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THE IMPACT OF DISTRICT POLICY ON THE EFFICACIOUS
IMPLEMENTATION OF TEXAS HOUSE BILL 5

A Dissertation

by

MARLENE STUDIVANT-MOORE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies
of Prairie View A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2024

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

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August 2024

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

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The Impact of District Policy on The Efficacious Implementation of Texas House Bill 5

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of District Policy on the Efficacious Implementation of Texas House Bill 5

Marlene Studivant-Moore, B.S., Norfolk State University

(August 2024)

M.A., Prairie View A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Patricia Hoffman Miller

Preparing students to contribute to society is essential for every high school in the nation. Texas House Bill 5 (House Bill 5, 2013) sought to create a framework for achieving college and career readiness for Texas public schools. Counselors were the frontline mentors who had essential roles in implementing House Bill 5. However, the performance of graduation and curricular changes mandated by House Bill 5 increased the responsibilities of counselors and challenged how the policy implementation affected students' college and career readiness. Numerous challenges and issues emerged within the school districts executing House Bill 5.

The success of House Bill 5 dramatically depended on how well the counselors daily implemented the policy. Counselors' understanding, knowledge, and attitudes about the procedure and assessing their actions as "street-level" policymakers (Mansfield, 2013, p. 2) helped determine the plan's ability to prepare students for post-secondary options. Suppose a counselor does not adequately understand House Bill 5 or lacks the necessary skills and support systems to implement the policy appropriately? In that case, it may result in a haphazard plan that fails to capture students' interests.

This qualitative study examined counselors' self-efficacy in implementing House Bill 5 policy at the district level for student college and career readiness preparation. The perceived self-efficacy theory introduced by Bandura (1977) was the integrative theoretical framework used in this research. This study was designed to explore the following research questions:

1. To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understand the school district's policy for implementing House Bill 5?
2. How do high school counselors introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students?
3. To what extent do high school counselors effectively communicate with parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement?
4. What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts?

Keywords: House Bill 5, college and career readiness, counselor self-efficacy

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my mother, the late Lenora Sylvia Studivant, who believed in my ability to succeed academically. You are gone, but your belief in me has made this journey possible.

I am incredibly grateful to my loving nieces Ariel Charles and Alexis Richard for their encouraging words, “Push forward because you can do it.” My sisters Joann Hunt and Lisa Studivant and brothers Joe and Kenneth Studivant believed in and prayed for me to pursue my dream of completing my dissertation. My brother Joe passed on May 15, 2024, but I know he is smiling down from heaven and saying, “Sis, you did it!”

I want to thank my special friends Dr. Earnestine Randle-Forest, Joyce Woods, Jon Claire Merritt, Nita Gilbert, Junetta Slaughter Cotton, Gwyn Muhammad, Wanda Palmer, and Deborah Golliday Nicholas for their steadfast support and prodding of me throughout this journey. You all have been the best academic cheerleaders.

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Finally, I thank God for guiding me and allowing me to maintain good health so that I can continue this journey. To God be the Glory!" I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength" (New International Version, Philippians 4:13).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

College and career readiness are significant factors in the destiny of students (Conley, 2010; Curry & Milsom, 2022). Texas is driving the nation in the number of policies tailored to monitoring students' college and career readiness status; however, it needs to drive the quality of these programs (Blume & Zumeta, 2014). In 2013, at the 83rd Legislature session, Texas House Bill 5 was born. Research by Terry et al. (2016) showed that House Bill 5 offered students a college and career culture by advancing instructive program choices while lessening state-approved testing requirements and improving the school's responsiveness.

This bill and many years of authoritative state measures were intended to access and improve equality among younger Texas students. According to researchers from the a crucial issue with the bill is that the school counselors are responsible for ensuring the implementation of the policy with students entering the ninth grade (Dean, 2018; Terry et al., 2016). Students and their parents must choose a graduation plan and an endorsement, a task that is either completed with the guidance of an eighth-grade instructor or with a secondary school advisor who visits the students while they are in middle school.

This dissertation follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th Edition*.

Promoting college and career availability in schools today is the essential obligation of the School Counselor (American School Counselor Association, 2023); however, guardians and gatekeepers assume a significant role in a youngster's profession and school preparation. There are various family factors associated with college and career decision-making. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), various family characteristics factors, including parent's educational level, desires, support, and financial status, significantly impact children's educational experiences and decision-making regarding college. Higher parental educational attainment positively correlates with children's academic success and college attendance. Children from households where parents have a college degree are more likely to pursue higher education

Parents with higher educational aspirations for their children often provide more academic support, such as helping with homework and encouraging academic achievement, which positively affects their children's educational outcomes and decisions regarding college. A family's economic resources are crucial to children's educational opportunities. Families with greater financial stability can afford better educational resources, extracurricular activities, and college tuition, which increases the likelihood of their children attending and completing college. Moreover, financial assets, including college savings, significantly influence the decision-making process regarding college enrollment. Families with more savings can reduce the financial barriers to college attendance, making it a more viable option for their children.

Many parents passed along their family values concerning educational training to their children; therefore, they would understand the significance of their role in promoting post-secondary educational options. More importantly, school advisors and administrators should not assume that parents without post-secondary degrees do not value such experiences, advantages, or open doors for their children. Parents of these students may need more support in helping their children explore colleges, obtain funds for the school, and enroll in the college they choose. Thus, when the opportunity presents itself to parents, they must take full advantage of it. School educators can likewise train guardians on ways to promote eagerness for school, support their child's intrinsic capacity, and offer opportunities to those youths to explore professions and universities.

The data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) revealed that for the academic year 2020-2021, the distribution of degrees conferred in the United States was as follows: 52.36% (1 million) received a bachelor's degree, 21.47% (820,000) received a master's degree, and 26.18% (2 million) obtained an associate degree. These statistics underscore the significant achievements of students in higher education. Transitioning to the importance of graduating, it is crucial to recognize how earning these degrees impacts individuals' future opportunities and economic stability. Post-secondary completion opens doors to advanced career prospects, enhances personal growth, and contributes to society's development. Therefore, House Bill 5 (HB5) in Texas plays a significant role in graduation by restructuring high school graduation requirements to better prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce (Texas Legislature, 2013).

House Bill 5 focused on the possibility of an informed decision. The Intercultural Development Research Association (2016) indicated that guardians felt they needed more bona fide correspondence about the law from the schools. Research findings revealed that advocates believed they needed more staff to fulfill some of the law's prerequisites, such as individualized meetings with parents. According to research conducted by the Intercultural Development Association on House Bill 5 (2016), these are legitimate worries concerning any new policy implementation. Any reform change in education, hierarchical standards, and system connections between various school districts and state agencies can affect policy implementation and execution (Malen, 2005). Thus, this study focused on the efficacy, satisfaction, engagement, and barriers of the school counselors charged with implementing the district policy of House Bill 5 in high-need, urban, comprehensive high schools.

Statement of the Problem

The execution of graduation and curricular changes ordered by House Bill 5 (HB5) expanded the obligations that secondary school advocates must perform. The enactment only partially laid out a few demands and requests on counselors forced through House Bill 5's emphasis on college enrollment and a high school career transition. Empirical studies indicated that low training levels are related to lower salary levels and the inability to finish secondary school or college, adversely impacting average income earnings (Carson & McChesney, 2015). As a result, this decline changes income information gathered by the state and federal government, affecting how the government can serve its populace. The consequences of a broken K-16 education pipeline can have

severe economic and social implications on the rise of poverty among the underrepresented students not addressed by initiatives to encourage direct-to-college or high-wage technical skill education.

In 2013, Texas House Bill 5 (83R) introduced another variety of graduation necessities in the state's discretionary guidance (Terry et al., 2016). Again, the objective of the approach was to advance the college and career readiness available (Mellor et al., 2015). However, the bill excluded explicit state-level directions on how autonomous school locales should actualize the framework. Nor did it provide assets for its execution. Therefore, it forced school districts to devise various ways to meet the prerequisites of HB 5 (Mellor et al., 2015).

School areas fused a structure that empowered students to choose a sequence of courses to try out during their high school career that was a pathway based on future college or career goals and objectives. These course sequences, known as Endorsements, included Business and Industry; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); Arts and Humanities; Public Service, and Multidisciplinary (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Inside each endorsement, a student could select a career pathway. For example, if a student was keen on pursuing certification in nursing or firefighting, they would choose the Public Service endorsement. They would choose the Business and Industry endorsement if they were interested in welding.

The bill put new burdens on schools, unequivocally on school counselors, without giving any additional income to actualize the latest model. In addition, according to Perna et al. (2008), a negative consequence of reducing the amount of time counselors have to

devote to advising students, is that with insufficient time for students, school counselors might leave it up to the students or guardians to seek guidance from counselors or find other means of support. Perna et al. (2008) were not specifically speaking within the context of House Bill 5, because the legislation was not proposed at the time of their publication. But it is reasonable to assume that when counselors report undue burdens on their time, students suffer. Given such, understanding counselor perspectives and implementation strategies and their workload limitations is crucial to ensuring student success in their post-secondary future, regardless of their career choice or educational pathway.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study explored the self-efficacy of school counselors working with students and parents in high-need urban, comprehensive high schools regarding the implementation and education of House Bill 5. Specifically, it explored the implementation and substance of House Bill 5 policy through the perspectives of school counselors, who directly influence the pre-college execution of instruction strategies planned to expand students' college and career decision-making. The study intended to understand counselors' experiences because they, by and large, are responsible for disseminating information and guiding students in their college and career attainment.

Significance of the Study

This research is crucial as it could bring policymakers' attention to the quality of implementation of standard barriers and challenges counselors face. Additionally, it may

assist educational leaders in determining whether House Bill 5, as an educational reform, is progressing as an institutional trend that should continue as part of regular school operations or if it is likely to be a passing trend. This study is also significant as it may provide further insights into the relationship between policy development and implementation. Moreover, since the self-efficacy of school counselors influences their motivation to deliver college and career readiness services, it is essential to understand and evaluate how counselors implement House Bill 5 within their districts. This understanding can provide valuable opportunities for them to explore new graduation pathways, particularly considering that counselor self-efficacy is affected by their work with impoverished individuals.

Theoretical Framework Overview

The theoretical framework employed to support this research study is grounded in Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997). Bandura (1995) characterized apparent self-visibility as "convictions in one's abilities to sort out and execute the blueprints required to oversee imminent circumstances" (p. 2). Self-efficacy is people's conviction about their capacity to achieve, total, or finish set undertakings or objectives (Bandura, 1997). Beliefs regarding self-adequacy sway inspiration influence, occasions, assignments, or goals (Bandura, 1997).

The estimated reason for self-efficacy incorporates mind-boggling and different sources, including positive authority experience, vicarious encounters like the observational discovery that contrasts a person's capacity with someone else, and social impacts like verbal influence, media, peers, and authority figures (Bandura, 1989, 1995,

1997). Of these hotspots for self-efficacy improvement, positive dominance encounters are the best strategy for creating authority (Bandura, 1995). Bandura (1995) maintained that adequacy impacts a person's contemplations in manners that help or upset execution. Moreover, their insights affect individuals' moves (Bandura, 1997). As a result, people's considerations and created subjective procedures manage the improvement of their capability (Bandura, 1985). A component of people's ideas is to empower thinking ahead, which helps them foresee results and make necessary decisions concerning what moves they should make (Bandura, 1997).

Examining self-efficacy in school counselors is important for several reasons. First, as stated previously, college and career readiness are essential components of student's success beyond high school. Second, according to Parikh-Foxx et al. (2020), nationally, "school counselors report not having adequate training in college counseling. . . ." (p. 183). As such, the selection of Bandura's framework for this study was appropriate.

Research Questions

This qualitative research study explored the following questions:

1. To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understand the school district's policy for implementing House Bill 5?
2. How do school counselors introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students?

3. To what extent do high school counselors effectively communicate with parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement?
4. What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts?

Researcher's Perspective

As a high school counselor with 21 years of experience working in an urban school district at three comprehensive high schools, I am passionate about preparing students for college or career readiness. As a practitioner, an issue that arose for me and other counselors was implementing House Bill 5, which placed an extra workload on me and other counselors who were already overburdened with additional duties before this new legislation.

While responsive services are equally important, they are barriers when implementing a new state program. This new bill promoted a decentralized process across Texas, allowing individual districts autonomy and creativity in their implementation strategies. However, this bill should have included specific state-level guidance on independent school district implementation and provided resources for implementation. As a result, school districts adopted a wide range of approaches to implementing the requirements of House Bill 5, including a system that allowed students to choose a sequence of courses to pursue in their high school career based on future or career goals and aspirations.

House Bill 5 amended the Texas Education Code to expand counselors' responsibilities by requiring them to discuss personal graduation plan (PGP) options and explain endorsements with each student entering ninth grade. Texas school counselors must focus on postsecondary counseling and career preparation and include career placement in student counseling sessions. Additionally, counselors in Texas must meet with students and parents before the end of eighth grade, determine the student choice endorsement(s), and aid the student with selecting a graduation plan.

Other responsibilities of the counselor are to create a personalized graduation plan for students deemed at risk of failing to graduate, for instance, those who cannot obtain a high school diploma before the fifth year or whose performance on assessments and standardized tests could be better. This personal graduation plan must identify student educational goals and provide detailed diagnostics, monitoring intervention, and evaluation strategies. Also, the counselor must be able to provide detailed information regarding college admissions, financial aid, and starting curriculum requirements.

My colleagues and I had access to quality school counseling, and the implementation of House Bill 5 was limited primarily by the high student-counselor ratio and multiple responsibilities that affected how much time counselors could spend with students discussing college and career readiness. With a counselor-student percentage of 1:470, I discovered that the student-counselor ratios were too high for counselors to provide adequate college and career guidance, particularly for those who relied to their counselor as a primary college and career information source. When considering the barriers and problems encountered in urban, comprehensive high schools while

implementing House Bill 5, a more in-depth exploration of school counselors' self-efficacy addresses how people exert efforts to persist when confronted with challenges in the workplace. I chose this research to examine how school counselors view their overall self-efficacy in implementing the requirements of House Bill 5 to ensure college and career readiness for students. The counselor's insight into this research may contribute to a more systematic body of knowledge for decentralized implementation and best practices that could be replicated in districts implementing House Bill 5 to enhance quality, efficiency, and equal access within the process.

Limitations of the Study

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) defined limitations in a study as matters or concerns that can impact findings that fall outside of the control of the researcher. Limitations to some degree or another, are present in all studies (Simon & Goes, 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The limitations of the study were related to limitations inherent in qualitative research designs. For example, the effectiveness of the state's HB 5 policy is reliant upon the beliefs and background unique to the context in which counselors interpret and implement the policy. Each school counselor may have a unique interpretation of House Bill 5 and how it is best implemented in their school district. Another limitation of the study is the participants' ability to answer questions truthfully based on their experiences. This means, their interpretation of HB 5 within the context of their campus and district, may differ from other counselors not only at other schools in their district, but in other schools in different districts in the state.

Delimitations of the Study

In contrast to limitations, according to Simon and Goes (2013), delimitations are matters or concerns within the control of the researcher that can impact the findings of a study. Delimitations involve the decisions the researcher makes for instance, regarding the scope of the study by selection of the framework and the framing of the research questions, data collection and analysis strategies, the population and sample, and the parameters or selection of validation approaches. The delimitations of this study were: (a) the small number of participants involved limits the generalizability of its finding, and (b) middle and high school counselors were the only participants; thus, students' and parents' insights were omitted.

Assumptions of the Study

The accompanying suppositions are presented comparatively with this study: (a) that House Bill 5 plan is an exact measure for students choosing endorsements, (b) the counselors in this study were knowledgeable of House Bill 5 and students' needs, and (c) the counselors participating in the study were truthful about the school's socioeconomic status, educational level, and perspectives regarding their ability in the advisement of the House Bill 5 Graduation Plan and Endorsement.

Definition of Terms

Career Readiness: a rigorous blend of academic, technical, and employability skills and the ability to apply these skills in authentic environments (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2018).

