DOLLARS AND SENSE: EXAMINING ACADEMIC INVESTMENTS IN URBAN
CONTINUATION SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DOLLARS AND SENSE: EXAMINING ACADEMIC INVESTMENTS IN URBAN
CONTINUATION SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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This study evaluates the effectiveness of continuation education high school investments at an urban Bay Area school district using cultural responsive practices. Soliciting perspectives of administrative stakeholders, data was collected to determine whether cultural responsive contexts are considered from a budgetary stance to support success in continuation high school programs. This study is intended to inform future district strategies to promote cultural responsive practices and increase program access and equity in its goal of ensuring all students achieve college or career readiness standards by high school graduation.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Chair, Thesis Committee

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I hope that with the many conversations that have taken place and the positive relationships established along this long journey that this work was not done in vain. It is my hope that continuation high school students are increasingly prioritized in district decisions to promote and promote college and career readiness for all students; increasing life chances for more students who look like me.

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Dedicated to
my parents and grandparents,
who claimed this achievement for me as a child
and
to my children, family, friends and young supporters
whom I have touched along the way,
keep your eye on the prize Kings and Queens;
believe, achieve and soar

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Zero tolerance policies are implemented throughout the nation, significantly impacting public policy (Stader, 2004). In the educational setting, zero tolerance policies are defined as disciplinary policies that result in mandatory suspension or expulsion for students who commit offenses that involve weapons, violence, or drugs (Stader, 2004; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Cramer, Gonzalez, and Lafont, 2014). Zero tolerance policies were created as a result of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA) and was expanded by practitioners to include zero-tolerance for drugs, alcohol, gang activity and fighting (Skiba, 2001, Wilson, 2013, Horsford and Powell, 2016). Within three years, 79% of schools across the U.S. had implemented some form of zero tolerance policy (Boccanfuso & Kuhfeld, 2011). Zero tolerance policies assume a one-size-fits-all penalty (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011), mandating severe consequences regardless of the circumstances.

Implementation of zero tolerance policies has become significant for schools with large populations of students of color and students of low socioeconomic status, as zero tolerance policies often lead to high levels of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. These policies disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities (Brownstein, 2010). Alternative school placement continues to be a final option for many students who have experienced ongoing academic and behavioral difficulties. In fact, alternative school placements are often the direct result of school discipline policies,

which are highly subjective and the single greatest predictor of future involvement in the juvenile justice system (Powell, 2007).

In addition, out-of-school factors such as juvenile probation, court involvement, and the need for students to work outside of school to support their families have contributed to in-school challenges including truancy, excessive transitions from school to residential programs to juvenile detention facilities, and the fostering of what students describe as a "prison culture" including prison customs, norms, beliefs, "street" codes, and values. Alexander (2012) refers to the growing trend of mass incarceration in the United States, as the 'new Jim Crow' for many students, this pipeline to prison begins with inadequate resources and supports in school.

Horsford and Powell (2016) claim schools that experience a shortage of qualified teachers, and funding for resources for counselors, social workers, special education services, supplies, textbooks, often trap students in failing circumstances that lead them not onto a path to college and career, but to incarceration. Failure to provide educational resources for students increases disengagement, which heightens the risk of court involvement (Horsford and Powell, 2016). The convergence of district-level school discipline policies and practices, inadequate resources in alternative schools, and the segregation of students by race, gender, ability, and language introduce larger moral and ethical questions concerning how such practices perpetuate inequality and racism, while denying poor students of color access to high-quality learning experiences.

Given the widening discipline gap in PK-12 education and criminalization of boys of color through alternative schools, school and district leaders must confront the role such schools play in fueling the national crisis of mass incarceration (Alexander, 2012). School leaders have the power and responsibility to ensure each student is provided an equitable opportunity to reach his or her potential regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic background—this is a critical role. School leadership influences the success of a school in that leaders can influence the culture of an organization through direct actions and by creating or modifying the formal programs, systems, facilities, structure, and cultural forms (Yukl, 2010, p.327). School leaders must also make decisions based on the data revealing the socially unjust practices embedded in their alternative education programs and reassess the extent to which such schools, as currently structured, truly offer students a "second chance," or simply serve as a pit stop along a tragic pathway to prison (Horsford and Powell, 2016). The challenge confronting school leaders and teachers is how to best meet the needs of this changing and expanding population of students (Banks, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Background

Every school district in California is required to maintain at least continuation high school; such school types remain largely absent from the general public's consciousness (Nygren, K., 2013). More than 55,000 students attended California's 452 continuation high schools during 2015-16 school year (CDE, 2017). Continuation high

school education programs began as individualized opportunities to meet the educational needs for youth identified as at-risk for academic failure. Factors that result in student placement in continuation education cover a range of issues related to behavioral, attendance, and academic performance challenges.

Continuation high school programs vary substantially in focus and quality (EdSource, 2008). Continuation schools offer career academies, online instruction (Cyber High), 12+1 (extended grade for failing students), dual enrollment at the local community college, and social enrichment programs. The complexities of students served by continuation education programs summons acknowledgment that there are students who do not meet the “one size fits all model”, therefore additional efforts must be made to ensure their educational success. Continuation high school education programs that focus on student success and retention are costly programs for school districts. Due to the fluctuation in governmental policy and revenue sources, managing funding in support of continuation high school education programs has become difficult for district leaders.

Continuation high schools often become district dumping grounds for at risk students and often do not have a very good track record in moving them to graduation (Mac Iver, 2010, Horsford and Powell, 2016). College success is not promising for continuation high school students who choose to further their education at a local community college without academic, social and emotional support. Remediation is a major factor impacting academic success among community college students (Navarez and Wood, 2010). To disrupt negative perceptions, California established the Model

Continuation High Schools Recognition Program. It is a joint project of CDE and the California Continuation Education Association (CCEA). The program honors continuation high schools for the comprehensive services they provide to at-risk youth through instructional strategies, flexible scheduling, guidance and counseling. This study will examine site based budgeting processes and its impact on leadership challenges to adequately support successful achievement outcomes for continuation high school students in an urban Bay Area school district.

Problem

Continuation school site leaders have had to make compromising choices in deciding how to best serve students with the resources provided. Student learning environments in general are distressed by insufficient funding in a variety of ways: increased class size, having ample supplies and materials, and inability to hire for key positions to support critical needs like student learning and social emotional health are often common experiences in urban districts. The inability of continuation high school site leaders to use total discretion to provide students with holistic learning experiences inhibits the obligation to deliver meaningful curriculum that best meet the needs of students served by this unique academic program.

In a local district, Sunrise Unified School District (BAUAD) where critical informative data was collected from the high school senior population, continuation high school seniors were completely absent from the self-reported survey. Continuation

schools students were not surveyed for district-level reports on experiences and achievement statistics of high school seniors, thus published data is skewed in favor of traditional education students.

Senior Survey 2015: Additional Support

Select Question: Additional Support
I could have used more assistance in:

Select High School
All

Select Subgroup
All Students

Select Ethnicity
All

Select Fluency Status
All

Select Gender
All

Select Pathway
All

I could have used more assistance in:

Figure 1

The chart above (Figure 1) displays self-reported responses from high school seniors regarding support services in which students could have used additional assistance.

Many surveys were administered to high school students asking a variety of questions related to the support received during high school; data was collected on students whom successfully met A-G requirements, statistics on cohort graduation and dropout rates, students on track for graduation and involvement in academic pathways (SUSD). The data mentioned above is a misrepresentation of the experiences for the total high school population in SUSD. In figure 1, regular high school students report on what services they could have used more of; given the responses one might infer that if regular education students were not receiving needed services, continuation school students were definitely missing out on the same critical supports.

Other surveys that included continuation school data (selected by school type/name) produced alarming results: 1) where data on continuation high school students were present for at least 3 years, it is revealed that enrolled in pathways were not on track for completing A-G college requirements, 2) continuation high school students were off track for graduating according to GPA, credits, History, English, Math, Science, and Language requirements. Most students were on track for graduating in the areas of Arts and other Electives. Research is needed to determine how support is provided to continuation schools in SUSD and how leadership decisions are made around program as well as looking into the implementation strategies used to support all students. Educational leaders must realize that a one size fits all model for regular comprehensive high schools are not sufficient for continuation high schools. They must also heed to the call of leadership across the district for the total population of students; particularly high

school students who as products of our educational system will soon become members of the community faced with “real” adult challenges and responsibilities. Students’ futures rely on both school and district leadership.

Discourse related to high school education primarily focuses on regular education and occasionally special education, but rarely continuation high school education. The absence of focus on continuation high school education should persuade stakeholders to question leadership policies and decisions that foster programs for college and career readiness for continuation high school students. Stakeholders for continuation high school programs represent unique positions in K12 education: administrators, teachers and students creating the campus culture - administrators lead the work at the site level by developing programs, assessing challenges, building community relationships and are charged with the overall responsibility of student learning, teachers implement site plans, build rapport with students and respond to daily needs of individual students and issues related to classroom management, students show up to school representing a vast spectrum of circumstances (motivated to learn and progress, emotional, disengaged, ready to challenge authority or be challenged, in need of certain supports unarticulated that encourage and allow for productive learning), and parents (family) a critical reinforcement to driving home the importance of attaining a productive education, nurturing social and emotional needs and finally encouraging positive student aspirations toward successful and socially responsible citizens of the community. Each stakeholder’s position relative to their experiences with continuation education incites the question of

how to best apply resources and policy toward improved outcomes of continuation school students.

The resources needed to support continuation education are often greater than the needs of regular education counterparts based simply on the nature of the type of student served by the program. Federal, State and Local revenue streams support districts in meeting educational goals that translate into a basic spend rate per student in a regular education environment (revenue source for program divided by the number of students served). Spend rates are grossly inflated in continuation high school setting due to the fluctuation in enrollment throughout the year, the advanced degree of social, emotional and academic needs of students served by the program. Continuation high school students are vulnerable to decisions made by leadership concerning investments focused on successful graduation and preparation for life beyond high school.

Disparities in the public education system incites the need for equity and advocacy on behalf of continuation high school education programs, giving attention to the perspectives of program leaders; my research question is, how does site based budgeting impact decisions around academic investments for continuation school programs?

Significance

The purpose of this research is to offer results from an evaluation of the continuation high school program leaders' use of cultural responsiveness in budgeting for

academic investments. This study will identify essential concerns of stakeholders for continuation school programs and between district strategies and processes compared to site level impact on continuation education programs through the experience of key stakeholders.

The findings from this study will be used to inform discourse emphasizing supportive strategies for continuation high school students of SUSD; summoning recognition of needs for a population generally categorized as academic underachievers. This study will contribute a double benefit to local continuation high school students and the SUSD's goal to graduate each student prepared for college or the workforce, supporting all students toward successful outcomes regardless of their educational pathways.

Using equity as a broad lens, this study will examine practices and strategies of administrators for continuation high school programs within urban school systems. Questions remain surrounding to what extent the educational system will default and struggling children will not learn because the school leadership has not created an inclusive school culture or modeled the expectations for cultural responsiveness, and to what extent these students will continue to be taught ineffectively (Banks, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2012). It is a necessary social duty of educational administrators to acknowledge the various needs of students served by the programs and think innovatively to maximize program benefits for all students. K-12 administrators must accelerate their role as a

social vehicle to build capacity and level the playing field for a sustainable future of all students, particularly for students in specialized programs such as continuation education.

Overview

This research study will be presented in a format of five chapters. Chapter One will be presented as the introduction to the topic and problem concerning challenges experienced by continuation school leaders in urban school districts.

Chapter Two will present a summary of literature on continuation school students and continuation high schools, California State budgeting practices and policy on school funding, cultural responsive leadership and social emotional learning, a concept intended to express the education of students with a multidimensional focus on the whole student experience.

Chapter Three will examine utilization of cultural responsiveness as a framework to budgeting practices supporting academic investments in continuation high school programs. The chapter will provide a description of participants and their significance to the study, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis processes.

Chapter Four will follow and present findings from the study. An analysis of the data collected, relationship of themes and findings, literature support will be included. The chapter will also summarize the findings and introduce additional points of reference where applicable to enrich understanding of the findings.

Chapter Five will present a summary, interpretation and relativity of the findings. The chapter will also include implications and recommendations for consideration of practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2 – RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

Public education is a high stakes industry; high costs, high expectations and high risks. The review of literature will provide insight to continuation high school programs: educational policy, student statistics, challenges and model education programs. This chapter will continue with a discussion of site based budgeting as a model and its use in decision program decision making. Funding is a critical platform for unique program development as it dictates the scope and breadth of a program focus. Access to adequate resources provides opportunities to support autonomy in programs designed to address the vast social, emotional and academic needs of high-risk students at continuation high schools. The final section will look at literature regarding the definition of cultural responsiveness and how it what it may look like in practice with high school students, as educational leaders move toward college and career readiness programs.

