a central topic of such a complex mandate. The lack of documented evidence of those individuals, groups, and organizations invited to present their opinions in reference to this issue highlights the central argument of the first arena.

The lack of evidence raises a fundamental question as suggested by Scheurich (1994):  
How did parent and community engagement become a social issue?

According to TASA (2013), the work of the individuals in the Public Education Visioning Institute and Texas High Performance Schools Consortium provided an educational historical push for a broader and comprehensive approach in assessing the work of students and the communities in which they lived. The work of both institutions helped deliver a clearer message to the Texas legislators. First, their work justified the culminating research of alternative forms of evaluating students and schools done by many scholars in the field of education. Second, their work was attached to a legislative bill (SB 1557) that required them to report their findings to the legislature. Third, their work allowed them to listen, collaborate, and act on the feedback of their community members (TASA, 2013).

The work reported by the Public Education Visioning Institute and Texas High Performance Schools Consortium shed light on a dimension of public education that had been ignored and abandoned. This dimension was the collaborative effort among parents, students, and educators that is necessary to facilitate student learning and genuinely evaluate the work done in schools. In the current era of standardized testing, parents feel left out of their children's education (Ravitch, 2013). Parent engagement has been defined by certain roles parents take on as they try to get involved in the education of their children. In the following section I explore the social phenomenon of parent participation or parent engagement as it relates to the education of their children and the implementation of HB5.



## **The Second Arena: Social Agents (Texas)**

As noted by the Legislative Reference Library of Texas (2016), the statement of intent for this mandate included several key elements that shaped HB5. It is important to explain these key elements because they begin to form a historical perspective of the social political tensions building up to this legislative piece as defined by the second arena of policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994). The main author of the legislation was State Representative Jimmie Don Aycock. Representative Aycock serves District 54 which encompasses the cities of Killeen, Harker Heights, Lampasas, Kempner, Nolanville and Salado (Texas Legislature Online, 2016). The sponsor of this legislation was Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick and the co-sponsor was State Representative Charles Schwertner.

According to the Legislative Reference Library of Texas (2016), three main themes influenced the creation of HB5. The authors and sponsors of the Bill Analysis report suggested that many Texans felt the rigor of curriculum and assessment had unintentionally limited the options of those graduating high school. In doing so, these unintentional consequences did not meet the needs of the growing labor demands in the state. These unintentional limitations were caused by an excessive reliance on standardized testing. It is evident that those in the business community had an influence on the creation of the HB5.

In response to these concerns, the authors of the bill believed HB5 would transform the way by which students would pursue their interests through diploma endorsements instead of a one-size-fits-all graduation path. The bill also included the reduction of end-of-course examinations for high school students from 15 to five exams.

Among other remedies, State Representative Aycock, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, co-sponsor Schwertner, and the influence of the business community proposed the institution of a school rating system that would provide a clearer understanding of overall school performance (Legislative Reference Library of Texas, 2016). Under the accountability umbrella, the intent of the new school rating system was to have a more comprehensive overview of the work within the community and how it related to student engagement and student learning.

According to TASA (2016), prior to 2013, the public, superintendents, trustees, teachers, and business groups asked state legislators to reduce the overemphasis on standardized testing. The public felt the overemphasis on standardized testing was not providing a comprehensive view of student progress (TASA, 2016) and not preparing students for the growing labor demands of the state (Legislative Reference Library of Texas, 2016). There were several areas the public and interest groups wanted to change in public education.

The message was clear that changes to graduation requirements needed to occur. In particular, the focus was on reducing the number of standardized tests needed to graduate from high school. According to the TASA (2016) inquiry report on HB5, legislators across the state responded to public demand for the creation of a campus progress report. The legislators' main objective was to create criteria for districts to evaluate themselves. The intent of the evaluation component was to be created by each district to serve the needs of the local community. This key component was referred to as the community engagement component in the legislative process. The idea behind the community engagement component was to gather a comprehensive view of the work

being done in the community as it related to student and parental engagement. This community engagement component targeted eight specific categories and a compliance category that would be able to showcase areas of excellence and success as well as areas of improvement valued by each community. The state required each district to assign itself and each campus a rating of exemplary, recognized, acceptable, or unacceptable and report the findings to the TEA by August 8 of each year (TASA, 2016). In the analysis of the Legislative Reference Library of Texas (2016) report, TASA's website (2016), TEA's A-F Resources webpage, and 2018 Accountability Manual documents, no evidence was presented to support a claim that parents, students, and community members were engaged in developing the district and campus rating system. This raises significant concerns. The lack of evidence demonstrating a genuine attempt to involve and gather input from parents, students, and community members supports a narrative that individuals, groups, and communities were marginalized through the development of this critical rating system.

### **The Third Arena (Micro): Possible Solutions (Texas)**

The third arena of policy archaeology examines a critical and yet challenging area of policy analysis. According to Scheurich (1994), the third arena seeks to study the social construction of the range of acceptable policy solutions. In examining for possible solutions that have been promoted by prominent individuals, groups, and organizations to help solve the social issue of parent and community engagement in public education, it is equally important to examine the roots of the social issue from those who have been marginalized from the construction of such solutions. Examining the evolution of the roots reveals a deeper understanding of how the sentiments, values, and beliefs of

particular individuals, groups, and organizations shape certain parent perceptions, resulting in prescribed methods of parent engagement from a micro perspective. The following section provides a micro-analysis of how the third arena manifested and the potential impact.

There are many ways in which parents and community members can get involved in schools. The research previously mentioned supported the benefits of parent and community involvement as it relates to student learning. There are, however, challenges that community members, in particular parents, face in attempting to get involved in the educational experiences of their children. Parents and family members face logistical challenges, such as not having a means of transportation. They face linguistic challenges when they are not able to speak the same language. Some feel a sense of vulnerability when they feel they are being judged or not valued by school personnel. Parents may also feel uncomfortable based on their own previous experiences as a student. These challenges are a few examples that unfold a pervasive sentiment among teachers, school personnel, and parents. Such experiences are not easily forgotten and at times transcend over time and are passed on to the next generation. These experiences develop a level of distrust between parents and educators. Negotiating this distrust then becomes a challenge for all involved. A community experiencing this level of distrust brings about other challenges that impede progress and unity among community members.

Block (2009) described the notion of a stuck community where institutions (private or public) insulate themselves under the marketing of fear of the unknown, the different and the marginalized. The stuck community flourishes when citizens are disconnected from conversation, seek fault and pass judgment, and demand control and

safety. This is a community that avoids disruptions, disagreements, and unpredictability. These similar characteristics manifest in the community engagement practices educators use when dealing with parents. For instance, the “mainstream” lens views parental involvement from a delegation perspective where assigned or set roles are predetermined by educators and school personnel (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Moles & Fege, 2011; Seeley, 1993). Connecting this parental involvement approach to HB5 as described by Seeley (1993), the Texas Legislature intentionally assigned and predetermined what three areas of community engagement would be evaluated through HB5 (Texas Education Code, Title 2: Public Education, Subtitle H: Public School System Accountability, Chapter 39 Subchapter B: Assessment of Academic Skills, Sec. 39.0545. School District Evaluation of Performance in Community and Student Engagement; Compliance): (a) opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments (TEC Chapter 39, Section 39.023), (b) tutoring programs that support students taking assessments (Section TEC Chapter 39, 39.023), and (c) opportunities for students to participate in community service projects. The defined and prescribed methods of parent and community engagement written in HB5 clearly depict the third arena of Scheurich’s (1994) policy archaeology. These prescribed methods of engagement provide a deeper and critical view of how parents and community members should be involved in the education of children. Two of the prescribed methods of engagement focus on addressing the common theme of student performance on standardized tests.

García and Kleifgen (2010) introduced the “let us fix them approach,” which assumes parents lack the motivation and skill sets to support their children’s education. This deficit approach provokes a sentiment of hierarchy where educators believe they

know what is best for the child and the parent. These are examples of challenges and ideologies that create division among parents and educators. The focus now shifts to programs that promote and engage community members in schools to comply with HB5: Community and Parent Engagement. TASA (2016) offers resources for districts to comply with HB5: Community and parent Engagement. The organization provides a HB5 Community and Student Toolkit to assist school districts across the state to comply with the mandate. It offers a list of activities and events in which students and parents can participate. Some of those activities and events include back to school orientations; PTA/PTO opportunities for involvement; education foundations; assemblies honoring veterans and victims of 9/11; climate surveys for parents; field trips; end of year programs; mentoring programs; college and career events; open house for parents; partnerships with community businesses and local government agencies; use of Facebook, Twitter and parent portals to communicate; 504 plans and IEP meetings; booster clubs; fund raising; and reading/math night. These examples provide a superficial level of engagement of parents in their children's educational experiences. Many of these activities and events were common practice in schools for years before the implementation of HB5. There were few activities and events that may be recently adopted by schools with the use of technology. Despite the implementation of these activities in the past, the only difference is that now they need to be recorded and documented as a compliance measure. This type of approach where compliance becomes a driving mechanism for parent involvement fails to have a significant impact on parent engagement and student learning. The Student-Centered Schools Future-Ready Students website, hosted by the TASA (2016), provides additional resources to help districts

navigate and comply with HB5: Community and Parent Engagement. The organization's website offers an alternative Community-Based Accountability System (CBAS) that:

Is not a way to escape standardized testing or a tool to pass judgment on individual students. It is a:

- Locally developed system of evidence of student learning
- Strategic and customized form of measuring student achievement
- Rigorous descriptive reporting to parents and community members

The foundation of CBAS is a four-part system consisting of:

1. Student and classroom-centered evidence of learning
2. Strategic use of standardized testing
3. Performance reviews and validation of learning by highly trained visiting teams
4. Rigorous descriptive reporting to parents and communities. (para. 2)

The website also offers testimonials and reporting data from districts that have used their resources. One of the districts that implemented this program uploaded (via .pdf) its HB5 compliance reports to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Part four of the report is titled Community Involvement and provides the following information. The report measured community and parental involvement through different means using parent and community surveys, volunteer hours, and business partnerships and internships. According to TASA (2016), their 2014 Baseline and Associates random sample survey, the community ranked parent involvement (36%) as the biggest challenge the district was facing. The district identified four indicators of parental involvement: communication, learning at home, decision-making, and volunteering. The results on the

four indicators revealed quantitative measures were used to report their findings. Parent and community surveys were used to report the level of satisfaction with the way the district communicated with parents. Volunteer hours, PTA membership counts, monetary donations, grants, and the district financial snapshot provided a view of parental involvement in the decision-making process.

Summarizing this micro-analysis, there is conclusive evidence that demonstrates the dependency of quantifiable measures to student, parent and community engagement under the HB5: Community and Parent Engagement mandate. There is no description or evidence of a unique culture, identity, traditions, relationship building, celebrations, relatedness, belonging, and creativity of the lifeworld of the district (Sergiovanni, 2000). It lacks what McKnight and Block (2012) referred to as a culture of abundance. A culture of abundance rejects the consumer society and the application of a market-driven ideology. It encourages unity, individuality, giftedness, and creativity. It also accepts failure, sadness, tragedy, and aspirations to reconnect often.

### **The Third Arena (Macro): Evidence of the Traditionalistic Political Culture**

To understand how education reform efforts such as HB5: Community and Parent Engagement occur, a deeper investigation of what elements provoked reform within the context of our public education system is necessary. It is commonly understood that parents, educators, advocates, and organizations that lobby for issues affecting the field of education have a level of interest in reform efforts within the public education system. The level of interest may depend on the issue being discussed or debated in local news reports or social media. These reform efforts started somewhere, eventually passed through the state legislature, and were finally signed into law by the governor. In Texas,



the legislature meets bi-annually to propose legislation for new laws and reform current mandates. Investigating a deeper understanding of how HB5: Community and Parent Engagement was passed into law, one must take a step back and identify the local, state, and federal political structures that enabled this process to occur. It is important to seek a deeper understanding of the political structures that helped the trajectory of HB5: Community and Parent Engagement become a piece of the collective HB5 mandate. Deepening the understanding of the political structures also exposes a macro-analysis of the third arena in Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. The third arena examines the range of possible solutions by couching Elazar's (1984) theory of the three political structures as a social dominant force that promotes and influences what can be an acceptable range of possible solutions to social problems.

In the following section, I use Elazar's (1984) theoretical concept of the three political cultures that influence the way laws are introduced and enacted to guide the analysis of HB5: Community and Parent Engagement in the State of Texas. The application of the traditionalistic political culture also restricts the range of acceptable solutions to the social issue. In addition, by applying Scheurich's (1994) third arena of policy archaeology to Elazar's (1984) traditionalistic political culture, a clearer landscape of how the regional and local politic unveils particularities affecting social issues like community and parent engagement in public education. Through the multi-layered lenses of policy archaeology and political cultures, HB5: Community and Parent Engagement and its evolution through HB2804 have been affected by the regional politics in the realm of education reform. Fisher (2016) supported that the American political behavior is determined by place or residence. Fisher believed a central premise of political cultures

is that it assumes the importance of socialization in determining America's political views learned through the process of political socialization. The understanding of how local and regional politics affect policy becomes the focal point through the lens of policy archaeology.

The three political cultures play a significant role in the way social issues are negotiated within and ultimately addressed through the legislative process. In analyzing the Legislative Reference Library of Texas (2016) report for HB5, the traditionalistic political culture (Elazar, 1984) influenced the range of acceptable solutions that focused on three particular areas:

The original intent of HB5 Community and Parent Engagement was to provide opportunities for community and parent involvement in three particular areas; (1) opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments, (2) tutoring programs that support students taking assessments, and (3) opportunities for students to participate in their community. (p. 77)

The range of acceptable solutions exposes the true intentions of the range of possible solutions in addressing parent and community engagement. The range of solutions is also restricted by the overemphasis on standardized tests. The overemphasis on standardized tests created a hierarchal structure where quantifiable data sets dictate educational values, environments, and practices (Ravitch, 2013). The hierarchal structure is the state legislature. The state legislature initially mandated HB5 without proper support in terms of resources, training, and funding. In addition, the overemphasis on standardized tests manifested in an accountability system where the educational experiences of students, parents, educators, school leaders, and community members are managed and controlled

by those outside the educational system. Upon receiving the recommendation of the group of superintendents forming the Public Education Institute that later published *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas*, the state legislature initially ignored the recommendations of parent engagement set forth by this group. Once the recommendations of the business community were addressed, the community and parent component was added to HB5 (TASA, 2013). The evolution of HB5 and its most recent amendments mirror the characteristics of the traditionalistic political culture (Elazar, 1984).

#### **The Fourth Arena: Construction and Legitimization (Texas)**

The third arena focuses on the limitations of possible solutions in addressing a social issue, whereas the fourth arena of policy archaeology challenges the framework by which a social issue is legitimized by those who study that issue (Scheurich, 1994). Those who study the complexity of parent and community engagement affect the counting, labeling, description, and relevance of the issue, which ultimately places a social order in the realm of policy and analysis. Applying the fourth arena can assist in exposing the social grids (groups or persons) that investigated parent and community engagement. The group of superintendents forming the Public Education Institute that later published *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas* not only restricted the possible solutions to parent and community engagement but also normalized how this social issue was portrayed to the public. The Legislative Reference Library of Texas Legislature (2016) prescribed possible solutions to HB5 and also normalized the public view of parent and community engagement. The normalization of the prescribed solutions addressing parent and community engagement led to the disciplining of the

public in behaving a certain way around this issue. According to the Legislative Reference Library of Texas, the original intent of HB5: Community and Parent Engagement was to provide opportunities for community and parent involvement in three particular areas: (a) opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments, (b) tutoring programs that support students taking assessments, and (c) opportunities for students to participate in their community.