College Readiness: degree of preparation a student needs to enlist and prevail without remediation in a general education course (for example, English/Language Arts or Mathematics course) at a post-secondary institution that offers credit towards a baccalaureate, associate degree program, or vocational and technical schools (Conley, 2010). Endorsements, established by HB 5, are sequences of courses intended to prepare students for school training or vocations in five content areas: business and Industry; STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Math); arts and Humanities; Public Services; and Multidisciplinary (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Counselor's Self-efficacy: self-expectations regarding one's professional competence and outcome expectancy related to engaging students (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017); as beliefs about one's abilities to provide effective counseling services (Larson & Daniels, 1998).

House Bill 5: legislation that set up the Foundation High School Program with five supports and a distinguished level of achievement to supplant the past recommended High School Program, minimum High School Program, and Distinguished Achievement Program. Under the guidelines set up by House Bill 5, all Texas secondary school graduates should be qualified to apply to four-year state colleges (Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium, 2016), while allowing those not interested in pursuing a college education to focus on a career or technical skill needed for a job after graduation. This law also reduced the number of state assessments required for graduation (Mellor et al., 2015).

Parent: in the state of Texas, parent is defined as the person or persons who have legal rights to make decisions on behalf of children (Texas Legal, 2022).

Pathways: specific course sequences that earn endorsements, such as a firefighter pathway within a Public Service endorsement or a welding pathway with the Business and Industry endorsement (Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium, 2016).

Personal Graduation Plan (PGP): a record of a student's choice of endorsement(s) and the courses necessary to complete them; generally developed by the end of 8th grade in consultation with a student's counselor and parents (Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium, 2016).

Professional School Counselor: the individual with a master's degree and a state school certification. School Counselors provide specialized counseling and guidance as outlined in The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Program. (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Self-Efficacy: a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). In simpler terms, self-efficacy is a person's belief in succeeding in a particular situation.

Summary

The organization of this research study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I introduced the overall study and the primary ideas that led to the consideration of this phenomenon. This chapter provided context to the background of the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose and importance of the study, assumptions of the study, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations and delimitations, and positionality

statement of the research. Additionally, this chapter concluded with a definition of terms that ensures consistency and understanding throughout the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review helps contextualize House Bill 5 changes to Texas high school curricula and the self-efficacy of professional school counseling. The first part of this review begins with an overview of the history, background, and implementation of House Bill 5. The second part explores Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory and the self-efficacy of Professional School Counselors regarding their role in implementing House Bill 5.

History and Background of House Bill 5

The State of Texas has an erratic and broadened education reform development history. The Texas Legislature amasses on a biennial cycle, meeting from January to June of odd-numbered years (Philpott & Martinez-Beltran, 2023; Ramsey, 2018). The fact that the legislators only meet for 140 days each session causes some to wonder whether there is routinely limited time to draft, deliberate, and pass legislation for each session (Philpott & Martinez-Beltran, 2023).

Legislative policies often change as the composition of legislation changes with each election cycle. Mellor et al. (2015) found that this phenomenon was evident in the efforts undertaken over the 10 years of education reform within the Texas Legislature. Priorities and attitudes concerning public education's fundamental causes and desires have shifted (Mellor et al., 2015). The Legislature's awareness has moved from more widespread efforts to increase academic rigor and create globally competitive students to

more individual policies that encourage students to map their future by prioritizing college and career readiness (Mellor et al., 2015).

In 2006, out of a special meeting of the Legislature, chosen officials passed House Bill 1 through the 79 Legislature session, which aimed to focus on public education policies related to college readiness and academic rigor. This omnibus bill was the legislature's response to a mandate from the Texas Supreme Court to address school finance equity issues. It introduced the concept of the 4x4 graduation requirements for students in the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) and the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP). This move was intended to guarantee that all Texas students would be prepared for college by requiring that students take four credits for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

During the accompanying general meeting of the 80th Legislature in 2007, Texas lawmakers passed legislation establishing various new testing initiatives designed to monitor schools' progress in implementing even more academically rigorous curricula. SB-1031 supplanted the old Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) with the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). It initiated several new End of Course Exams (EOCs) for studies. Furthermore, lawmakers passed House Bill 2237, setting up high school completion and success initiative boards. This bill introduced new programs with funding, including recent grants and expanded instruction for instructors, drop-out avoidance programs, and new achievement activities. It rebuilt school accountability measures (House Research Organization, 2007).

In 2009, the 81st Legislature passed House Bill 3, which focused on public school accountability, curriculum content, and promotion prerequisites. This law made changes to the 4x4 educational plan prerequisites by requiring foreign language classes and, for the first time, favoring Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes that satisfied some math and science credits. It likewise supported objectives for college readiness status and included accountability prerequisites for school districts. In House Bill 3, the Legislature defined college readiness as a “level of preparation that is vital for a student to enroll and succeed without remediation in an entry-level stage English language arts or mathematics course for credit toward a baccalaureate or associate degree program” (House Research Organization, 2007, p. 9).

As indicated by the bill digest, supporters of the enactment accepted that House Bill 3 "would convey the parents and employers of Texas assurance that graduates were college or workforce ready upon graduation" (HRO, 2007, p. 18). House Bill 3 tried to align each state appraisal (the STAAR) with the appropriate grade levels, connecting student achievement and college readiness with prescribed learning outcomes. The “bill permitted students adaptability in course work to seek after their interests while guaranteeing a quality education, having different pathways with equal rigor may be fundamental to help each student reach their total limit" (HRO, 2007, p. 19).

In 2011, the 82nd Legislature body was obstructed by a \$27 billion spending deficiency. The Texas Constitution expects the lawmaking body to pass a reasonable financial plan for each biennium. If they cannot do so, the likely result of the next session is budget cuts. All state offices and capacities endured enormously after the budget

slashed in 2011. By some estimates, no area was hit harder than public education, which suffered a \$5.4 billion deficit. Rick Perry, governor at the time, and other legislature leaders previously expressed that they would no longer raise taxes nor utilize the Economic Stabilization Fund, Texas' secret stash for crises, casually referred to by politicians and most Texans as the "rainy day fund" by (Mann, 2011, p. 1).

By the spring of 2011, parents, teachers, and education stakeholders started rallying their fellow Texans to demand they utilize the rainy-day fund to balance deep cuts in public education. In the long run, Governor Perry and legislature members consented to using \$3.2 billion from the rainy-day fund; however, many budget cuts had already caused harm (Mann, 2011). Because of those generous cuts, no significant education policy measures were passed in the 82nd Legislature.

In 2013, the 83rd Legislature body gaveled with a more favorable budgetary photo than its predecessor. Because of the turmoil from the account cuts of the 2011 session, parents developed disappointment with the number of standardized tests their children needed to take. The worry from business and industry leaders in Texas was that students needed to be more prepared for the workforce. Thus, House Bill 5 was conceived.

House Bill 5 had various destinations, for example, bringing down the number of Course Exams (EOCs) from 15 to five, granting new responsibilities and straightforward measures for schools, and changing the structure of secondary school course contributions and confirmation plans. House Bill 5 was intended to "meet the creating need of Texas businesses for gifted specialists outfitted to go into specialized exchanges,

including welding, pipefitting, and computer animation" (HRO, 2013, p. 10). Rep. Jimmie Aycock, the legislation's creator, accepted that the graduation rates would improve by allowing students to choose their career interests in secondary school. Also, Rep. Aycock believed the workforce preparation would increase for the "40% of students" whose requirements were not met by the current school educational program and whose futures did no longer primarily include college.

House Bill 5 was passed into law by Governor Rick Perry in June 2013. House Bill 5 supplanted the Minimum High School Program, Recommended High School Plan (RHSP), and the Distinguished Achievement High School Plan (DAP) with the Foundation High School Plan (FHP). Texas lawmakers agreed that sweeping changes should be made to maintain rigorous standards for students destined for college. However, those students keen on acquiring a college degree could focus on a career and the specialized skills required for a job after graduation (Intercultural Development Research Association, 2018).

Under House Bill 5, the Commissioner of Education was required to change the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP, and Distinguished HSP, starting with the 2014-2015 school year. Per the progress plan, students in grades 9-11 in the 2013-14 school year could pick the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP, Distinguished HSP, or the new Foundation HSP as their plan (Mellor et al., 2015). One final factor to contemplate while considering the status of the Legislature is the deep thought of *local control*. Generally, Texas has a long-standing policy of leaving effective decision-making to local governments and municipalities. This decision extends to local school districts. For the

most part, policymakers have grasped creating comprehensive policies, allowing local authorities to decide the particulars of policy implementation. This tradition has been eroded by recent legislative sessions that instituted numerous top-down policy solutions without allowing districts much flexibility.

House Bill 5 returns to this idea of local control by allowing individual schools and districts to create endorsements and pathways based on what is best for their students and what local leaders consider essential. However, a local control policy leaves room for disparity and can lead to “glaring differences in both quantity and quality of the educational program” (Hadderman, 1988, p. 2). While school administrators and legislators wrestle with their roles in education policy, it is necessary to consider that many elected officials believe wholeheartedly in local control. Given its long history in public education, the idea of local control will likely stay the same (Ehrensall & First, 2008). Consequently, the most significant provisions of House Bill 5 will presumably not be revisited by the Legislature soon since policymakers prefer allowing local districts to make implementation decisions without further state guidelines.

Legislative Intent of House Bill 5

The opportunity for a student to earn a certificate or endorsement that they could use to gain employment or add to additional credentials or degrees in the future was appealing to policymakers trying to train and educate a changing student body. House Bill 5 policy changed drastically, from the last decade of focus on college readiness to a mixed focus on college and career readiness, with an extreme reduction in standardized testing. However, a piece of House Bill 5 has caused considerable disagreement. This

contention was the move requiring all high school students to take Algebra II and allowing districts to choose where Algebra II fit in their endorsements. This provision proved contentious, as Algebra II is a crucial component of admissions requirements at colleges and universities and correlates strongly with post-secondary student outcomes (Lee & Ready, 2009).

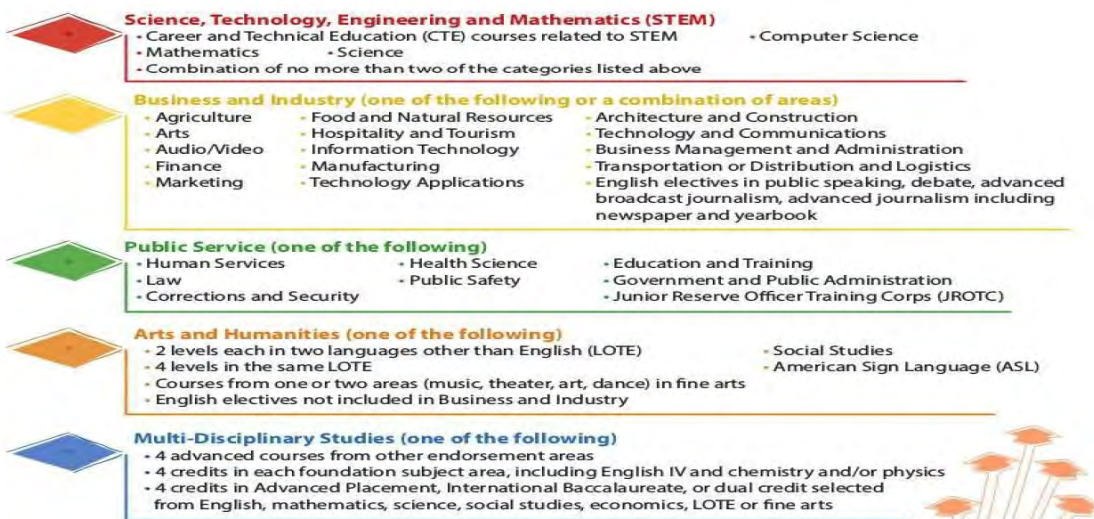
House Bill 5 placed burdens on schools, specifically school counselors, without providing additional revenue to implement the brand-new policies. It also passed many specifics directly to the State Board of Education to work out. Most importantly, House Bill 5 required eighth-grade students and parents to choose the course they would follow to graduation (Weiss, 2013).

Specific challenges arose as a result of House Bill 5, which included confusion regarding endorsement selection and the relationship to a future career pathway and a lack of understanding of the integration of class choice into the foundation graduation plans, especially for (a) students who desire to select more than one endorsement, (b), students who remain in extracurricular activities that do not fit into endorsement tracks, (c) the selection of higher-level science and math classes concerns over strict sequencing, (d) concerns over sequencing challenges that limit class selection or endorsement change in 11th or 12th-grade, (e) availability of all classes required to achieve endorsements, (f) loss of student time due to busing to other campuses to meet endorsement requirements, (g) equal access for students to all blessings across the state, and (h) challenges to transfer students as they move between districts with different endorsement options.

Implementation of House Bill 5

In 2013, Texas House Bill 5 (83R) introduced a new system of graduation requirements into the state's secondary education environment that was intended to promote college and career readiness. However, the bill did not include specific state-level guidance on how independent school districts should implement the system nor provide resources for implementation. Therefore, this led school districts to adopt different approaches to fulfilling the requirements of House Bill 5, such as a system that allows students to choose a sequence of courses to pursue in their high school career based on future college or career goals and aspirations. These course sequences are called Endorsements and include Business and Industry, Science, and Technology. Students may select a more specific pathway within each endorsement, such as the Firefighting pathway within the Public Service endorsement or a Welding pathway within Business and Industry. Figure 1 illustrates the career options under each Endorsement.

Figure 1

Endorsements with Career Choices

As stated above, the state legislature needed to provide specific guidance to districts, which caused significant variations in how districts implemented endorsements and career pathways. A range of implementation dilemmas emerged, primarily related to the increased workloads and training needs of the counseling staff charged with implementing House Bill 5. According to Mellor et al. (2015), *The American Institute of Research* surveyed all Texas public school districts, and 81% of the schools reported that their implementation practices met the requirements of House Bill 5. The results from this survey indicated that slightly more than half, 53%, offered five endorsement paths, while six percent only provided one, Multidisciplinary Studies the most likely suggested. The selection of Multidisciplinary Studies was understandable, given that this Endorsement is a requirement. The authors found that most school district leaders reported that current staff capacity and course offerings figured prominently in their

decisions regarding which Endorsements to offer. Additionally, schools said that meeting with staff directly or through a guidance counselor was the most frequent communication with parents.

In 2014, the Ray Marshall Center, funded by the *Texas Education Grantmaker Advocacy Consortium* (TEGAC), examined how the changes required by the implementation of House Bill 5 increased the responsibilities of middle and high school counselors in the state. Results from the Center found that House Bill 5 increased the amount of work, and the type of support needed for counselors. Counselors were required to meet with all incoming ninth-grade students and their parents initially and then again, every year they were in high school to subsequently follow up with the students' House Bill 5 graduation plan. Furthermore, beyond focusing on the college application alone, counselors now needed to provide a wealth of information about high school-to-career transitions, thus highlighting the need for counselor capacity building.

As the research on the implementation of House Bill 5 continued, in 2015, the RGV Equal Voice Network surveyed more than 1,600 parents and parent guardians in South Texas, representing children in 24 school districts. They found that of most parents, 85% were unfamiliar with the new graduation requirements, and 80% were unfamiliar with the graduation plan's implications for their child's college. The surveyed parents feared that implementing a tracking program such as House Bill 5 would leave students unprepared for college and without the necessary credits for college admission.

The adoption of House Bill 5 in 2013 reflected one of the critical adjustments within the trajectory of Texas high school graduation requirements. Stakeholders are now

raising crucial questions about how House Bill 5 implementation might also impact the state standard post-secondary preparation. Questions remain to be answered as to whether school districts have the capability and resources to provide a full range of rigorous course options and provide those options equitably inside the community. Additionally, concerns were posed regarding whether families and students had the resources for new requirements and opportunities. More importantly, very crucial questions arose as to whether counselors had the resources to help students and families; that is, whether STEM course offerings and course-taking were preparing students of all backgrounds for success, whether curriculum monitoring was an issue, whether counselors would analyze from challenges and best practices, and whether Texas graduates had the preparation they need for college and careers they wish to aspire.