Continuation high schools remain among the most understudied sub-sector of secondary education in California (De Velasco, Austin, Dixon, Johnson, McLaughlin & Perez, 2008 and Nygreen, K., 2013). Search criteria of “continuation high schools” yielded limited results as a continuation high school is not a widely researched subject and is not a trending in popularity. In order to expand my results, I included “alternative high school” as continuation high school is one form of the alternative high school education program. (Appendix D)

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study will utilize cultural responsiveness as a primary conceptual framework to understand the critical role leaders must play in addressing the needs of continuation school students. Cultural responsive leadership is critical to the work of continuation high school education, as leaders are called to exercise their power as change agents and embrace culturally diverse educational environments. Culture is defined as values, traditions, worldview, and social and political relationships created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by common history, geographic location, language, social class, religion, or other shared identity (Neito and Bode, 2011) Cultural Responsiveness lends rationality, respect and sensitivity to understanding cultural needs and differences of continuation school students. The demographics of the SUSD continuation high school population coupled with individual student circumstances (i.e., academic, social, emotional, socio-economical) must be acknowledged and addressed without bias and overgeneralization.

Cultural Responsiveness will be used as a framework to acknowledge the diverse challenges of continuation education programs and the cultural complexities of the students served SUSD. Cultural responsiveness is defined with variations of an underlined idea of the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from others cultures. E. Swartz (2012) offers cultural responsive principles produced by assumptions or claims of practice: inclusion,

representation, accurate scholarship, indigenous voice, critical thinking and collective humanity.

Cultural relevance or responsiveness was first introduced in the early 1990s by scholars such as Delpit (1995), Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009), Sleeter and Grant (2003). The results of several studies have indicated student achievement can be directly linked to the assimilation of student culture into the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2001). It is believed that students of color are prone to low academic achievement because of the discontinuity between school and home. Culturally responsive educational leadership is a construct which emanates from pedagogies which actively respond to the diversity in our school populations. Gay (2002) defines Culturally Responsive Education as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective for them".

Culturally responsive leadership framework is based on Gay (2000) work on culturally responsive teaching consisting of validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformatory and emancipatory. School leaders who are culturally responsive leaders understand that to close the achievement gap, they must first close the opportunity gap leadership. This section will provide literature references for understanding: 1) continuation high school programs, 2) obligations of school districts as required by governmental educational and finance policies, and 3) leadership practices

that foster positive impact on continuation school education through relationship building and opportunities.

Understanding factors that contribute to the challenges of retention, increasing enrollment and successful completion of continuation school programs initially designed to serve as temporary interventions are important. Educating continuation school students to meet college and career readiness standards by graduation is a right for all students and every effort should be made to ensure that each student receives an opportunity at such success. Findings from this case study will prompt discussions on the restructuring of continuation education school programs at the district level to promote college and career readiness for its total student population.

Continuation High School Programs

Federal and state government laws are created to make educational institutions accountable to the students served by all levels of education. Government policies impose standards by way of testing to determine satisfactory progress, a measurement of successful academic achievement. Academic achievement levels are as diverse as the students served by any one institution. In a K12 environment, success is ultimately determined by high school graduation, further challenged by underperforming students in regular education, and tested even further in continuation high schools.

The California Department of Education (CDE) defines continuation education, and educational option since 1919, as an alternative high school diploma programs that serves students 16 years of age or older, have not completed high school and are at risk of not graduating (CDE, 2016). Students who are under-credited need supportive ways to earn a credential that will give them the ability to enter post-secondary education of secure a job that pays a living wage (Mac Iver, 2010). Many students who attend continuation school are on the brink of dropping out and have little or no interest in academic advancement. CDE (2015) reported that 2.8% of grades 9-12 statewide enrollment of 1,955,355 drop out of school (Appendix A). The dropout rate was reasonably low relative to total enrollment; however any student prematurely leaving K12 education without preparation for a viable life is a product of system failure.

De Velasco & McLaughlin, (2012) report from phase two of a 2007 field research study of continuation schools in nine California counties that formal educational pathways that provide students with opportunities for increased chances of academic and employment outcomes are limited or non-existent in continuation education. Recommendations in multiple areas were presented as next steps to improving the conditions of continuation schools ranging from placement policy, continuous development of instructional staff, academic progress recognition, support school, establish clear goals, improve systematic data tracking, and fully fund targeted supports (De Velasco & McLaughlin, 2012). Many continuation students in need of academic intervention and support efforts could benefit from these next steps. The next steps could

provide a basis to reorganize continuation education so that all of the students have access to universal program offerings.

The challenges of continuation education require execution of creativity and flexibility to meet the variety of needs of the student population (EdSource, 2008). Data from 40 California continuation schools with varied focus, student outcomes, size and area was conducted in 2007; researchers found that California continuation schools failed to provide the academic and critical support services that students need to succeed (De Velasco, et. al., 2008, De Velasco & McLaughlin, 2012). The need for accountability and structure is important for academic success of continuation students. Continuation students require a system of support to aide in various social, emotional and psychological challenges; systems include county and community youth-serving agencies, juvenile justice, mental health, child protective services and foster care (De Velasco & McLaughlin, 2012)

De Velasco & McLaughlin (2012) concluded that school districts play a critical role in setting clear academic goals for students in alternative settings by providing needed resources and implementing supporting policies that take the special needs of continuation schools into account. District leadership must be well informed of the needs of their continuation schools students so that a system of support can be created. Absence of systemic support for quality programs in continuation schools will depend on the views of administrators. Continuation students who do not receive social and academic

intervention fall further off high school completion track and drop out of school, adding to California's staggering dropout rate.

Resources: School Finance and Policy

Federal and State policies designed improve educational outcomes for all students also have potential to create inequities for students who struggle through K12 education, specifically continuation high school students.

- In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) was enacted under President Lyndon B. Johnson's leadership declaring a "War on Poverty" to ensure all students had access to education. ESEA created testing standards for students that ultimately could not be achieved through a single testing model (CDE).
- In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was the reauthorization of ESEA allowing states to design testing standards. The law provided additional funding for educational assistance for low income students in return for improvements in their academic progress, improved teacher and principal quality (HQT), and ultimately implemented measures that exposed achievement gaps among underserved students and their peers (US Department of Education). NCLB ultimately did not meet its intended goal to create additional resources to support student achievement (CDE).
- In 2006, the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) was introduced to set a standardized test as an additional graduation requirement with focus content

standards in math/English (CDE). This legislature ultimately proved to be a political embarrassment for districts as students who had completed graduation requirements could not pass the exit exam (CDE).

- In 2009, the Common Core Initiative promoted educational standards initially adopted by 48 states. The initiative required accountability through Math/ELA standards for all K12 students through learning goals outlined at each grade level (US Department of Education). The Common Core Initiative is currently active; however, the tools used to achieve outlined goals at the district level are frequently changing (CDE).
- In 2013, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) eliminated the California Pupil Retention Black Grant (commonly used to support continuation high school education). Funds were repurposed into a main source of unrestricted funding to be utilized at the discretion of the Local Education Agency (LEA) (CDE). LCFF granted LEAs authority over district investments, a new way of funding for school districts to focus on student success. The formula was a huge benefit to urban districts with moderate to high free and reduced priced lunch recipients. LCFF is currently active, however the influx of additional funding initially awarded to districts is slated to reach full implementation in coming years (CDE).
- The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) was introduced as a measure for LEAs to identify and monitor goals and strategies for improving achievement for all students (CDE). The initial LCAP requirement was rolled out with LCFF as a

three year plan to be updated annually. The LCAP is tied directly to funding through achievement benchmarks, if not met State funding is jeopardized (CDE).

- In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) enacted by President Obama replaced NCLB one size fits all model, promoting for the first time college and career readiness requirements for high school graduates (US Department of Education). ESSA obligated accountability through statewide assessments to measure academic progress and provide evidence based interventions (CDE). ESSA is currently active; its ultimate goal was to promote positive change for underperforming schools and low graduation rates.

LCFF is designed to give local agencies flexibility in the use of their state funding while adhering to supporting educational program standards and meeting the academic needs of students (CDE, 2015; LAO, 2013; WestEd, 2014). The impact of LCFF on school districts resulted in conversion of most previously restrictive state funds to unrestrictive funding, eliminating the need to adhere to restrictive expenditure requirements (CDE, 2015; LAO, 2013; WestEd, 2014).

Figure 2 – Equity in School Finance (LCFF, West Ed, 2014)

West Ed (2014) provides a visual interpretive overview of California's LCFF calculation for school districts. LCFF provides districts with a base per pupil amount and additional funding for K3 and 9-12 grade span and specific demographic criteria.

Achievement equity is not currently a reality in American public schooling. This problem is perhaps most visible as a result of achievement disparities across racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, Howard, 2010, Darling-Hammond, 2010). California's adoption of LCFF is an inclusive state-wide effort to provide resources to school districts that transcends socioeconomic and racial boundaries in support of improving high school graduation and college readiness for all students served by the public education system.

LCFF is comprised of a base grant (per pupil allocation by specific grade span), a supplemental grant allocation (per pupil allocation for demographic categories: low income, English Learner, or foster youth) and a concentration grant of an additional 50% (for districts where students that meet criteria for the supplemental grant make up 55% or more of the student population). California's urban school districts were primary beneficiaries of LCFF, as it translated into an increase in State funding for districts. Districts were to utilize increased funding to improve educational outcomes for students who were specified in the LCFF funding categories.

Funding is an essential part of any program as it dictates decisions on program structure: from staffing and services to supplies. Budget models serve multiple purposes for managing finances. Models are used as a tool to create, track, compare and project financial activity. All school districts utilize a method of distribution of resources, a budget model, from systematic sources to spreadsheet formulas which can cross the entire spectrum from simple to complex. The goal of using budget models is to provide

transparency in budget allocation processes. A budget model can reflect district priorities at a glance; it easily displays the various levels of district investments among specified areas (i.e., salaries, professional development, books, supplies, etc.).

Budget models in California

Oakland Unified School District (SUSD) adopted its Results Based Budgeting (RBB) model in 2004. It combines School Based Budgeting (SBB) and School Based Management (SBM) developed from the Edmonton model for school budgeting (Matthews, 2010). SBB is a system that distributes funding to schools on a per-pupil basis rather than in the form of positions, programs or services (Matthews, 2010). SBM is a structure that allows school level decisions to drive resource allocations by the principal, committee and community members (Matthews, 2010, Hill et al., 2008). The strategy behind a system for resource allocation is to exercise site based budgeting utilizing one comprehensive tool that supports the goals of the district, school site, department through a result based budgeting model. RBB has yielded varying results since its implementation as well as since the research conducted by Dr. Matthews in 2010.

Matthews (2010) conducted research on Results Based Budgeting (RBB) at Oakland Unified School District that examined the relationship of RBB and its impact on student achievement; he also reviewed budget distribution and spending patterns during 2004-2008 and examined the level of autonomy exercised by principals using RBB. The

results were mixed; the study collected views of several principals who agreed that RBB supported autonomy and transparency, but others did not. Dr. Mathews (2010) concluded that RBB was not the sole contributor to student achievement success. For some principals, academic gains could be attributed to autonomous use of funding at the site level to fund additional instructional support services, but for other sites the same was not true. Sites that were not able to meet their operational costs because of high cost veteran staff were granted supplemental resources to help bridge the gap in their budgets, a much appreciated funding provision at the time (Mathews, 2010). During the early years of RBB, district funds were more solvent and equitable distribution efforts were implemented via supplemental funding strategies.

Research on SBB suggests that certain funding conditions targeting specific student population characteristics such as intervention for ELL, FRPL or other risk factors are considered by district leadership as equitable funding continues to be a challenge for districts. Standard budgeting practices result in very different per-pupil allocations, thus the model of weighting (or supplementing additional allocation for specific criteria) may prove beneficial as it did with school systems like the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) (Miles, K., Ware, K., & Roza, M., 2003), as referenced by some research. The CPS student based budgeting system highlighted four reasons for differential funding; student needs, school operating costs, political needs, and strategic investments. CPS learned that pushing for greater school accountability required reassessment of school funding levels within their budgeting model (Miles, K., Ware, K.,

& Roza, M., 2003). CPS was able to evaluate its practices and move toward improvement with input from key staff within the school system. Collaborative efforts made by CPS to reform its budget allocation model proved to be more beneficial than exercising decisions made solely by central administration.