The three areas of community and parent engagement listed on the mandate formulate the limitations to this social issue. Mandating these three areas of community and parent engagement through HB5 set a standard. The TEA regulates this issue within the set parameters of these standards. Organizations such as TASA continues to support educators, school leaders, and community leaders in addressing this mandate. In doing so, TASA reinforces the set parameters of the mandate, only focusing on addressing the three areas. The significance of these set parameters ultimately influences the way community and parent engagement is studied and legislated.

### **Synthesis of the Analysis for Community and Parent Engagement – House Bill 5**

This section provides a synthesis of the policy analysis of community and parent engagement in the State of Texas. The analysis revealed the various social networks that promoted the legislation and passing of HB5. These social networks set the range of possible solutions in addressing this issue under the traditionalistic political culture as described within Elazar's (1984) theory of three political cultures. The range of possible solutions in addressing this issue have been guided by three key components of the mandate (i.e., assist students in preparing for assessments, tutoring that would support assessments, and opportunities for students to participate in their community). Recent

changes to HB5 have included implementing a local rating system where districts and campuses are assigned an overall grade (A-F). These recent changes continue to capture the dependency of the ratings system based on student standardized test scores. This policy analysis provides evidence of the limitations set by these recent changes in addressing community and parent engagement.

The limited scope of possible solutions addressed through HB5 is confined by the traditionalistic political culture (Elazar, 1984). The application of HB5 continues to be limited by the recommendations proposed by the TEA and TASA. Both organizations provide guidance to meet the compliance of the mandate. The compliance of the mandate is heavily dependent on the promotion and support of student standardized test scores.

### **Colorado: Parent Engagement Senate Bill 13-193**

This section begins with Figure 5, which demonstrates the application of both theoretical lenses introduced by Elazar's (1984) three political cultures and Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. Figure 5 captures a synthesis of the analysis of Senate Bill 13-193 of the 69th General Assembly through both theories. Figure 5 also helps guide the analysis and findings throughout this section. This is followed by the application of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology to the mandate. I analyze Senate Bill 13-193 (SB13-193) through each of the four arenas of policy archaeology. In the third arena of policy archaeology, I analyze SB 13-193 analyzed through the application of the moralistic political culture informed by Elazar's (1984) theory of three political cultures. I close with a synthesis of my analysis by triangulating policy archaeology, the moralistic

political culture, and the public presentation of SB13-193 as communicated by the Colorado Department of Education.

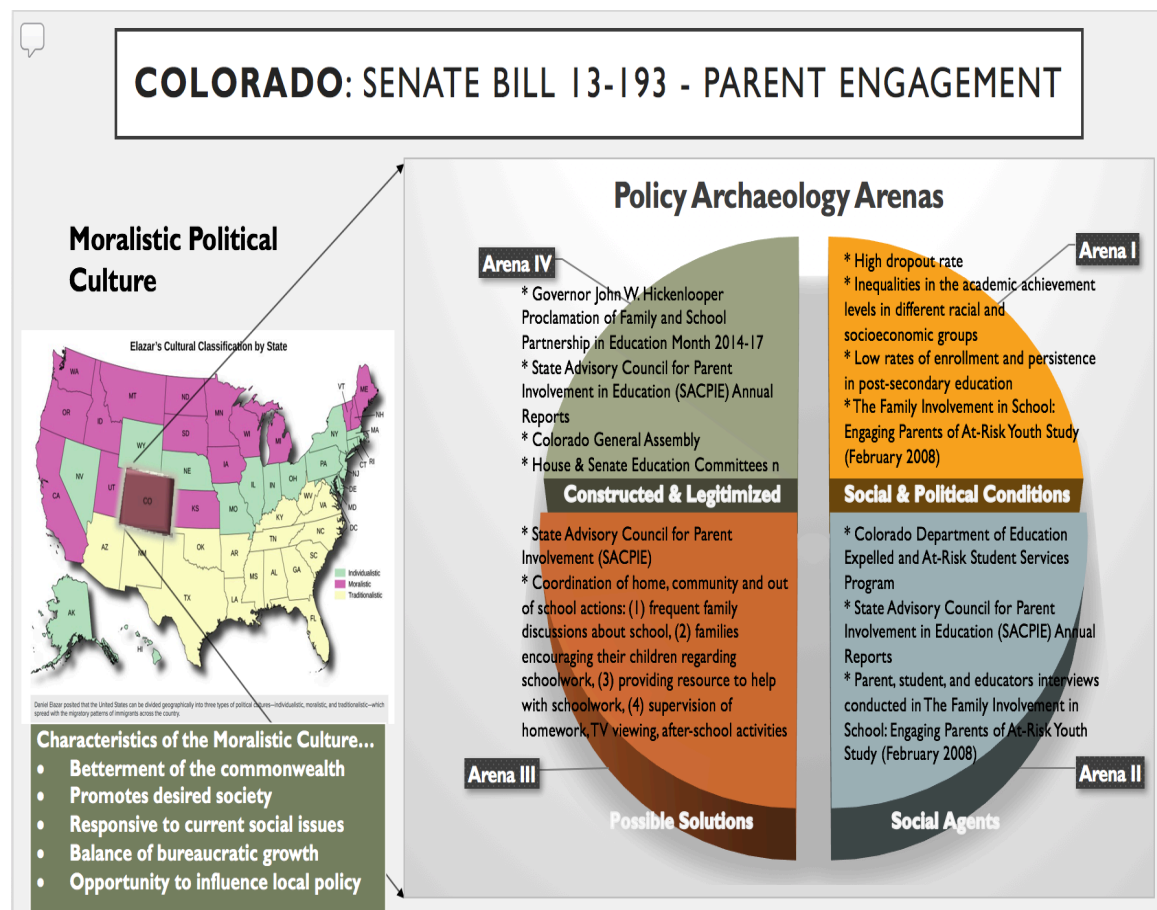


Figure 5. Synthesis of the analysis in Colorado using Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology and Elazar's (1984) three political cultures.

### Transcript of Senate Bill 13-193

In 2013, the Colorado General Assembly and Governor John W. Hickenlooper passed Senate Bill 13-193 relating to the increase of parent engagement in public schools, also known as the Parent Engagement Bill (Senate Bill 12-193). The two primary sponsors of the Parent Engagement Bill were State Senator Evie Hudak and State Representative Tracy Kraft-Tharp (Colorado General Assembly, 2013). The work and dedication of these two legislators, along with the recommendations provided by the

State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE, 2013), promoted the passage of the SB 13-193 Parent Engagement Bill.

The following section consists of the Parent Engagement Bill (Senate Bill 13-193) and the amendments that have since taken effect. As indicated in the footnote of the bill, capital letters indicate new material added to existing statutes; dashes through words indicate deletions from existing statutes and such material not part of the act (SB13-193).

#### SENATE BILL 13-193

22-11-302. School district accountability committee - powers and duties.

(1) Each school district accountability committee shall have HAS the following powers and duties:

(e) To consider input and recommendations from the school accountability committee of each school of the school district to facilitate the evaluation of the performance of the school's principal for the purposes of article 9 of this title; and

(f) To provide input to the local school board concerning the creation and enforcement of its school conduct and discipline code; AND

(g) TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, ESPECIALLY THE ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN THE POPULATIONS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 22-11-301 (3). THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PARENT ENGAGEMENT MUST INCLUDE, BUT NEED NOT BE LIMITED TO:

(I) PUBLICIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AND SOLICITING PARENTS TO SERVE ON THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES. IN SOLICITING PARENTS TO SERVE ON THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES, THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE SHALL DIRECT THE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO HELP ENSURE THAT THE PARENTS WHO SERVE ON THE DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES REFLECT THE STUDENT POPULATIONS THAT ARE SIGNIFICANTLY REPRESENTED

WITHIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE SCHOOL, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 22-11-301 (3).

(II) ASSISTING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT IN IMPLEMENTING THE PARENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY ADOPTED BY THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-32-142; AND

(III) ASSISTING SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO INCREASE PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATORS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN CREATING STUDENTS' READ PLANS PURSUANT TO PART 12 OF ARTICLE 7 OF THIS TITLE, IN CREATING INDIVIDUAL CAREER AND ACADEMIC PLANS PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-32-109 (1) (oo), AND IN CREATING PLANS TO ADDRESS HABITUAL TRUANCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-33-107 (3).

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-11-402, amend (1) introductory portion; and add (1) (f), (1) (g), and (1) (h) as follows:

22-11-402. School accountability committee - powers and duties - meetings. (1) Each school accountability committee shall have HAS the following powers and duties:

(f) TO PUBLICIZE AND HOLD A PUBLIC SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-32-142 (2) OR 22-30.5-520 (2) TO DISCUSS STRATEGIES TO INCLUDE IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT OR TURNAROUND PLAN;

(g) TO PUBLICIZE A PUBLIC HEARING HELD PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-32-142 (2) OR 22-30.5-520 (2) TO REVIEW A WRITTEN PUBLIC SCHOOL PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT OR TURNAROUND PLAN. A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE IS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE PUBLIC HEARING.

(h) TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOL, ESPECIALLY THE ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN THE POPULATIONS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 22-11-401 (1) (d). THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PARENT ENGAGEMENT MUST INCLUDE, BUT NEED NOT BE LIMITED TO:



(I) PUBLICIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AND SOLICITING PARENTS TO SERVE ON THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE. IN SOLICITING PARENTS TO SERVE ON THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE, THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE SHALL DIRECT THE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO HELP ENSURE THAT THE PARENTS WHO SERVE ON THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE REFLECT THE STUDENT POPULATIONS THAT ARE SIGNIFICANTLY REPRESENTED WITHIN THE SCHOOL, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 22-11-401 (1) (d).

(II) ASSISTING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT IN IMPLEMENTING AT THE SCHOOL THE PARENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY ADOPTED BY THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-32-142; AND

(III) ASSISTING SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO INCREASE PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH TEACHERS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN CREATING STUDENTS' READ PLANS PURSUANT TO PART 12 OF ARTICLE 7 OF THIS TITLE, IN CREATING INDIVIDUAL CAREER AND ACADEMIC PLANS PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-32-109 (1) (oo) OR 22-30.5-525, AND IN CREATING PLANS TO ADDRESS HABITUAL TRUANCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-33-107 (3).

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-11-404, amend (1) (b) and (2) (b) as follows:

22-11-404. School improvement plan - contents. (1) (b) The school accountability committee for the district public school shall advise the principal concerning preparation of the school improvement plan and shall make recommendations to the principal concerning the contents of the school improvement plan. The principal, with the approval of the superintendent or his or her designee, shall create and adopt the school improvement plan, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the school accountability committee. Prior to adopting the school improvement plan, the

principal shall hold a public hearing to review the plan as required in section 22-32-142 (2).

(2) (b) The school accountability committee for the institute charter school shall advise the principal concerning preparation of the school improvement plan and shall make recommendations to the principal concerning the contents of the school improvement plan. The principal shall create and adopt the school improvement plan, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the school accountability committee. Prior to adopting the school improvement plan, the principal shall hold a public hearing to review the plan as required in section 22-30.5-520 (2).

SECTION 4. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-11-405, amend (1) (b), (2) (b), (4) introductory portion, and (4) (e); and add (4) (e.5) as follows:

22-11-405. School priority improvement plan - contents. (1) (b) The school accountability committee for the district public school shall **HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 22-32-142 (2) TO RECEIVE INPUT CONCERNING POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SCHOOL PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**, advise the local school board concerning preparation of the school priority improvement plan, and shall make recommendations to the local school board concerning the contents of the school priority improvement plan, **TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED AT THE PUBLIC MEETING**. The local school board shall create and adopt the school priority improvement plan, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the school accountability committee. Prior to **BEFORE** adopting the school priority improvement plan, the local school board shall hold a public hearing to review the **WRITTEN** plan as required in section 22-32-142 (2).

(2) (b) The school accountability committee for the institute charter school shall **HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 22-30.5-520 (2) TO RECEIVE INPUT CONCERNING POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SCHOOL PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**, advise the institute concerning preparation of the school priority improvement plan, and shall make recommendations to the institute concerning the contents of the school priority improvement plan, **TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED AT THE PUBLIC MEETING**. The institute shall create

and adopt the school priority improvement plan, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the school accountability committee. Prior to BEFORE adopting the school priority improvement plan, the institute shall hold a public hearing to review the WRITTEN plan as required in section 22-30.5-520 (2).

(4) A school priority improvement plan shall MUST be designed to ensure that the public school improves its performance to the extent that, following completion of the public school's next annual performance review, the public school attains a higher accreditation category. At a minimum, a school priority improvement plan shall MUST:

(e) Identify the local, state, and federal resources that the public school will use to implement the identified strategies with fidelity; and

(e.5) INCORPORATE STRATEGIES TO  
INCREASE PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOL; AND

SECTION 5. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-11-406, amend (1) (b), (2) (b), (3) introductory portion, and (3) (e); and add (3) (e.5) as follows:

22-11-406. School turnaround plan - contents. (1) (b) The school accountability committee for the district public school shall HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 22-32-142 (2) TO RECEIVE INPUT CONCERNING POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SCHOOL TURNAROUND PLAN, advise the local school board concerning preparation of the school turnaround plan, and shall make recommendations to the local school board concerning the contents of the school turnaround plan TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED AT THE PUBLIC MEETING. The local school board shall create and adopt the school turnaround plan, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the school accountability committee. Prior to BEFORE adopting the school turnaround plan, the local school board shall hold a public hearing to review the WRITTEN plan as required in section 22-32-142 (2).

(2) (b) The school accountability committee for the institute charter school shall HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 22-30.5-520 (2) TO RECEIVE INPUT CONCERNING POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO BE INCLUDED

IN THE SCHOOL TURNAROUND PLAN, advise the institute concerning preparation of the school turnaround plan, and shall make recommendations to the institute concerning the contents of the school turnaround plan, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED AT THE PUBLIC MEETING. The institute shall create and adopt the school turnaround plan, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the school accountability committee. Prior to BEFORE adopting the school turnaround plan, the institute shall hold a public hearing to review the WRITTEN plan as required in section 22-30.5-520 (2).

(3) A school turnaround plan shall MUST be designed to ensure that the public school improves its performance to the extent that, following completion of the public school's next annual performance review, the public school attains a higher accreditation category. At a minimum, a school turnaround plan shall MUST:

(e) Identify the local, state, and federal resources that the public school will use to implement the identified strategies with fidelity; and

(e.5) INCORPORATE STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL; AND

SECTION 6. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-7-303, amend (6) as follows:

22-7-303. Colorado state advisory council for parent involvement in education - created - membership. (6) The council members shall serve without compensation and without reimbursement for expenses BUT MAY RECEIVE REIMBURSEMENT FOR ACTUAL AND NECESSARY EXPENSES INCURRED IN PERFORMING THEIR DUTIES PURSUANT TO THIS PART 3, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO EXPENSES INCURRED IN PROVIDING A REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-7-304 (3).