The Impact of House Bill 5

HB 5 impacts all high school graduation levels, planning, and state testing requirements. This bill's most significant impact is on eighth—to 12th-grade students. Before House Bill 5, students had to pass 15 standardized End-of-Course exams to graduate high school. In ninth through 12th grade, Texas students must pass five exams: the End-of-Course (EOC) assessments for English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, US History, and regular coursework.

House Bill 5 is such a paradigm shift, according to Region 7 Education Service Center Federal Program Coordinator Debbie Connors. She likened the legislation to climbing a tall mountain. House Bill 5 impacts how and when students elect an academic focus, called *Endorsement*, and what courses are available to fulfill the requirements of

each graduation pathway. Students can select an area of interest through one or more Endorsements. Endorsements are like college majors but for high school students. The Endorsements are intended to broaden students' options upon graduation.

Nevertheless, this policy may create a separate path leading to unequal college destinations. For example, the STEM endorsement is a more direct path to selective four-year colleges or universities than other Endorsements. In addition, it is the only endorsement that requires students to take more rigorous courses such as Algebra II, Chemistry, and Physics or Principles of Technology.

On the other hand, the non-STEM Endorsements require four math and science credits, like the STEM endorsement, but do not explicitly require students to take these courses. The STEM college paths embedded in the Endorsement system may increase educational achievement disparities in racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic gaps. According to the Texas Education Code, HB 5 instills flexibility in public education by enabling students to pursue a traditional path into colleges and universities or move directly into the workforce to help fill what business leaders believe is a critical skills shortage. Unfortunately, Texas school districts and campuses are burdened by implementing HB 5. This 111-page bill requires districts to do much more than decrease End-of-Course exams from 15 to five. This bill affects nearly all high school coursework and college and career planning. It requires much new communication among counselors, students, parents, and the higher education community.

Graduation Requirements

In June 2013, the Texas 83rd Legislature passed HB 5, establishing the new school program, the Foundation High School Program (Terry et al., 2016). The graduation program was for all Texas public high school students entering grade nine in the 2014–15 school year. In addition, the new graduation requirements introduced greater flexibility for students in earning a high school diploma, which could prepare them for college or a career. The requirements transitioned from three graduation plans, Minimum, Recommended, and Distinguished, to the Foundation High School Program (Terry et al., 2016).

Understanding the Foundation High School Program or the minimum requirements to graduate high school in Texas is essential. Students must complete 22 credits in eight subject areas and pass the five required End-of-Course exams (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Local school districts have the discretion to increase requirements above the state minimum. However, if a student only wishes to graduate with the Minimum Foundation Program, the student and parent must submit a signed written permission form adopted by the Texas Education Agency after the student's sophomore year to allow graduation without an Endorsement (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The school counselor(s) must advise students, parents, or guardians of the benefits and the importance of graduating from high school with one or more Endorsements (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

To complete an Endorsement, a student must earn 26 credits to meet the graduation requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2014). In addition, according to the

Texas Education Agency (2014), students must complete 22 credits under the Foundation High School Program, including four credits in English Language Arts (ELA) and four credits in Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics. Also, all students must obtain two credits in a foreign language or a language other than English and select one of five Endorsements to pursue, such as, Arts and Humanities, Business and Industry, Public Services, STEM, or Multidisciplinary Studies (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

However, unlike in previous graduation programs, students are not required to complete Algebra II to fulfill the mathematics requirement. Only students opting to earn a distinguished level of achievement or pursue the STEM endorsement must complete Algebra II. Students can switch endorsements, so no choice is permanent. They have the option to select more than one Endorsement (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Additionally, students can earn the Distinguished Level of Achievement and a Performance Acknowledgment for outstanding performance (Raise Your Hand Texas, 2014). Completing an Endorsement is required to achieve the Distinguished Level of Achievement, a distinction students can earn upon high school graduation (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Aside from the Foundation Endorsement, students must complete four science and four math credits, including Algebra II, to gain the Distinguished Level of Achievement (Raise Your Hand Texas, 2014). The Distinguished distinction is essential because students must earn it to become eligible for admission to a Texas public college under the top 10% law and receive state-distributed financial aid (Texas Education Agency, 2020).

Performance Acknowledgements are distinctions students can earn upon graduation to recognize outstanding academic performance in specific areas (Texas Education Agency, 2013). According to the Texas Education Agency (2013), students can make up to five Performance Acknowledgments, which are listed on their transcript and diploma. Acknowledgments are awarded for dual-credit course performance, bilingualism or bi-literacy, high scores on standardized tests like the Preliminary SAT, ACT Aspire, SAT, ACT, high scores on Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams and completing a business or industry certification or license (Texas Education Agency, 2020).

According to guidelines outlined by the Texas Education Agency (2020), school districts have the freedom and authority to customize high school graduation requirements. However, each district must follow the basic requirements outlined by the state in House Bill 5. School districts must also annually report to the Texas Education Agency the names of courses developed locally, programs, institutions of higher education, and internships in which the students have enrolled as authorized by Texas Education Code 28 (Texas Education Agency, 2017). House Bill 5 requires districts to partner with at least one postsecondary institution to develop and provide for high school seniors with college preparatory courses whose performance on the End-of-course assessment, college admissions, or placement exam did not meet college readiness standards. In addition, the students who complete a college preparatory course may enroll without remediation or further assessment in college-level coursework in the associated content area at the partnering postsecondary institution (SREB, 2020).

House Bill 5 Evaluation

Subsequent Texas legislative sessions have also significantly changed the state accountability system (Texas Education Agency, 2020). In 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature passed HB 2804, which revised the state accountability system to an A–F rating in five domains. In addition, provisions of the bill required the commissioner of education to release a provisional A–F rating report showing the ratings that each district and campus would have received for Domains I–IV for the 2015–16 school year if the A–F rating system had been in place. However, in 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed HB 22, which changed the state A–F accountability system in several ways, including reducing the number of domains, introducing locally developed accountability domains, changing the calculation of the summative accountability grade, realigning the unacceptable cut-point at the F rating, and changing the timeline for implementation to August 2018 for districts and August 2019 for campuses (Texas Education Agency, 2020).

Since House Bill 5's new graduation requirements became law, Texas's new accountability rating system uses grades A. The most significant changes included college and career readiness measures, consisting of 40% of a school district's score. While the new system is controversial due to punitive measures and over-reliance on high-stakes testing, which includes college and career readiness as a significant accountability component, this could signal a step in an unfortunate and detrimental direction. The Texas Education Agency (2020) prepares an annual report on graduates and dropouts in Texas public secondary schools. This report includes state summaries of

the annual dropout rate, longitudinal graduation and dropout rates, and state attrition rates. In addition to statewide statistics, the report provides historical information about dropout policy in Texas and the evolution of the dropout definition used for accountability purposes.

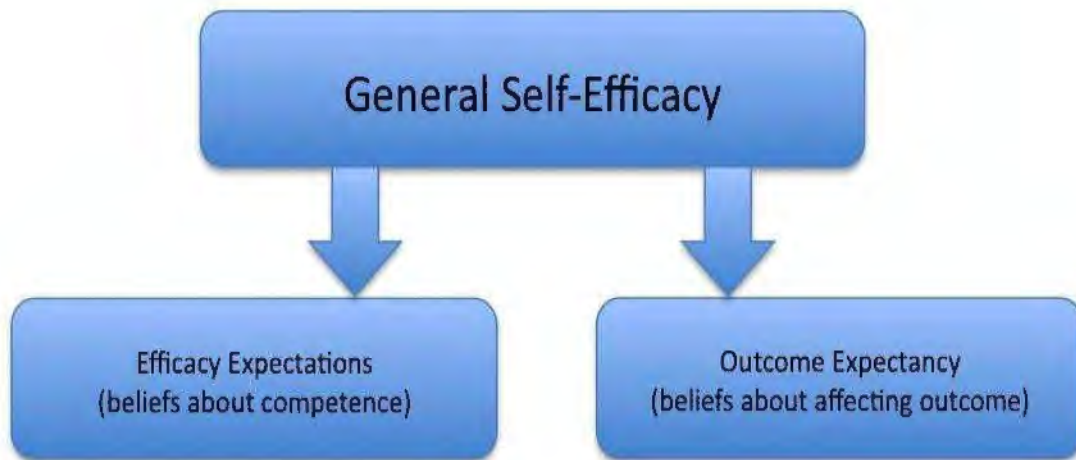
The Texas Education Agency (2020) annual report on graduates and dropouts in Texas public secondary schools revealed graduation statistics and House Bill 5 completion: (1) out of 384,600 students, 90.3% graduated within four years. Nearly four percent of students of the class of 2020 continued to attend school in the fall after expected graduation and less than half of a percent received a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency, (2) 87.8% graduated under the Recommended or the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement, including with or without a distinguished level of achievement, (3) across the five most significant racial/ethnic groups, the four-year graduation rate was highest for Asian students (96.7%), followed by White (94.0%), Multiracial (91.1%), Hispanic (88.6%), and African American (87.0%). /The four-year dropout rate was lowest for Asian students (1.4%), followed by White (3.1%), Multiracial (4.4%), Hispanic (6.5%), and African American (7.8%), (4) the four-year graduation rate for students not identified as economically disadvantaged was 93.5%, six percentage points higher than the rate for students identified as economically disadvantaged (87.5%), (5) females had a higher four-year graduation rate (92.6%) than males (88.1%) and lower rates of continuation (3.2% vs. 4.5%), receiving a TXCHSE (0.3% vs. 0.5%), and dropping out 4.0% vs. 6.8%, (6) students placed in special education programs was 78.9%, and students identified as English learners in grades 9-12 (79.3%) were lower

than the state average (90.3%). The dropout rates for these two student groups were 8.2% and 12.9%, respectively, higher than the state average of approximately five percent.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1985) defined self-efficacy as “people’s belief about the capabilities to exercise control over their level of functioning and other events in their lives” (p. 257). The self-efficacy construct entails two expectancies: efficacy expectations and outcome expectancy. Bandura (1985) distinguished efficacy expectations and outcome expectations, although both constitute the construct of general self-efficacy. According to Bandura, efficacy expectations are one’s assessment of competence to perform duties and tasks in specific contexts. Efficacy expectations are people’s belief that they can complete the actions necessary to reach the desired outcome, for example, “Can I do this” (Lent, 2005, p. 104).

It follows that efficacy expectancy is inferred as a mediator between an individual’s behavior and the outcome of that behavior. Outcome expectancies are judgments about the results or consequences of performance within the specified context (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Thus, self-efficacy beliefs assess how confidently one can perform and the performance outcomes within a specific context (Bandura, 1989). Figure 2 illustrates the components of Bandura’s construct.

Figure 2*Bandura's Self-Efficacy Construct*

Self-efficacy develops when individuals (1) acquire the requisite skills for a task, (2) observe others engage successfully in similar tasks, (3) receive social or verbal persuasion that they will succeed in each task, and (4) have emotional reactions related to a task (Bandura, 1995). Consequently, self-efficacy beliefs mediate task-related functions such as performance, effort exerted in facing challenges, goal setting, and a personal sense of competence (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2002). Self-efficacy links counseling-related outcomes such as career decision-making, career satisfaction, commitment, school counselor multicultural competence, and public-school counseling practice (Sutton & Fall, 1995).

Although Bandura's (1977) theory was not specifically created within the context of school counselors, his construct is most useful because self-efficacy is cited in the

literature as a concern of counselors in their implementation of HB 5 (see Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020). According to Mullen et al. (2019), the self-efficacy theory aids with conceptualizing how school counselors assess their efficacy in engaging students within the school. Self-efficacy beliefs mediate the extent to which individuals exert effort, persist in challenging situations, overcome barriers, and persevere to be a success and achieve a task (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bandura, 1985; Pajares, 2002). Bandura (1995) also posited that self-efficacy beliefs develop when the individual is exposed to a history of successes, observing behaviors, social or verbal persuasion, and tensions.

Individuals tend to grow stronger or weaker self-efficacy beliefs concerning specific tasks or domains when engaging these sources of efficacy. Self-efficacy opinions are integral to the counselor's career, overall performance, and satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). Thus, the self-efficacy theory is an excellent match for examining how efficacious school counselors feel about their work and how it can relate to assisting students in completing high school within demanding school environments (Bandura, 1977; Hatice & Ozteke, 2018). When considering the barriers and problems that might be encountered at urban, underperforming high schools, a more in-depth exploration of school counselors' work through the lens of self-efficacy addresses how people exert efforts and persist while confronted with challenges within the workplace (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Furthermore, using self-efficacy beliefs to examine how school counselors view their overall performance, and the outcome of their work may be instructive while considering the impact that school counselors' self-efficacy may have on student achievement.

School Counselors' Self-Efficacy

School counselor self-efficacy has recently become a constructing development within self-efficacy research. This construct is an application of teacher self-efficacy in school counselor roles (Bandura, 1977; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Thus, school counselors' self-efficacy beliefs may be considered the counselor's assessment of competence to perform school counseling-related duties and tasks within the precise context of school counseling and guidance (Bandura, 1985; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017).

Sutton and Fall (1995) set a precedent by adopting a formerly developed teacher self-efficacy measurement to create the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSS). The CSS determines the relationship of school counselor self-efficacy to numerous demographic variables, school counselor roles, and school climate. School climate, mainly perceived as assistance from colleagues and administrators, became the most potent influence on school counselors' self-efficacy (Sutton & Fall, 1995).

According to the correlation analysis of 1,280 school counselors surveyed, self-efficacy related positively to high school counselors' career satisfaction and commitment (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). According to the National Model of ASCA (2019), school counselors who reported high self-efficacy for inappropriate duties had higher career satisfaction and commitment than counselors who reported low self-efficacy for inappropriate responsibilities. School counselors with high self-efficacy were more likely than those with low self-efficacy to persist in challenging situations to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1977; Sutton & Fall, 1995). As mentioned previously, self-efficacy beliefs

mediate the extent to which individuals exert effort, persist in challenging conditions, triumph over barriers, and persevere to succeed in specific tasks (Bandura, 1977, 1995). Baggerly and Osborn's (2006) findings on school counselors and self-efficacy support Bandura's belief about persistence in challenging situations.

Based on the works of Bandura (1985, 1995) and Sutton and Fall (1995), Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2017) developed an understanding of self-efficacy within the context of professional school counseling. School counselor self-efficacy is defined as the counselor's certainty in performing different school counseling tasks (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017). The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE) instrument was created using the ASCA National Standards for practice across all grade levels.

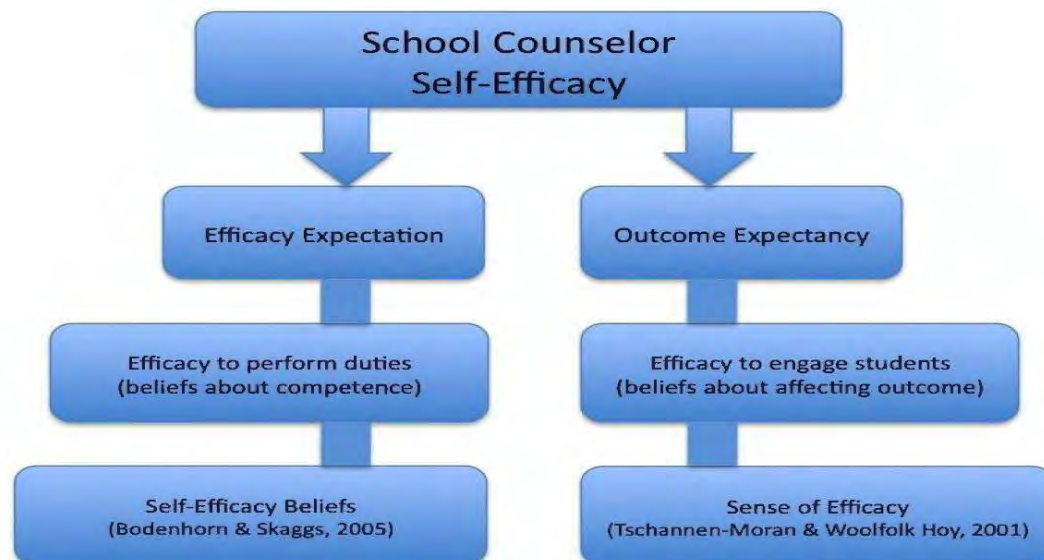
The five areas of school counselor self-efficacy derive from the recommended duties of the school counselor: Personal and Social Development, Leadership and Assessment, Career and Academic Development, Collaboration, and Cultural Acceptance. The four variables Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2017) found that related to self-efficacy are (a) gender, that is females compared to males, (b) teaching experience, (c) three years or more years of school counseling practice, and (d) training in the ASCA National Standards.