Sites that execute autonomy to create tailored curriculum programs risk the chance of underfunding core program and site support needs. Such mistakes are not realized until sites are met with a budgetary crisis. Parameters must be in place to ensure responsible behavior on part of school leaders (Chambers, J., et.al, 2010). Principals and department leads are held responsible for the success and effectiveness of their site programs. Annual goals and outcomes are created to measure administrators' competency and progress.

Promising practices are shared among sites; however, the cost of support may differ depending on the academic needs of students at a specific site. Two principals with the goal of increasing students' basic math scores may have different support needs; therefore, planning costs will vary. Student based budgeting allows districts to experiment with funding formulas, setting priorities where needed to maximize student achievement. Hill and McAdams (2002) found that districts limited the number of funding sources used in student based formula allocations in order to preserve dollars for other priorities or needs. Funds that were not included in these calculations were pooled to provide supplemental support to sites where fiscally possible, while funds that were

included followed calculations driven by specific student criteria such as income (captured by Free and Reduced Priced Lunch applications) and English Language Learners. Student-based formulas require that investments are clear and intentional and may also be modified as needed. Strategic decisions should also be clear and detailed so that vital staff have an understanding of budgeting processes.

Figure 3 – Equity in Action (Georgia Education Equity Coalition, 2017)

California's LCFF and LCAP guidelines are meant to promote equitable distribution of resources. Flexibility of past restrictions along with accountability requirements allows districts to direct more support to areas that need more resources within the parameters of the budget model used. Figure 2 (above) illustrates how revised funding measures are meant to support student needs. Three groups of students are compared side-by-side, educational resources are available to each group toward student achievement; all three groups require various levels of support, however each are able to attain student academic success.

Decentralized budgeting and accountability reform ensures that school leaders have the authority to determine how resources should be used to operate individual sites

(Roza, M., 2008). Executive level commitment is necessary to implement site based budgeting strategies that mirror core elements of the SSFR project: to develop and implement equitable strategies for resource allocation within the district, increase transparency in budget and resource allocation decisions, link strategies to policies designed to promote equity and access for students and encourage autonomy, innovation, efficiency, and strengthen accountability for site leaders to improve academic outcomes for all students.

BUASD employs guidelines from official Board policy on results-based budgeting and funding allocation processes. The policy directs that allocations to schools be based on enrollment, with adjustments for students who:

- Are in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools
- Qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Price Meals Program
- Are English Learner
- Are in Foster Care
- Reside in high-stress neighborhoods

School budgets include a base allocation factored on enrollment projections by grade, supplemental allocations based on LCFF eligible students and concentration allocations based on neighborhood climate factors such as high crime activity. Flexibility in funding intended by LCFF creates opportunity for sites to explore innovative budgetary strategies. Innovation and creativity are challenged by SUSD budgeting process which requires sites

to purchase services that are needed to improve student support (e.g., social workers, counselors, nurses, intervention facilitators, etc.). Continuation schools have limited funding; therefore purchasing student services (Appendix D) that may normally contribute to productive learning environments are often an expense that programs cannot afford without compromising other critical investments. School and district leaders continue to struggle to find the right balance of financial investments for schools within a climate of declining enrollment resulting less state and federal aid.

Cultural Responsiveness Leadership

Traditional schools are not intentionally organized to empower all students to achieve at high levels (Delpit, 2012). Traditional schools may systematically deny minority students equal educational opportunities, while providing members of the dominant culture better learning opportunities (Banks, 2001). Students from different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds sometimes come to school socialized in ways that are different from the school culture (Banks, 2001). Educators, face challenges of how to help children who come from diverse groups to "mediate between their home and community cultures and the school culture" (Banks, 2001).

Culturally responsive educational leadership is a construct which emanates from pedagogies which actively respond to the diversity in our school populations. Gay (2002) defines Culturally Responsive Education as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to

make learning more relevant and effective for them". Cultural responsiveness should be at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving group in multicultural societies; moreover, it is a powerful, persistent, and vitalizing force for improving education for all students. School leaders must challenge traditionally accepted notion of "rigorous" curriculum and instruction in favor of a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to education (Delpit, 2012, Howard, 2010). School leaders who practice culturally responsive leadership help students achieve academic success. Skills demonstrated by a school leader's ability to understand and respond to the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more meaningful and relevant. Gay (2010) defines it as teaching "to and through (students') personal and cultural strengths and their intellectual capabilities in which they are valued and used to improve academic achievement.

Cultural responsive consciousness takes from culturally responsive pedagogy and is defined as a pedagogy (education, teaching, schooling, training, instruction, etc.) that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally responsive pedagogy or culturally responsive practices involve using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay, 2010). These practices include the (a) behavioral expressions of knowledge, (b)

beliefs, and (c) values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. Ladson-Billings (1995) believed culturally relevant pedagogy must meet three criteria: (a) student experiences academic success, (b) student develops or maintains cultural competence, and (c) student develops critical consciousness and challenges the norms of society. Ladson-Billings (1995) proposed three dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy: holding high academic expectations and offering appropriate support such as scaffolding; acting on cultural competence by reshaping curriculum, building on students' funds of knowledge, and establishing relationships with students and their homes; and cultivating students' critical consciousness.

As change agents for continuation high school program students, leaders are required to be budget and policy savvy, have thorough knowledge of the history and impact of the continuation high school programs, and serve as advocates through culturally responsive practices. Research provides the foundation for how cultural responsiveness is needed to correct existing injustices that marginalize one group of students over another. As leaders, it is a basis for change that is critically needed to improve the academic experiences of all students.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

This study gives insight to the daily challenges of K12 continuation high school education program leaders. As district experts, administrators closest to continuation school students given their participation in this study has the potential to have great value, informing opportunities for inclusive discourse focused specifically on continuation high school students. Experiences of continuation high school education program leaders contribute to understanding complexities of continuation high school settings and the students served at a local level.

This research will bridge the conversation between site and district leaders concerning high school education expectations, as well as help identify the unique needs of continuation high school students in effort to increase their opportunities to graduate college and workforce ready. This chapter will provide an overview of five research steps used in this study. It begins with general demographic statistics on SUSD and the city in which it is located. District data will provide further detail of high school students. Second, the role of the researcher will follow to validate my role and my position as the researcher. Third, the data collection section will explain why specific data was collected. Fourth, the participants section will describe how participants were selected and finally, the data analysis will present how the data will be analyzed to make meaningful interpretations of participants' responses and related documentation.

Context

School districts face many challenges in managing high school education goals as they deal with the challenges of retaining and educating students within the structure of traditional education. The current site based budgeting tool was implemented in 2004 as a tool that would promote site autonomy, equitable distribution across sites, transparency regarding how allocations were calculated as well as accountability for planning decisions at the site level. The budgeting tool illustrated the logic of site-based funding calculation process; a formula-driven school site budget was distributed through the budgeting tool as a site's annual budget projection. The overall site budget consisted of several sources of funding referred to as resources (CDE, 2016). After all resources were calculated, then allocated according to district priorities, site administrators were given access to make the necessary planning adjustments according to the needs of their site.

School site allocations are calculated based on a per pupil allotment depending on the type of the school (elementary, middle, or high), student attendance rate, and categorical funds are calculated based on Free and Reduced Priced Lunch (FRPL) program recipients and English Language Learner (ELL) students. Continuation schools are funded on highest enrollment over the prior 10 month period, resulting in an increased calculation over the standard calculation model. Although the criteria for budget allocations are consistent among school type, the budgetary outcome can be very different for any given school. Programmatic and budgetary preparation plans are

developed annually according to a projected enrollment count verified on the 20th day of instruction; continuation schools experience rolling enrollment, causing constant variation in actual counts and challenges to matching site needs to the amount of site support.

District administrators must address the reality of continuation education programs that result in common long-term solutions for underachieving students in contrast to temporary interventions. Without continuously revisiting the operational needs of continuation education programs, school districts maintain a level of status quo that may be detrimental to student learning and the district goals. Students will become disengaged in the curriculum provided and fall further behind in educational standards or drop out of school completely, contributing to a declining population of educated urban youth within Bay Area school districts. School districts will miss its mark in successful program administration, as students are unprepared for life beyond a high school education.

The purpose of this research is to explore realities of administrators who play significant roles in administration of continuation education programs and are closet to the most vulnerable students in the district. This research will spark meaningful conversations considering district priorities and direct strategies that focus on continuation education programs for high school students within Sunrise Unified School District (SUSD). Information revealed from this work will promote discussion around

program development strategies for continuation education schools so that impacted students are provided with sustainable skills for potential success in general education and life beyond high school graduation.

Background

The Census Bureau (2015) reported that the city in which SUSD is located has a population of 419,267, the 45th largest city in the country with a diverse ethnical make up: White 27.2%, Hispanic 27.2%, African American 24.1%, and Asian 15.2%. Although the city hosts rewarding economic opportunities representing many industries, 28.7 % of youth live below the poverty line; 44.2% of households have an income of \$50K or less, 26.5% have an income of \$50K-\$100K, 19.9% have an income of \$100K-\$200K, and 9.5% hold incomes of \$200K or more (Census Bureau, 2015). There is work to be done in preparing residents for viable employment opportunities so that families can survive above the poverty line. Creating conditions for all students in the SUSD to graduate college and career ready is a critical step toward a partnership of excellence with the community.

SUSD (2016) serves 36,737 students in 86 schools across the district. The student body consists of 71.5% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Lunch as represented by criteria defining families with low household income levels. There are seven high schools serving 9,690 students: 41.8% Latino, 29.8% African American, and 14.3% Asian. SUSD continuation schools are dominated by two minority groups: Latino

and African American represent an equal share of enrollment at 44 and 45 % respectively (See Appendix B). The graduation rate of students at SUSD is 60.8%; there has been an historic dropout rate of 20% over the past three years. It is imperative that SUSD leadership search for solutions to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates for all students.

A historical look at SUSD completion stats for continuation school students show grad rates were flat at 39% for 2013-14 and 2014-15, an increase of 4% since 2011-12 (see Appendix C). Dropout rates from continuation schools increased slightly at 3% since recorded at 29% in 2011-12 (see Appendix C). The 3% increase is a fraction of overall enrollment, however any percentage of academic failure equates to an equal percentage of deserving youth moving into adulthood unprepared for its challenges. Touched by the possibility that more continuation school students could potentially benefit from increased advocacy, I feel compelled to advocate for the students at any opportunity possible and so I have chosen to look further into a familiar challenge across the district, funding verses operational needs. Fueled by determination to positively influence at-risk students one life at a time and attempt to fill the void in the work involved in continuation education as I see it, sets the tone for a change in focus in my career in education.

Role of Researcher

As I walked through the halls of the administration building, the words “Graduate all students, college and workforce ready” jumped from poster outlining the district’s goals and stopped me in my tracks. I had just concluded a conversation regarding high school education without mention of continuation schools – another instance where continuation high school education was generalized or assumed in the broader reference of high school education. Without addressing the needs of a student population that had been deemed ineligible to remain in a general education setting, those conversations appeared biased and unjust. I asked myself, who is advocating for those students.

The poster reminded me of a quote by Charles F. Kettering, an inventor and engineer of the 1920s and 1930s, that I previously encountered in a random reading, “Nothing ever rose to touch the skies unless someone dreamed that it should, someone believed that it could, and someone willed that it must.” I was hit with an “ah-ha” moment; reading the posting claim that all students will graduate college and workforce ready, yet knowing that continuation school students, in spite of their needs, are rarely mentioned as a single entity commanding an intense focus for access and equality, in addition to witnessing the student population being often overlooked as they are unnamed and generalized within the overall reference to the high school student body – in reference to the quote, we as leaders cannot truly believe or will that our continuation school students reach the skies (graduate college and workforce ready) without properly

investing in the challenges experienced by the whole student body. Various forms of supports are needed for social, emotional, and academic advancement of continuation school students in order to promote access and equitable opportunities for success. The culture of a continuation school environment beckons the response of educators to acknowledge and address the disparities that exist and impede students' chances of success in high school.

The Kettering quote continues to resonate with me; it fuels my fight for fairness, equity and common courtesy in my everyday work life, as I serve in a capacity to lead, influence and advocate for voices often unheard. I have adopted renewed energy to ensure that continuation school students are given special consideration wherever discourse concerning student needs, graduation, college and career readiness takes place, hence the proposal of this study. I believe it takes a "village" to embrace the whole student, to meet them where they are in their academic or social struggle in an urban school district and to empower them with tools needed for a successful life.