SECTION 7. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-7-304, add (3), (4), and (5) as follows:

22-7-304. Council - advisory duties - technical assistance - report. (3) (a) THE COUNCIL SHALL PROVIDE TRAINING AND OTHER RESOURCES DESIGNED TO HELP THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES AND SCHOOL

ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS, INCLUDING INCREASING THE NUMBER OF PARENTS SERVING ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES.

(b) THE COUNCIL SHALL WORK WITH THE DEPARTMENT TO PROVIDE REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES. AT A MINIMUM, THE TRAINING PROGRAMS MUST ADDRESS PARENT LEADERSHIP AND INCREASING PARENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES, INCLUDING BEST PRACTICES FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES.

(c) THE COUNCIL SHALL WORK WITH THE DEPARTMENT TO PROVIDE REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS CONCERNING BEST PRACTICES AND SKILLS FOR DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN WORKING WITH PARENTS.

(4) THE COUNCIL, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SHALL IDENTIFY KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION AND USE THE INDICATORS TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR METHODS BY WHICH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION MAY MEASURE AND MONITOR THE LEVEL OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT WITH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN COLORADO.

(5) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2013, AND ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31 EACH YEAR THEREAFTER, THE COUNCIL SHALL REPORT TO THE STATE BOARD, THE

COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, AND  
THE EDUCATION COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE AND  
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, OR ANY SUCCESSOR  
COMMITTEES, THE COUNCIL'S PROGRESS IN  
PROMOTING PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE STATE AND  
IN

SECTION 8. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-32-142, amend (1) and (2)  
as follows:

22-32-142. Parent engagement - policy - communications -  
incentives. (1) (a) Each school district board of education is  
encouraged to SHALL adopt a district policy for increasing and  
supporting parent involvement ENGAGEMENT in the public  
schools, INCLUDING CHARTER SCHOOLS, of the school  
district. In adopting the policy, the board of education may take  
into account, but need not be limited to, the best practices and  
strategies identified pursuant to section 22-7-304 by the Colorado  
state advisory council for parent involvement in education and the  
national standards for family-school partnerships, as defined in  
section 22-7-302 (5). The board of education is encouraged to  
SHALL work with the parent members of the district  
accountability committee in creating, adopting, and implementing  
the policy.

(b) AS PART OF THE DISTRICT PARENT  
ENGAGEMENT POLICY, A DISTRICT IS  
ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE TRAINING  
CONCERNING BEST PRACTICES AND SKILLS FOR  
DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN WORKING  
WITH PARENTS.

(c) EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL IDENTIFY AN  
EMPLOYEE OF THE DISTRICT TO ACT AS THE  
POINT OF CONTACT FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT  
TRAINING AND RESOURCES. THE IDENTIFIED  
PERSON SHALL ALSO SERVE AS THE LIAISON  
BETWEEN THE DISTRICT, THE DISTRICT  
ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE, THE COLORADO  
STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR PARENT  
INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION, AND THE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SHALL  
FACILITATE THE DISTRICT'S EFFORTS TO  
INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE  
DISTRICT. THE SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL SUBMIT

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION THE NAME  
OF THE IDENTIFIED EMPLOYEE.

(2) (a) If the state board of education, pursuant to section 22-11-210, determines that a school of the school district is required to adopt and implement a school improvement plan as described in section 22-11-404, a school priority improvement plan as described in section 22-11-405 or a school turnaround plan as described in section 22-11-406, the school district, within thirty days after receiving the initial notice of the determination or, if the determination is appealed, the final notice of the determination, shall notify the parents of the students enrolled in the school of the required plan and the issues identified by the department of education as giving rise to the need for the required plan. The notice shall also include the timeline for developing and adopting the required plan and the date, time, and location of a public hearing held by the school principal or the district board of education, whichever is responsible for adopting the plan DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATIONS OF THE PUBLIC MEETING DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (b) OF THIS SUBSECTION (2) AND THE PUBLIC HEARING DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (c) OF THIS SUBSECTION (2).

(b) THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE SHALL HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING TO SOLICIT INPUT FROM PARENTS CONCERNING THE CONTENTS OF THE REQUIRED PLAN BEFORE THE PLAN IS WRITTEN. AT THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE'S PUBLIC MEETING, THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SHALL REVIEW THE SCHOOL'S PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING ITS PLAN FOR THE PRECEDING YEAR AND IN IMPROVING ITS PERFORMANCE.

(c) THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION SHALL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING AFTER THE PLAN IS WRITTEN to review the required plan prior to final adoption. At the public hearing, the school principal or the district board of education shall also review the school's progress in implementing its plan for the preceding year and in improving its performance. The date of the public hearing shall be at least thirty days after the date on which the school district provides the written notice. A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE IS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE PUBLIC HEARING.

SECTION 9. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-30.5-520, amend (1) and (2) as follows:

22-30.5-520. Parent engagement - policy - communications - incentives. (1) (a) The state charter school institute board is encouraged to SHALL adopt a policy for increasing and supporting parent involvement ENGAGEMENT in institute charter schools. In adopting the policy, the institute board may take into account, but need not be limited to, the best practices and strategies identified pursuant to section 22-7-304 by the Colorado state advisory council for parent involvement in education and the national standards for family-school partnerships, as defined in section 22-7-302 (5).

(b) AS PART OF THE INSTITUTE'S PARENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY, THE INSTITUTE IS ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE TRAINING CONCERNING BEST PRACTICES AND SKILLS FOR INSTITUTE AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN WORKING WITH PARENTS.

(c) THE INSTITUTE SHALL IDENTIFY AN EMPLOYEE TO ACT AS THE POINT OF CONTACT FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT TRAINING AND RESOURCES. THE IDENTIFIED PERSON SHALL ALSO SERVE AS THE LIAISON BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE, THE COLORADO STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SHALL FACILITATE THE INSTITUTE'S EFFORTS TO INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT WITHIN INSTITUTE CHARTER SCHOOLS. THE INSTITUTE SHALL SUBMIT TO THE DEPARTMENT THE NAME OF THE IDENTIFIED EMPLOYEE.

(2) (a) If the state board of education, pursuant to section 22-11-210, determines that an institute charter school is required to adopt and implement a school improvement plan as described in section 22-11-404, a school priority improvement plan as described in section 22-11-405 or a school turnaround plan as described in section 22-11-406, the institute charter school, within thirty days after receiving the initial notice of the determination or, if the determination is appealed, the final notice of the determination, shall notify the parents of the students enrolled in the school of the required plan and the issues identified by the department of



education as giving rise to the need for the required plan. The notice shall also include the timeline for developing and adopting the required plan and the date, time, and location of a public hearing to be held by the institute charter school or the institute, whichever is responsible for adopting the plan DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATIONS OF THE PUBLIC MEETING DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (b) OF THIS SUBSECTION (2) AND THE PUBLIC HEARING DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (c) OF THIS SUBSECTION (2).

(b) THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE SHALL HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING TO SOLICIT INPUT FROM PARENTS CONCERNING THE CONTENTS OF THE REQUIRED PLAN BEFORE THE PLAN IS WRITTEN. AT THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE'S PUBLIC MEETING, THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SHALL REVIEW THE INSTITUTE CHARTER SCHOOL'S PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING ITS PLAN FOR THE PRECEDING YEAR AND IN IMPROVING ITS PERFORMANCE.

(c) THE INSTITUTE SHALL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING AFTER THE PLAN

IS WRITTEN to review the required plan prior to final adoption. At the public hearing, the institute charter school principal or the institute shall also review the institute charter school's progress in implementing its plan for the preceding year and in improving its performance. THE INSTITUTE SHALL HOLD THE PUBLIC HEARING WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT IN WHICH THE INSTITUTE CHARTER SCHOOL IS LOCATED. The date of the public hearing shall MUST be at least thirty days after the date on which the institute charter school provides the written notice. A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE IS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE PUBLIC HEARING.

SECTION 10. Appropriation. (1) In addition to any other appropriation, there is hereby appropriated, out of any moneys in the general fund not otherwise appropriated, to the department of education, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2013, the sum of \$150,093 and 1.0 FTE, or so much thereof as may be necessary, to be allocated to the management and

administration division for accountability and improvement planning programs for the implementation of this act as follows:

1. (a) \$100,440 and 1.0 FTE for personal services; and
2. (b) \$49,653 for operating expenses and other costs.

SECTION 11. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety.

A significant approach to parent engagement is articulated in Senate Bill 13-193 Section 1 (SB13-193). In Section I of the bill, a key term was amended that signifies a concrete stance on the implementation of parent engagement in schools and districts across the State of Colorado. Amendments to the bill targeted the make-up of the school district and school accountability parent committee. The amendment specifically directed the school district and school accountability committees to ensure outreach efforts promoted the selection of parent committee members reflective of the student population of the school district and the school.

On October 8, 2013, and October 1, 2014, the Governor of Colorado signed a proclamation indicating the month of October should be recognized as Family and School Partnership in Education Month. These proclamations cited the following educational issues that initiated the proclamations: an unacceptably high dropout rate, inequalities in the academic achievement levels of students from different racial and socioeconomic groups, and low rates of enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education. The proclamation also cited the importance and positive impact in academics, better attendance, and homework completion when parents, families, and schools collaborate. Additionally, the proclamation cited that students from all cultural backgrounds perform

better when educators bridge the gap between cultures from home and the classroom. Similar proclamations were signed in 2015 and 2017.

### **The First Arena: Social and Political Conditions (Colorado)**

In 2009, the Colorado General Assembly found that it was in the best interest of the state to create a state advisory council for parent involvement in education that would review best practices, make recommendations to policymakers, and provide educators with strategies to increase parent involvement (Colorado Department of Education, n.d.). In part, the recommendation to establish an advisory council to explore the issue of parent involvement came from a report published by the Colorado Education Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Program. The report, entitled *Family Involvement in Schools: Engaging Parents of At-Risk Youth* (MacGillivray & Mann, 2008) helped shape the argument for the establishment of the advisory council. This study was conducted to explore the positive impact of parent involvement in addressing the needs of at-risk students. This qualitative study involved interviews, focus groups, and program observations. The participants in this study were teachers and parents of students. Thirty-one staff interviews and five focus groups were conducted with a total of 32 parents. The following themes emerged from the findings of this study: establishing strong relationships, creating good communication, questioning assumptions and negative labels, and creating a welcoming climate for students in transition (MacGillivray & Mann, 2008).

The connection of this study to Senate Bill 13-193 is significant for several reasons. It is evident that the social issue of parent involvement was investigated in depth. The study established a link between parent involvement and the positive impact

on student progress (MacGillivray & Mann, 2008). The study also brought attention to an important social issue in Colorado. It is evident that the significance of this study became a legislative opportunity for those seeking change in parent involvement. Analyzing the significance of report through the lens of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology, the depth of this study supports the first arena. In first arena, Scheurich seeks to find evidence of social conditions (social or political) that help drive parent and community engagement as an important social issue. The 32 parents and 31 staff who participated in the interviews for the MacGillivray and Mann (2008) study indicates how a social issue was discussed at a local level and within the education system by those affected by the issues.

### **Second Arena: Social Agents (Colorado)**

In 2009, the Colorado General Assembly decided to create a state advisory council for parent involvement in education (SACPIE, 2013). This legislative action and the efforts of the advisory council then became the impetus for the creation of SACPIE in 2012. According to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE, n.d.), SACPIE is made up of parents and a diverse group of individuals from different disciplines (non-profit organizations, early childhood advocates, educators, counselors, higher education, and members of other state agencies). This new advisory council played an important role within Colorado's educational system. The creation of SACPIE became the political solution for addressing family, school, and community engagement as the organization was positioned to inform best practices and make recommendations to policymakers to increase parent involvement in public education, thereby helping to improve the quality of public education and raise the level of students' academic achievement throughout the

state (SACPIE, 2013). In essence, SACPIE (2013) has become the leading agency and voice in addressing issues of parent, family, and community engagement in the state. This council provides families, school districts, and community organizations a framework by which they can successfully affect student engagement by developing a partnership with parents and community organizations. The framework consists of the following guiding principles, actions, and resources:

1. Align strategies and practices with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008) for every student and family.
  - Ensure inclusion of those with cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning differences.
2. Apply research and laws to practice, focusing on student success.
  - Do what works, consistently.
3. Share knowledge and responsibility.
  - Use two-way communication.
  - Partner actively and equitably.
4. Use data to make decisions.
  - Be strategic and intentional.
  - Action plan, based on what exists and what is needed.
  - Continuously improve.

In accordance with this framework, doing what works directly affects students' progress as noted by their research in parent and community engagement. The following are the key areas the council uses to define success:

Coordinating Student Learning, in and out of School:

- Students spend more than 70% of their waking hours outside of school (Callendar & Hansen, 2004)

#### Supporting Student Achievement at Home and in the Community:

- Specific home, community, and “out-of-school, coordinated” actions which improve student achievement are as follows: (1) frequent family discussions about school; (2) families encouraging their children regarding schoolwork; (3) providing resources to help with schoolwork; (4) supervision of homework, TV viewing, after-school activities. (Marzano, 2003)

#### Reaching Out to Every Family for Every Student:

- The more parents perceive teachers as valuing their contributions, keeping them informed, and providing them with suggestions, the higher parental engagement in their children’s learning. (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000)
- School-initiated, specific parental involvement programs - such as shared reading, homework checking, and teamed two-way communication - are significantly and positively related to academic achievement for students at all levels. (Jeynes, 2012)

#### Finding Solutions:

- Educator and family challenges in partnering together for student success are similar; they need explicit role expectations for sharing responsibility, self-confidence, skills, workable logistics, authentic invitations, and

mutually respectful relationships. (Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker & Ice, 2010)

- When students struggle in school, the most effective interventions are those where families and school personnel work together to implement plans and strategies, utilizing ongoing two-way information exchanges. (Cox, 2005)

SACPIE's (2013) annual report contains details of legislative efforts on issues related to parent involvement in education. The makeup of the SACPIE council is a diverse group of 23 members. These members are chosen by their field of expertise and are divided into five committees: executive, early childhood, K-12, higher education, and partnerships. All committees meet quarterly and are responsible for legislative responsibilities, purpose, and action plans. Each committee has a Colorado Department of Education representative to help support its particular efforts. The Department of Higher Education has also designated a resource liaison to serve on the Higher Education Committee (SACPIE, 2013). The SACPIE council has aligned its work with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. The council has identified resources for practitioners from nationally recognized organizations such as The Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at John Hopkins University; The Family Involvement Network of Educators at Harvard University; and the Southwest Educational Developmental Laboratory (SEDL) National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools (SACPIE, 2013).

The alignment of SACPIE's (2013) work with nationally recognized organizations identifies the interrelationships of social networks that support parent,

family, and community engagement. The work of these national organizations provides guidance into what practices have been researched and deemed acceptable. The next section expands on practices and applicable solutions through Scheurich's (1994) third arena.

### **The Third Arena (Micro): Possible Solutions (Colorado)**

The range of acceptable solutions in addressing parent, family, and community engagement emerged from the way this issue is defined. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE, n.d.) provided the application of the third arena by identifying the goal and definition of parent, family, and community engagement. The significance of what has been identified as acceptable solutions to this social issue relies on the way the CDE has defined parent, family, and community engagement. The CDE posted the following goal and definition:

[Goal] Families, schools and communities partnering to support student learning.