Another significant finding was that school counselors with high self-efficacy in their general practice were more likely than their low self-efficacy partners to be aware of and acknowledge the achievement gap and equity issues within their schools (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017). School counselors with higher levels of self-efficacy who used a systematic approach to school counseling perceived a narrowing of the achievement gap

at their schools. Maxis's seminal research (2011) about school counselors' self-efficacy had implications for the role of school counselors and administrators in narrowing the achievement gap.

Earlier research suggests that school administrators can affect school counselors' self-efficacy by fostering a positive school climate and supporting the school counselor's work (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Accordingly, high school counselor self-efficacy leads to a proactive school counselor. The school counselor will then persist in situations where they are asked to perform non-school counseling-related duties (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). Furthermore, school counselors with high self-efficacy may be more conscious of their schools' achievement gap and equity issues. Sequentially, high self-efficacy leads counselors to be responsive and active in helping to close the achievement gap within their schools (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010).

The implementation of school counseling programs, quality of school counseling preparation, training in the ASCA National Standards (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017), and school climate (Sutton & Fall, 1995) affect school counselors' work. In addition, these variables may positively influence student outcomes (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2017). To capture the school counselors' self-efficacy about their work, both strands of Bandura's (1977, 1985) definition of efficacy expectations and outcome expectancy were incorporated into the meaning of school counselor self-efficacy in this study. Figure 3 illustrates how they collaborate to inform data collection and analysis.

Figure 3*Efficacy Expectations and Outcomes for School Counselors*

Chapter 2 concludes by discussing school counselors' roles and responsibilities, challenges, and the limited time to implement House Bill 5. Additionally, the final section addresses counselor career training and how counselors communicate with parents and students about endorsements and courses for graduation under House Bill 5.

Role of School Counselor

As with teachers, Professional School Counselors are accountable for students' academic success (American School Counselor Association, 2023). National recognition and support for school counseling have a role in closing the achievement gap, as evidenced by the fact that federal funds were appropriated for counseling-related services such as drop-out prevention, career counseling, and drug and alcohol (Erford, 2019). In addition, school counselors have access to evidence-based resources. These evidence-

based resources help counselors make data-driven decisions to enhance student learning (American School Counselor Association, 2023; The College Board, 2008).

School counselors can foster high academic expectations, school climate, and caring relationships that correlate with the achievement of students at increased risk of dropping out of high school (Bemak & Cjung, 2005). They can serve as one of the primary liaisons between students and colleges to access part of the career development services program. Additionally, the school counselor's role is to help students navigate the college-readiness process.

Counselors coordinate and organize college-related events at the high school level (American School Counselor Association, 2019). High school counselors analyze the relevant assessments and inventories that help students explore their career and post-secondary options (American School Counselor Association, 2019). School counselors' influence on students' decision-making may be especially critical for many first-generation students. First-year generation students rely heavily on school personnel to inform them and their families of options and resources available after school (Wimberly & Noeth, 2004).

High School Counselor Role in House Bill 5

Counselors are essential to supporting students who want to achieve college and career readiness, but their roles and duties have changed (Mellor & Cain, 2024). In Texas, their roles now need a new personalized method to conform with House Bill 5 guidance requirements (Mellor & Cain, 2024). Understanding these converting roles and how they impact students' college and career readiness is critical to understanding the

role of counselors in implementing House Bill 5 (Texas Education Agency, 2014). In addition, the bill amended the Education Code to enlarge counselor duties in executing a personal graduation plan, including the distinguished level of achievement and the explanation of Endorsements with each student coming to ninth grade (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Under House Bill 5, Texas Professional School Counselors must increase their awareness of post-secondary counseling and career preparation and include career placement in student counseling sessions (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Counselors must now meet with high school students and parents before eighth grade to decide on the student's Endorsement(s) preference and to choose a graduation plan (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Counselors must create a personalized graduation plan for students at risk of failing to graduate, defined as students who cannot obtain a high school degree before the fifth year or whose overall performance on assessments and standardized tests is unsatisfactory (Texas Education Agency, 2014). The personal graduation plan should include student education goals and offer detailed information interventions, monitoring, and evaluation strategies (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Counselors must also be able to provide accurate information regarding university or college admissions, financial resources, and curriculum requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

At the school level, the counselors must publish daily activities stemming from district implementation decisions regarding House Bill 5 (Texas Education Agency, 2013). They face enormous changing demands for their limited time (Terry et al., 2016).

They must be adequately trained in career counseling, which is vital when supporting students in selecting endorsements (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Moreover, there is an extended need for middle and high college counselors to work together, considering that students must prepare to choose an endorsement before entering ninth grade.

Additionally, the two groups of counselors presently work in separate silos in some districts. Finally, counselors are liable for communicating with parents about House Bill 5 requisites but face boundaries when attempting to attain all of them effectively. Other specific challenges are discussed in detail (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Limited time faced by counselors. The limited time counselors provide to individual students and the number of counselors available are two of the most echoing issues. District administrators have expressed their concerns regarding this issue. From understanding how to transition from the old graduation plan to the new or just understanding how the new policy works, counselors frequently use the word "stressed" (Terry et al., 2016). In a group discussion with high school counselors at a suburban high school, when asked to describe House Bill 5 in one word, they used the following descriptors: "overwhelmed," "death," "change of career," "burdensome," and "time-consuming" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 92). One Head of Counseling said her counseling is in "crisis mode" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 92). At the same time, another stated her staff is "incredibly overwhelmed," and yet a third counselor, a "strained" workforce (Terry et al., 2016, p. 92). Counselors must tackle four grade levels and assist their middle school counterparts schedule eighth graders' four-year plans.

Many districts have approached the meeting with every eighth-grade student at least once. However, as captured in the evaluation of HB 5 by Terry et al. (2016), a handful discontinued this practice. Instead, according to the authors of the evaluation, they have chosen to allow the counselor to meet with groups of two or three students at a time or larger groups of 20 to 30 students in computer labs with students developing their schedules. The tiny window of opportunity in which counselors can speak with students regarding their future leaves many districts with grave concerns for their students' future.

Career counselor training. Career counseling implies that counselors have experience in specific career fields, know the essential requirements to succeed in that profession, and have a realistic idea of the socio-economic implications of that discipline. They should also be aware of the sorts of industries available locally, the academic requirements for that subject, and have expertise in the state and national labor work markets and where future jobs may increase. Perhaps most importantly, a counselor should be aware of the tools and resources available locally to students, including the district's internal course offerings and outside partnerships available to students to gain future employment. This knowledge requires in-depth training and experience, which many counselors in Texas genuinely need to achieve.

Counselors are considered academic advisors in school districts. Six districts raised the concern of the disconnect between counselors and career preparation as a primary barrier to implementing House Bill 5 and its intent (Terry et al., 2016). Four of the districts surveyed mentioned their counselors' predominant shortcomings regarding career counseling (Terry et al., 2016). Two districts discussed life experience issues

(Terry et al., 2016). These counselors were trained as educators and likely spent a few years teaching; therefore, their career experience was only in the teaching realm. Thus, the counselor may need help explaining the merits of a career as a plumber or engineer.

The district commented that counselors were already under such stress regarding their workload that they no longer had the time or inclination to learn about different career fields (Terry et al., 2016). In many districts, middle school counselors must know about districts' high school career pathway offerings, partnerships, or programs.

Therefore, they could recommend a future four-year plan for their students or help them choose between Endorsements or future careers (Terry et al., 2016). Districts revealed that counselors needed more information regarding the Career Technology Education (CTE) courses and certifications available to students at high schools (Terry et al., 2016). Counselors need education regarding resources to help students and families of all backgrounds for the success and preparation they require for college and careers (Terry et al., 2016).

Counselors must have a master's degree in a relevant field and numerous professional development hours (Terry et al., 2016). Furthermore, counselors who experience stress related to their workload probably need more time to obtain an additional career counseling certification that the state does not require (Terry et al., 2016). This requirement would be in addition to their already statutorily required continuing training hours. One Head of Counseling in Terry et al.'s (2016) evaluation inferred that House Bill 18 (84R) intended to help with this challenge. Still, thus far, they

have yet to acquire enormous data or updates on how this legislation will assist counselors with career counseling.

Communicating effectively with all parents. Texas school districts reported two communication challenges with parents. The first challenge was establishing initial communication about House Bill 5 when it became law. The second continuous challenge was finding ways to reach all parents with the necessary information about graduation plans. Under House Bill 5's plan, the parent's signature is required on the initial graduation plan when a student chooses an Endorsement and again when there are changes to the graduation plan. Many districts reported that communication is part of the counselor's responsibilities, but it is challenging to ensure parental compliance (Terry et al., 2016).

New challenges related to parents' concerns or confusion about House Bill 5 were reported. For example, in one West Texas school district, the language barrier was the main problem (Terry et al., 2016). However, "parents were excited about the changes once they translated the necessary Spanish materials" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 94). Parents in large urban districts were concerned about the legislation (Terry et al., 2016). The urban district's problem was that it could have done an excellent job communicating the bill's intent to parents. Still, it focused all of its early efforts on complying with a legislative requirement (TEGAC, 2016). Additionally, "districts faced specific concerns from parents about Endorsement's impact on college admission" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 94).

Summary

Chapter II presented the theoretical construct and supporting empirical research regarding this study. Specifically, it reviewed Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977) and the history/background, impact, and legislative intent of House Bill 5. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is an excellent match for examining how efficacious school counselors feel about their work and how it can relate to assisting students in completing high school within demanding school environments.

Chapter III delineates this study's methodological design and procedures. Details concerning the setting, participants, access to participants, schools, data collection, and analysis are provided. The chapter concludes with the methods used for validity and explains the process for protecting participant privacy and confidentiality.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The realities faced by education professionals when implementing House Bill 5 help broaden the understanding of what this policy means regarding its influence on improving students' college and career decision-making. This study examined school counselors' perspectives regarding their self-efficacy in implementing House Bill 5 within the scope of urban, comprehensive high schools. A qualitative approach was used to search for meaning in understanding the implementation of House Bill 5 and answer the questions in Chapter 1.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design was more appropriate than a quantitative one because qualitative methods interpret subjects' experiences through their perspectives and worldviews. Creswell and Guetterman (2018) help clarify using qualitative inquiry research approach to help explore a social or human problem by analyzing respondents' words, text, and reports.

The study examined the self-efficacy of school counselors in implementing House Bill 5 in urban, comprehensive high schools in a Texas school district. Specifically, it focused on the personal experiences of high school counselors as they implemented this educational reform. Berman (1995) described the reform as improving the performance of existing systems and assuring their efficient and equitable responses to future changes.

Understanding House Bill 5 implementation requires a systematic and planned approach to exploring the human experience of the educational actors involved. This plan

to study human behavior and the interaction of academic actors requires careful listening to these actors in their natural settings. Therefore, qualitative research deciphers the meaning of the information these educational actors gather and immerses them in the world inhabited by those they wish to study (Lichtman, 2013). This approach is vital in describing and understanding humans. Remember that modern-day qualitative researcher nourishes the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Stake, 1995).

Slavin (2007) recognized that the school setting is vital when observing because the location is best understood within the context of the history of the institutions and communities of which they are a part... “to divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is to lose sight of its significance” (p. 122). Jovanovic (2011) believed that “there are plausible academic in addition to social signs that qualitative research has become an indispensable part of the methodological practice of the social sciences” (p. 1).

This study assessed the self-efficacy of school counselors in implementing House Bill 5 in urban comprehensive high schools. The attending questions for this study were:

1. To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understand the school district’s policy for implementing House Bill 5?
2. How do high school counselors introduce and promote the school district’s House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students?
3. To what extent do high school counselors effectively communicate with parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement?

4. What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts?

Research Approach

This study employed a phenomenological approach within the data collection and analysis procedure (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). A phenomenological method is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular phenomenon. Phenomenological researchers seek to explore and describe individuals' lived experiences and the essence of those experiences. Also, this research is based on a paradigm of personal insight and subjectivity, giving more importance to personal experience and interpretation. Moustakas (1994) is considered the founder of phenomenological analysis. However, according to Christensen et al. (2020), the main objective of a phenomenology study is to explain the meaning, structure, and essence of a person's lived experiences or a group of people around a specific phenomenon.

Edmund Husserl founded phenomenology, particularly transcendental, also called descriptive phenomenology (Giorgi, 2010; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Moustakas, 2011). It focused on the phenomena as experienced by the individual. Descriptive phenomenology was particularly appropriate for the study, given its focus on describing the essential experiences of the participants when a phenomenon is newly explored (Moustakas, 2011).

Descriptive phenomenology consists of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomena (Moustakas, 2011). The researcher then analyses the data by

reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the ideas into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a textual description of the experience of the persons, in other words, what participants experienced, a structural description of their experiences, or how they experienced it in terms of conditions, situations, or context, and a combination of the textual and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of their experience.

Descriptive phenomenology is a powerful way to understand subjective experience and gain insights into people's actions and motivations (Lopez & Willis, 2004). It cuts through long-held assumptions and challenges conventional wisdom. It may contribute to the development of new theories, changes in policies, or changes in responses (Russell & Field-Springer, 2022). Phenomenology was a suitable approach to examine the self-efficacy of school counselors in implementing Texas House Bill 5.

The descriptive phenomenological approach provides a detailed exploration and description of lived experiences, allowing researchers to uncover the essence of those experiences without imposing preconceived notions (Russell & Field-Springer, 2022). Phenomenological studies examine human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved (Lopez & Willis, 2004). These experiences are called lived experiences. As stated above phenomenological studies aim to describe the meaning of experiences for each subject (Moustakas, 1994).

This qualitative approach aligned with my belief in the value of personal narratives in understanding complex phenomena. By engaging counselors and capturing their experiences with understanding and implementing HB 5, I was able uncover their

nuanced realities that other approaches might overlook. This approach honored the participants' voices and provided actionable insights for policymakers and educational leaders.

In summary, my selection of a qualitative research design with a descriptive phenomenological approach was driven by a combination of professional insight, the specific needs of the research questions, and a commitment to capturing the authentic experiences of school counselors.

Research Site

This research study's site is within two secondary schools in the North Central School District of Houston, Texas. These two schools have a Title I designator and serve an economically disadvantaged majority of the student population. Some programs implemented in this school district are an engineering magnet school, a magnet fine art school, early college immersion with a local community college, providing three meals to students who would otherwise face hunger, and specialized attention to students learning English as their second language.

Study Participants

Professional school counselors from Houston's urban, comprehensive high schools served as the population for this study. Urban refers to a continuously built-up area with a population of 50,000 or more residents (United States Census Bureau, 2020). The two high schools are in the North Central region of Houston, Texas, and serve low-income and minority-majority student populations. Urban, comprehensive high schools that serve primarily low-income, minority-majority student populations and demonstrate

state-high graduation rates and college enrollment rates post-graduation or enrollment in advanced courses are of interest for this study. This qualitative study consisted of an online open-question questionnaire with counselors.

This study's sample design was purposive. The purposive sample strategy directs researchers to select individuals who can help them attain the information needed to answer research questions. Purposive sampling allows flexibility in the sampling and analysis process to ensure a broad base of data points related to the stakeholders' perspectives and interactions to deepen the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon to be studied. In this process, "decisions are made about who or what should be sampled, what forms the sampling will take place, and how many people or sites need to be tested" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 156).

Access to Participants

The participants selected for this study were school counselors who work in an urban, comprehensive high school in North Central Houston's high-poverty area. Participants must have worked at schools receiving Title I funds, and the students received free and reduced lunches. Additional criteria for the participants were that they had two years of experience counseling low-income students of color and were open to diversity issues. These criteria presented the opportunity to glean information-rich data about the counselor's implementation of House Bill 5 in urban, comprehensive high schools. The minimum number of participants for this study was seven.