I am an African American woman born in Southern California and raised in the immediate area. I grew up in a local public education system and have subsequently put my children through K12 public education. I have a B.A. from UC Berkeley with a major in Sociology and minor in African American Studies. I also have a Master Degree in Public Administration from CSU Hayward. I have worked in the education field for 25 years: 15 years in higher education and 10 years in K12. I have had multi-angled

exposure to an overall system design that prompts me to question its authenticity in practice, access and equity for educating the whole student body, specifically students in continuation education programs. Although I do not work directly with curriculum, I have an interest in the quality of educational support services offered to students. My tenure as a District Administrator has allowed me exposure to conversations and observations that lead me to question equity in advocacy efforts on behalf of all students beyond high school graduation, especially continuation school students. Before proposing this study, I thought it would be important to identify my bias as an African American and product of urban living. I have school finance experience as well as participation in multiple processes around site based budgeting, and I personally know parents and students who have come up through continuation school environments, I also have a good sense of what it takes to survive the expectations of society in the midst of an urban working class community, as well as continuous exposure to discourse about decision making concerns – I do not believe that continuation school education is given equitable resources to access programming and support services that may lead to successful college and career readiness attainment. As a spectator, I can generalize my discernment of continuation education in SUSD, however, this study is being proposed as a means to learn the viewpoints of leaders of the work, educators on the ground in an unfamiliar capacity to me, curriculum and curriculum leadership.

I plan to use this research as a base for initial discussion on how to best offer quality educational support to continuation school students. This study will employ action

research through inquiry into a topic that concerns me, as a parent, a taxpayer and an administrator in education. I hope to continue this work as an advocate for equity and access in a professional capacity in areas of recruitment, retention and service programming liaison at the community college level. I want to bring awareness and knowledge base of an often overlooked and under considered student population in the district.

Participants

This research will provide insight to the opinions and experiences of “on the ground” continuation education leaders at SUSD through the lenses of practice, access and equity. The Purposeful Sampling technique is ideal for this study because continuation education programs in the SUSD are a very small segment of the larger K12 education system. There are 7 Network Superintendents (one high school, one middle school, five elementary, and one intensive support (schools identified as having challenges with academic growth and achievement)). Reporting to the High School Network Superintendent is the Executive Director of Alternative Education who is responsible for continuation schools as well as other alternative education programs. Since there are few administrators at SUSD with expert involvement in continuation education, it was a logical decision to use Purposeful Sampling to directly select the participants with subject matter expertise rather than use a random sampling process.

Three site leaders were interviewed who have direct responsibility for the daily interactions and program management at continuation schools. Three district leaders were interviewed who have district level management responsibility and oversee the work of the site leaders and who have themselves come up through the ranks with direct experience in urban school districts or continuation high school education. Participants were asked an initial set of questions (Appendix G), responses were used provide an overall description of the participant and to validate their credentials for selected for this study as individuals with direct experience in continuation education.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from participants using a combination of survey and one-on-one interview processes in effort to gain insight of continuation high school program leaders' views on cultural responsiveness and budgeting priorities. Interviews were conducted to collect data providing a general perspective on exiting program support for continuation high school. Participants were asked to further describe their perspectives on cultural responsiveness in action, student equity, district budgeting priorities for continuation high school investments. Participants' shared responses were used to interpret their experiences in managing budgeting decisions and academic investments by using a guided set of interview questions (Appendix H).

Purposeful Sampling was used to select participants for this study because experience in the field of continuation education is critical to gaining insight to a non-

traditional area of education. Purposeful Sampling is to intentionally select (or recruit) participants who have experienced the key concept being explored in the study (Creswell and Clark, 2011). It is a non-probability sampling technique using selective sampling that relies on the judgement of the researcher. Creswell and Clark (2011), describe a key difference in the use of Purposeful Sampling in qualitative research compared to quantitative research. Cases studied typically use a sample of 4 to 10; the sample size used relates to the question and the type of qualitative approach used (Creswell, 2011). The qualitative idea is not to generalize from a sample (as in quantitative research) but to develop an in-depth understanding of a few people - the larger the number of people, the less detail that can typically emerge from one individual.

Administrators serving in various capacities with direct or indirect leadership responsibilities, over alternative education programs in the SUSDC were selected to take part in this study. Criterion used to identify eligible participants was expert knowledge in the field having direct impact on the administration of continuation education programs at SUSDC were: current affiliation with continuation education as an administrator: principalship, district curriculum leader, district operational leader, and other continuation education support services. Participants were contacted via email and sent a letter of introduction to the study (Appendix E). Each participant were provided with a Statement of Consent Forms (Appendix G). A brief demographic survey was provided to participants and responses charted to compare general information about administrators' involvement in alternative education (Appendix H). Participants were asked to complete

a Google Survey addressing their perception of culture, cultural responsiveness, program practice, and program related experiences as leaders (Appendix I). Finally, during one-on-one interview sessions participants were asked several questions focused on practice, equity and access (Appendix J).

Participants were asked a series of questions that will focus on their knowledge and experience as leaders of continuation education programs as well as gain their perspectives on related challenges. Continuation high schools present a unique culture as the student population can vastly differ from students in regular education settings. Much diversity can be found within the culture of a single site: student –administration dynamics, personal circumstances that feed behavioral challenges, daily stressors of poverty and violence found in urban cities, racial tension, subpar academic aspirations and gang affiliation. Leaders must employ cultural responsive approaches that embrace the cultural complexities which manifest within continuation high school education programs. Cultural Responsiveness in action can be identified by exercising best practices that perpetuate equitable opportunities and accessible programming services for continuation education students that are consistent with district regular education high school students.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDS, 2012), published a list of seven skills tied to cultural competency related to the ability to think, feel, and act in ways that are respectful of cultural. The following CSDS list of skills was used as a

guideline to formulate questions and analyze participants' responses using cultural responsiveness as a framework:

1. Demonstrates empathy for feelings, values, needs, and insights of other people
2. Demonstrates good will
3. Interactions – flexible, positive, sincere
4. Seeks out and learns more about other people
5. Able to deal with ambiguity
6. Holding off making judgements until essential facts are determined and possible outcomes are assessed
7. Understanding the societal context in which decisions are made
8. Gives praise that is both acceptable and sincere
9. Invites trust by keeping confidences
10. Uses creative feedback from others and gives it as well

Research is commonly performed on schooling, yet so little is based on studies involving the perspectives of the individuals and collective experiences that constitute schooling (Seidman, 2012). Interviews will be conducted with key administrators of continuation education programs so that I, the researcher can collect the real stories from the expert implementers. Seidman (2012) states the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Interviews will last no more than 1.5 hour and will be arranged at convenient location choice of each participant. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all

interview participants and their respective sites to protect their identity. Participant responses will be transcribed and analyzed following completion of interviews and follow up interviews will be arranged if needed for clarification no later than two weeks after initial interview.

An interpretive summary of interview responses will allow me as the researcher to use narrative inquiry to tell a story of personal accounts of individual experiences of the participants, resulting in descriptive data (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). Survey responses will be used to compare and contrast participants' responses and individual perspectives on current practices, access and equity of administering continuation education programs at SUSU to promote college and career readiness.

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data can be approached many ways and require multiple phases. The audio-recordings were transcribed, indexed and summarized. Transcripts were coded for themes and edited in order to focus on discussion and statements that directly related to stakeholders' perceptions of culturally responsive leadership.

The initial task in analyzing qualitative data was to find some concepts that helped make sense of the information collected. Creswell and Clark (2011) list several steps for analyzing qualitative data: preparing data for analysis, exploring data, analyzing data, representing data, interpreting the analysis, and validating the data and

interpretations. These steps are implemented both simultaneously and iteratively in qualitative research. Data collected from surveys, interviews and document review will be analyzed throughout this qualitative research.

Creswell and Clark (2011), state that the coding process is a core feature of qualitative data analysis as a process of grouping evidence and labeling ideas so that they reflect increasingly broader perspective. Coding influenced by interpretation allows the researcher to assemble and reconstruct data in a meaningful manner (Jorgesen, 1989), as data analysis is an iterative process. Creswell (2013) describes coding as segmenting text to form descriptions and themes. All documents were coded for themes. Coding is the last form of data analysis. According to Schwandt (2001), coding is a process of analyzing the large volume of data generated in the form of transcripts, field notes, photographs, and other documents. Data were broken down into manageable pieces and given a reference representing the concept.

In qualitative research, there are several strategies for addressing trustworthiness that lead to its authenticity (Creswell, 2013). This study's findings were based on data collected from interviews, surveys and document analysis. The trustworthiness and authenticity of the current study were enhanced through the application of multiple approaches including: (a) authenticity; (b) triangulation; (c) member checking, in which individual responses were reviewed and checked with each participant (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative validity was utilized through the member-checking approach (Creswell and

Clark, 2011), by which the summary of results and findings were returned to individual participants to confirm accuracy of their responses. Creswell (2013) stated that member checking is used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final study or specific descriptions or themes back to the participants and determining whether the participants feel they are accurate (p. 201). Member checking occurred when the transcripts, initial findings, descriptors, and themes were shared with the school leadership team, teachers, and parents and then checked for accuracy. Participants were allowed one week to respond to the request to confirm accuracy before I assume the responses collected are accurate and proceed with my analysis.

Triangulation of the data collected was used to analyze emerging themes and categories from participant responses and document review through the lenses of practice, access and equity. Triangulation is the use of different data sources to build and corroborate evidence from different sources to shed light on coherent justifications for themes or perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Interviews, survey responses and relevant literature were all used to triangulate findings in the current study.

Creswell (2013) offered a model for data analysis that follows a hierarchical approach to building from a base. The model contains six hierarchical “steps” of data analysis:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis
2. Read or look at all the data

3. Code accordingly
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes
5. Use a narrative passage/draft to convey the findings of the analysis
6. Interpret the findings or results

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations describe how the scope of a study can be narrowed and limitations describe possible weaknesses of the study (Creswell, 2013). The limitation of this study as identified by the researcher were that a small purposeful sample of five critical stakeholders was used, thus the potential to generalize the results of this study in other fields or districts may be limited. The sample of participants was selected for this study in effort to narrow the scope and focus on the challenges of site based budgeting is utilized district-wide in the SUSD. All school sites may perceive funding as an essential component for operation, however its impact on academic investments for student achievement may differ.

Transferability addresses whether findings and conclusions from a sample, setting, or group lead to lessons learned that may be applied to a larger population, a different setting, or to another group (O'Leary, 2005). The researcher made no attempt to generalize the findings to all public schools, continuation schools or educational systems. Certain data analysis strategies were used in the creation of this research study and it is

possible that readers will be able to apply the results of this study to other similar situations.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to offer valid insight into the concerns of continuation high school education program leaders from an urban district. Given the educational goal to graduate all high school students, college and workforce ready, district leadership must acknowledge the critical needs of continuation high school students via the voices of administrators nearest the students. Through interview and survey analysis, this study explored the experiences of continuation high school program leaders who serve the district's most vulnerable students. Data was collected in an effort to answer, how does site based budgeting impact decisions around academic investments for continuation school programs?

This chapter is organized into two main sections. First, a conceptual base is provided for indicators used to formulate surveys and interview questions. I formulated questions regarding budgeting to determine how familiar and how experienced participants were with governmental and district policies, followed by questions determining the level of involvement in budgetary planning for their respective programs. Participants were provided with questions utilizing pre-existing scales for identifying culture and cultural responsiveness, followed by an interview that examined their practices related to cultural responsive leadership.

The second section analyses themes that emerged from both survey and interview responses. I chose to highlight major themes based on participant responses using inferences of components of educational leadership in K12 systems where cultural responsive practices were present. Secondary themes were identified where applicable to provide enriched meaning to interpretations.