[Definition] Family, school, and community partnering can be defined as the collaboration of families, schools and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district and state outcomes. (CDE, 2014b, p. 1)

According to the CDE, this definition evolved from what the state once promoted:

Colorado has shifted from a “traditional parent involvement” to a focus on active partnering, which stems from knowing what works to improve student learning and coordinate in- and out-of-school opportunities. The definition presents a departure to conventional practices of parent, family, and community engagement



which broadens the scope of possible solutions in addressing this issue. (CDE, 2014b, p. 2)

The state also defines the priorities for family engagement through four strategic goals and seven standards as listed below:

Four strategic goals to “Support Every Student, Every Step of the Way.”

- 1. Read Act: Educators and families coordinating early literacy support
- 2. Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAPs): Educators, students, and families together planning postsecondary success
- 3. Educator Effectiveness: Educators following specific performance standards which include family partnering. (CDE, 2014b, p. 1)

The three strategic goals are aligned to the State of Colorado’s Theoretical Framework for Family, School, and Community Partnering and Family, School, and Community Partnering as part of its multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) model (see Figures 6 and 7). I explain and analyze the MTSS in a different section. This alignment provides a lens into the realm of possibilities in addressing parent, family, and community engagement because according to the State of Colorado, the family, school, and community have an equal part in addressing student learning (see Figure 6).

The CDE (n.d.) has also adopted The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) national standards for what parents, schools, and communities can do together to support student success. According to the CDE, a seventh standard was added by SACPIE to advance partnerships.

- 1. Welcoming all families into the school community

- 2. Communicating effectively
- 3. Supporting student success
- 4. Speaking up for every child
- 5. Sharing power
- 6. Collaborating with the community
- 7. Providing professional development and pre-service training in partnering with families for administrators and teachers

The seven standards support the opportunity to view parent, family, and community engagement from a broader perspective. The fifth standard shapes the landscape as it addresses the topic of power. In conventional practices of parent, family, and community engagement, educators and school leaders hold the power as they determine the methods of engagement among parents, educators, and school leaders. The fifth standard emphasizes the value of collaborating in the decision-making process. This leads to the seventh standard that was added by SACPIE. The seventh standard focuses on the professional development of educators and school leaders with regard to reaching out and partnering with parents.

Another key player influencing the range of possible solutions is SACPIE. The 23-member committee that makes up SACPIE supports the complexity of this social issue. The diverse membership includes individuals in non-profit organizations, state educational agencies, and state health agencies. The diverse perspective brings a broader view to the issues affecting parent, family, and community engagement that ultimately affect student learning. This group of individuals seek opportunities to improve home–school partnering, train parents who are members of the school and district accountability

committees, increase parent partnership in higher education, and collaborate with the CDE and the Department of Human Services (SACPIE, 2013). One of the most important roles SACPIE possesses is the recommendations it provides to policymakers. The decisions made by SACPIE ultimately shape the way parent, family, and community engagement is leveraged and addressed. In essence, SACPIE is a major player in setting a range of possible solutions as described by the third arena in Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. The idea of having a council dedicated to help promote best practices for parent, family, and community engagement is a positive and significant step forward in supporting student learning.

### **Third Arena (Macro): Evidence of the Moralistic Political Culture**

Elazar's (1984) theory of the three political cultures is evident in the evolution of SB 13-193. The analysis of the legislative documents and supporting agencies studying this issue also provided insight into the political culture of Colorado. According to Elazar's political map, the State of Colorado captures the characteristics of the moralistic political culture. Elazar argued that although each state has a dominant political culture, each has areas within the state that represent a different or a mix of political cultures. A mix of political cultures emerges from the migratory and resettlement patterns of the state's populations.

In analyzing the characteristics of the moralistic political culture (Elazar, 1984), certain themes emerged. The following five themes were taken from the description of Elazar's (1984) moralistic political culture: betterment of the commonwealth, promotes desired society, responsive to current social issues, balance of bureaucratic growth, and opportunity to influence local policy. The five themes were then used to help identify

evidence in the selected legislative documents and analysis of the organizations that helped shape SB 13-193. Four of the five themes were most evident in the analysis of the documents (i.e., betterment of the commonwealth, promotes desired society, responsive to current social issues, and opportunity to influence local policy). These four themes were evident from the inception of SB 13-193. For instance, the creation of SACPIE is evidence of the themes of betterment of the commonwealth, promotes desired society, responsive to current social issues, and opportunity to influence local policy. The CDE and SACPIE embrace a collectiveness approach to influence policy-based best practices in family, school, and community engagement.

The study that generated the report entitled *Family Involvement in School: Engaging Parents of At-Risk Youth* (MacGillivray & Mann, 2008) helped raise awareness on the issue of the impact of parent engagement in student learning. This qualitative study involved interviews with students, parents, and educators, which is evidence of the theme of response to current social issues. The presentation of this monumental study to legislators in 2008 in essence helped promote a desired society. The statewide goals to support home–school partnerships (SACPIE, 2013), the theoretical framework for family, school, and community partnering (see Figure 6), and MTSS (see Figure 7) promote the themes of betterment of the commonwealth, promote desired society, and responsive to current social issues. All three documents emphasize the significance of family, school, and community engagement as it relates to the student learning. The notion of having a multi-layered approach in which parents, educators, and community members work together to support student learning goes to the core of SB 13-193 and the educational goals of the state. Seeing the issue of family engagement at different stages within

Colorado's educational system signifies how invested local, regional, and state efforts are in supporting student learning. The evolution of SB 13-193 under the moralistic culture captures how local, regional, and state politics influence the way students are educated and the importance given to the collective efforts of parents, educators, and community members in supporting student learning

**Moralistic lens: Colorado's theoretical framework for family, school, and community partnering.** Figures 6 and 7 provide evidence of Colorado's theoretical model for family, school, and community partnering and multi-tiered intervention system model. The images, taken from the CDE (n.d.) website, demonstrate the connection and support systems for family, school, and community engagement affecting student learning. These images also provide a fundamental insight into the moralistic political culture.

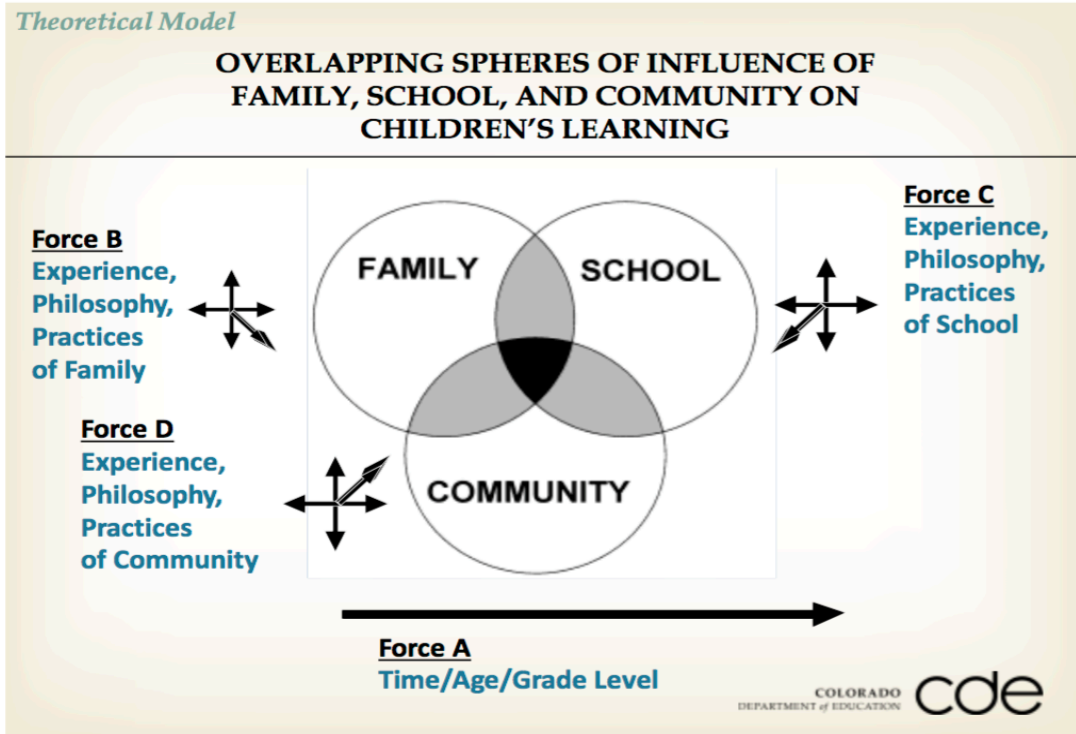


Figure 6. State of Colorado's theoretical framework for family, school, and community partnering.

## Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)



*Figure 7.* State of Colorado’s family, school, and community partnering as part of their multi-tiered system of supports model.

Figures 6 and 7 reflect evidence of the state’s understanding of the impact of family and community engagement on student learning. These illustrations were taken from the CDE website under the Schools and Districts Accountability Committees (SACs & DACs) training materials tab. Under this tab, the CDE provides insight into its comprehensive approach to student success. According to the CDE (n.d.), it provides training on the four main components of student support and student success: the framework of the National Family-School Partnership Standards, distributed leadership, action planning, and evaluation. These four components have a significant role in student

success as the state provides a plan on how it will support districts and schools on meeting the state's vision and mandate.

Figures 6 and 7 are important pieces of evidence in this comparative analysis. Figure 6 provides a theoretical framework with three overlapping spheres representing family, school, and community, supporting the idea that the family unit is part of the support system for student success. Figure 7 depicts the different components to the MTSS where family, school, and community engagement are key components in addressing student learning by providing additional support (CDE, n.d.).

The state of Colorado's theoretical framework for family, school, and community partnering captures the moralistic political culture characteristics as presented by Elazar's (1984) theory. The evidence demonstrates how family, school, and community engagement is part of the state's educational vision and fundamental in the educational practices that align to the characteristics of Elazar's moralistic culture. The significance of having both systems (see Figures 6 and 7) match the characteristics of the moralistic culture is important for several reasons. It couches family, school, and community engagement (the social issue) as a fundamental and critical element of student success. Second, it legitimizes the argument that schools, families, and the community must see each other as equal partners in the development of a sustainable civil society. Third, these documents show evidence of the state's ability to prioritize and respond to issues affecting communities. In this case, the state's response was to fundamentally address student learning by promoting and supporting the engagement of families, schools, and community members. The state's response was instrumental in the way in which



resources (i.e., human, capital, and political) are allocated by acknowledging the impact of family, school, and community engagement on student learning.

#### **The Fourth Arena: Construction and Legitimization (Colorado)**

The fourth arena of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology seeks to analyze how this social issue is researched. It is also important to expose those individuals, groups, and organizations who research and shape the way this issue is presented to educators, school leaders, parents, students, families, and community members across Colorado. Exposing the social agents who study this issue is important because they construct the narrative and set a range of acceptable solutions. The leading organization instrumental in addressing the social issue of parent, family, and community engagement is SACPIE. This organization has been identified as developing the current narrative on this issue in Colorado. It was also given the authority to inform legislators and provide training to school districts, teacher organizations, state agencies, and other social agencies.

A lens into the fourth arena of policy archaeology is provided through the analysis of the SACPIE digital documents. The analysis of the training materials revealed the framework in the way this issue is addressed at the local, district, and state level. At the local level, education agencies have access to the training materials for educators and parents. The website also provides an opportunity to critique and provide feedback through the use of the Family Engagement Policy Critique Form. In other words, SACPIE provides an opportunity for those affected by the law to share their perspectives to better serve their needs. The method of providing feedback by using a form may not be the best way and certainly not the most effective but the point is that the state provides an opportunity to continuously collect feedback. The Family, School, and Community

Partnering (FSCP) Team Tracker Form offers an approach to integrating family, school, and community partnering within schools and districts to assess existing teams and organizational meetings. This form provides an opportunity to document the different committees and actions that need to be taken to remain focused in complying with the mandate. Although the availability of these forms portrays a level of transparency, it also restricts the way this social issue is negotiated. These forms set norms and conditions for how parent, family, and community engagement is practiced at the campus and district level.

The analysis of the members who make up the SACPIE organization reveals the significance of the fourth arena. Of the 23 designated memberships assigned to this committee, three are assigned to parents; five are assigned to representatives for state agencies; seven are assigned to representatives for non-profit organizations promoting issues affecting students, parents, and families; four are assigned to representatives for non-profit agencies promoting issues for educators and school leaders; and two are assigned to representatives for members of higher education (SACPIE, 2013). Since 2013, only eight parents have served on this committee. Of the eight parent members, one has been a member since 2013 occupying different roles and currently chairs the committee. Four out of the eight parent members have worked in the education field, one is a business owner, and the occupations of the other three are unknown (SACPIE, 2013).

The membership of this committee exposes an underlying issue that raises the following questions. What are the complications in the decision-making process when the committee has a limited number of parent membership of individuals who, at some point, worked within the education profession? This undermines the core of the

organization's mission because the issue of parent, family, and community engagement can be influenced to benefit certain individuals, groups, or organizations. The interests of parents may not be the main focus when there are a limited number of parent members who come from other professions not associated with education. This analysis also raises the question of diversity. How diverse (in terms of race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, and age) has the membership been over the years? Although answers to this question could not be found, it raises fundamental questions and concerns about how the issue of parent, family, and community engagement is studied, analyzed, and communicated.

### **Synthesis of the Analysis of Parent Engagement: Senate Bill 13-193**

This section provides a synthesis of the policy analysis of parent, family, and community engagement in the State of Colorado. Different social networks made up of individuals, groups, non-profit organizations, state agencies, advocates, and legislators collectively pushed for the legislative passing of SB13-193. At the same time, these social networks informed a range of possible solutions in addressing parent, family, and community engagement under a moralistic political culture established by historical events as described by Elazar's (1984) theory of three political cultures. The response in addressing the issue of parent, family, and community engagement through SB13-193 were set forth by social, educational, and political conditions. The legislative response to this issue fit the characteristics of the moralistic political approach. The moralistic political inclination is evident by the creation of SACPIE as the foremost organization in addressing this issue. The parent representatives have a significant role in the decision-

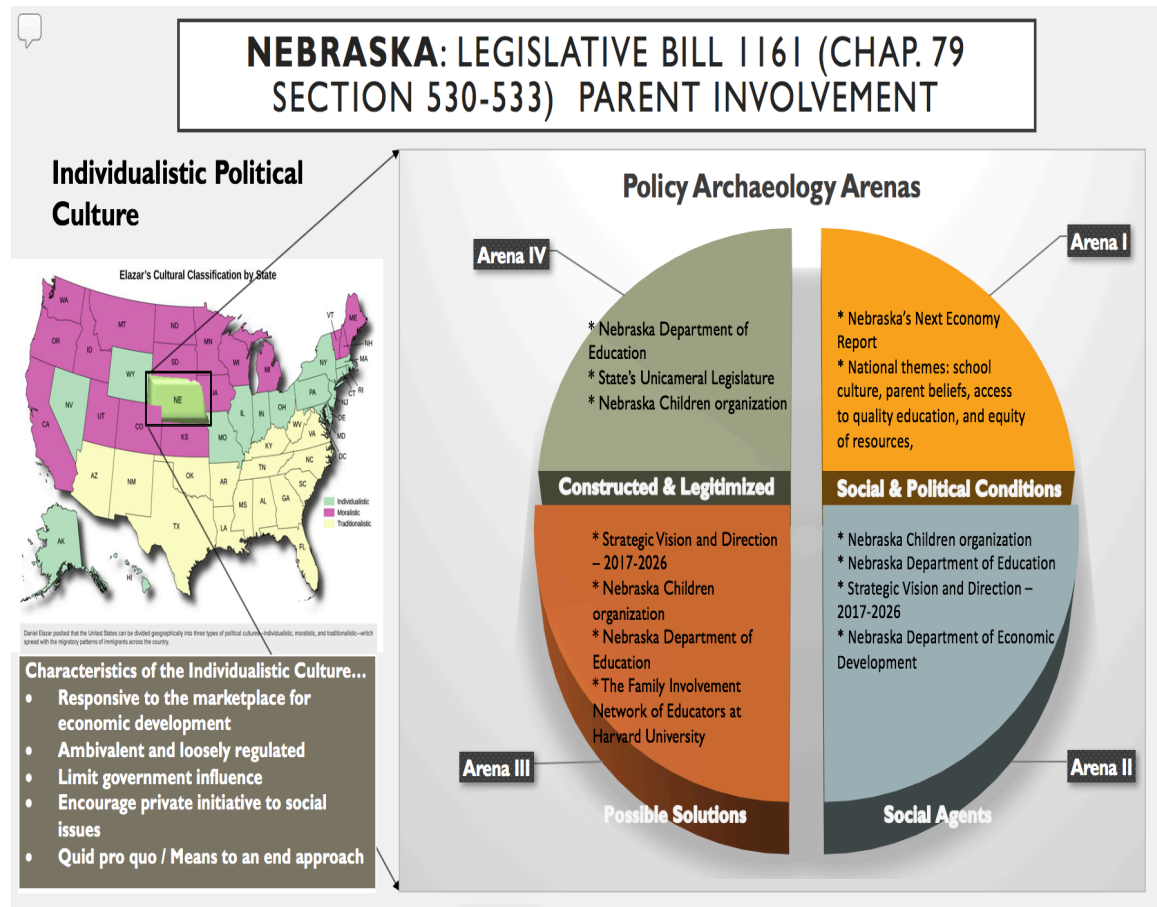
making process in the School Advisory Committee (SAC) and District Advisory Committee (DAC) as well as the performance evaluation of the campus principal.