After receiving the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this research, the researcher contacted the school district's research department

for approval. Once the study was authorized, initial contact was made with the campus principal. The researcher then emailed school counselors who met the sampling criteria, asked them to participate in the study, and requested them to sign an informed consent. The informed consent described the research and explained confidentiality and the participant's rights. Participants had 24- 48 hours to return their informed consent forms. The scheduling of the online open-question questionnaire started as soon as possible upon receipt of approved consent forms. Table 1 presents the demographics of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

| Participant Name | Gender | Years of Experience | Ethnicity |
|------------------|--------|--------------------------|------------------|
| P1 | Female | 12 years – Middle School | Hispanic |
| P2 | Female | 24 years – Middle School | Caucasian |
| P3 | Female | 10 years – Middle School | African American |
| P4 | Female | 9 years – High School | African American |
| P5 | Female | 6 years – High School | African American |
| P6 | Male | 8 years – Middle School | African American |
| P7 | Female | 19 years – High School | African American |

As seen in the Table, the participants' years of experience ranged from six to 24. Six participants were female, and one was male. The sample included four middle school counselors and three high school counselors. All participants meet the criteria for the sample of this research.

Instrumentation

The research study used an online open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire contained a sequence of questions asked the same way to all participants (Frey, 2018).

The questions aimed to shape the participants' knowledge, the researcher's interest in understanding how they implement House Bill 5, and their perspectives on the district-level implementation process. The open-ended questionnaire was created on Google Docs Form and disseminated to the counselor's email. The online open-ended questionnaire was designed to provide the necessary intimate setting for participants to respond at length about individual experiences attempting to understand the legislative policy of House Bill 5 and implementation strategies. Also, this questionnaire allowed each participant to describe the researcher's campus approach to House Bill 5. The protocol for this study consisted of critical questions about the implementation of House Bill 5 presented in the American Institutes for Research (AIR) report (Mellor et al., 2017).

Data Collection and Management

Once school districts granted permission, participants were emailed the online questionnaire. They were instructed to be as detailed as possible with their responses regarding their initial feelings about House Bill 5, their roles in implementation decisions, challenges encountered, and any practices that seemed promising for success. Since responses were submitted via the questionnaire, no transcription took place.

The researcher made the decision to use a questionnaire rather than face to face interviews for two reasons. First, many school personnel are still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a questionnaire was less time intensive. They required fewer logistical arrangements since the participants could complete them wherever they felt most comfortable. Second, the use of technology in research continues to grow, with

expanding choices gaining greater currency among researchers (Salmons, 2020).

Therefore, questionnaires were well suited to the research goals of assessing the board impacts and challenges associated with implementing House Bill 5.

Confidentiality of data was protected by ensuring that none of the information on the questionnaire identified the participants by their legal names. Pseudonyms were used to preserve anonymity. Participants were given a choice of selecting their own or allowing the researcher to assign one. Each of them elected to allow the researcher to assign pseudonyms. I used P1, P2, P3, and so forth. All the collected data will be stored on the campus of Prairie View A&M University in a locked cabinet in Room 115 of the Wilhelmina R.F. Delco Building for seven years. After this time, the data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis Steps

Data analysis involves constantly moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that the researcher is analyzing, and the analysis of the data that the researcher will produce. The researcher used six steps of thematic analysis outlined by Clark and Braun (2017) The six steps were: (1) becoming familiar with the data. In this step, data is read and re-read, and initial ideas are noted, (2) generating initial codes. In this step, exciting features of the data were coded systematically across the entire data set, and relevant data was collated for each code, (3) searching for themes. This step involved collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data pertinent to each theme, (4) reviewing themes. In this step, the researcher checked the theme work of the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map of the analysis,

(5) defining and naming themes. This step entailed refining the specifics of the themes and the overall experience of what the research unveiled, generating clear definitions and names for each theme, (6) producing the report. This step is the final opportunity for analysis. Here, the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts relating to the research question and literature analysis, and the production of a scholarly report are presented.

NVIVO, a computer software application for coding and analysis, was used to manage and display qualitative data from written text. NVIVO created mind maps to display significant themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Although software helps collect data, the researcher is responsible for the analyses and interpretations.

Validation Measures

The qualitative researcher established credibility in this study by implementing several validity strategies: triangulation, member checking, and thick description (Toma, 2011). Credibility is a vital part of research approach because it allows the researcher to consider the study's complexities and deal with patterns that are not easily explained (Guba, 2011).

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Triangulation is a set process that the researcher uses to enhance the study's validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Triangulation involves different perspectives or examining a conclusion, assertion, or claim from multiple viewpoints. More specifically, triangulation entails seeking convergence among numerous other sources of information to form themes or categories in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

Ravitch and Carl (2016) described five different forms of triangulation. This researcher used “within-methods triangulation” (p. 195) for this study to validate the results. Ravitch and Carl (2016) describe this form of triangulation as using “one method (e.g. interviews) but different strategies associated with that method” (p. 195). In this study, I triangulated participant questionnaires with each other and the literature on school counselors.

In member checks, the researcher solicits participants’ views on the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checks are referred to as validity measures to establish credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1995) consider members checks one of the most crucial validity measure for building credibility. This approach in most qualitative studies involves taking data analysis, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so they can judge the accuracy and reliability of the study. According to Stake (1995), participants should be significant in directing and acting in phenomenological research.

Stake (1995) suggested asking participants to examine rough drafts of the researcher’s work and solicit their feedback regarding alternative language, critical observations, or interpretations. Accordingly, I gave the study participants their questionnaires and allowed them to check them for completeness and accuracy. None of them made corrections to their words. After member checks, I conducted preliminary analyses of descriptions or themes to view the written comments and determine what was missing.

Finally, the researcher created detailed descriptions to portray the findings in the study, which is called a thick report. A thick description involves the researcher describing and interpreting observed social actions or behavior within a particular context and providing a clear explanation so the reader can understand the participant's thoughts and feelings (Ponterotto, 2006). For example, reports in interview studies may involve contextualizing participants' responses so that readers can understand the context in which quotes are presented and discussed. In qualitative research, context is essential, and a thick description is one way to help leaders contextualize data to determine the validity of the findings.

Ethics and Risks

In studies there is a degree of risk (Sieber, 2012). However, in this study, there were minimal risks. Still, the researcher adopted specific measures to meet standards of ethics. First, the consent form stated that participation in the study was strictly voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time and without penalty. This statement appeared in all subsequent written communication before completing the questionnaire. Second, the consent form included a confidentiality statement. The researcher had possession of the actual names of the participants. No private, identifiable information was collected, nor was the participant's original name used in any publication or presentation. Third, the researcher remained mindful of the principle of beneficence. Ravitch and Carl (2021) defined beneficence as “doing good for others and preventing harm” (p. 196). Beneficence must be maintained during all interactions with the study participants. Fourth, the researcher remained mindful of the principle of justice, the

refusal to exploit study participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Finally, the researcher recognized potential vulnerability areas of the study participants by maintaining the highest level of integrity.

Summary

This chapter described the setting, participants, and how access to participants was handled. Also included were details of data collection and how data was analyzed. The methodology reaffirmed the purpose of this research, which was to examine counselors' perspectives of the implementation of the school district's House Bill 5. Specifically, this research focused on the counselor's experiences implementing House Bill 5 at an urban comprehension high school. Methods for conducting this study were proposed to ensure a quality selection of data is analyzed and presented accordingly. Chapter IV consists of data analysis results and how the methodology in this chapter was followed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study explored the realities of implementing House Bill 5 through counselors' perspectives in urban comprehensive high schools. The research questions for this study aimed to explore the counselors' self-efficacy in implementing House Bill 5 and their experience in aiding students with college and career attainment. Utilizing Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theoretical framework, the guiding questions were:

1. To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understand the school district's policy for implementing House Bill 5?
2. How do high school counselors introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students?
3. To what extent do high school counselors effectively communicate to parents and students about the pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement?
4. What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts?

Profile of Participants

The demographics of the participants in this study are as follows: there were seven participants, six females and one male. Four participants were middle school counselors, and three were high school counselors. The participants' years of experience in counseling ranged from six to 24 years.

Participant P1 is a Hispanic female with 12 years of experience in middle school counseling. Participant P2 is a White female with 24 years of experience in middle school counseling. Participant P3 is an African American female with 10 years of experience in middle school counseling. Participant P4 is an African American female with nine years of experience in high school counseling. Participant P5 is an African American female with six years of experience in high school counseling. Participant P6 is an African American male with eight years of experience in middle school counseling. Participant P7 is an African American female with 19 years of experience in high school counseling. Purposive sampling ensured that participants worked two years as counselors at an urban, comprehensive high school that received Title I funds, and students received free and reduced lunch. All participants met the criteria for the sample of this research.

The researcher highlighted the critical findings from the online questionnaire on counselor self-efficacy in implementing House Bill 5. Many challenges were documented as counselors described their implementation experiences as they guided students through endorsement planning, selection, and implementation at both middle and high schools across the two campuses in the district.

Findings

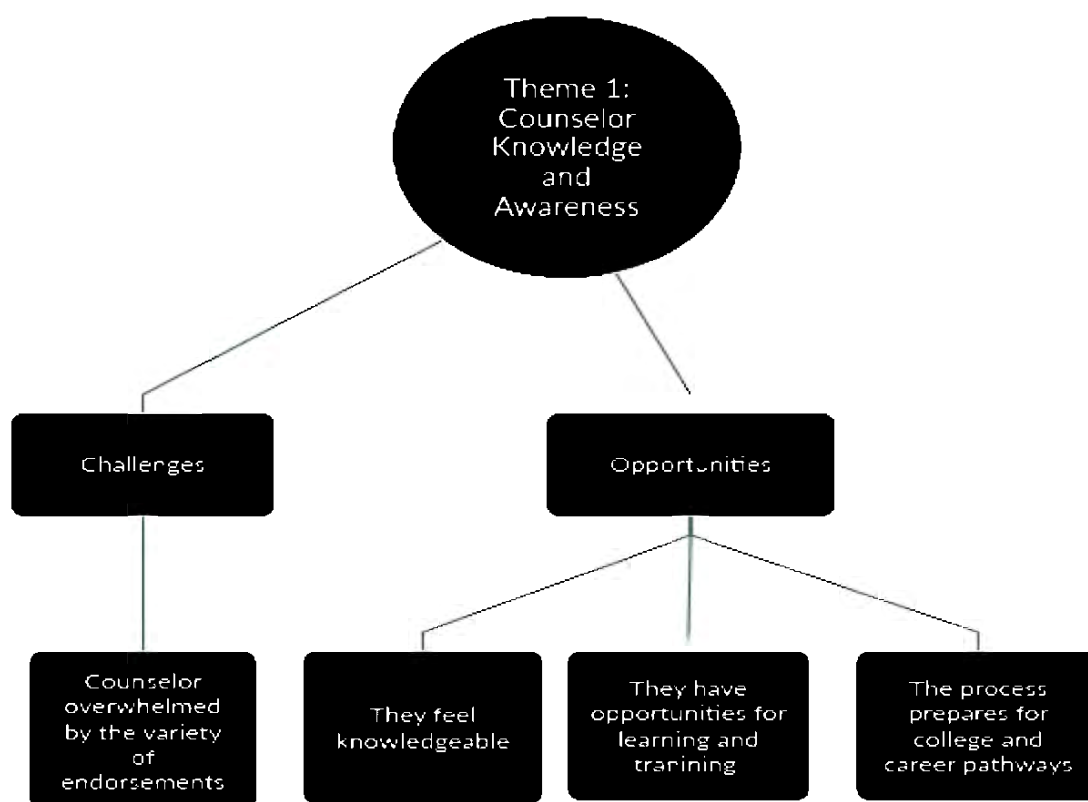
There were 10 themes that emerged from the findings organized around four research questions. **Research Question 1:** To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understand the school district's policy for implementing House Bill 5?

Findings for this question are represented by Theme 1, Opportunities and Challenges Relating to Counselor Knowledge. This theme is divided into two sub-themes:

Counselors are Knowledgeable, and Counselors are Overwhelmed. A visual of Theme 1 is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Counselor Knowledge and Awareness



Counselors are Knowledgeable

The findings showed that six participants believed they knew about House Bill 5 and the implementation process to prepare students for college and career pathways effectively. For example, Participants 2 and 3 stated definitively that they were

knowledgeable. P5 attributed her knowledge specifically to training and P6 stated the affirmative for the counselors on his campus. P4's response was similar to P6 but a bit more expansive. Here is how she answered: "*Counselors are very knowledgeable and understand the policy used to implement House Bill 5. The district provides great learning opportunities through district meetings and training.*" P7 said,

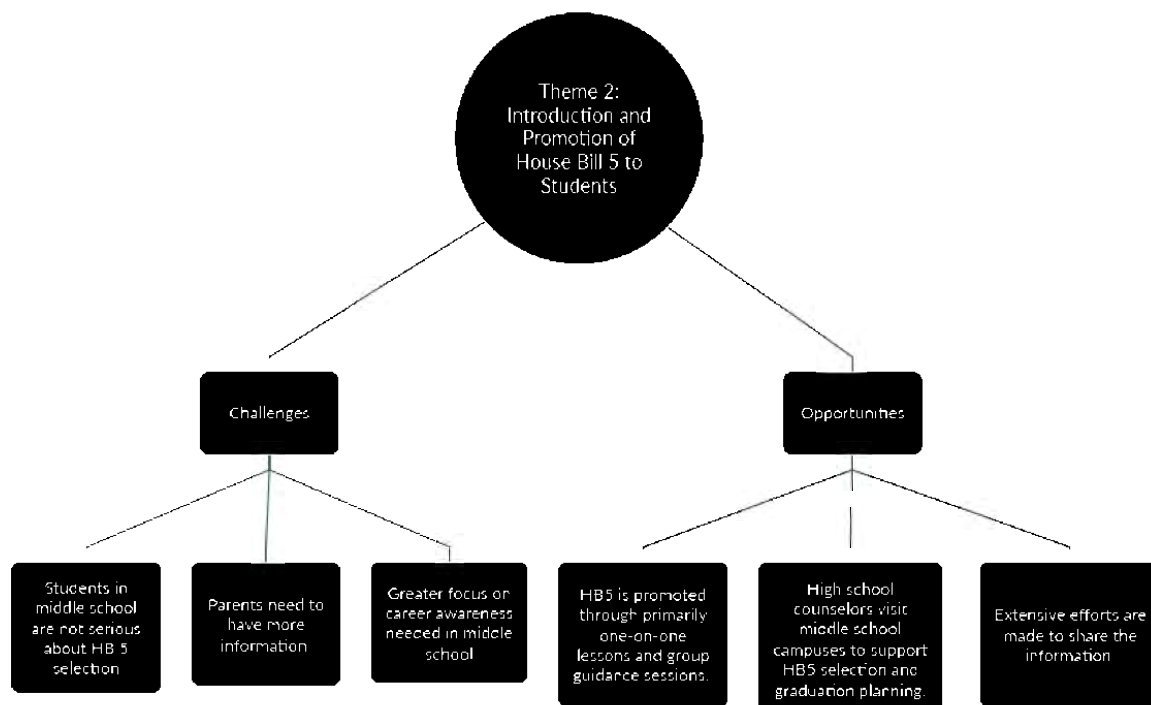
As a special education counselor, we are made aware of House Bill 5, and I try hard to make sure my special education students understand its logic and goal."

"I usually sit down with them, review their transcripts, and explain to them the requirements for core classes, CTE, PE & Health, Foreign Language, etc.

Counselors are Overwhelmed

Despite their knowledge, counselors felt overwhelmed by the various endorsements under House Bill 5. **P2** captured the sentiment of the all participants when she said, "*I feel they are very knowledgeable but overwhelmed by the variety of endorsements and administrative duties.*" This response, of course, is consistent with the counselor feedback in Mellor et al. (2015), Terry et al., (2016), and Mellor and Cain (2024).