To conceptualize culture, participants were asked to define culture. Their answers were compared to a common definition in which culture can be described as the attitudes and behavior characteristic of a particular social group. In 2012, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) used various tools in a comprehensive culturally responsive education series training to improve school-family-community partnerships for student success. Participants in this study were asked to select from a list of 12 elements associated with school culture as used by CSDE (2012) which they believed contributed to successful continuation school programs, as well as those requiring consideration when making financial decisions. Participants' choice of elements from the list provided below was compared to their individual definitions of culture, as well as the official definition of culture to determine similarity or relationship between their personal description and the common definition used for the purpose of this study:

1. student discipline
2. student attendance
3. student academic performance

4. student graduation requirements
5. high school graduation A-G requirements
6. student pathway participation
7. Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
8. student civic engagement
9. student career pathway interest
10. barriers for student academic success
11. Student academic counseling
12. student social/emotional counseling

To conceptualize cultural responsiveness, participants were asked to define culture responsiveness. Participants were provided with a list of 24 behaviors or practices, used by the CSDE (2012), that positively impact student achievement, student attitudes, student behaviors, teacher attitude, teacher behaviors, and dropout rates (continuation school climate). Participants were asked to rank each behavior below according to their interpreted level of importance using a scale from 1-4, followed by whether they felt the behaviors marked as important were significant to cultural responsive leadership:

1. Safe and orderly environment
2. Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning
3. High expectations for student learning

4. Visibility and accessibility
5. Positive and supportive climate
6. Emotional and interpersonal involvement
7. Parent and community outreach and involvement
8. Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment
9. Collaboration
10. Norm of continuous improvement
11. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers
12. Support of teacher's autonomy
13. Professional development opportunities and resources
14. Protecting instructional time
15. Use of student progress for program improvement
16. Recognition of student and staff achievement
17. Self-confidence, responsibility and perseverance
18. Communication and interaction
19. Ritual, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions
20. Instructional leadership
21. Discussion of instructional issues
22. Support of risk taking
23. Monitoring student progress and sharing findings

24. Role modeling

Participants were provided with seven traits of culturally responsive schools used by CSDE (2012) and asked to rank the traits according to its level of importance.

Participants' answers were compared among the group, as well as with the definitions provided to determine whether relationships existed between the definition of cultural responsiveness and traits of cultural responsive schools listed below:

1. Students are recognized and treated as intellectually capable, with particular attention toward those whose futures are most tenuous
2. Instructional and assessment practices build on and legitimize students' prior knowledge, real-life experience, culture, and language
3. Classroom practices stimulate students to construct knowledge, make meaning, and examine cultural biases and assumptions, drawing on linguistic and experiential resources they bring
4. Within the classroom and school, students practice participating as citizens in a diverse and democratic society
5. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups
6. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups

7. School programs and instructional practices draw from and integrate community and family language and culture, and help families and communities to support the student's academic success

Participants were asked to indicate whether the following value statements used by CSDE (2012) were true for either their program, the district, or both. Participants' answers were compared among the group, as well as with the definitions provided to determine whether relationships existed between the definition of cultural responsiveness and the value statements below:

1. Schools should honor, respect, value and understand diversity in theory and practice
2. A culturally responsive education curriculum should be embedded with the concepts of Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. Rigor- exposing students to challenging class work with academic and social support: Relevance – demonstrating how student will use their learning; and Relationships – building caring and supportive connections with student, parents, and communities
3. Classroom and school-wide traditions, values and practices should reflect respect for family and community assets, including students' native languages, cultural experiences, and family knowledge

4. The curriculum content should reflect the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of society and the world
5. A culturally responsive education provides meaningful and valuable exposure to students, faculty and staff from different cultures, ethnicities, religions and other forms of differences
6. Teachers must be aware of their students' histories and community strengths taking into account the various styles and strategies that students employ for learning
7. Learning styles are influenced by students' personalities, cultural backgrounds and life experiences, therefore teachers should employ multiple pedagogical strategies so that students of all backgrounds learn in ways that are most comfortable for them while also expanding their learning repertoires

To conceptualize budgetary knowledge-base, participants were asked a series of questions to determine their overall knowledge of school finance at the government and district level. Participants were asked two questions requiring binary answers (yes or no):

1. Do you have prior budgetary experience (hands on) outside of the district?
2. Are you directly involved in the budgeting process for your site/department?

Participants were further questioned using scaled responses to determine their level of familiarity with school finance and policy:

1	2	3	4
extremely	moderately	somewhat	not at all

1. How **familiar** are you with the overall budget allocation process used at Sunset Unified School District?
2. How **familiar** are you with the site-based budgeting process?
3. How **familiar** are you with how the district allocates funds to schools?
4. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its impact on the district?
5. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its impact on your site?
6. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Accountability Plan (LCAP) and its impact on the district?
7. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Accountability Plan (LCAP) and its impact on your site?

Cultural responsiveness was the framework used to analyze participant responses.

For the purpose of this study, cultural responsiveness was interpreted as the belief or practice of recognizing, appreciating, understanding and respecting diversity in terms of social, psychological, emotional, academic differences met by the continuation high school student population.

Review of the findings from the data collected showed how resources are operationalized by site leaders to support continuation high school education programs. Interviews and surveys were used to collect data on the use of cultural responsiveness in

decision making for continuation school programs. Reflections were shared by practitioners in support of educating a high risk student population: participants were asked as series of knowledge-based questions related to their familiarity with government and district funding policies and procedures, experience with site based budgeting, opinion of effectiveness on current budgeting processes. Participants were also asked to self-identify and rank several pre-determined cultural responsive attributes, including ranking level of importance to programming. Survey and interview responses were analyzed and further categorized into main themes and sub themes.

This chapter presents findings from multiple sources: an illustration of collected profiles of the participants involved in this in this study, data on their respective continuation education programs and an analysis of their responses to completed interviews. Responses were collected and compared for themes and significance to the context of the study; leadership, social emotional learning, equity and finance were themes that emerged in my analysis.

Participants in the study

The researcher utilized purposeful sampling to district leaders who managed continuation high school programing; participants consisted of site leaders as well as district leaders. The selection process began by sending a study invitation email to 5 administrators with a direct leadership relationship over continuation high school programs for SUSL. Participant demographic collected included gender, ethnicity,

district role and years of experience with the district as well as the number of years in continuation high school education. A summary of the demographic data collected from each participant is illustrated below in Table 1.

Table 1 – Profiles of Participants

Pseudonym	District Role	Gender	Ethnicity	Years in District	Years in K12 Education	# of Students Impacted by Current Role
Ms. Lillie (SL)	SL	F	A	>15	>15	201-300
Mr. Pop (SL)	SL	M	A	>15	>15	>300
Ms. Amalia (DL)	DL	F	H	6-10	11-15	>300
Mr. Mann (DL)	DL	M	A	<5	>15	>300
Ms. Adale (SL)	SL	F	A	>15	>15	201-300

Note. DL = District Leader, SL=Site Leader.

Eighty percent of participants reported being African American, having more than 15 years in K12 education, being responsible for a student population over 300, having hands-on budgetary experience outside of the district, and participation in budget development and planning. Each participant reported being extremely familiar with site-based budgeting, although 60% of participants reported some degree of unfamiliarity regarding the budget allocation process used in SUSD, indicating that some level of

uncertainty exists. After reviewing general demographics about the participants, I attempted to analyze data collected through survey and interviews specific to their experiences as continuation high school education leaders.

Interpreted Themes

Sunrise Unified School District (SUSD) is comprised of 5 alternative education programs, 3 of which are continuation high schools. The group of continuation high schools have undergone a name change of reference and are now recognized as “intensive pathways,” to contrast against negative connotation of historical continuation high schools as a dumping ground for students whom could not be taught to succeed.

The District’s Pathway to Excellence Strategic Plan which asserts that students will find joy in their academic experience while graduating with the skills to ensure they are caring, competent, fully-informed, critical thinkers who are prepared for college, career, and community success. This work intersects boundaries of race, gender, class, religion, status, access, opportunity, and social advocacy. In successfully achieving this work, leaders must transcend these demographic differences and political considerations in pursuit of a higher non-partisan standard—a pathway for success for each and every student! (SUSD, 2014). Each administrator agreed that in order to move the continuation high school population to greater heights, several key changes must occur: 1) the way in which continuation schools are viewed, 2) understanding the culture and climate of the schools, and 3) raising expectations of the students. Themes that emerged from

participants' interview and survey responses were: 1) cultural responsiveness in action, 2) leadership experiences, 3) social emotional learning environments, 4) leading with equity, and 5) financial investments for academic strategies.

Perception –image change for continuation school programs:

Continuation schools are commonly referenced by condescending terms that infer student failure in traditional education settings. However, current leaders of continuation high school programs are working to change outdated negative viewpoints into new pathway experiences that provide students with alternatives for academic and career success. Advocates for student learning must address a shift in the mindset for continuation schools, many veteran leaders in the field have spent an extensive amount of time fighting for enhancement of these programs.

Ms. Lillie (SL) (15+ years of experience): The negative perception of continuation is so engrained by onsite staff and district leadership – takes extra work to get the additional that we need financially, just explaining why we need to address the issues that we have to address with students, that's a major challenge because if we don't believe in the student or don't help the student we won't be able to move them forward...

Leaders must possess a lens of leadership that challenges perceptions of diversity in social and academic climates in which continuation school students are served. Concerns for changing the perspective of continuation school programs are the core of pursuing equitable supports for students.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I think there is a feeling where high schools push kids out because they don't know how to deal with and they kind of have to pick everything up.

Theme 1: Cultural Responsiveness in Action

Before delving into cultural responsiveness, it was important for participants to be clear about their individual perspectives of culture in action at continuation school programs. Participants were asked share their vision of culture through the following three questions:

1. Describe what culture looks like in continuation school programs using their lens of leadership.
2. In reference to the list above, participants were asked to explain the importance of each element within the continuation school program
3. In reference to the list above, participants were asked to explain how the elements influence financial planning for continuation school programs.

Culture visualized:

Ms. Lillie (SL): Culture through my own personal lens of leadership and my experience here at opportunity academy looks like lots of support for students and it is support for the whole student not just academics. It is a culture of not only support, but caring develops, a culture that develops social emotional learning, a culture that develops parents as well in social and emotional learning and how to support their students in the school.

Mr. Pop (SL): That would be a situation for the culture and climate and for everyone to start working together to meet the needs of the student. That means establishing a platform where they can gain a students' trust and to get them to a place of student engagement and motivation. I think all of that really gets to the

student that you're trying to support them and their aspiration, whether it be secondary career or going back to the community and being that change agent for the community.

Relationships are important in building school climate, providing a space for students to contribute to the school's culture: student relationships, student-student relationships, familial, professional and informal relationships.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I think we're in our continuation schools trying to create a culture where students feel visible and supportive and in a space where they're coming in and it feels like they have a clean slate. A lot of students might have negative association with schools that they come from in the past or feel like they weren't getting what they needed in their previous schools, so when they step on the campus we want to reengage them in a different way so it's not that their identity is one of a kid who struggled and didn't make it, but that of one with a new opportunity coming into the school. So in terms of the culture, it feels like really there's a lot of wrap around support in terms of how we're supporting students from case managers, mental health, relationships with the teachers, smaller class sizes, more personalized, so when a student comes in we know exactly what they need and where their at. I feel like everyone knows every single student on the campus because it's a smaller environment and class sizes are smaller. I think we have pretty strong culture of social and emotional supports on the campus as well.

Mr. Mann (DL): The culture is one of support and challenge and our continuation schools, we have students who have struggled in a traditional setting but I'm motivated enough not to have given up. It's a unique circumstance where you have to make sure we have support for all students and that they as well have accountability and structure to get them where they want to be.

Ms. Adale (SL): Ideally we focus on relationships and many times when you come into these schools you will see students smile and for the last 2 to 3 years they weren't smiling at all. Going back to my first day as an administrator, I personally kicked out 15 kids from my pervious school and I was worried about how they would receive me here. From a far I noticed some kids smiling and one of them, Jesus who I remembered I had problems with, had a huge grin on his face and I was thinking my God I haven't seen this kid smile in years. As soon as he saw me his smile was wiped off his face, however we became really good friends. But it's really good we use restorative justice and just a lot of things we do with the kids makes them know that people care at the school.

The importance of culture:

Ms. Lillie (SL): It's very important that we focus on attendance and having programs designed to make sure students are getting here and spending that seat time. Discipline, supportive discipline not punitive. Academic performance, it's very important that we focus on academic performance at the highest standards because continuation schools have the perception that academics are low performance. Graduation requirements are one of our key elements that we focus on, along with A-G. It is extremely important to involve the kids socially and emotionally, it is very critical which we hold a lot of the social emotional learning in our restorative justice program which is a bases of our school's culture and climate. Student engagement and clear pathway interest is very critical. It took a lot of time to identify the pathways that interest students and will serve not only the student and the parents, but also the community. We're very concerned about focusing on those barriers to success and student academic counselling is very critical. Student social and emotional counseling is very critical, we have therapist on site to support us in addition to case managers, etc.