Despite the creation of these structures that incorporate parents in the decision-making process, educators, school leaders, and parents continue to act in conventional ways by following prescribed roles and filling out forms to meet the mandate. These actions bound and restrict the imagination of developing more genuine practices that could potentially garnish a greater impact in student learning. The analysis of SB 13-193 illustrated how the moralistic political culture influenced the legislative progress but has limited influence over the actions taken by those in the ground. The public presentation of SB13-193, as it is written, and the conventional approaches used in addressing this issue deviate from the characteristics of the moralistic political culture as presented by Elazar (1984). The creation of SACPIE is a departure of the conventional approaches in addressing this social issue. However, at the local level, the recommendations set by SACPIE are limited to the compliance of the mandate instead of creating a collective and genuine approach in addressing this issue.

### **Nebraska: Parent Involvement – LB1161**

This section begins with Figure 8, which demonstrates the application of both theoretical lenses introduced by Elazar's (1984) three political cultures and Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. Figure 8 captures a synthesis of the analysis of Legislative Bill 1161- Parent Involvement of the 93rd Legislature through both theories. Figure 8 also helps guide the analysis and findings throughout this section. This is followed by the description of the actual mandate as it is written in the legislation. Then, I analyze LB1161 through each of the four arenas of policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994). In the

third arena of policy archaeology, I analyze LB1161 through the application of the individualistic political culture informed by Elazar's (1984) theory of three political cultures. I close with a synthesis of my analysis by triangulating policy archaeology, the individualistic political culture, and the public presentation of LB1161 as communicated by the Nebraska Department of Education.



*Figure 8.* Synthesis of the analysis in Nebraska using Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology and Elazar's (1984) three political cultures.

### Transcript of LB1161 - Chapter 79 Section 530-533

According to the Nebraska's Legislative transcripts of the second session of the 93rd Legislature, Legislative Bill (LB) 1161 in support of the social issue of parent involvement was passed on April 13, 1994 (93rd Legislature Floor Debate, 1994, p.

13684). According to the Nebraska Legislature (2018), LB1161 - Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 are the statutes that address parent involvement in public schools. Section 530 of Chapter 79 was originally enacted in 1994 (Committee on Education transcript, 1994). In essence, Section 530 is the initial legislative effort to support student learning through parent involvement. Section 530 provides three main declarations for public school districts to follow:

The Legislature finds and declares:

- (1) That parental involvement is a key factor in the education of children;
- (2) That parents need to be informed of the educational practices affecting their children; and
- (3) That public schools should foster and facilitate parental information about and involvement in educational practices affecting their children.

According to the Nebraska Legislature (2018), Sections 531 to 533 of Chapter 79 were enacted to strengthen the level of parental involvement and participation in public schools. LB1161 - Chapter 79 Section 531 reads as follows:

Parental involvement; public school district; adopt policy.

On or before July 1, 1995, each public school district in the state shall develop and adopt a policy stating how the district will seek to involve parents in the schools and what parents' rights shall be relating to access to the schools, testing information, and curriculum matters.

LB1161 - Chapter 79 was amended when Section 532 was enacted. It reads:

Parental involvement; policy; contents.

The policy required by section 79-531 shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- (1) How the school district will provide access to parents concerning textbooks, tests, and other curriculum materials used in the school district;
- (2) How the school district will handle requests by parents to attend and monitor courses, assemblies, counseling sessions, and other instructional activities;
- (3) Under what circumstances parents may ask that their children be excused from testing, classroom instruction, and other school experiences the parents may find objectionable;
- (4) How the school district will provide access to records of students;
- (5) What the school district's testing policy will be; and
- (6) How the school district participates in surveys of students and the right of parents to remove their children from such surveys.

The final amendment to LB1161 - Chapter 79 was enacted through Section 533, which reads:

Parental involvement; policy; hearing; review.

The policy required by section 79-531 shall be developed with parental input and shall be the subject of a public hearing before the school board or board of education of the school district before adoption by the board. The policy shall be reviewed annually and either altered and adopted as altered or reaffirmed by the board following a public hearing.

Parent involvement was addressed through LB1161 - Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 in the mid-1990s. A key proponent of this bill was Senator Ron Withem (Nebraska Council of School Administrators, 2018). This legislation mandates the issue of parent involvement in public schools in the State of Nebraska.

During the search for these legislative documents, I searched for other potential legislative documents or additional information related to LB1161 - Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 that would give a historical perspective. I also analyzed transcriptions of legislative documents (floor debates and committee meetings) from the 91st, 92nd, 93rd, and 94th legislative sessions to capture a historical perspective of this social issue. It is important to mention that this mandate has not been amended since 1996.

### **The First Arena: Social and Political Conditions (Nebraska)**

Legislative Bill 1161: Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 has been the only instrumental mandate to address parent involvement in Nebraska in the past 24 years. Transcriptions of legislative documents such as floor debates and committee meetings from multiple legislative sessions provided a lens into the conditions that helped shape the social construction of parent involvement in Nebraska. The analysis of government state agencies and non-profit organizations also provided a landscape of the most recent social construction of this issue.

The social and political conditions affecting the educational system in Nebraska changed the way education reform efforts have taken place. The analysis of a Nebraska Department of Economic Development agency report provided a picture of the influential tenants affecting school reform efforts. The agency report exposed a business-like framework also evident in Nebraska's Department of Education and State Board of



Education documents. The business-like approach influenced the framework by which the Nebraska Department of Education and State Board of Education addressed the social issue of parent involvement.

I begin by presenting the agency report Nebraska's Next Economy: Analysis and Recommendations presented by Nebraska Department of Economic Development (Stephen, Ozawa, Deitz, Querejazu, & Avery, 2016). The analysis of this state agency report provided evidence of how primary education, secondary education, and postsecondary education fit the state's economic plan. The goals listed in the Nebraska's Next Economy (NNE) report focus on four themes of high skill, high wage jobs; technology intensive investment; innovation; and high quality communities (Stephen et al., 2016). In the NNE report, all three levels of the education system (i.e., primary, secondary, and postsecondary) are positioned to support the state's economy vision. This economic vision is linked to the education efforts.

The key to this competition is talent. In a 20th century economy, economic development meant building existing businesses and attracting new business.

Workers then follow. In the 21st century this has been turned on its head. If you keep or attract the right talent, established businesses and outsiders will invest more, and new businesses will be launched. (Stephen et al., 2016, p. 11)

According to Stephen et al. (2016), a similar theme was identified in the Vision for the Future section of the report as depicted in Figure 9. In this section of the report, high quality jobs, a skilled workforce, and a strong K-12 system were some of the recurring themes identified during a listening tour across Nebraska (Stephen et al., 2016). These themes are the focus in the following section of the analysis.

### Vision for the Future

The SRI team conducted a listening tour in January in Nebraska, where they heard a great deal of detailed ideas regarding the future for the state. These ideas were generated by dozens of participants from across the state, attending meetings in four communities: Scottsbluff, Kearney, Lincoln and Omaha. The participants, invitees of the Department of Economic Development, were not a representative group in any formal sense, however taken as a whole they represented a diverse cross-section of backgrounds. They reflected on their vision of the future of the state from three different points of view: New college graduates, small- or medium-sized businesses, and a young family.

Although many things were mentioned, a review of the written notes revealed recurring key themes (as depicted in Figure 7 below). Affordable housing was mentioned by almost everybody, quality of place and quality of life were also seen to be a shared aspiration for the future. Finally, from the point of view of business, a reliable supply of high quality workers was seen as critical, while from the point of view of college graduates high-quality, rewarding jobs were viewed in the same way. Closing that gap, to the extent that it exists, is one of the key tasks facing Nebraska.

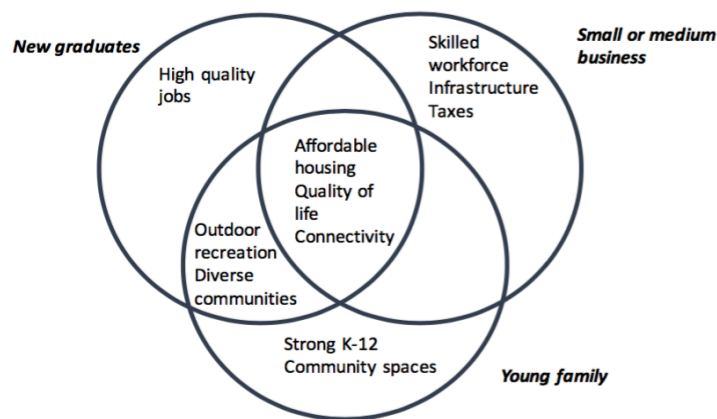


Figure 7

Everybody was concerned about quality: high-quality job opportunities, high-quality employee skills, and high quality of place. Citizens want their children to stay, or come home if they have left (low wages and quality of life issues are part of the reason why graduates with good skills, needed in Nebraska's labor force, leave the state).

*Figure 9.* Recurring themes captured from a listening tour across four large communities in reference to economic, educational, and community development.

**The Second Arena: Social Agents (Nebraska)** The utility of the second arena of policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994) identified the political will of a legislator in addressing parent involvement in Nebraska. State Senator Ron Withem was the legislator who helped shape legislation for LB1161: Parent Involvement (U.S. Congress, 2017). Senator Withem was a former history teacher, a school board member, and Chairperson of the

Education Committee who eventually became the Speaker of the Legislature. He served for 14 years in the state legislature (U.S. Congress, 2017). In a book written by Berens (2005), Senator Withem shared his legislative service, which relied heavily on the constant interactions with his constituents. The matters shared by his constituents were the issues for which he legislated (p. 167).

According to the transcript of the Committee on Education (1994), there is evidence of Senator Withem's push for legislation relating to parent involvement. This sentiment was evident during a committee hearing on February 22, 1994:

Bill 1161 is a bill that was inspired by LB654, last year, the bill dealing with parental rights. This is a different approach which would deal with the types of issues that were brought in by LB654, but would require each individual school district to have a policy in place as to how they would deal with parental involvement in the schools and parental access to information, and how they would deal with parental complaints. That's the full intent of the bill. (pp. 126-127)

Senator Withem continued to debate his support of the importance of this parent involvement during the same committee hearing as he shared a particular reason why this issue was important to him (Committee on Education, 1994):

And there really does need to be a genuine dialogue with parents on what schools are doing, and that needs to be a quiet dialogue that needs to take place at the local level . . . I think 1161 would be a good bill and a good process, and I wish every school district in the state would take the comments to heart and would do a better job of communicating with parents, and not just communicating in the

sense that they tell them what they're going to do to their kids, but to listen to their concerns and respond to those. I wish that there would have been more of a dialogue on this bill. (pp. 128-129)

The excerpt of the February 22 Committee Hearing provided evidence that the issue of parent involvement was an issue that had been previously discussed. Additional evidence was then recorded through the transcription of a floor debate on March 11, 1994 (93rd Legislative Floor Debate, 1994), when Senator Withem expressed concerns about the issue of parent involvement prior to the passing of LB1161:

The goal of this is to get the dispute that has been festering in this state over education reform, driven down to the local level and have those school officials that are attempting to implement policies have in place procedures by which they will communicate with concerned parents about those policies. That's what the bill does, I'd be happy to respond to any concerns. (pp. 10462-10463)

The social issue of parent involvement in Nebraska had a distinct history that connects to the Committee Hearing in February and Floor Debate of 1994. The issue of parent involvement emerged from two particular legislative efforts in 1991. The debate of parent involvement was actually inspired by Legislative Bills 654 and 849 in 1991 during the 92nd Legislature. In one excerpt of the Committee Hearing (1994), Senator Withem suggested LB1161 was inspired by LB654, a bill introduced to support the enrollment changes for childcare providers. Within LB654, the topic of parent choice is a common theme. In a Committee Hearing on February 22, 1991, legislators, parents, childcare providers, and childcare advocates all discussed the issue of parent access. This narrative was constructed during the hearing as legislators, parents, and childcare

advocates discussed changes to the current law. The narrative evolved from parent's choice by providing parents with the necessary information to make a decision (Nebraska Legislature, 2018).

At a different hearing during the same time, the introduction of this social issue was part of a greater agenda in the state's creation and implementation of a state lottery through Legislative Bill 849 (Nebraska Council of School Administrators, 2018). The debate for a state lottery placed educational needs as the top priority for funding through the Tax Equity & Educational Opportunities Support Act of 1991. According to the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (2018), Governor Ben Nelson felt the earnings of the lottery would provide funding for initiatives supporting school districts, teachers, educational foundations, educational service units, or cooperative funding for implementing pilot projects and model programs. Two of the 14 initiatives identified were programs using decision-making models that increased the involvement of parents, teachers, and students in school management; and increased the involvement of the community in order to achieve increased confidence in and satisfaction with its schools (Nebraska Council of School Administrators, 2018). The emergence of parent involvement in LB849 is another link into the identification of the social networks that helped promote what ultimately became the LB1161: Parent Involvement.

The issue of parent involvement was embedded in the legislation of LB654 and LB849 (Nebraska Council of School Administrators, 2018). In these committee hearings, many individuals, groups, and organizations testified in support of LB654 and LB849. The transcription of the hearings recorded the voices of parents, childcare providers, organizations, and representatives of state agencies that supported both legislative bills.

These bills opened the path for a discussion of parent involvement. This legislative path is important because it exposed the identification of particular social networks that created a narrative where parent involvement became the focus. In essence, the input of these individuals, groups, and organizations became the social agent that propelled the issue of parent involvement to the following legislative session. Senator Withem, the Committee of Education, the Committee of Health and Human Services, and Governor Ben Nelson were the social agents that raised awareness of the issue of parent involvement that eventually became LB1161 – Chapter 79: Sections 530-533.