Research Question 2: How do school counselors introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students? Findings for this question are organized around Theme 2, Opportunities and Challenges for Introducing and Promoting House Bill 5 to Students. This theme is divided into sub-themes: House Bill 5 Promotion Strategies and Connecting with Middle School Students. Figure 5 is a depiction of Theme 2.

Figure 5*Introduction and Promotion HB 5 to Students*

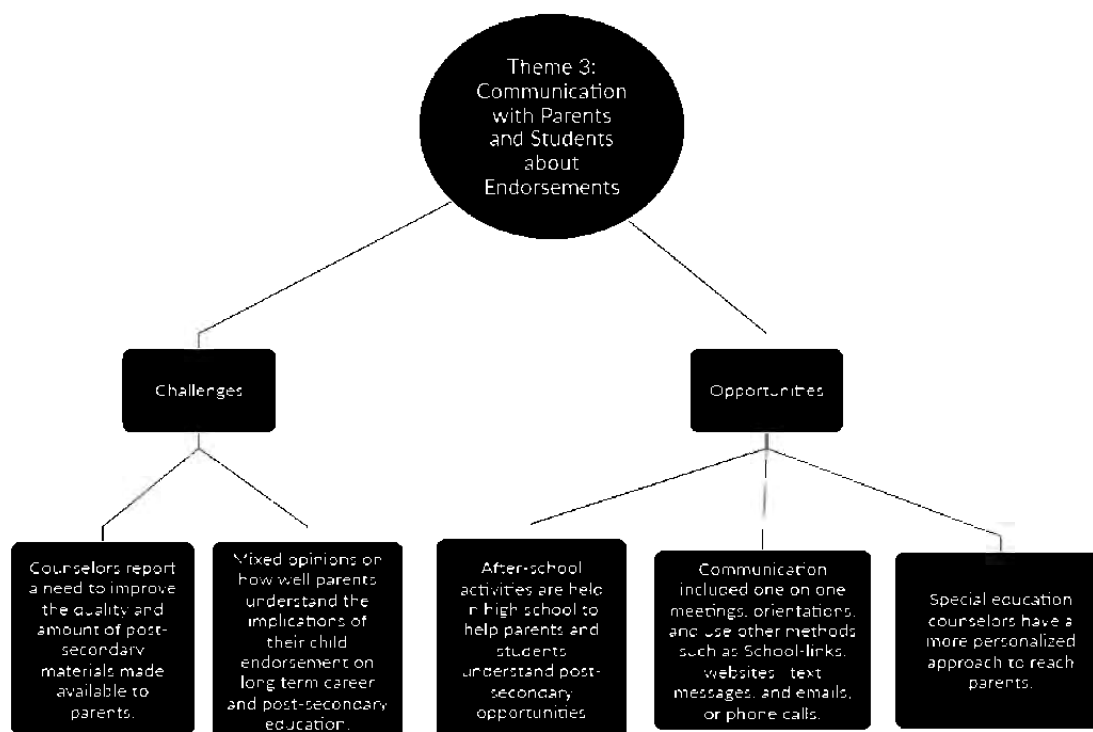
According to Participants P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, House Bill 5 is promoted to students through multiple strategies, including one-on-one class lessons and group guidance sessions. For instance, P1 said she used PowerPoint in eighth grade classrooms whereas P2 would present to classes once in the fall and once in the spring. P4 said she used, “*Classroom guidance meetings or individual student meetings.*” P5 said, “*We have individual and small group meetings on what is needed and what is required.*”

In terms of Connecting with Middle School Students, P6 pointed out, “*The requirements are promoted, but middle school students are not approaching these new systems seriously.*” P1 agreed. She said, “*In middle school, they start to get more in-depth conversations about House Bill 5.*”

Research Question 3: To what extent do school counselors effectively communicate with parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement? Findings for this question are represented by Theme 3, Communication with Parents and Students about Endorsements. This theme is divided into Extensive Efforts Made to Share Information and Parents Need More Information. Figure 6 illustrates this Theme.

Figure 6

Communication with Parents and Students About Endorsements



Participants reported an extensive effort to share information with parents and participants responded that parents received enough information about post-secondary education and other career opportunities. P1 answered this way:

Yes, I do! We start talking about college and career choices in elementary school. In middle school, they start to get more in-depth conversations about House Bill 5. In high school, they have many after-school activities to help parents and students understand post-secondary opportunities, college admissions, and how to complete the FAFSA financial aid application.

P4 shared, “Yes, we meet with each senior during the conference and provide post-secondary information. We also offer parents opportunities to come in for support through workshops or individual appointments with our college advisor for any assistance needed.” P7 responded,

Yes, I believe they do. At the high school I worked at, we frequently have students and parent meetings to discuss changes in graduation requirements, the admission process for colleges, the FAFSA, and various things that need to be completed before graduation.

In addition, participants reported that they made extensive efforts to communicate with parents using various methods such as one-on-one meetings, orientations, and online platforms. P7 said,

I am familiar with House Bill 5. I am a special education counselor who mainly works with students with behavior issues. I conduct Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs), Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), Individual Transition Plans (ITP), and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals for students on my caseload. I adopt a more personalized approach by informing the parents of

transition services for their children and referring them to transition specialists to create plans that meet graduation requirements.

Most participants noted that the most effective communication was via text messages, emails, or phone calls. Face-to-face communication, such as mandatory meetings with parents and parent-student conferences, was also necessary for effectively communicating House Bill 5 information.

Parents Need More Information

There was consensus among participants that while they felt that parents received adequate information, they likewise believed parents needed still more information. P3 said, *“Parents benefit from more informational meetings about the importance of post-secondary education and career choices.”* P4 concurred. She said, *“Counselors provide parents with many opportunities to come in for support by offering workshops or individual appointments to meet with college advisors for any assistance needed.”* P6 also agreed but identified his limit.

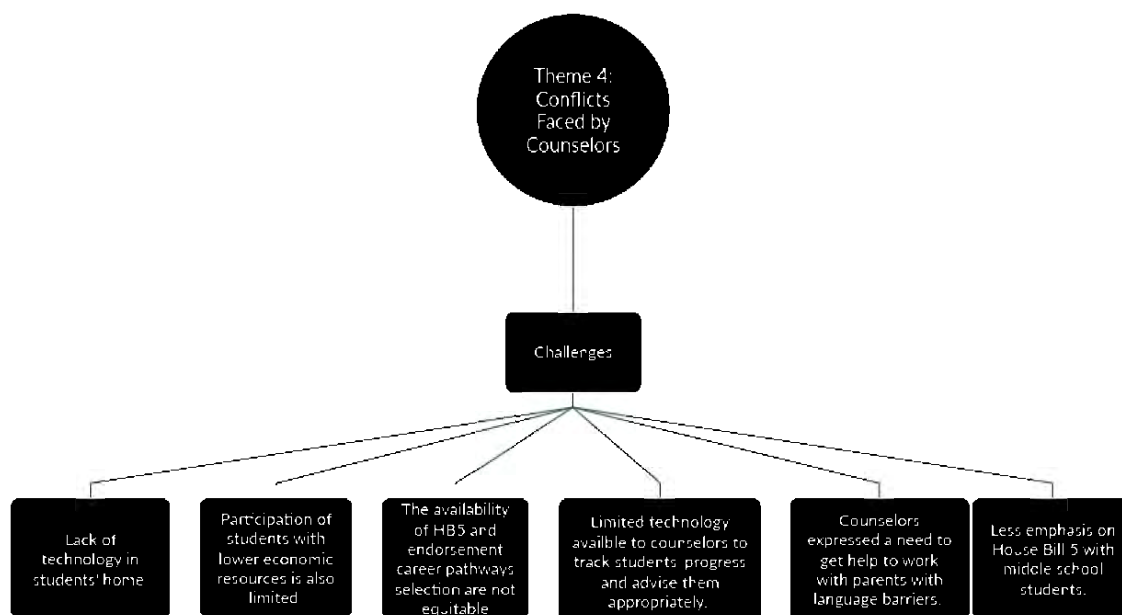
I feel like parents received enough information, but I do not like going to the lengths to acquire information for parents, and they do not attend the meetings or presentations to get information to help ensure the success of their children.

Without question, providing updated information is vital because parents must fully understand the implications of their child's endorsement of long-term career and post-secondary education. But counselors recognized that there were scenarios where parents could be proactive.

Participants also believed there was a need to improve the quality and quantity of post-secondary materials available to parents. In assessing the receipt of adequate information for parents to help with their child's post-secondary decision-making, most of the participants did not have confidence in the information parents received. P1 and P2 used identical language: *"I am unsure,"* both responded. P3 and 4 also used identical language. *"I am not especially confident,"* they both said. P6 and 7 reported they were somewhat confident. Only P5 conveyed confidence. *"I am very confident that parents received adequate information to support student decision-making."*

Regarding how well participants believed parents processed the information to support their child's selection of endorsements, here again, they did not express much confidence. P1, 3, 4, 6, and 7 said they were not confident. P5 was only, *"Somewhat confident."*

Research Question 4: What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts? The findings for this question are represented by Theme 4, Constraints Faced by Counselors which is divided into four sub-themes: Students and Counselors Need Access to Technology, Limited Participation of Students with Lower Economic Resources, The Need for More Parental Involvement, and Greater Focus on Middle School Education. This Theme is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7*Constraints Faced by Counselors****Students and Counselors Need Access to Technology***

It is no surprise that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may not have full access to technology. The digital divide is not only real, but it was also exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Most of the participants in this study cited the digital divide as problematic for many students and even for counselors. P1 said, *“Students’ lack of access to technology in their homes limits their abilities to explore post-secondary college and career opportunities.”* Counselors lack proper technology software programs to help them track students’ progress and advise them appropriately.” P2 said, *“Counselors need the resources and ongoing training to help implement House Bill 5, which is vital since counselors advise students on graduation plans, careers, and college-going aspirations.”*

Limited Participation of Students with Lower Economic Resources

Under House Bill 5, students with lower economic resources have limited opportunities to choose specific career pathways, such as engineering and business. This disparity across campuses highlights inequities in the availability of career pathway selections. P2 said, *“Reaching parents, the language barrier among parents, and access to technology at home are problems for students in lower economic areas.”* P4 added, *“There is a need for greater access to Career Technology Education (CTE) classes.”*

Not having greater access to certain CTE classes affects the endorsements students can obtain and prevents students from gaining practical hands-on experiences in various fields. Interestingly, P5 said, *“Teachers are not exposing students to career endorsements. Instead, teachers are more concerned about the passing rate for certification than whether students do well in the course.”*

The Need for More Parental Involvement

Building parental involvement can help alleviate some challenges counselors face in implementing House Bill 5. The majority of the participants expressed that parents needed more support. This is what P2 said, *“There is a need to help reach parents with language barriers.”* P3 was more simplistic. She said, *“There is a need for more parent support.”* P4 elaborated, *“Parents and counselors must reevaluate their child's career choices before completing year two to ensure alignment and student choices for endorsements.”* P5 offered a suggestion. She said, *“Build parent engagement by having more individual meetings with parents to explain the endorsement selection process and to have conversations with district leaders on ways to improve parental involvement.”*

Finally, P6 said, *“Parents need to be held accountable for participation in the House Bill 5 process because a significant amount of responsibility is being placed on counselors, which they cannot control.”* The clear consensus was that participants believed more parental and administrative support is also needed in implementing House Bill 5.

Greater Focus on Middle School Education

Most participants reported that there needed to be a greater focus on middle school education regarding House Bill 5 to familiarize students with career and college opportunities before high school. The additional focus would bode well for assuring students were better equipped and prepared for selecting endorsements that they believe speak to their interests once they arrive at high school. Here is how P3 explained it:

“Exposing middle school students to different career pathways helps to promote student selection of their House Bill 5 endorsements in high school.” She later pointed out the positive consequences of ensuring middle school students are more knowledgeable:

“Introduce House Bill 5 in middle school so that by the time students get into high school, they are well versed in understanding House Bill 5.” P5’s expression of this Theme included parents. *“Building more parent engagement in middle school and one-on-one advisement in middle school to help explain the importance of House Bill 5 [can help with] maintaining their endorsement path throughout high school.”*

Summary of Themes

This section presents a summary of the Themes. Participant’s responses represent the essence of each research question that is captured in the themes.

Research Question 1: Awareness and Knowledge of House Bill 5

The responses to this question revealed that while the counselors in this study were knowledgeable about House Bill 5, they often felt overwhelmed by its requirements. This self-awareness and knowledge contributed to participants feeling informed and burdened by the additional responsibilities. Specifically, counselors shared experiences highlighting the depth of their understanding and the challenges of keeping up with continuous policy changes.

Research Question 2: Implementation Strategies

The responses for this RQ revealed represent the various strategies counselors employed to implement House Bill 5. These strategies often involved creative problem-solving to manage limited resources. For instance, participants discussed specific methods, such as group sessions and individualized meetings, demonstrating their efforts to balance efficiency through guidance.

Research Question 3: Communication with Parents and Students

Responses here underscored the extensive efforts made by counselors to communicate House Bill 5 requirements, though they also noted the pressing need for better parent engagement. The responses represent the Theme of Communication Challenges and Successes. Detailed accounts from counselors illustrated the methods used to reach parents and students, including informational meetings, emails, and personalized consultations.

Research Question 4: Constraints in Implementing House Bill 5

The responses highlighted several constraints, including lack of time, insufficient training, and the need for more resources. These constraints were critical in capturing the essence of their experiences illustrated by Barriers to Effective Implementation.

Participants provided specific examples of how these constraints impacted their ability to support students, particularly those students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Visual Representation of Themes

The Themes presented in this chapter correspond to the Research Questions. The significance of each theme is demonstrated within the theoretical framework of Bandura's self-efficacy (1997) and descriptive phenomenology (Moustakas, 2011) as a qualitative approach. The Themes identified by the RQs and their connection to the theoretical framework and methodology are represented in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes, RQs Connection to Methodology and Framework

| Research Question | Methodology and Theoretical Framework | Themes |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| RQ1: To what extent are high school counselors aware of and knowledgeable about and understand the school district's policy for implementing House Bill 5? | Descriptive Phenomenology and Self- Efficacy | Counselor Knowledge and Awareness |
| RQ2: How do high school counselors introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students? | Descriptive Phenomenology and Self- Efficacy | Introduction and Promotion of House Bill 5 to Students. |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| RQ3: To what extent do high school counselors communicate with parents, and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement? | Descriptive Phenomenology and Self- Efficacy | Communication with Parents, Students about Endorsements |
| RQ4: What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower-socio economic students in urban school districts? | Descriptive Phenomenology and Self- Efficacy | Conflicts/Challenges Faced by Counselors |

The interview questions were designed to reveal the extent of counselor knowledge, the strategies they used for HB 5 implementation, their communication efforts with parents and students, and the constraints counselors believed face. For the most part, the data aligned with existing evaluations of HB 5. The responses provided by the participants detailed insights and specific examples that contribute to understanding the impact of HB 5 on counselors' and their self-efficacy in their roles.

Summary

Chapter IV provided a thematic analysis of the realities and challenges school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5. The findings revealed several Themes that represented school counselors' perspectives and lived experiences of the implementation process. These findings can be considered credible and trustworthy.

In short, first, counselors believed they were knowledgeable. They demonstrated a strong understanding of House Bill 5 and believed the implementation process effectively prepared students for college and career pathways. Overall, the participants appreciated the district's provision of valuable learning and training opportunities yet two of them

expressed a desire for additional training. Second, counselors indicated they felt overwhelmed. Specifically, despite their knowledge, counselors felt overwhelmed by the various Endorsements available under House Bill 5.

Third, the participants indicated House Bill 5 is promoted in various ways. It is promoted to students through multiple strategies, including one-on-one lessons, group guidance sessions, and high school counselors visiting middle school campuses. Fourth, the participants in this study believed middle school students needed to take House Bill 5 more seriously. They indicated students needed to gain knowledge and participants reported that students also needed to take the Endorsement selection process seriously.

Fifth, participants believed extensive efforts were made to share information. In their role as counselors, they communicated with parents using one-on-one meetings, orientations, and online platforms. Participants also shared that special education counselors adopted a more personalized approach. They shared that the most effective communication was through text messages, emails, phone calls, face-to-face presentations, mandatory meetings, and discussions in parent meetings.