Mr. Pop (SL): Everything starts with student attendance. First, if students show up, then we have a chance to make a difference. Secondly, we focus on the social emotion learning, which is self-awareness for the student to become aware of who they are and what their learning skills are. We create the supportive structures that are needed to help with self-awareness and taking ownership of personal learning. We have to push back barriers, so that students can begin their search to self- actualize early rather than later. Looking at academics, students can actually leverage their performance.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I think all of those are key, I mean some of the things that we focus on more is the SEL (social emotional learning, that's such a key and also on the student graduation requirements. I would say A-G hasn't been much of an emphasis, but we want to change that and we're also trying to focus more on academic performances instead of thinking credit recovery, thinking skill and knowledge recovery. We have really good discipline in the continuation schools, we have some of the lowest suspension and expulsion rates in the district for high schools, and so that's one of our strengths. Attendance is huge and that is one of the things we've been working on. For a lot of students, if they're feeling disengaged with school and they might not have been going to school as regularly as they should have and that might be one of the reasons why their grades have dipped and one of the reasons why they might have ended up in one of our schools. Attendance is actually a big thing, because with the seat time requirements of the continuation schools, students have to be present to earn their grades. We're

looking at how we might increase attendance using outside the box thinking and SEL relationships.

Mr. Mann (DL): I actually checked all of them, all of them were important. So if you ask me to prioritize them, student' academic performance and then the barrier to student academic success because again these students have not been successful academically and that's how they end up with us. But again they're motivated enough even though they have not been successful and they have not given up, so those two were important. Student emotion is huge and the S.E.L. and those are some of the reasons students might not have had success and as a result of that, the students' academic counseling is important because that gets us to making sure that we have a path and plan which goes straight into the A-G requirements and graduation requirements. We want students to be successful with us but most importantly after they leave us and so the counseling pathway after they successful complete our continuation school is very important and we are talking about some of the issues that came while they were with us and majority of the students is attendance and discipline but we take care of that with the counseling.

Ms. Adale (SL): Most kids who come here have seen so much failure a lot of times they come to my office and I ask them, "When was the last time you saw me?" Most of them mention 6th and 7th grade or elementary school. It is so important that they understand that they can succeed here and through social emotional learning that we use from the minute you walk in the front door of the school and when you leave at 3 o'clock. It's kind of our middle name here at this school. Kids understand that people care and that they're number one goal is to walk across that stage, you make sure of that the first day.

The influence of culture-related elements on financial planning:

Ms. Lille: It is very critical that we make sure that in most cases we have more financial support for those elements listed because many of our students come with a heavier list of situations that have to deal with, some are responsible for taking care of their parents, coming out of the juvenile system, some are parents as well and they have lost a lot of seat time so we have to find additional finances to support them. We have to have additional case management, we have those additional programs, such as restorative justice just to give them that balance in order make sure that they are in place for learning the academics that they need.

Mr. Pop (SL): Once I determine what a student needs are and how we can leverage resources and it becomes very intentional about meeting those needs. Then we can

begin to identify those useful pots of money because I'm a firm believer that if you don't have the money to support, it's not going to happen. When we start talking about how to make a difference in a students' life you have to first start with how you're going to do that. In most cases it takes funding, but most importantly you can't do the lifting alone you have to partner and that's where partnerships come in so that you can come together and leverage those resources. Some cases might be partnerships with other institutions partnerships with outside agency partnerships with colleges and if we do all those things, we can begin what Sunrise Unified School District had in mind of coming full circle for the communities. That means leverage all resources to get our kids college, career, and community ready; working with everything that is available to you to meet those challenges.

Ms. Amalia (DL): We look to see if we're staffed to be able to meet the requirements in general and to be able to provide a smaller class size which is usually staffed about 1 to 25. I would say we're trying to do a better job at figuring out how we leverage our resources, to focus more on the academic performance and support around attendance. We also do a little bit for some schools with the counseling because we don't get a fulltime counselor, which is hard on the program. We have to use other resources to do some of the counseling and that's so important when you have kids coming in with very different trajectories, a lot of times we actually have to make sure that we plan to figure out how we allocate funding for counseling.

Mr. Mann (DL): They all influence financial planning because I believe we can tell what our priorities are based on our budget and looking at all factors you look at what will be most impactful for students and that is what you prioritize in your budget process. The truth of the matter is some things you budget for out of your own resources, the others you build partnership to make sure there is proper resources.

Ms. Adale (SL): We can't say enough about how much we need. Many times we are the forgotten schools and I don't quite understand that I remember when I first came from Fairmont. I was on the principals' committee and I would meet with the principals' and every time they would mention something. I would say, "Excuse me, what about my site?" My colleague from another continuation school said "I'm glad you're asking this question, because we're all still high schools. I wanted to make sure we are included with other high schools. I couldn't understand why we weren't number one in consideration, it is vital for all the programs that we need to help with social emotion learning to help with A-G requirements, just to help with everything.

Culturally responsiveness can be defined as the process of using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strength of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (Gay, 2000). Participants were asked share their vision of cultural responsiveness through the following two questions:

1. Describe what cultural responsiveness looks like in continuation school programs through your lens of leadership.
2. Does cultural responsiveness have a place in financial decision making within your educational environment? Explain.

Cultural responsiveness visualized:

Ms. Lillie (SL): It looks like training our teachers through personal development for staff, making sure that they have the professional development to relate to our students, to know who they are and to meet them where they are. Cultural responsiveness is a process or understanding that is a transformation on the part of staff from the inside out, rather than the outside in. The most important thing is that staff and teachers have to be willing to back up and have a little humility; I call it cultural humility rather than cultural responsiveness.

Mr. Pop (SL): Culture responsiveness is being able for students to take responsible for learning S.E.L. which is self-awareness and self-monitor and social-awareness. It doesn't just start with the students, it starts with staff as well. We all come to a situation that we lend, which is our experience things that we learn in our value system. Culture responsiveness is be responsible for what your lens is but being conscious that you have to develop core beliefs and right now the district has those core beliefs. Understand that if you want a student to respond to you, it's a certain lens you have to look through. One would be student first and equity those are the key things and I call it having respect for what you believe in, the value system as oppose to what the kids need.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I feel like we're getting better at it. For me cultural responsiveness incorporates SEL and academics and I think for a while our strength was SEL and now we're trying to bring it into the academic place as well. The one thing that I don't feel that we're as strong with and now were staring to move in that direction is what learning means, like cultural responsiveness in terms of learning because it was more focused on credit recovery and now its shifting. Some of the English teachers created a unit called "Black lives matter" and their doing Socratic Seminars with the students, where the students are bringing in their own real life experience into their English class and it's just so powerful to see what the kids are doing. We're trying to change this "our kids" can't do to what are the opportunities that we're providing students to demonstrate what our kids can do. A lot of teachers have started to create their own units that are meant to leverage their students' experiences. There was even one for KQED, where people are able to submit recordings and do a little blurb about their life. A teacher actually created a segment in their unit where students do a narrative, actually record it and send it in to KQED. Trying to do some things outside of the box of credit recovery, making meaningful learning for the kids.

Mr. Mann (DL): Cultural responsiveness is giving you what you need based on your needs, no matter what your different culture might be. When we talk about culture responsiveness for me it is not treating everybody equal but making sure there is equity; because of your needs you might need more or less of a touch than somebody else. To be successful I have to make sure you get what you need and how you need it.

Ms. Adale (SL): When you're in a school like this, everybody has an issue I mean it's quite funny. Some kids will come up to me with issues and the more they come to me the more I have an issue with our system. Let's be real here, some people have to have an open lens and see and feel a lot because sometimes the problems that are told to us have to be seen and understood in order to be addressed. We have several partnerships that come into the site and help us with support of our students. We tell our staff that as part of our meetings, we explain that if they see something say something or do something we repeat that all the time.

The influence of culture responsiveness on financial planning:

Ms. Lillie (SL): Absolutely, we need to have additional dollars again to train our teachers and staff on how to work with our students. We need that finical support to go that extra mile for our students in all areas. As we're looking at attendance, a lot of that responsibility is attendance accountability and is on the continuation schools more so than comprehensive schools, because the parents take more of a

role in getting those kids to school. It's just part of the culture, not having to do with color, but just an educational understanding. Not as many of our students have parents who are college educated, who have been to college and all that so that attendance as it relates to our student. We have to have additional financial support in developing programs to get them interested in effort to get them here. Extra dollars are needed to get them actively involved in the classes, to get them excited and to give them a purpose for being here. Additional dollars are needed so that we can make this academy a destination point for the students rather than a place they have been made to come to.

Mr. Pop (SL): It ties into how we set it up our structures and processes, as well as what we put in place to facilitate our being able to support our students. Funding influences the hiring of staff for the programs offered and the support needed for it to be comprehensive because funding is going to dictate how far you can go. The last thing we want to do is spread ourselves to the point that we are not effective, so we identify what we do well and put resources there. A part from that, is the way we have things set up now through the site plan; we begin to look at that and I think that is important and we look to the students as important not as clients and I think that is what's been missing from traditional education and we take that into account on what that support looks like and that means getting a student's perspective.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I would say no doubt. I think cultural responsiveness should influence financial planning. I would say as a district, it does given the fact that we even have these schools. I actually think it shows commitment on behalf of the district to invest in something a little bit different from the norm. For the most part when other people come from other parts of California or other parts of alternative schools, they're always like wow you guys have some really cool programs here so in some ways I do think that the district has made a commitment to do something a little bit different.

At the school level, I would say cultural responsiveness has a little influence on financial planning with regard to staffing. A lot of that was very intentional by the leaders in terms of keeping the staff very diverse. I would say we can do more of it in terms on how we actually think about how we're using the resources. Funding is allocated differently so we can do more of that, meaning can we think outside the box on how we support attendance or how we support some of these other things. I would say it's not something that comes to the forefront although I think all of our leaders somehow operate with it to some degree giving their own history and their own experiences but I think it could be more intentional.

Mr. Mann (DL): Absolutely, if you're going to give students what they need you have to take in what they need to be successful and take in account things that might be specific to their culture that makes them an individual.

Ms. Adale (SL): The first thing that we need other than supplies, are adults to teach classes. We need our partnerships to help with our students and we have to make sure any applicable resource that comes through the district, that we are considered because are kids are so needy and some of our students are the stage that they are 18 already so they think that they are not needy but they are even more needy than anybody else and these are not the kids you can drop off and pick up because if you drop them off you might not be able to pick them up they need all the care they can get.

Continuation school programs are often viewed as a second chance opportunity extended to underperforming students. District leaders must make decisions that are most impactful to every student served by the district. Leaders must be flexible and intentional in their efforts to reach the masses by building confidence, promoting student value and pushing visibility contribute to students' ability to recharge and re-engage in their education. Through life experience and content knowledge, SUSDC continuation school program leaders are able to hone in on student needs; encouraging participation in their personal educational experiences, supporting them to a level that provides a basis for successful learning opportunities. Intentional effort is directed to support the whole child, building confidence, and converting students' "I can't" attitudes into "I can", transforming them into potential change agents.

Theme 2: Leadership Experiences

Cultural responsive leadership encourages educators to learn from their students and modify learning experiences to better suit learning needs. Ladson-Billings' (1995) theoretical framework: high academic expectations with appropriate support such as

scaffolding; cultural competence reflected in work with curriculum and students' funds of knowledge, and establishing relationships with students and families; and cultivating students' critical consciousness. Cultural responsive leaders must possess optimism, embrace learning differences, recognize students' individual needs, and move students through constructive programming to attain academic success.

In effort to further validate participants' responses to the survey questions provided on culture, cultural responsiveness and leadership perspectives, participants were asked share their vision of leadership practices through the following three questions that influence their decision making strategies:

1. Describe a major challenge found in the work that your lead for continuation school education programs in the district.
2. What additional support(s) do you feel are needed to enhance or accelerate your program?
3. What would you do more of related to education continuation school students if you had additional time and/or funding?

Challenges of the trade:

Mr. Pop (SL): My challenge is seeing over more than one school and to be intentional with every school and program and two schools we have 4 programs and really can consider 4 different schools because the focus is different so being there as an active learner when we looking over each program and being there to schedule meetings, a meeting where we look at the data and develop a plan and identify an indicator of our process and our biggest challenge is the schedule because I'm very responsive to staff, parents and students concerns and I tend to get off track and it's not much time in a day to look at what needs to be done and

schedule is spending most of my time with the students and the operation of the schools can be very distracting.