Other organizations such as Nebraska Children, The Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families (NCRCYF) and Schools, the Nebraska Academy for Early Childhood Research (NAECR), and Heartland Center for Leadership Development have been advocates of parent involvement in public schools. These non-profit organizations have part of the social networks supporting many children, parents, families, educators, school leaders, community advocates, and members of other social agencies in addressing student needs in public schools. Nebraska Children was established in 1997 as a means to strengthen families so children can reach their full potential in life (Nebraska Children, n.d.). Nebraska Children collaborates with other state agencies like the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board, and the Child Abuse Prevention Councils (Nebraska Children, n.d.). Nebraska Children seeks the betterment of children by supporting families, parents, and students.

The NCRCYF was founded in 2004 as an interdisciplinary research center within the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska. The

NAECR primarily conducts interdisciplinary research for children younger than 9 years old that is also based out of the University of Nebraska. These two organizations have also been part of the advocacy for parents in public education since the early 2000s. These organizations continue to collaborate with other social agencies in addressing the needs of students and their families in public schools. These organizations conduct research and share their results with other social agencies, non-profit organizations, education agencies, and policymakers. The work done by these two organizations is part of the social agents that helped identify the importance of parent involvement within Nebraska.

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development is an organization that started in 1985. This organization focuses on issues relating to community development and offers trainings in leadership development, citizen participation, community planning, facilitation, evaluation, and curriculum development. Their work extends beyond the State of Nebraska. Indirectly, their work has made an impact on the issue of parent involvement as they prepare parents, community leaders, and organizations in training them how to address the challenges they face.

Attempts to contact Senator Withem to conduct (phone call and e-mail) a semi-structured interview were unsuccessful. Several attempts were made to contact Betty Medinger, Senior Vice President of Nebraska Children, but were also unsuccessful. E-mails to the NCRCYF and NAECR were sent in request for interviews. The interview requests were unsuccessful. The representative for NCSA (Amy Poggenklass) said, "There is no person in charge of this here. We usually contact someone in the field who is doing this well and ask them to offer a training." I asked whether parent engagement

was a topic discussed in their organization. She said, “I don’t remember the time when parent involvement had been part of the agenda.” The information analyzed to identify the social networks that helped shape the issue of parent involvement demonstrates how this issue is socially negotiated by individuals and organizations.

### **The Third Arena (Micro): Possible Solutions (Nebraska)**

The range of possible solutions in addressing parent involvement, as examined through the third arena of policy archaeology, provides a limited scope as to how this issue is negotiated. It is evident that the range of possible solutions to parent involvement was legislated by the lens of Senator Withem, who was an educator, school board member, and policymaker. This is evident by the way the law was written. The legislative solution to this issue was positioned from the perspective of someone who worked in public schools. The law was written in such a way that access to information (procedures to handle parent requests for student information, address how parents may ask that their children be excused from testing, inform parents of testing policy, and the rights of parents to excuse their children from participating in school related surveys) was granted to parents (LB1161 - Chapter 79 under Section 532). The way this law was written claims a position of power from one group (educators and school leaders) to another (parents). The key finding to this claim is the way parents are positioned in relation to having access to their child’s information. A parent is asking for permission to acquire information from the state or school district in order to make a choice for his or her child. The text used in the law places parents as outsiders and having limits to information related to the child. This brings another important factor to the positionality of power under this law. The text used to write this law portrays an adversarial



relationship among parents, educators, and school leaders. The following is Section 532 of LB1161 - Chapter 79 that illustrates this adversarial sentiment:

How the school district will handle requests by parents to attend and monitor courses, assemblies, counseling sessions, and other instructional activities;

(3) Under what circumstances parents may ask that their children be excused from testing, classroom instruction, and other school experiences the parents may find objectionable;

(4) How the school district will provide access to records of students;

(5) What the school district's testing policy will be; and

(6) How the school district participates in surveys of students and the right of parents to remove their children from such surveys.

The way the law was written unveils a reality of the social and political conditions during the mid-1990s when the law was last amended. These social and political realities also limited the range of possible solutions to the way parent involvement is currently perceived or practiced. In other words, amendments to the law have not kept up with the current social and political conditions.

### **The Third Arena (Macro): Evidence of the Individualistic Political Culture**

The NNE report (Stephen et al., 2016) captured an important element to this comparative policy analysis. This agency report unveiled a business-like approach to the way parent involvement is negotiated within the social and political realms. The NNE (Stephen et al., 2016) report documented the economic, social, and political conditions

that influenced parent involvement within the education system. The following excerpt of the executive summary section of the report signifies this influential sentiment:

The report that follows contains analysis and recommendations aimed at helping Nebraska's leaders as they accelerate the shift towards a new equilibrium in which Nebraska is home to technology-intensive, well-paid jobs served by a reliable, highly skilled workforce pipeline. (Stephen et al., 2016, p. 4)

In essence, the NNE report provided the framework for the way social issues would be negotiated and ultimately legislated. According to Elazar (1984), this framework fits the characteristics of the individualistic political culture. In the individualistic culture, the following themes emerge: responsive to marketplace for economic development, ambivalent and loosely regulated, limit government influence, encourage private initiative to social issues, and quid pro quo/means to an end approach. The themes of the individualistic political culture are found in the NNE report and other documents found on the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) website. In the analysis of the NDE website, Nebraska's Education Strategic Vision and Direction (Nebraska Department of Education, 2016) plan for the next 10 years (i.e., 2017-2026) unveils the map for all educational reform efforts.

The education Strategic Vision and Direction plan for Nebraska was designed and presented as a business proposal. According to Nebraska's Education Strategic Vision and Direction plan (Nebraska Department of Education, 2016), the following information lays out the business proposal approach through the implementation of Nebraska Quality Education System for Today and Tomorrow (NEQuESTT):

Nebraska's Strategic Plan to be known as Nebraska Quality Education System for Today and Tomorrow (NEQuESTT) represents the evolution of a philosophical and practical approach to supporting education in Nebraska. This commitment unifies and strengthens positive outcomes for each and every Nebraskan through bold and achievable goals. NEQuESTT not only outlines the critical needs and strengths within the system, but also reflects innovative approaches to ensure each Nebraskan has equitable access to opportunities and are ready for success in postsecondary, career, and civic life . . . This vision will require new and different ways of working together, stretching beyond the status quo, and engaging stakeholders through collaborative processes. (p. 3)

According to the Nebraska Department of Education (2016), the Strategic Vision and Direction plan will be achieved through following steps taken by the Nebraska Department of Education shown in Figure 10.

To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.



NDE will:

- ✓ Create a dynamic vision that drives change through proactive leadership to support learning
- ✓ Build connections amongst stakeholders to take action in support of success for all learners
- ✓ Provide all Nebraskans significant opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and high quality education and services to close achievement gaps
- ✓ Allow all learners to achieve their fullest potential in transitioning through phases of school and into civic life
- ✓ Ensure all educators are effective in instructional strategies and monitoring student progress using multiple measures of proficiency
- ✓ Prepare all learners to be college, career, and civic ready

*Figure 10.* Nebraska Department of Education steps to achieving the Strategic Vision and Direction plan.

Nebraska's Strategic Plan is also known as Nebraska Quality Education Systems for Today and Tomorrow (NEQuESTT), which represents the evolution of a philosophical and practical approach to supporting education in Nebraska (Nebraska Department of Education, 2016). It outlines the critical needs and strengths within the system. It reflects on innovative approaches that will provide equitable access to opportunities and success in postsecondary, career, and civic life. According to the Nebraska Department of Education (2016), the vision requires a new and different way of working together, stretching beyond the status quo, and engaging members of the community through collaborative processes. The realignment of Nebraska's vision promotes a business-like approach to the educational vision, systems, and practices.

According to the Strategic Vision and Direction (Nebraska Department of Education, 2016), NEQuESTT prioritizes educational inequities focusing on student- or client-centered outcomes as a determining factor to the accountability for a quality education system today and tomorrow. The terms client-centered outcomes and accountability for a quality education espouse the educational vision, direction, and inequalities of a business-like model. Emphasizing on this business-like approach places education as a commodity where those in the education system are perceived as pieces that can be sold, exchanged, and manipulated as means to address the economic goals of the state. This business-like approach to education fits the characteristics of two themes found in the individualistic political culture: responsive to the marketplace for economic development of the individualistic culture and quid pro quo/means to an end approach (Elazar, 1984).

The State of Nebraska addressed the issue of parent involvement as an option rather than an important part of a student's educational experience. According to the Success, Access, and Support: Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success section of the Strategic Vision and Direction document (Nebraska Department of Education, 2016), the outcome statement reads, increase student, family, and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities. Goal 2.1 that would help achieve this outcome reads, by 2019, the NDE will develop a system to regularly engage and survey clients, schools, and stakeholders to gather input, and measure engagement and satisfaction. The terms used in these two statements seek to measure and quantify the engagement of clients and stakeholders rather than students, parents, families, educators, and community members. The vocabulary used reinforces the

business-like model and replaces the identities of students, parents, and educators by generalizing them as clients and stakeholders, therefore justifying the ambivalent and loosely regulated theme of the individualistic political culture (Elazar, 1984).

#### **The Fourth Arena: Construction and Legitimization (Nebraska)**

The analysis into how parent involvement is studied manifests a reality where parents, students, educators, school leaders, and community members become accustomed to the status quo. This begins with the clear reality that LB1161 – Chapter 79 Sections 530-533 have not been amended since 1996. It has been over 20 years since the last amendment. The evolution of this social issue that has been negotiated through a business-like approach deviates from the current research on this topic. The disconnect between the mandate (policy), current research (theory), and practice (action) has created a gap in the way this issue is negotiated in Nebraska. The analysis of the state and national social agencies (Nebraska Child, NCRCYF, NAECR, Heartland Center for Leadership Development, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory [SEDL], National Network of Partnership Schools, Academic Development Institute) that study this issue contradicts the Strategic Vision and Direction plan set by the Nebraska Department of Education. The influence of the business-like approach set by Nebraska's Next Economy: Analysis and Recommendations presented by Nebraska Department of Economic Development (Stephen et al., 2016) conditioned the Strategic Vision and Direction plan set forth by the Nebraska Department of Education. Within the business-like approach, parent involvement is negotiated as a business transaction where educators and school leaders possess something parents need. Under this business-like structure, a hierarchy exists. Parents and students are dependent on the conditions set forth by the

hierarchal structure, which limits access to information and restricts them from participating in the decision-making processes affecting the educational experiences of their children.

### **Synthesis of the Analysis of Parent Involvement: Legislative Bill 1161**

This section provides a synthesis of the policy analysis of parent involvement in the State of Nebraska. The analysis revealed the various social networks that promoted the legislation and passing of LB1161. These social networks helped inform the range of possible solutions in addressing parent involvement under the individualistic political culture as described by Elazar's (1984) theory of three political cultures. The range of possible solutions in addressing this issue was set over 20 years ago when this mandate was passed. This poses a significant challenge because the mandate and initial amendments have not kept up with the evolution of this social issue.

The way LB1161 was written and the current public presentation of this issue from the Nebraska Department of Education are incongruent. The analysis provided important evidence to support this claim. The way in which this mandate was written established a hierarchal structure where parents are positioned as receivers of information and educators are positioned as owners of the information. A parent wants access to his or her child's information and the school, represented by educators and school leaders, creates a system (procedures) that parents must follow to receive access to the information. This hierarchal structure was influenced by the legislator who championed this bill, Senator Ron Withem. With good intentions, the senator was answering a critical issue at the time this law was passed. This was recorded in the transcription of a committee hearing. It was written in response to a previous legislative bill (LB654)

where the theme of parent choice was debated. This bill was also written and introduced by a legislator who was once a teacher and a school board member and eventually became a legislator. This evidence supports that LB1161 has limitations in the way the issue of parent involvement is addressed by the current presentation of the Nebraska Department of Education.

The analysis provided evidence that the public presentation of parent involvement by the Nebraska Department of Education conforms to the characteristics of the individualistic political culture (Elazar, 1984). The evidence is present by the values, ideals, and goals set by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED). The NDED's Nebraska's Next Economy (NNE): Analysis and Recommendations report (Stephen et al., 2016) became the influential agent in addressing parent involvement. The individualistic political culture is embedded in the way the NDE addresses this issue. The educational systems (i.e., primary, secondary, and higher education) are part of the economic vision of the state's economic development. The NDE describes parents, families, students, educators, school leaders, and community members as stakeholders. This overgeneralization is driven by the influence of the business community.

### **Synthesis of the Three State Policies in Practice**

In this section, three key findings informed by the analysis of the policies are shared to inform the recommendations. Legislative Bill 1161 of Nebraska, Senate Bill 13-193 of Colorado, and House Bill 5 of Texas failed to guide the untapped potential parents, families, and members of the community by restricting their level of engagement. The policies missed opportunities to engage parents, families, and community members in a genuine and meaningful way to garnish the untapped potential



of student development and learning. These misguided opportunities were forced by the accountability and standardization era in student learning manifested over the last 30 years (Ravitch, 2013). That is, all aspects related to student learning, including parent, family, and community engagement in public schools, continue to support the standards-based accountability system. The accountability and standardization era has infused distrust among parents and educators (Ravitch, 2013). As a result, educators, school leaders, and policymakers have supported legislative measures that have stifled cooperation between these two groups by setting parameters that define parent, family, and community engagement.

The social construction analysis of this issue in Nebraska and Texas failed to provide significant evidence to support that parents, family members, community members, and teachers were the driving force behind the promotion of what parent, family, and community engagement should look like. What did emerge was how the influence of the private sector, in particular the business community, negotiated and ultimately legislated this issue in these two states. The business community influenced the political cultures of each state. The evidence analyzed for the State of Colorado supported a different perspective to the way this social issue was socially constructed and ultimately legislated. In the State of Colorado, SACPIE was the driver of how this issue was socially constructed, negotiated, and legislated. Although SACPIE, a state organization, promoted the issue from the support of representatives of various disciplines, the limited number of parents, teachers, and community members in the state organization demonstrates how this issue continues to be negotiated at a macro level. The lack of evidence of this issue being socially negotiated at a local community (micro

level) supports that the issue continues the similar path of the status quo. In other words, the members of SACPIE are the negotiators of how this issue will be constructed, addressed, and legislated. However, the creation of SACPIE is significant because, at the very least, the issue of parent, family, and community engagement is present, relevant, and investigated continuously.

Other findings of this study were also significant in the way this issue was socially constructed and informed the recommendations I make in this document. The evidence emerged from the work of Elazar (1984). The application of Elazar's theory was consistent with the characteristics described by each political culture and the analysis of each mandate. The analysis of the legislative documents and relevant information unearthed the influence of each state's political culture as identified by Elazar's original work. The evidence of each political culture affected the way each state law was legislated and ultimately mandated. The recommendations I propose challenge the political structures that have galvanized the status quo of each state mandate.

### **What Would My Mother Say About the Findings?**

The information in this section demonstrates how politics influence everything we do, especially in education. It was interesting how you chose the three states based on their political culture. I know many do not like to get involved in politics. I do. In politics, we need to stand on our feet and let the politicians who represent us know of our problems. They will hear you. That is their job!