Sixth, participants believed that parents need more information. The quality and quantity of post-secondary materials available to parents must be improved. There were mixed opinions on how well parents understood the implications of their child's endorsement of long-term career and post-secondary education. Additionally, participants believed more information was needed on the importance of post-secondary education and the need for parent engagement. Participants expressed the need to get help to work with parents with language barriers.

Seventh, participants indicated students and counselors needed access to technology. The lack of technology in homes, they believed, limited student's ability to further explore work-based opportunities and career choices. Due to limited technology in the school district, participants shared that they faced limitations in tracking students' processes and advising.

Next, participants believed that participation of students with lower economic resources was limited. They expressed students with lower economic resources had limited opportunities to choose specific pathways under House Bill 5, such as engineering and business. Based on their experiences and perspectives, they felt this disparity across campuses highlighted inequities in the availability of career pathway selections.

Next, participants said they believed parents needed to be more involved in the endorsement selection process. According to them, building parental involvement was seen to alleviate the limitations faced by counselors. They expressed that there was a need to reevaluate student choices before they completed year two to ensure alignment between school opportunities and student choices.

Finally, the participants in this study believed that a greater focus on career awareness was needed in middle school. They shared that they felt the need for a greater focus on House Bill 5 in middle school education to familiarize students with career and college opportunities before high school. There was consensus among them that attention to training and support for middle school counselors should be a top priority.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview of Study

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study explored how Texas House Bill 5 is implemented in two urban, comprehensive high schools, focusing on counselor perspectives. It explored counselors' perspectives of self-efficacy and confidence in implementing House Bill 5 and their roles in helping students achieve college and career goals. This study addressed four research questions:

1. To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understand the district's policy for implementing House Bill 5?
2. How do high school counselors introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students?
3. To what extent do high school counselors effectively communicate with parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection process, and courses that align with each endorsement?
4. What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts?

Seven counselors participated in the study, comprising six females and one male. Four participants were middle school counselors, and three were high school counselors. Their years of experience ranged from six to 24 years. Purposive sampling ensured participants worked two years as school counselors at schools that received Title I funds, and served students received free or reduced lunch. Several themes emerged from the

analysis: Counselors are Knowledgeable, Counselors are Overwhelmed, Counselors Used Various Strategies to Promote House Bill 5, Counselors Need to Connect with Middle School Students, Efforts to Share Information, Parents Need More Information, the Need for Technology Access, and Limited Resources of Students from Lower Socio-economic Groups, the Need for More Parental Involvement, and a Greater Focus on Middle School Education.

Overall, the study addressed school counselors' perspectives of their positions relative to House Bill 5 and the importance of self-efficacy in implementing it. The findings showed that, in general, the counselors felt overburdened by implementing House Bill 5. The challenges they faced included limited access to technology to track students' graduation plans, a desire for more training on House Bill 5, better communication with parents and increased parental involvement. In addition, they reported that sustained connections with middle school students were often limited.

Discussion

According to the participants in this study, implementing House Bill 5 presented many challenges to a school district's counseling department. Prior studies, such as those by Dean (2018), Cumpton and Giani (2014), and Mellor et al. (2015) indicate that House Bill 5 increased the workload of counselors. The results of those studies aligned with the data in this study. At present, there is consistent data available to districts for them to understand how the legislation has impacted educators, students, and parents. As such, this qualitative research study sought to add to the body of literature by examining school

counselors' perspectives of their positions relative to House Bill 5 and their self-efficacy in implementing it.

Texas House Bill 5 introduced a revised framework of graduation requirements at the state secondary education level (Cumpton & Giani, 2014; Dean, 2018; Mellor & Cain, 2024). The legislation aimed to enhance college and career readiness by providing a system of endorsement tracks (Dean, 2018; Mellor et al., 2015). These Endorsements empower students to select a specialized academic pathway that aligns with their chosen career and educational objectives, choices they make at the eighth-grade level. This bill aimed to decentralize the process statewide, granting individual school districts the freedom and flexibility to implement the program creatively. However, it did not include specific state-level directives for independent school district implementation or resources for this purpose.

Consequently, school districts had to adopt various approaches to meet the requirements of House Bill 5 (Mellor & Cain, 2024). Implementing graduation and curricular changes mandated by the bill also amplified the responsibilities of middle and high school counselors. In what follows, I discuss the results of each research question, relate them to prior studies, and identify areas for further research.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, “To what extent are high school counselors aware of and knowledgeable about the district’s policy for implementing House Bill 5?”

Overall, the participants demonstrated a strong understanding of their knowledge and ability to implement House Bill 5. Most participants indicated that they felt that the

training offered by the district helped them with preparing students for both college and career pathways.

According to findings from the *Intercultural Development Research Association* (2018) study, counselors reported that implementing House Bill 5 requirements increased the provision of career awareness information to students. They did, however, express that there was a need for more research to gain up-to-date knowledge about the experiences of students with varied gender identities, ethnicities, and sexual orientations, which will best prepare school counselors to serve the entire study body. Also noted in the IDRA study was that Education Service Centers provided a well-designed website containing resources about successful practices for counselors to enhance their knowledge about House Bill 5 and counselors with help to set up programs or websites in their districts.

Research Question 2

The second research question provided additional information about a somewhat contentious issue in previous research. Question 2 was, “How do high school counselors introduce and promote the school district’s House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offering to students?” In this study, counselors stated that they used various ways to promote House Bill 5, including group guidance sessions, visitations to middle school campuses, and one-on-one counseling sessions. The findings were consistent with existing research.

For example, Bojorquez (2018) authored the *Intercultural Development Research Association*. Findings showed that some school counselors held a specific career and

college readiness class in the eighth grade. Others reported that they integrated counselor visits into health classes to speak about careers for implementing House Bill 5.

In other schools, career content was embedded in classes like technology, where students researched careers. In one school district, for example, counselors said students were required to produce a thorough and detailed plan of graduation options. Also, there was a large freshman-year assembly where parents and students received information about graduation plans and Endorsements. Following the assembly, students set up appointments to meet with counselors, and at these meetings, students received even more information about the House Bill 5 graduation plan and endorsements. Some counselors also visited specific classes and gave presentations.

Research Question 3

The third question of the study was, “To what extent do high school counselors effectively communicate with parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement?” This study's findings produced mixed opinions regarding how well parents understood the implications of their child’s endorsement of long-term career and post-secondary education. Moreover, the quality and quantity of post-secondary materials available to parents, according to participants, were limited. A majority of participants noted this was an area that needed improvement.

A more recent study produced by the Intercultural Development Research Association (2018) revealed counselors reported having success with families by offering information sessions multiple times during the year. They also found that holding

sessions on the same day as parent-teacher conferences worked well for distributing material and providing updates to parents on House Bill 5. Also, counselors mentioned that short 30-minute sessions better accommodated parents' schedules than longer sessions. Presentations that were in Spanish and English aided the parent engagement.

Consistent with the data in this study, counselors in the 2023 study stated that parents and families experiencing economic hardships needed guidance and opportunities to meet with counselors to understand all aspects of the college admission process. Many counselors said that parents cared and wanted the best for their children, but that poverty and economic struggles created barriers. This finding was consistent with findings from the earlier study conducted by Cumpton and Giani (2014).

Research Question 4

The fourth question was, "What constraints do high school counselors face in implementing House Bill 5 with lower socio-economic students in urban school districts?" The findings from this study showed that students and counselors needed access to technology. Participants believed that the lack of technology in student homes limited their ability to explore work-based opportunities and career choices. In addition, there were a limited number of Career Technology Education (CTE) classes on the campuses represented in this study. Findings showed that having limited CTE classes affected the endorsement students can have and limited their opportunities to choose specific pathways such as engineering and business.

Although most of the participants in this study reported a high level of confidence related to their ability to educate students and families on HB 5, this finding was inconsistent with other researchers. For instance, the Intercultural Development Research Association (2018) study revealed that counselors believed their district and region could only answer some of their specific questions about House Bill 5. This study found that counselors needed the technology necessary to keep track of student's graduation plans effectively and needed more training on House Bill 5.

Still, by and large, the findings from the present study aligned with previous findings in most areas. Recall that the participants in this study stated their beliefs that funding presented challenges for underrepresented students and that House Bill 5 needed to address those issues. For underrepresented racial and ethnic group students, only one counselor reported positive college preparedness outcomes from House Bill 5 implementation at their campus and stated that they had never seen so much interest in college. All others did not see any increase in college interest but saw the potential for an increase in college preparedness if the school district had more resources that could be used to create the time to help students and families learn more about college opportunities. The participants in Dean's (2018) study reported identical data.

In all, the data from previous studies (see Terry et al., 2016; Dean, 2018; Mellor & Cain, 2024; Cumpton & Giani, 2014) aligned with the data from this study. A majority of participants in all of the studies identified similar the pros and cons of House Bill 5 for all students, including increased workload, the absence of key resources, and the

disparate impact on underrepresented students. Nevertheless, one sentiment that was notably absent was the belief that House Bill 5 was unnecessary.

Discussion of Theoretical Framework in This Study

The successful implementation of House Bill 5 in schools depends on the self-efficacy of school counselors. According to Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977), the theoretical framework of this study, counselors' efficacy can be seen through their beliefs in their capability to execute tasks required by House Bill 5 effectively. That is, efficacy expectations and outcome expectancy illustrated their confidence in the positive outcome of their efforts, that is.

An outcome expectancy is a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to specific outcomes while an efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Outcome and efficacy expectations are differentiated because individuals can believe that a course of action will produce specific outcomes. However, if they entertain severe doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities, such information does not influence their behavior (Bandura, 1977).

In implementing Texas House Bill 5, school counselors' efficacy, as seen through Bandura's self-efficacy theory, was pivotal. This efficacy can be seen through participant's belief in their capability to execute tasks required by House Bill 5 effectively (efficacy expectation) and their confidence in positive outcomes of their efforts (outcome expectancy) (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy expectations of a school counselor might involve their belief in their ability to effectively communicate the

benefits and requirements of House Bill 5 to students, parents, and other stakeholders.

The participants in this study expressed confidence in their knowledge and skills to create informational materials, conduct presentations, and engage with students in a way that promoted understanding and compliance with House Bill 5 new graduation requirements. The constraints they identified did not relate to areas they considered within their locus of control.

Bandura (1997) explained that persons with high efficacy expectations were more likely to engage actively in activities. Within the lived experiences of the participants in this study, the expectations include House Bill 5 implementation. All of the participants accepted the reality that they needed to understand the requirements thoroughly, provide accurate information to students and parents and effectively guide students in selecting suitable Endorsements.

A manifestation of outcome expectancy in relationship to House Bill 5 was the counselor's belief that by effectively implementing the new graduation plans and Endorsements, students would be better prepared for college or career success. More importantly, counselors' outcome expectancy influenced their investment in implementing House Bill 5. Those who believed their actions would lead to positive outcomes, such as improved academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and better post-secondary success, were more motivated to dedicate time and effort to the process.

In summary, school counselors' efficacy, as viewed through the lens of Bandura's theory, is crucial for the successful implementation of House Bill 5. By fostering high efficacy expectations and outcome expectancy, counselors can effectively guide students

through the transition, leading to improved academic outcomes and better preparedness for post-secondary endeavors. The data from this study indicated efficacious counselors considered what they desired to do and planned to use various resources to accomplish their goals.

Implications for Teachers, Educational Leaders, and Policymakers

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study focused on counselors' perspectives of House Bill 5 and its implementation. The data from this study revealed five significant implications for teachers, educational leaders, and policymakers regarding improving counseling services in Texas Schools. They are discussed next.

First, counselors need more significant support from their colleagues and school administrators to implement the bill successfully. A suggestion for providing greater support is to require counselors to receive professional development concerning equity and include them as stakeholders in defining and implementing the school district's equity vision. Counselors must be able to articulate plans of action that align with equity initiatives. This implication addresses underrepresented students. A section of The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) requires that all schools receiving Title I funds submit an equity plan that addresses racial, ethnic, and social disparities.

The district should require workshops as part of the regular pre-service and in-service professional development programs that help counselors review and analyze school district data on students' college readiness. This implication would expand the work of Cumpton and Giani (2014). Some school counselors may benefit from specific professional development activities to increase their efficacy in needed competence areas. Workshops should include the percentage of Endorsements earned at their respective secondary campuses, college

course enrollment, preparedness data, and discussions on students' high school successes and struggles. Such information would help counselors become more knowledgeable about and able to implement their districts' policies on House Bill 5. Also, reducing the assigned responsibilities of school counselors increases their time for preparing students for college and careers and implementing House Bill 5 (Cumpton & Giani, 2014; Dean, 2018). One suggestion for reducing counselors' responsibilities is to assign or hire personnel to handle standardized tests, freeing up time for counselors who spend most of their time on testing.

A second implication concerns the critical role that family engagement plays in students' career choices and college preparation. As suggested in this study, schools need to grow relationships with the community that entrusts the district with the future of their families. Schools must develop ways to increase positive relationships among students' families, counselors, teachers, and administrators. One way to do this is to increase the means of disseminating information and communicating with parents, including social media, emails, texts, phone calls, and one-on-one meetings. As indicated by participants in other studies, counselors should provide parents with access to a state-level helpline or customer service email if they cannot get answers to their specific questions at the school or district level. This will help parents feel more comfortable with the materials counselors use in their sessions with students and become more knowledgeable of resources related to House Bill 5.

Additionally, counselors should be equipped to assist students' families in navigating the system for college preparation and access. Counselors should receive professional development on equity issues and family engagement models that increase positive relationships among schools, counselors, and families. The more informed parents

are, the more helpful they can be to their children when they make career and college decisions. One of the accountability dimensions within House Bill 5 includes a parent and community engagement piece, which measures the level of access, involvement, and communication a school and district have with the community. Furthermore, educating parents with students in eighth grade on college and postsecondary activities increases the prospects of the student's completing college, which is one of the reasons for parent engagement in House Bill 5.

A third implication concerns the limited funding some Texas school districts receive for technology. This study showed that counselors' and students' access to adequate technology is limited at best. This leads to inequitable academic and career advancement opportunities for students in some high schools. Policymakers and other stakeholders can improve this situation by providing additional funding and opportunities for schools to apply for innovative grants that could fully and fairly support schools' technology needs and enhance student outreach through technology across all districts. The state or district should provide capacity-building grants for high schools to partner with colleges, universities, and private businesses to develop and implement technological tools that improve counseling efficiency. This includes improving communication efforts between the school and the student's parents or guardians.

Additional funding needs to be considered to help hire more counselors to be strictly House Bill 5 college and career counselors. The literature reported that counselors are overwhelmed, stressed due to workload, have multiple responsibilities, and have limited time (Cumpton & Giani, 2014; Mellor et al., 2015; Mellor & Cain, 2024). Hiring more counselors will help decrease the anxiety level of counselors who feel

overwhelmed, allow counselors to have more time to rotate responsibilities to avoid burnout, and identify shared roles that enhance efficiencies.

The fourth implication concerns strong efforts to educate middle school students about House Bill 5. This study revealed that middle school students needed to take House Bill 5 Endorsement selections more seriously. Additionally, there was a need to introduce the House Bill 5 process before students enter high school. To assist with connecting with middle school students, the school district could initiate a plan to prepare middle school students for the House Bill 5 process. This plan could consist of showing videos prepared by the district, illustrating the five endorsements during homeroom advisory, and then sending it out on Twitter.

The district could have a career fair for middle school students to ask industry representatives about their jobs. Also, it can offer a tour of the high school in the district, rotating students through different areas of interest to learn about electives. In turn, the district could allow high school counselors to visit the middle schools and share options for Endorsements. The plan might include a parent's night, live streamed, of course, on the school website for parents who could not attend in person. The final part of the plan for educating middle school students about the House Bill 5 process is for high school counselors to communicate with parents and meet with students one-on-one to answer their questions before finalizing high school plans.