Ms. Amalia (DL): It's a struggle for students to move into these schools and in high school we have 9,000 kids and only 3,000 would qualify into an alternative school and schools where they won't be referred to the Disciplinary Hearing Panel (DHP). Some of the systems a structures don't fit, like district wide, testing data and a few other things. For me the biggest challenge for me moving forward the budget conversation that the schools are too expensive for the budgets that they're given.

Mr. Mann (DL): A major challenge is funding and making sure all staff believing that the student will be successful.

Ms. Adale (SL): One major one is fighting for what we need and questioning anybody why they didn't think we need it with our population and talking to educated people that understands. Secondly, fighting to make sure parents don't give up on their kids and that most of the parents are supporting their kids and also making sure kids believe in themselves; that's pretty major.

Additional support:

Ms. Lillie (SL): I would think in continuation schools there should be additional concerns about the urgency of supporting the students, particularly since we don't have the students as long as comprehensive high schools do. We don't have four years to get them there, I think that's the most important thing to realize.

Mr. Pop (SL): I think all concerned with the district must understand the alternative program. Putting students all in one box while not understanding that alternative programs have different focus areas creates challenges for successful... For example, people think alternative is only continuation school, but alternative means different or unconventional as traditional schools don't work for our students. These schools gives students different options so that they can excel and we are very clear about that.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I feel like a one person show sometimes and sometimes the network supports don't work with us, they work with the bigger high schools but I would love the transition piece.

Mr. Mann (DL): Great people is what makes the difference. Obviously the staff and transportation tends to be an issue for students. I would say more resources are needed towards internships and work experiences.

Ms. Adale (SL): I could use all the partners that I can get that can help with brainstorming and helping with supporting positive educational experiences for students.

Doing more with additional resources:

Ms. Lillie (SL): I'd do more of the work that I'm doing now. I'd provide more preparation for internships and being able to give them more internships, because students need to be out there in the world learning how to talk to business owners and everyone else. With more funding I would get students off site and involved in professional community exposure rather in the area of field trips or various learning projects; because that's where the real learning is. If I had more funding I'd bring in more real world speakers, you know people they can physically look at, to talk to, and be mentored by. I'd bring in more mentors like a mentor for every 2 or 3 students. There would be more case management, I'd love to have a case manager right now to tell you the truth.

I could go on and on about what I'd do if I had more funding. I would even do something with this old broken down site.

I would love to have a bus or mini bus that can pick up students at different points because a continuation students come from such a wide span of area, so if I had checkpoints where I could pick kids up throughout the city and get them here that will help with my attendance. That way the students wouldn't have bother with connecting 3, 4, 5 bus routes trying to get here. I'd make sure that we could continue to give them bus passes to get here, pay for their transportation on Bart with passes, not just for transportation to go on field trips but monthly 31 day bus passes.

Mr. Pop (SL): It would be building more relationships with my students so that they see me as a support system rather than a gate keeper or a dean and that makes me position myself. I make sure I understand them, because every kid has a story and I try to educate them on what my role is, so often they see my role as a barrier. I'm also seem as someone a teacher refers them to when they have a problem; not realizing to meet those goals I have to meet the staff needs and sometimes we don't get the benefit to tell the students that. I'm on a mission too, I have goals like they have goals. They are held accountable I'm held accountable

starting with the parents wanting their kids to be educated but sometimes they don't see the connection.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I would do more with the instructional college readiness side of things, for example thinking how can do more of that at our schools because we are pretty good with the SEL, but we can be better with the academics. I would like to work with the bigger high schools more, in terms of setting up systems on their end. I think that would be helpful to student transition as well.

Mr. Mann (DL): If we had additional funding, I would insure that every student had concurrent enrollment courses that would help them actually help them get an AA in the continuation schools or at least a year of college credits, as well as every kid will have a paying internship.

Ms. Adale (SL): Give them opportunities many of them need jobs we help with internships some are paid and some are not but at least give them opportunities Create things so it can be there to develop and help them literally get a job not just send them but actually help them. I would love to see something where we can speak to the supervisor the manager or just someone in support of our students.

Restorative practices are student-focused interventions that try to change the perspective of students with behavioral difficulties and other related problems. Students are encouraged to understand the impact of their offense on the victim and the school community and to take responsibility for their actions through interactive, social-cognitive processes (Choi, Green, & Gilbert, 2011). Restorative justice approaches are intended to be interventional and diversional efforts that include mediation and peace circles as practices that encourage behavioral shifts through restorative philosophy.

Transforming students

Cultural responsiveness validates students' ways of knowing and doing and therefore allows students the freedom to focus on academic tasks. Cultural

responsiveness enables students to find their own voices, contextualize issues in multiple cultural perspectives, achieve higher levels of understanding, practice insightful thinking, and become more active participants in shaping their own learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Transforming student engagement through their academic experience is pivotal in demystifying the negative references against continuation high schools. Participants highlighted strategies which they felt may contribute to the success of transforming students in their respective programs.

Ms. Lillie (SL): A major contribution/success was bringing the pathway where students get the work experience of having worked for a very large district with the internships that are involved as a result of the pathway, it's a phenomenal process. I am about transforming education so that it works for students.

Mr. Pop (SL): Establishing partnerships with other institutions, outside agencies, and colleges...coming full circle for the communities – using all leveraged resources to get our kids college, career and community ready – working with everything that is available until you meet those challenges.

Ms. Amalia (DL): Focusing more on student academic performance through thinking skills and knowledge recovery instead of thinking credit recovery.

Mr. Mann (DL): The most important resource is people, meaning that when you have less dollars it is extremely important to have people who can make it happen in spite of...

It is my responsibility to make sure that I lead in a way that demonstrates that values should be present for every student.

One district leader has a long history of advocacy, known for fighting for recognition, respect and visibility of continuation schools, always reinforcing the fight for the future of continuation school students.

Ms. Adale (SL): I'm always asking questions that others don't want to ask themselves, although they know that question should be answered and so in that aspect I think I am an advocate for our programs. I fight for recognition, respect and visibility of our students. I fight for the future of our students.

Commitment to the work

Cultural responsive leaders must be accountable to all students served by the educational system. Leaders must believe that each student has the ability to succeed in school. Through work or personal experience, SUSD continuation school program leaders became drawn to their work to advocate for and elevate students in need. Participants were asked share their motivation to lead in continuation educational high school programs through the following two questions:

1. What motivates you to continue this work?
2. How do your personal values and beliefs shape your actions as a culturally responsive leader?

Motivation:

Ms. Lillie (SL): If not me then whom? I believe in the students, I believe in their communities. I'm totally motivated, when I see students come to me having been harmed in so many cases and in need of healing; emotionally, psychologically, academically....to seeing the transformation in them as they stand tall and knowing that they are somebody, that's what keeps me motivated.

Mr. Pop (SL): I've been doing this for years and I've been lucky enough to oversee K-12 programs and sometimes you begin to question if you want to continue to do this work, because you have set backs especially when you're trying to coordinate interest groups that sometimes don't have those same goals in mind. What gets me motivated is I have a group of kids in a K-8 and when I walk in to see these babies playing (keep in mind they are in a school where there are high school kids), I realize the importance of my work. It starts with the safety of

our students and with these students, I want to make a safe culture and climate. When I see those kids I see my own kids, we cannot afford to fall asleep at the wheel so I get energized; I can't afford to fumble.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I see so much strength and beauty in the students and I feel beholden to do right by them. The bonus is, I love the principals I work with and the staff at the schools; this is one of my favorite jobs. I believe that all kids are capable so that really drives me. My long term vision is to help continuation schools and the youth we are trying to serve and it goes beyond the schools.

Mr. Mann (DL): God put me here on this earth to help advocate for these children's education.

Ms. Adale (SL): The thing that keeps me motivated is that there's something every day, and that I want to make things better, there are goals I want to accomplish.

Beliefs and values:

Ms. Lillie (SL): My personal values and beliefs shapes my actions totally as a culturally responsive leader I refer to being an adaptive leader really it's a culturally responsive adaptive leader again my values that everyone should have the same opportunities for college and career and be successful in life. I don't care what color you are what your background is we should all have access our children should have access. I spoke about humility we have to be humble we have to be able to back up from ourselves and not be about I, I and be able to listen and give students voices those are the actions that shape my culturally responsive leadership and always being cognoscente of who my students are no judging but making sure that I can give them the best. Spiritual is a value that determines who I am as a culturally responsive person, being kind.

Mr. Pop (SL): Growing up in the south the Jim crow system I was lost I didn't have a voice and the support my grandmother had a 6th grade education and didn't say she loves me but I know she did and I didn't realize I had a voice and the potential and I didn't realize that until I became a teacher to understand that and supported me. So when I see that I try to share that with the students saying I have a story too I grew with struggles and some of what they face I have experience and some student don't think you understand them. I am one of them I am a product of them so when I share my experience I think of what I had in place or what are some of the things I had in place because I tell them I'm a long way from north Carolina a long way from home and didn't have aspirations to go to college and I aunt supported to go to college and my only interest was working at a factory in that town and I graduated from high school and it was a teacher that

opened up my lens saying you have a whole world out there and you have touch potential and I didn't believe it but she believed it.

Ms. Amalia (DL): I believe that all kids are capable so that really drives me also I believe in integrity and equity and in the last few years I felt like I was being pressure into making a decision that I didn't feel that were my values. I really had to think deeply about what this person needs and how can I advocate into the right choice and so I don't want to fall into self-preservation but by doing right for the kids so I always have to make sure to check myself.

Mr. Mann (DL): As a African American male I have seen the impact of culture responsive practices of the lack there of from my entire life and it is my responsibility to make sure that I lead in a way that demonstrates that a value should be there for every student.

Ms. Adale (SL): I don't know because I never really evaluate myself but I take that back I grade myself in the car with A,B,C,D or F and when I get a C or D I start talking and say well what can I do better and it doesn't always work. The one thing I know is that I have good common sense and I this because when things constantly happens to myself I say is that just common sense I'm always questioning why is that not something they always do. I'm great at this and the more I do this the more I start reflecting back on my career on the mistakes I made but it's a good thing to know the students have an equal chance to be heard that's very important.

Theme 3: Leading Social Emotional Learning Environments

Many alternative schools have staff who are not properly trained to teach high-need student populations. With discipline being central to many alternative school settings, an emphasis on skill sets such as anger management and behavior modification becomes prioritized over student learning and academic engagement, which further limits the educational opportunities afforded to the very students who need additional support (Powell, in press).

Social emotional learning (SEL) is a student management approach that includes not only quality instruction planning, but a focus on the behavioral needs of the students,

monitoring of student engagement, and skills application to avoid escalating conflicts (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). These programming strategies that include character education and emotional development interventions aimed at aiding children and adolescents' acquisition of knowledge, improved attitudes, and skill building to recognize and manage their emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). SEL programming can be implemented as a stand-alone program involving social work and counseling as well as a school wide curriculum.

One SUSD leader believed that taking ownership of one's education is important for success.

Ms. Lillie (SL): Students take responsibility for learning under SEL – self-awareness, self-monitoring and social behavior.

Culturally responsive leaders embrace diversity among their students and employ multifaceted strategies to encompass all learning objectives, beginning with servicing student needs.

Ms. Amalia (DL): There is a lot of wrap around in terms of how we're supporting students from like case managers, mental health, relationships with teachers, smaller class sizes, with more personalized learning.

When a student comes in, we know exactly where they're at...I think we have a pretty strong culture of social and emotional supports on the campus

We are looking to see how we might increase attendance using outside the box thinking and SEL relationships

One SUSL leader credits her efforts to an old African Proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child”, and so her attempts in maximizing partnerships are strategic in positively impacting students’ educational experiences. SUSL leaders believe the more participation in students’ social, emotional, and academic well-being, the greater the influence for positive student outcomes.

Ms. Adale (SL): We need our partnerships to help with our students and we have to make sure anything (e.g., initiatives or investment priorities) that comes through the district that we are considered, because our kids are so needy. Some of our students are 18 already so they think that they are not needy but they are even more needy than anybody else, these are not the kids you can drop off and pick up because if you drop them off you might not be able to pick them up they need all the care they can get.

Theme 4: Leading with Equity

Achievement inequity defined as lack of fairness or justice in efforts of being successful, is most visible in American public schooling as a result of achievement disparities across racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, Howard, 2010, Darling-Hammond, 2010). Traditional school culture is and always has been that of White middle class America (Delpit, 2012). Continuation high school leaders must challenge traditionally accepted notion of “rigorous” curriculum and instruction in favor of a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to education (Delpit, 2012, Howard, 2010). Participants were asked share their vision of equity through the following question:

How does student equity “in action” look within the continuation school programs under your leadership?