Talking about the law, I enjoyed hearing about the law in Colorado. This law should be passed here in Texas and New Mexico. There should not be differences when it comes to helping parents and their children. There has to be a parent's voice in the

decisions made at the schools and district offices. In this section, you gave me the information I need to share with the principal at school but also to the municipality. Can you imagine how things would work if we had parents making decisions?

## **V. RE-IMAGINING A PATH FORWARD: MOVING POLICY IN PRACTICE**

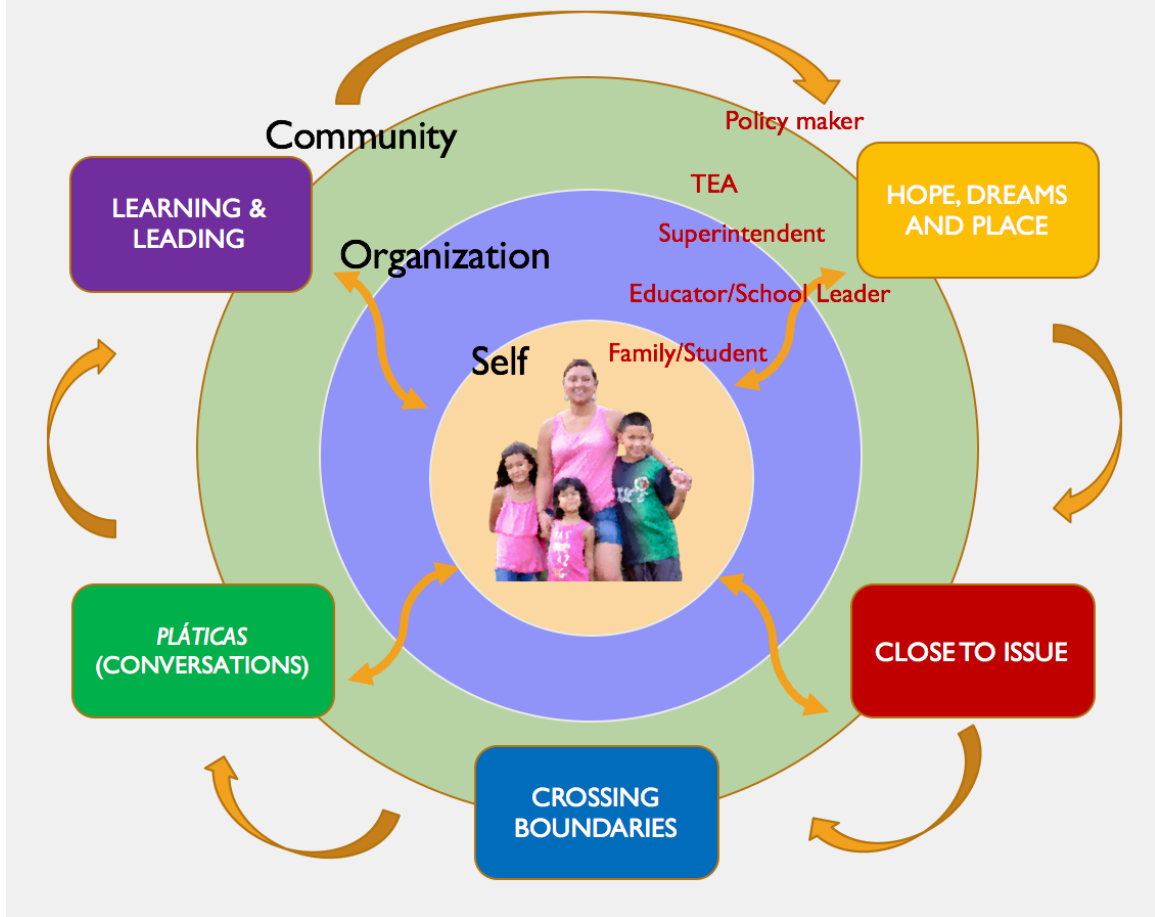
In this chapter, I propose recommendations informed by the data analysis and in the spirit of activist research employed by the politics of Elazar (1984), the policy archeology presented by Scheurich (1994), and the lessons I have learned as a scholar practitioner. These recommendations were also guided by Guajardo et al.'s (2016) research of community learning exchange (CLE) informing change and a new awareness in how we think about, practice, and research family and community engagement in schools, community, and policy as illustrated by Figure 11. Figure 11 provides a comprehensive view that forecasts the narrative of my recommendations. These recommendations were guided by three overarching themes that propose making parent, family, and community engagement a core value of our educational system, policies, and practices. My recommendations highlight and respond to the challenges we face as parents, family members, educators, school leaders, and policymakers. These recommendations also address how we can create and co-construct a different path that is responsive to the challenges communities face. The recommendations emerged from the comparative policy analysis of three similar laws from the states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Texas; the literature review; and my own professional work in a Central Texas school district.

The recommendations are purposeful and informed by policy, academic research, praxis, and my past experiences as a student, father, educator, researcher, and community activist. These recommendations begin with an important declaration—the social issue of parent, family, and community engagement is critical to the transformation of student learning, community development, and the revival of our democratic values in public

education. This declaration challenges the conventional practices used to address this issue in public education. The status quo must be challenged in order to experience the possibilities of a different reality. This section presents the importance of this issue and its connection to people, place, policy, and action.

A brief description of the CLE framework is presented as the driving mechanism for the study of the issue of parent, family, and community engagement. The description and utility of the CLE framework is followed by the significance of the ecologies of knowing introduced by Guajardo et al. (2016). In the final section of the recommendations I apply the five axioms informing the ecologies of knowing. These axioms were the tools that guided the recommendations through the application of Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology and Elazar's (1984) three political cultures. In categorizing the recommendations by axiom, I also color coded each recommendation by the political culture that I felt most aligned with each. The pink color represented the moralistic political culture. The light green color represented the individualistic political culture. The yellow color represented the traditionalistic political culture.

## Five Axioms in Action Through the Ecologies of Knowing



Recommendations for a Dynamic Approach to Parent, Family, and Community Engagement				
Axiom: Learn and Leading	Axiom: Pláticas (Conversations)	Axiom: Close to Issue	Axiom: Crossing Boundaries	Axiom: Hope, Dreams and Place
• Spaces for curiosity	• Pláticas as part of curriculum (circle)	• Collective approach to solving issues	• Profession is about Service not Servitude	• Grounded on those it serves
• Learning led by students	• Sharing of stories	• Culture of inquiry	• Codification of communities is unnatural	• Aspirations, dreams, & hopes
• CLE Framework embedded in curriculum	• Experiences	• Driver of school/district evaluation	• Policy in action	• Driving Vision, Mission & Goals
	• Challenges	• Disconnecting to standardized ratings	• Pliable to environments not systems	• Connectedness
	• Conversations with other communities		• Guided by current research	• Democratic values
				• Democratic experiences

Figure 11. Recommendations: The five axioms in action through the ecologies of knowing.

## **A Personal Commitment to this Work**

### **Bridging Policy Into Practice**

The importance of this social issue lies in my personal connection and passion for change. My mother's journey in navigating the complex educational system connects my purpose for studying this issue and also guides my quest for change. My mother's willingness to participate in the education of her children was inspired by her own passion for learning. She instilled in us *la importancia de una buena educación* (the importance of a good education). My mother's efforts in getting involved in our education were not recognized or valued. The middle class Caucasian ladies who made the PTA fit the mold and reinforced the norms set by teachers and school leadership.

There is extensive research to support the positive impact of parent, family, and community engagement on student learning (Casper et al., 2007; Davies et al., 2007; Epstein, 1990; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The research is valid and reaffirmed by the fundamental work of Epstein, Henderson, Mapp, and Hoover-Dempsey, to name a few. It is important to mention that the research on the benefits and impact of parent, family, and community engagement in student learning has surpassed 40 years (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The positive connection between parent, family, and community engagement and student learning has been consistent across socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural differences (Davies et al., 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Shepard & Rose, 1995; Redding, 2011). This research has consistently positioned the work of parents, other family members, and community members as a component of student success. The manner in which family, parent, and community engagement is presented in the research supports the narrative of a hierarchical structure within the

supporting framework of student learning. The current factory schooling model is not designed to include parents as partners, becoming involved, or collaborating; it was designated for efficiency that did not value the input of participation of the citizen (Redding, 2011). My mother's experience in navigating the complex educational system supports Redding's (2011) concept of the factory schooling model. Despite my mother's attempts to be engaged in our learning, the prescribed roles positioned her as an outsider. Elazar's (1984) work informs us that these prescribed roles and postpositivist structures (Scheurich, 1994) emerge from a political culture (or a combination of the political cultures) that purposely marginalizes those who do not fit a stereotype—White, Caucasian, middle class, female.

The positionality of parent, family, and community engagement under a hierarchal structure has preconditioned and prescribed a range of possible solutions in addressing its impact on student learning as supported by the third arena in policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994). Though scholars and organizations continue to research this social issue, the positionality of the issue remains under a postpositivist structure (Scheurich, 1994). The postpositivist structure continues to have legislators, school leaders, and educators designate roles for parents, families, and community members based on conventional forms of engagement practices. Parents and those outside the educational or political realms have a limited impact in developing a picture of parent, family, and community engagement. The postpositivist structure continues to legitimize or illegitimize what constitutes parent, family, and community engagement. These structures set parameters and limitations on its impact on student learning. These structures are the gatekeepers of the way the social issue is studied and ultimately



mandated. These structures impose a one-dimensional perspective to this social issue. In the previous chapter, the analysis of the three state mandates (Texas's HB5, Colorado's SB 13-193, and Nebraska's Chapter 79 Sections 530-533) prescribed what practices of parent, family, and community efforts are accepted. For instance, the three state mandates include how parent, family, and community engagement support standardized testing and student homework. The prescribed recipe limits the imagination of what parent, family, and community engagement could look like.

I frame my recommendations as a declaration of positioning parent, family, and community engagement as an important issue affecting student learning, civic engagement, and an example of our democratic values. This means parents, families, and community members must have equal influence in the development and actions taken to educate students. It means educators, school leaders, and legislators must first listen to those they serve in order to determine the needs, gifts, hopes, and dreams of the community. If the work of educators, school leaders, community members, and legislators is to serve the youth who one day will become the caregivers, leaders, and decision-makers within society, then we need to serve our youth and those who care for them (i.e., their parents, families, and community members) now. From a fundamental perspective, how do educators, school leaders, and legislators know if their work is truly addressing the needs of parents, families, and communities? The current positioning of parents, families, and community members places them and their efforts as an extra, not as the core to student learning.

At a national level, Henderson and Mapp (2002) argued that schooling should be responsive to the needs of parents, families, and communities from diverse backgrounds.

They argued the following key practices respond to a different level of engagement that affects student learning: (a) focus on building trust through collaborative efforts among teachers, families, and community members; (b) recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences; and (c) embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared (p. 47).

### **Transforming Policy to Practice**

The CLE framework is used through a praxis oriented theory of change. The CLE framework is nurtured by the application of the five axioms that journey through the ecologies of knowing: self, organization, and community. Guajardo et al. (2016) argued that there are alternative forms of meaningful engagement that foster stronger relationships and deeper learning among parents, community members, educators, leaders, parents, youth, and elders. These alternative forms of engagement reframe the way schools and communities genuinely engage through their use of CLEs. According to Guajardo et al., the CLE has five axioms that guide the process. Each axiom serves a purpose and function as a cyclical process in no particular order. The following are the five axioms that guides the CLE experience.

- Learning as leadership are a dynamic social process,
- conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes,
- the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns,
- crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process,
- and

- hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities. (pp. 22-27)

CLEs offer a dynamic, natural, and genuine approach to addressing the needs of a student, parent, family, and community (Guajardo et al., 2016). The CLE is a pedagogical instrument flexible enough to discover the opportunities and challenges facing any group of people. However, the CLE framework deviates from conventional, traditional, step-by-step linear models of addressing the challenges a student, parent, family, and community face. The CLE empowers those individuals or groups that are close to the issue in an organic fashion to help them find solutions. Unlike conventional parent and community engagement practices such as the annual parent teacher conference or the mandatory Title I or PTA volunteer flyer, the CLE disrupts the environments in which these conventional practices are used. The CLE is not assessed through quantitative measures.

The disruption caused by the CLE framework simultaneously serves as a bridge to the practice of the policy and thus leads to the recommendations of this research. The reason why this pedagogical framework is at the core of my recommendations is its adaptability, creativity, and provocative nature. The CLE framework is policy archaeology in action (M. A. Guajardo, personal conversation, February 2, 2019). The provocation and disruption of environments challenges conventional practices but, most importantly, it responds to the conditions of students, parents, families, and community members through an assets-based lens. The application of policy archaeology mirrored by the CLE framework, employs a theory of change—praxis.

Undoubtedly, the CLE framework provokes change in the environments in which it is employed. The CLE framework challenges the political culture as well. In this study I analyzed how the political culture (Elazar, 1984) of each state (i.e., Texas – traditionalistic, Colorado – moralistic, Nebraska – individualistic) influenced the creation and legislation of each law. Each political culture had set restrictions and perceived solutions in addressing parent, family, and community engagement. Those restrictions and prescribed solutions manifested in different forms but the policies evolved from a political inclination that systematically oppressed the efforts of parents, families, and community. How will the CLE framework provoke change to the status quo of parent, family, and community engagement within each political culture?

The disruption of each political culture will emerge through the application of the five axioms within each of the ecologies of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016). In the traditionalistic and individualistic political cultures, the positionality of the prescribed roles that parents, families, and community members play within the educational system has been created and sustained by a postpositivist structure (Scheurich, 1994). The hierarchal structures have nurtured an environment where parents, families, and community members are perceived as adversaries by those who are in charge of the educational system (i.e., educators, school leaders, and legislators). Parents, families, and community members are not perceived as equal partners when it comes to student learning. The postpositivist structure reinforces the notion that educators, school leaders, and legislators know what is best for children and the efforts of parents are minimized to supporting components of the dominant structures. The application of the five axioms

through the CLE framework completely challenges this notion. Through the five axioms, the CLE framework provokes change within the political culture in a natural way.

### **Praxis: Grounding Findings on a Research Platform of Values, People, and Place**

The recommendations set forth were informed by employing the five axioms through the ecologies of knowing (self, organization, and community). The application of the ecologies of knowing (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2019; Guajardo et al., 2016) is an important instrument in creating social change. Employing the ecologies of knowing provides a guide to the meaning-making process but also stimulates the curiosity of the human spirit (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2019; Guajardo et al., 2016). The axioms become the energy that drives the theory of change. The ecologies of knowing consist of the self, the organization, and the community. In the next paragraph, I present a brief description of each axiom.

The five axioms of a CLE are learning and leadership are a dynamic social process, conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes, the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns, crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process, and hope and change are built on the assets and dreams of locals and their communities (Guajardo et al., 2016). I used these axioms to develop the recommendations for this study within an action oriented framework.

At the bottom of Figure 11, a table illustrating each axiom with recommendations is presented. The table is broken down by axiom and placed at the beginning of the following sections representing my recommendations.

## Recommendations Through the Five Axioms

*Learning and leadership are a dynamic social process.* At the micro level, the core of this issue is students and their learning. Learning is a process that feeds the curiosity of individuals (see Figure 12).