The fifth implication concerns counselors expressing a need for assistance for working with parents with language barriers. District leaders should create multilingual resources for parents concerning college and career information and graduation requirements. Parents of all languages should have access to these materials. Counselors can ensure that the

quality and content of these resources are updated within the district and school. A study commissioned by the Texas Education Grantmaker Advocacy Consortium conducted through the George Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M found that in one district in West Texas, the main communication challenge for parents was a language barrier, resulting in confusion about House Bill 5 (Terry et al., 2016). Parents reported being enthusiastic about the changes once the necessary material was translated into Spanish.

Recommendations

The research findings from this study can assist policymakers, school district leadership, principals, counselors, and teachers who provide educational services to students. The findings point to six recommendations for addressing and improving the implementation of House Bill 5 and school counselors' efficacy in their programmatic service delivery of the House Bill 5 process. The following recommendations are:

1. Assess the counselors' workload, including any additional tasks, to ensure the successful implementation of House Bill 5 and consider restructuring where feasible. Re-evaluate counselors' responsibilities to provide practical guidance on House Bill 5 and college readiness. Policymakers and district administrators should examine counselor-to-student ratios and fund sustainable ratios that enable counselors to address crucial emotional issues, provide career and college advice, and engage with parents. Specifically, counselors require more opportunities for individual meetings with students to address specific concerns related to House Bill 5.
2. Policymakers should consider allotting extra funding to school districts to recruit more counselors dedicated to serving as House Bill 5 college and career counselors.

- They should also participate in the teacher hiring process and master schedule planning to ensure the pathways are fully utilized and developed.
3. School counselors should continue to dialogue with students and parents, guiding them through the House Bill 5 process until successful graduation. Additionally, counselors should survey parents to identify the most effective communication methods for educating them about House Bill 5. Consider providing online links to webinars on House Bill 5 so that parents can access real-time information, which could benefit working parents who cannot attend in-person parent meetings.
 4. The district should evaluate, adopt, and implement best practices of vertical integration between middle school and high school. District leaders should explore expanding the endorsement section of personal graduation plans to the middle school. This step would familiarize students and parents with the complexities and implications of future career and college planning. Offering parents and students an endorsement selection plan will enhance awareness and facilitate discussions, ultimately aligning student values with post-secondary choices and success. To facilitate this, the counseling structure should be revised to allow counselors to rotate with student cohorts starting in middle school.
 5. School counselors may benefit from professional development activities to increase their self-efficacy for implementing House Bill 5. District coordinators and state educational agencies should survey counselors regarding the topics they identify as areas of need for professional development to provide informed decisions regarding training opportunities and certification/licensure renewal requirements. In-service

- training and continuing education should be offered to provide school counselors with relevant information to support their professional development and increase their career counseling self-efficacy.
6. The school district and counselors must be innovative in implementing House Bill 5 to align with the district's student demographics. This includes considering the native language preferences of parents and students attending schools receiving Title I funds. Federal law requires schools receiving Title I Funds to submit an equity plan that addresses racial, ethnic, and socio-economic disparities.

Suggestions for Future Research

This qualitative phenomenological study explored school counselors' self-efficacy in implementing House Bill 5. Specifically, it focused on the personal experiences of high school counselors as they implemented this educational reform. The data collected included counselors' perspectives and realities of implementing House Bill 5 in two urban high schools in the North Central Region of Houston, Texas. The review of the literature and study findings provide evidence that school counselors take a more individualized approach to advising students for postsecondary pathways of their choice and provide parents with information on House Bill 5 policy.

The findings lead to the following suggestions for future research. First, researchers should examine how House Bill 5 has affected counselors' abilities to provide services that increase post-secondary access and success for underrepresented and underserved students in Texas. Second, they should investigate the best counseling practices school systems can adopt to increase secondary access and success for

underrepresented and underserved students in Texas. In addition, the challenges that counselors face in providing services that increase post-secondary access and success for underrepresented and underserved students in Texas under House Bill 5 should be examined.

Another consideration is to research House Bill 5 district expectations of high schools and the types of benchmarks that indicate progress with implementation. Studies should also be conducted to understand the need for policy implementation in various settings. This would benefit scholars and district leaders as they plan to adapt and adjust their programs to meet their communities' needs. This research is crucial as it could bring policymakers' attention to the quality of implementation of standard barriers and challenges counselors face. Additionally, it may assist educational leaders in determining whether House Bill 5, as an educational reform, is progressing as an institutional trend that should continue as part of regular school operations or if it is likely to be a passing trend. Such research is also significant as it may provide further insights into the relationship between policy development and implementation.

Finally, research on the perspectives and experiences of middle school counselors can explore the challenges of preparing students for pathways and decisions leading to high school enrollment. Equally important is to research the impact of House Bill 5 education on parents from middle to high school. According to the findings of this study, most participants reported that there needs to be a greater focus on middle school education regarding House Bill 5. The research can examine how best to familiarize

students with career and college opportunities before high school and facilitate their participation.

Concluding Thoughts/Summary

This study showed that counselors are crucial in implementing House Bill 5 in urban Title I comprehensive high schools. Their self-efficacy or belief in their ability to help students is the key to how effectively they can deliver college and career readiness services. Understanding their perspectives and challenges is vital for improving the implementation of House Bill 5 and supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings in this study underscore the increased workload and support needed for counselors due to House Bill 5 requirements. They also underscore the need for counselors to be deliberate in planning ways to effectively involve parents in students' post-secondary education and career choices.

Overall, this qualitative study provides valuable insights into counselors' challenges in implementing House Bill 5, including the need for more technology, better communication with middle school students, and increased parental involvement. Addressing these challenges and creating diverse best practices can lead to more effective implementation of House Bill 5 and better outcomes for students in Title I schools. Constant support, training, and resources are crucial to House Bill 5 implementation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter To School Administrator

Marlene Studivant-Moore
Prairie View A&M University
Whitlowe Green College of Education
Wilhelmina Delco Building 103
Prairie View, Texas 77446

September 11, 2023

Dear Administrator(s):

I want permission to conduct a research study with school counselors on your campus. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership and Counseling Doctoral Program at Prairie View A&M University and am writing my dissertation. This study is entitled “The Impact of District Policy on the Efficacious Implementation of Texas House Bill 5.”

I hope you and your school administration will allow me to conduct my study with the counselors on your school campus regarding implementing the specified House Bill 5 education legislation. This study examines the apparent self-efficacy convictions of school counselors working with students and parents in high-need urban, comprehensive high schools on the implementation and education of House Bill 5. Specifically, this study will explore the implementation and substances of House Bill 5 policy through the perspectives of school counselors who directly influence the pre-college execution of instruction strategies planned for expanding students' college and career decision-making. This study aims to understand counselors' experiences because they are essential to students' college and career attainment.

If you and your school administration approve, the school counselors will complete an online survey and consent form. The survey and consent form will take no longer than 45 minutes to complete. The results of this study will remain confidential and anonymous, so you or your school campus will incur no costs.

Please let me know by Friday, September 15, 2023, if the school counselors can participate in the research. I will be happy to answer any questions you or your school administration may have at any time. You may contact me at mstudivantmoore@pvamu.edu or by phone at 832-633-3053.

Sincerely,

Marlene Studivant-Moore

Appendix B: Letter To School Counselors

Marlene Studivant-Moore
Prairie View A&M University
Whitlowe Green College of Education
Wilhelmina Delco Building 103
Prairie View, Texas 77446

(Date to be added)

Dear Counselor:

I would like you to participate in a research study with school counselors within your school district. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership and Counseling Doctoral Program at Prairie View A&M University and am writing my dissertation. This study is entitled “The Impact of District Policy on the Efficacious Implementation of Texas House Bill 5.”

This study examines the apparent self-efficacy convictions of school counselors working with students and parents in high-need urban, comprehensive high schools on the implementation and education of House Bill 5. Specifically, this study will explore the implementation and substances of House Bill 5 policy through the perspectives of school counselors who directly influence the pre-college execution of instruction strategies planned for expanding students' college and career decision-making. This study aims to understand counselors' experiences because they are essential to students' college and career attainment.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the consent form and email it back to me at mstudivantmoore@pvamu.edu by (date will be added). The results of this study will remain confidential and anonymous. You or your school campus will incur no costs.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time. You may contact me at mstudivantmoore@pvamu.edu or by phone at 832-633-3053.

Sincerely,
Marlene Studivant-Moore

Appendix C: Prairie View A&M University Office of Research Compliance**CONSENT FORM**

TITLE OF STUDY: THE IMPACT OF DISTRICT POLICY ON THE EFFICACIOUS
IMPLEMENTATION OF TEXAS HOUSE BILL 5

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2023-014

DEAR STUDY PARTICIPANT:

You are invited to participate in a research study examining your experiences as a high school counselor working in an urban high school and your experience with implementing House Bill 5 as a school counselor.

You were selected as a possible participant because of your role and responsibilities in preparing students for careers or college.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study. Dr. Patricia Hoffman-Miller, Prairie View A&M University, Educational Leadership & Counseling Department, is conducting the study.

Background Information

This study aims to examine the apparent self-efficacy of school counselors working with students and parents in high-need, comprehensive high schools in implementing House Bill 5 policy at the district level. The conceptual framework used in this study is Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

1. Sign the consent form to participate in the study.
2. Provide an email address.
3. Agree to complete an online survey during a session of 30-45 minutes.
4. Agree that you will not receive any payment to participate in this study.
5. All data collected is confidential and will be kept secure

Risks and Benefits of Participating in the Study.

The study does not have anticipated risks, and risks are limited. If you would like to be excused from participation during the interviewing process, you may opt to do so. Engaging in this study will allow school counselors to provide a voice in district-specific procedures for implementing House Bill 5. Their feedback might contribute to the overall improvement of the district HB 5 plan.

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS.

Phone: (936) 261-1553, Office of Research & Innovation 1 of 3

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
CONSENT FORM

Another benefit of this study is that the information gained will help district and campus administrators understand how school counselors perceived their experiences in implementing House Bill 5 to meet the needs of all students to be college—or career-ready and uncover what is essential to improving the future process of House Bill 5.

Compensation:

There will not be any payment or other form of compensation for the participants in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In all reports from this study, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records. The audio recording will be destroyed one year following the study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Prairie View A&M University or Aldine Independent School District. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Marlene Studivant-Moore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact the Principal

Investigator, Dr. Patricia Hoffman-Miller, at Prairie View A&M University, **936-261-3652**,
phmiller@pvamu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Office of Research Compliance at (researchcompliance@pvamu.edu) in the Office for Research and Innovation, P.O. Box 519; MS 2800 Prairie View, Texas 77446 Phone 936.261.1553.

You will be given a copy of this information for your records.

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

CONSENT FORM

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS.

Phone: (936) 261-1553, Office of Research & Innovation

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

CONSENT FORM

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. Therefore,
 I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS.

Phone: (936) 261-1553, Office of Research & Innovation

Appendix D: Online Survey – Counselor’s Implementation of House Bill 5

Please answer the questions below. Be very detailed in your response to each question. Please note that some questions require answers, as indicated with an asterisk. (*)

* Indicates a required question

1. To what extent are high school counselors aware of, knowledgeable about, and understanding the school district policy for implementing House Bill 5?
2. How do you, as a high school counselor, introduce and promote the school district's House Bill 5 graduation requirements and endorsement offerings to students?
3. How do you, as a high school counselor, effectively communicate to parents and students about pathway options, endorsement selection processes, and courses that align with each endorsement?
4. What specific challenges do you encounter when supporting lower socioeconomic students in their endorsement choices in Aldine ISD?
5. What are some ways to improve the implementation of House Bill 5 within the school district?
6. What is your name?
7. What is your preferred name to use in this study? (Ex. Counselor A, Counselor B, Counselor C, or other)
8. How long have you been a high school counselor? *
9. How many counselors (including you, are in your department?) *

10. ROLE OF COUNSELORS AND INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS (Questions 11-13)

11. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “extremely effective” and 5 being “not at all effective,” considering the initiative, how would you rank HB 5’s effectiveness **as an educational intervention?**

1 – Extremely effective

2 – Moderately effective

3 – Neutral/unsure

4 – Slightly effective

5 – Not effective at all

12. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being “extremely well” and 5 being “not well at all” how would you assess student understanding of the endorsement content?

1 - Students understand extremely well

2- Students understand pretty well

3- Neutral/unsure

4- Students somewhat understand

5- Students do not understand at all

13. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being "extremely well" and 5 being" not well at all" how would you assess student understanding of the endorsement selection process?

1 -Students understand extremely well

2. Students understand pretty well

3. Neutral/unsure

4. Students somewhat understand

5. Students do not understand at all

*

COUNSELOR-PARENT COMMUNICATION

14. Do you feel parents receive enough information about post-secondary education? Why/why not?

*15. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being “very confident” and 5 being “not confident at all,” how would you assess the receipt of Information from parents

1 – Very confident parents receive adequate information to support student decision-making

2 – Somewhat confident

3 – Neutral/unsure

4 – Not especially confident

5 – Not confident at all

16. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being “very confident” and 5 being “not confident at all,” how would you assess parent processing of information to support their child’s selection of endorsements?

1 – Very confident parents can process the information received to support student decision-making.

2 – Somewhat confident

3 –Neutral/unsure 4 – Not especially confident...

5 – Not confident at all...

17. In your estimation, which is the most effective form of communication with parents?

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very confident” and 5 being “not confident at all,” to what degree do you feel parents understand the implication of their student endorsement selection process on long-term career and post-secondary education choices?

1- Very confident parents can understand the implication

2 -Somewhat confident parents can understand the implication

3 - Neutral/unsure

4 - Not especially confident parents can understand the implication

5- Not confident at all, parents can understand the implications.

KEY CHALLENGES

19. What are your greatest challenges with your job related to House Bill 5 Implementation?

20. What suggestions do you have for alleviating these challenges? *.

Appendix E: Curriculum Vitae

Marlene Studivant-Moore
1354 Blue Diamond Drive
Missouri City, Texas 77489
momarlene@sbcglobal.net

EDUCATION:

High School:

1972 Booker T. Washington High School,
Norfolk, Virginia

Undergraduate:

1976 Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Virginia
Bachelor of Science in Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
with an endorsement in Driver Education

Graduate Degree:

1989 Master of Science in Physical Education
Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas

1993 Master of Science in Education - Counseling
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas

2000 Certification in School Administration
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas

2013 Educational Leadership, Ed.D. (ABD)
Texas Southern University, Texas

2015 Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership Program
 Present Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas

WORK EXPERIENCE:

1985 -1991 PreK-6 Physical Education Teacher,
 Houston Independent School District
 1992 -2000 Elementary School Counselor/Title I Coordinator,
 Houston Independent School District
 2000-2021 High School Counselor
 Houston Independent School District

SPECIAL AWARDS:

1986 Houston Gardens Elementary, Teacher of the Year
 1999 Clinton Park Elementary, School Counselor of the Year
 1999 East District, School Counselor of the Year
 2023 Human Rights Education Training – Certificate as Human
 Rights Consultant
 2024 Center for the Integration of Research Teaching and
 Learning (CIRTL) Network Massive Open Online
 Course (MOOC): Advancing Learning Through
 Evidence-Based Teaching – Associate Certificate

PRESENTATIONS:

An Investigation of Urban High School Counselors' Proficiency of Educational
 Training in College and Career Readiness, (poster presentation), 2019 Annual

Meeting of American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Canada, 6 April 2019, Doctoral *Student Marlene Studivant-Moore, Prairie View A&M University* Parenting with a Purpose Workshop, Waltrip High School, Houston, Texas, 8 February 2018, *Marlene Studivant-Moore, M.Ed.*

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

American School Counselor Association
 American Educational Research Association (AERA)
 Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
 Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)
 Bellaire Toastmaster Club
 Houston School Counselors Association
 Research Association of Minority Professors
 Texas Counseling Association
 Texas School Counselor Association
 The American Association of Blacks in Higher Education
 The US Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Anointed Nurturer Caregiver Services - Various locations in Texas
 Houston Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority -Social Action Committee, Local Projects, and Scholarship Committee
 Hunter Glen III Homeowner Community Board – Missouri City, Texas
 Human Rights Advocate in Texas Public School
 Troop Mom Girl Scout Troop 2081 – Houston, Texas