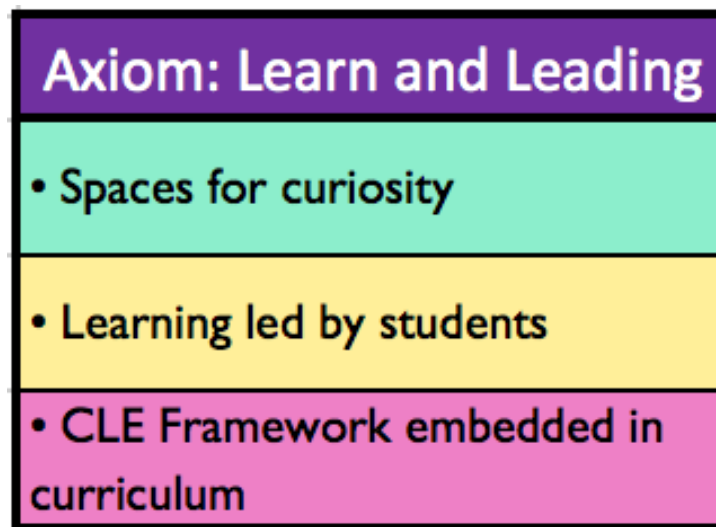


Figure 12. Recommendation for axiom: learning and leadership are a dynamic social process.

The CLE framework promotes learning in public (Guajardo et al., 2016). Learning should not be an isolated journey. Humans need other humans to learn from each other. The three state mandates regarding parent, family, and community engagement were founded on the idea that student learning should not be an isolated journey. The mandates actually support the idea that student learning is the responsibility of the student, the parent, the educator, the school leader, and the community member. The political culture of each state, however, influences the subtractive practices where the parent is not seen as equal partner to student learning. These mandates fail to change conventional practices promoting an isolation of individuals, such as parents, family

members, and citizens of the community, who have an equal importance in creating and developing and nurturing a learning environment of connectedness.

Leading is the other element of this axiom. The student must become the leader of his or her own learning. In order for students to become leaders of their own learning, they must have time to socialize with one another. This includes conversations where other students can share their experiences, beliefs, and values with peers, parents, teachers, and community members. Policy archaeology reminds us that learning to investigate the creation and identification of social issues relies on social interactions as described in this axiom. In order to have the students lead their learning, parents, teachers, and policymakers must help promote the dynamic social networks.

Parents and teachers are leaders as well. Their efforts must be equally recognized and valued. Parent must be in constant conversation with their children and their teachers. Parents should be visiting their children's classrooms as often as they can and be engaged in the learning along with their children and their peers. The act of conversation is political in nature. Parent leadership means taking the time to develop a relationship with their child's teacher. This a political dance where the parent and the teacher see the value behind a genuine relationship. When Legislative Bill 1161 of Nebraska is mandated so that parents are informed of their child's learning, it sends the wrong message to parents. It strips their leadership capacity to a receptive and passive approach in support of student learning.

The teacher should reframe the concept of learning and reflect on the concept of serving others. The teaching profession is about serving others for a greater purpose—creating an informed citizenry and a better community. Leading this greater purpose is

political and it begins at the macro level—the classroom. Teachers must create learning environments where students are challenged and are willing to take risks. The teacher is no longer leading but facilitating the instruction. The teacher must facilitate the learning by including and valuing the influence of parents, peers, and families. Providing access to parents should not be a privilege but a mutual understanding that the experience will benefit all who are present. Hosting a CLE for parents prior to the beginning of the year sends a powerful message. It sends a welcoming message for everyone and it also exemplifies leadership qualities. Hosting a CLE takes planning and a team. The CLE framework must be embedded as part of the curriculum, the school culture, and the value system of the classroom, campus, district, and community.

At the core of this issue, students, parents, teachers, school leaders, and community members need to socialize. From a community development perspective, schools and school districts must facilitate opportunities for educators, school leaders, parents, students, and community members to socialize to connect. Part of the CLE experience is to disturb the social and political systems that separate us and the systems that rely on the status quo and divisiveness. The most radical form of tearing down these practices is by promoting and hosting social spaces where learning is framed as an opportunity to address the needs of students, parents, educators, and the community.

Student, parent, family, and community engagement is about connecting with other parents, families, and communities to help sustain student learning. This is an issue that affects other communities. This issue becomes silent as it moves into the macro level. In communities where citizens do not talk to each other, influential individuals, institutions, and organizations dominate the political culture (McKnight & Block, 2012).



In communities in which people that talk to each other, the political culture is negotiated through community activism, presence in social rallies, acts of solidarity, and support of public institutions. Connecting parents, students, and community members with other communities is necessary to address similar challenges, support the learning of students, and raise awareness of the importance of this issue.

***Conversations are critical and central to the pedagogical process.*** From the perspectives of a student, parent, and teacher, conversations with each other are necessary for the child's learning (see Figure 13).

<b>Axiom: <i>Pláticas</i> (Conversations)</b>
• <i>Pláticas</i> as part of curriculum (circle)
• Sharing of stories
• Experiences
• Challenges
• Conversations with other communities

*Figure 13.* Recommendation for axiom: conversations are critical and central to the pedagogical process.

Through conversations, students, parents, and teachers share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. Students, parents, and teachers discover talents, assets, and gifts while sharing their personal stories. Opportunities to share personal experiences are how students make sense of their surroundings. The CLE framework invites the sharing of stories. The CLE experience also brings people together because this is where

participants begin to challenge their own biases and stereotypes (Guajardo et al., 2016). In a CLE, gracious space is used to foster a nurturing and inclusive setting (Hughes & Grace, 2010). Gracious space fosters the spirit of learning and provides open space where people are willing to take risks and where the emphasis is not about being right but exchanging ideas. In return, gracious space increases trust among participants.

The issue of parent, family, and community engagement connects everyone. Because schooling is a social endeavor, why do we not do more of it? The spaces inside and outside of schools should be purposeful in creating spaces for critical conversations with students, parents, families, educators, school leaders, legislators, and community members. This axiom also means schools, local organizations, and state agencies must create and nurture channels where conversations support the student, the parent, the teacher, and the greater community. A common practice in school districts is the isolation of services where department members do not talk to each other to cross pollinate ideas to address issues. The challenge of isolation is not time, money, or resources, it is lack of vision beyond the campus, district, or community. School leaders must connect with other school leaders within and outside the district to become informed of the challenges students, parents, families, and neighboring communities are facing.

Conversations about topics that affect the greater community are issues that affect student learning. If the local unemployment rate is high, it will have a direct effect on the schools and student learning. At the community level, it is necessary to create opportunities for discussions over larger issues that ultimately affect student learning. Policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994) seeks to unearth conversations that created the

social construction of an issue like parent, family, and community engagement. The CLE pedagogies facilitate discussions of issues but also create a dynamic opportunity for learning and leading in a collaborative approach to solving critical issues affecting the greater community. Parent, family, and community engagement should be framed in a larger context. A student is affected by issues affecting the home, the classroom, the neighborhood, the city, the county, the region, the state, the nation, and the world.

***People closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns.*** The closer to the issue, the better. Some of us fear being too close to the issue because we feel we do not have the answers. People may feel they do not have the tools to resolve the issue. This axiom recommends the opposite. This axiom repositions the student, the teacher, and the parent as the drivers to solving their own challenges (see Figure 14).

Axiom: Close to Issue
• Collective approach to solving issues
• Culture of inquiry
• Driver of school/district evaluation
• Disconnecting to standardized ratings

*Figure 14.* Recommendation for axiom: people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns.

It is not up to the teacher to solve every issue at school. Sometimes it is politically challenging for teachers to solve all issues. Teachers need parents and students to help solve challenges. A collective approach to solving issues results in a better experience for the students. The connections among students, parents, and teachers that are nurtured by a sense of belonging can change an environment, a wrong, and a mind. For these reasons, it is important to create a culture of inquiry in schools and communities. A culture of inquiry is a pedagogical exercise that is always in action. The social gathering cultivated by a culture of inquiry examines everything. This pedagogical process questions systems, practices, and methods. The inquiry culture does not question the dedication and spirit of others.

Everyone involved has an equal part in addressing student learning. Parent, family, and community engagement should not be degraded to a supporting component of standardized testing and the overarching accountability system. It is actually the opposite. Parents, students, teachers, and school leaders must collaborate and challenge the validity and the value of standardized testing as it relates to student learning. According to Ravitch (2013), standardized testing has not proven its value in creating positive learning experiences for students, parents, families, and communities. Parent, family, and community engagement should be defined by those who are closely involved. This issue should be informed through the CLE framework where it is genuinely explored, practiced, and discussed. Parents, students, educators, and school leaders must be well informed of the most critical issue affecting student learning, standardized testing. The lack of understanding of the implications of standardized testing on student

learning by the general public has allowed this system to dominate the educational experiences of generations.

Having people close to the issue find solutions to their problems is political as well. When parent, family, and community engagement is addressed at the community level, it should be informed by different populations of the community. This issue can be addressed in different forms but without the input of a diverse group, the values informed by the dominant political culture will control how this issue will be addressed. The CLE framework allows for the opportunity to incorporate the input from diverse groups. My mother would have loved to be in a space where she could share her thoughts, ideas, dreams, and the aspirations of her children. She knew what we wanted to be when we grew up—she frequently challenged us with this question. We could not just give her a short answer—a carpenter. Or God forbid—I don’t know. The follow-up question would be, Why a carpenter? Then she would ask, what skills will you need to have in order to find success? My mother knew what we wanted to be and would have loved to share this with someone who would listen. She was never asked. My mother was intelligent, resourceful, successful, *trabajadora*, genuine, honest, willing, humble, beautiful, and had answers to the issues her and her children faced.

***Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process.***

Crossing boundaries is about challenging students, teachers, and parents to seek beyond their own perspective. It is about their willingness to listen and understand the other sides of the issue. Parent, family, and community engagement is an issue that provokes border crossings. This is challenging because the norms of this issue have already been written and prescribed in accordance with the political cultures informed by policy

archaeology. Challenging these political cultures is being able to cross boundaries and seek change from within and from outside the political cultures (see Figure 15).

<b>Axiom: Crossing Boundaries</b>
• Profession is about Service not Servitude
• Codification of communities is unnatural
• Policy in action
• Pliable to environments not systems
• Guided by current research

*Figure 15.* Recommendation for axiom: crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process.

The student, the parent, and the educator must collectively tear down the walls that impede the facilitation of parent, family, and community engagement. The CLE framework moves participants to become border crossers by promoting their curiosity and imagination (Guajardo et al., 2016). Senate Bill 13-193 of Colorado was developed within a curious and imaginative culture where individuals felt propelled to seek beyond the status quo. This bill embraces the importance of crossing boundaries because it is representative of the moralistic culture and it challenges the current norms of national politics.

Educators, school leaders, and elected officials serve students, parents, and communities—not the other way around. Crossing this ideological threshold is key in

finding success. I am not proclaiming that teachers, school leaders, and elected officials are servants to anyone. The service provided by teachers, school leaders, and elected officials is grounded on creating environments, policies, and opportunities that positively affect the lives of those they serve. In order to do so, teachers must have the awareness that they serve within multiple roles and cross boundaries simultaneously during their day, week, school year, and as they grow their professional skills.

Crossing boundaries deviates and challenges the utility of examining social issues from a number or sets of numerical data. Communities are not sets of data. Communities are made up of students, individuals, parents, and families. Members of a community should be seen as individuals because we are all different and an issue may affect individuals in a different way. House Bill 5 of Texas and Legislative Bill 1161 of Nebraska were written as blanket statements in in order to find general solutions. Senate Bill 13-193 crosses boundaries because it responds to the Theoretical Framework for Family, School, and Community Partnering and individual parents are part of the MTSS (CDE, 2014a).

Policies of parent, family, and community development must be responsive to the current condition of communities, research, and practice. This axiom is important in addressing the responsiveness and adaptability of policies. Crossing boundaries means seeking a deeper understanding of the issue and what is visible. This axiom challenges us to seek beyond the obvious and imagine alternative forms of addressing an issue. This issue has been legislated from a postpositivist lens having limited impact at the surface level. The postpositivist lens uses traditional forms of knowing that only produce a one-size-fits-all approach to policy. Nebraska's LB1161 is an example of this one-size-fits-

all approach because the policy has not been amended since 1996. The importance and validity of this issue relies on crossing boundaries to seek beyond the surface to better understand the issue.

***Hope and change are built on the assets and dreams of locals and their communities.*** This axiom connects with the other four axioms because of the underlying desire to create a better me, a better them, and a better society. Students, parents, and teachers have hopes, dreams, aspirations, and fears. Change starts when we connect our hopes, dreams, aspirations, and fears to the things we do and share them with the people close to us (see Figure 16).

Axiom: Hope, Dreams and Place
• Grounded on those it serves
• Aspirations, dreams, & hopes
• Driving Vision, Mission & Goals
• Connectedness
• Democratic values
• Democratic experiences

*Figure 16.* Recommendation for axiom: hope and change are built on the assets and dreams of locals and their communities.

For a young student, the educational experience is based on the hopes and dreams of the parent until the student becomes more independent. The student needs to reflect



about his or her learning, be aware of the benefits of collectiveness and connectedness, and seek opportunities for learning at any moment. The student needs to continue dreaming and feeding his or her spirit of learning. Parent, family, and community engagement starts with the student's assets and dreams. Policies set to address this issue must recognize that students have assets, hopes, and dreams and it is up to teachers, parents, and school leaders to continue developing their assets and help them reach their dreams.

For the parent, it is about loving and nurturing his or her child. The parent wants to provide the child with the best opportunities to achieve his or her dreams. For the teacher, it is about nurturing the student's curiosity, creating healthy environments, and developing a critical mind. The hopes, dreams, aspirations, and fears of the student, the teacher, and the parent should be shared with others. The collection of all these hopes, dreams, aspirations, and fears is the reminder for change, connectedness, and community building.

The vision, mission, and goals of learning institutions should reflect the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of the community. These should be informed and negotiated by students, parents, educators, and community members. The vision, mission, and goals of learning institutions are influenced by political cultures that represent a group and marginalize others. What I propose is for this process to be a democratic experience so that students, parents, and educators revive the democratic essence of our country. Efforts to involve all members of the community are necessary to revive our democracy. Declaring a vision for an institution without using a democratic process fractures trust in a society. The CLE framework uses genuine practices to ensure all members of the

community are involved in negotiating the values that inform the vision, mission, and goals of an organization. Parent, family and community engagement is not just about parents. It is about the teachers, school leaders, and families that make up the community. Communicating our collective ambitions, ideas, and dreams to those who represent us at the local, state, and national levels is part of our democratic values.

### **Conclusion**

A policy addressing parent, family, and engagement must have the following components: be a policy in action; pliable to conditions at of the community and the educational experience of students, parents, and families; informed by current research; guided by those close to the issue; and driven by the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of students, parents, educators, and citizens of the community. No one would be more suited to express the extent to which these recommendations would affect an evolution in parent engagement than my mother.

### **What Would My Mother Say About the Recommendations?**

*Mijo*, and how are you going to implement these recommendations? Where do these recommendations come from? I am not speaking about the recommendations that came from a book. I hope that these recommendations came from somewhere deep inside of you. I hope they came from your experiences growing up that one day led you to become a teacher, administrator, and director. Remember that you benefited from the communities where we once lived. Just how each community embraced you and your family, I hope you can give back to the community you live in and work for now. You have a place in that community because now your children are part of it. Demonstrate to

your children how to be a good citizen and let your them take advantage of the opportunities this beautiful country has given us. *¡¡Adelante mi capitán!!*

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