Equity visualized

Ms. Lillie (SL): All students having the same accessibility to the full spectrum of education, meeting my students where they are – not discriminating against my students coming from juvenile hall.

Including all in student leadership, all students having access to participate in student leadership and decision making within the school

Teachers currently without proper credentials are allowed to teach core classes, make no sense...this gets us back to the whole perception of who are kids are and we are not giving them equity in education and that's huge...

Traditional schools are not intentionally organized to empower all students to achieve at high levels (Delpit, 2012). SUSDC continuation school leaders focus on empowering and engaging students in effort to make learning more meaningful.

Mr. Pop (SL): Every student understanding that their opinion matters and they as students are just as important as the next. We create engagement opportunities for students who are less likely to participate so that we get their input as well and they can feel included.

Mr. Mann (DL): It's just meeting a student at his or her needs.

BUASD continuation school leaders must appeal to district leadership for consideration in district strategies and priorities based on the extenuating needs of continuation school students.

Ms. Adale (SL): We can't say enough how much we need, many times we are the forgotten schools and I quite don't understand. I couldn't understand why we weren't number one in consideration, it is vital for all the programs that we need

to help with social emotion learning to help with A-G requirements, just to help with everything, our program basics.

Theme 5: Financial Investments for Academic Strategies

Resources have many financial implications for school programming: it can determine the success or failure of a program and it supports implementation and on-going operational costs. Funding dictates the span of impact on the students served in terms of overall program costs: materials, equipment, program logistics, transportation, staffing and other support services. A simple-level funding strategy is inadequate for the diverse needs of continuation school programs. To determine how budget asked share their vision of budgeting through the following questions:

1. What strategies do you employ in your budget planning priorities that support the educational needs of continuation school students?
2. How do you maximize program potential given the resources provided to operate the program?

Dollars and sense in budget planning

Ms. Lillie (SL): I make sure that we are very focused on core academics, literacy reading and writing. Additional dollars are used to focus on materials to support literacy; a lot goes into it, including additional staff FTE to support that college and career piece. Support for my continuation students is important because we have to back up and do the additional education and the additional focusing for our students about college and career as many of our continuation school kids come with the idea that their just trying to catch up on credits just to get out of high school. Additional dollars for college and career counseling and support. Again, having additional dollars for that social and emotional piece is critical, because we have to put additional dollars into teaching our students how to manage their

lives both on site and off, making sure they get the additional tools as their functioning out in the community.

Mr. Pop (SL): One of the things that I take to heart is being able to leverage resources for example, I look at leveraging, not in terms of structure but in terms of the staff we select. We had a counselor here and before I chose her as my partner as assistant principal, I knew that she was a counselor and made the hire as counselor in an assistant principal; I called it a hybrid, I got two for one leveraging those resources and every staff that I select. I look at what they can bring to the table and try to put them in a position where they can leverage that expertise and sometimes that may not be what's called for in their job descriptions.

Ms. Amalia (DL): In this district I've learned that I have to be proactive, because alternative schools are funded differently. I've learned that before the "one pagers" (projected site funding) come out, we have to think about what is actually need and start engaging in conversations with fiscal ahead of time and that's when it feels like it works best. This year and the prior year I had the opportunity to connect with different folks in fiscal to kind of like think about the Alt. Ed schools and so that there were no surprises when the one pagers were sent out.

I feel like right now I'm having to think differently about my strategies and learn how we communicate why this work is important. In the long run when I look at cost, it's like a drop in the bucket to be able to run these programs, in terms of the revenue that the schools generates and how much we actually give for the kids that we serve. If there's any difference when you look at the big picture, it's a drop in the bucket to serve some of our most vulnerable students that have been failed throughout the system; we put them in these schools and I feel like I have to think differently about my budget planning, thinking about helping the schools increase enrollment, increase ADA to make sure that they are creating sustainable programs as well.

Mr. Mann (DL): One thing from a center perspective we actually give more resources to continuation schools in the sense that the way that we budget our continuation schools because of their size and or small size wouldn't be able to offer all the programs that is needed for a student to graduate so that is supplement to give them more than what we will actually give other schools.

Ms. Adale (SL): First and foremost I have to consider staffing and partners. I have to pay for it, unfortunately for us the 2017-2018 school year I lost someone, a partner, that we needed every day but there was no money to keep them. We give our partnerships money to get people in and I had to talk to the partners and say can you give me a lesser price, because we really need this person/service, especially in restorative justice to help with social emotional learning and after

school programs. Even though we get funding, we need extra to address our program needs. I also say to staff the district is about to cut our budget, so order everything you'll need in terms of supplies and materials for next year because you just don't know when it's going to hit and this year has been one of the hardest hits.

Maximizing resources

Ms. Lillie (SL): I commit to a very strategic hiring, making sure that teachers or counselors or whomever has additional skills to cover their role and support additional areas, really looking closely at every dollar. I focus my priorities on what my program needs or my program goals and my program outcomes are and then direct the dollars to really support those items, not just giving the program lip service, but real strategic planning in putting resources where they should be.

Mr. Pop (SL): It's looking at what staff can offer and what staff can bring to the table. I look at my selected staff to see if they can teach more than one subject in case we find ourselves in a pinch, putting them in a situation where we can benefit from their expertise. I try to leverage their contributions and position them where they are happy and successful.

Ms. Amalia (DL): We've tried to do a lot of out of the box thinking because I think when I first came onboard the schools schedule looked exactly the same as comprehensive high schools. It was like if students didn't do well in a comprehensive high school then their probably weren't going to do well here. But we're trying to think differently around how we structure our classes, our schedules, and staff to maximize the strengths of different positions. In some of the Alt.Ed schools they have partnerships with different nonprofits, but it didn't feel like there was a coherent vision sometimes in how to use all of the resources coming in the schools. We're figuring out how we move the money around so that we're clear in the big picture of what is needed and that it is known how to use the different funding sources to get there. Discretionary is your most flexible finding; we've created advisory programs that are at smaller ratios and working to help with some of the attendance piece. It's like a relational piece between the advisor and the student, which helps as we've seen attendance increase and actually didn't cost any money it was just more about how we restructured the day.

Mr. Mann (DL): The most important resource is that is when you have less in dollars, it is extremely important to have people who can make things happen. You can be really creative around what you can do if you have really smart, resourceful people at the table who are on board with your vision.

Ms. Adale (SL): We brainstorm a lot to see what is needed and we decided for the last 2 years we will bring expanded after school programs into our bell schedule so kids couldn't decide if they were going or not. We want to make sure our after school classes align with our pathways and our vision. I want to make sure with those classes that students become better, it's all about educating the kids for their next steps after graduation. I tell kids all the time, I don't want to see anyone on their mom's couch after they leave (graduate) that's no one's purpose.

Leaders who were financially savvy believe that program direction is dictated by available resources. SUSD leaders reported that being fiscally astute was an important aspect in leadership. Restrictions imposed by limited funding pose challenges in providing appropriate support to students. Funding is more often than not consumed by staff salaries, the more longevity staff have the more expensive they are, resulting in inflated budgets. Funding limitations impose challenges with finding the right balance in instructional and administrative staffing and operational costs. Funding is a constant priority and is the root of a continuous battle for SUSD continuation school leaders – program leaders are burdened with justifying why continuation school students need more than traditional students, overlooking the fact that traditional school leaders deemed these same students as an inappropriate placement and referred them to continuation education.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore how site leaders perceive site based budgeting practices and its impact on academic investments for continuation high school programs. Through a framework of cultural responsive leadership, participants were asked to identify characteristics of cultural responsive behaviors. Questions were asked of participants to determine whether leaders practiced cultural responsiveness. Additional questions were asked to determine how funding impacted site leaders' ability to invest in their respective programs.

A review of the research on continuation high school education, school finance, cultural responsiveness and leadership confirmed that very little research exists pertaining to continuation high schools. Alternative education emerged as a term commonly used in literature, however the term "alternative" referred to a program design that did not place emphasis on underperforming students, but rather offered students with satisfactory academic performance an alternative methods to meet their educational trajectories. For the purpose of this research, the term continuation school was used instead of alternative education or alternative school. Continuation school is a type of educational program that falls under the umbrella of alternative education, which also includes Community Day, cyber programs or any other form of non-traditional schooling. It was my intent to specifically name continuation school as the focus of my research, as the program is my area of interest.

Findings from this study emerged to show how funding plays a critical part in connecting culturally responsive leadership decisions for academic investments given nature of the school type and the diverse needs of the students served by continuation high schools in BUASD. Funding is the underlying thread that connected each overarching theme: 1) cultural responsiveness in action, 2) leadership experiences, 3) social emotional learning environments, 4) leading with equity, and 5) financial investments for academic strategies. Funding enables leaders to strategically invest in academic and program supports most beneficial to a highly vulnerable student population.

Leaders must be culturally and responsively astute to recognize and address the multilayered social, emotional, and academic challenges experienced by many continuation high school students, for which funding is greatly needed in support of programming and wrap around services that address student social, emotional and academic challenges. Leadership practices as shared by participants, reflected a culture of caring, community and family. Participants shared that positive and nurturing relationships with students were a critical and commonly the most challenging part of their work; however, after building trust and supportive goals, participants reported that students reciprocated by actively engage in their education experiences.

Implications for Leadership

A district level analysis is called for to help district leaders understand student needs for additional resources to satisfy their deficiencies in educational and social skills.

District advocates for alternative education programs at SUSD should emulate “ridas”, as defined by Duncan-Andrade (2007). Rida is noted as a popular cultural term that refers to people who can be counted on during times of extreme duress (Duncan-Andrade, 2007), emulates the theory of authentic caring as defined by Valenzuela (1999). A vested interest in the whole student body stems from caring and compels the attention of authentic leadership regarding alternative education. More appropriate decisions can be made if the right people are at the table to make them. Authentic leaders with genuine interest in the condition of alternative education programs and its impact on students are better versed in meaningful discourse to have the ability to transform education into a system that embraces diversity in the educational needs of all students in SUSD.

District leaders must take on the challenge as a New Breed Leader, defined by Bethel (2009) as having integrity, accountability and is open to in the leadership role. One leads in this transparency with confidence from a foundation of truth, honesty and openness. This leadership style may appear to be emotionally driven, however the vulnerability shown via openness attracts respect, compliance, and commands effort in moving an organization in a specific direction. Bethel (2009), contends that an open leader rattles the cages of convention, questions everything, and constantly looks for opportunities, innovation, and creativity. The New Breed Leader must evolve into the company of SUSD’s Executive Team armed with critical hope, authenticity and transformative ideas with the goal to shed light on the silenced and forgotten student population of alternative education. Such representation of alternative education will

capture the attention of leadership agendas and gain notable recognition of its position within the district and its impact on the neediest students of the district.

A thorough understanding of the relationship between funding mechanisms and how those opportunities are created will enable educational leaders to make informed budgetary decisions that impact all students. Without adequate financial support essential learning cannot take place in continuation schools (De Velasco & McLaughlin, 2012). More funding directed to continuation education will allow for the critical support needed for educational success, such as appropriate continuation education courses and interventions: academic counselors, psychologists, social workers, highly qualified instructors, adequate support staff, and an inclusive program structure to meet all needs of continuation high school students.

Challenges

SUSD is a large urban district where many of its students are confronted with life situations that defy the possibilities of success, such as poverty, unemployment, crime, and inadequate education and skills for college or work. College and career education may be the life line needed to give continuation high school students a standing opportunity into the community as socially responsible citizens. Lack of academic and career preparation continues to perpetuate negative outcomes for minority students who are most impacted by incomplete program completion at continuation schools.

Shifting the mindset of leaders across district divisions is necessary to achieve an understanding of value and necessity for continuation school programming. The shift begins with prioritizing investments for students, equity emerges when all students are provided needed services to capitalize on education opportunities offered by the district.

Recommendations

Cultural responsive training is a much needed resource to support continuation high school program students. Leaders must be trained in not only the official definition of “cultural responsiveness”, but on an operationalized definition applicable to the entire student body. Intense cultural responsive training should be developed for the general district mission, regular sessions should be required to operationalize cultural responsiveness in the work being performed by all educators: teaching, leadership, and fiscal administration. Cultural responsive leadership training will encourage:

- change in culture of working in silo as departments/communities, currently inciting a system of chaos
- change the current culture of chaos, resulting in uniformity and streamlined processes
- transform the system/mindset district-wide about continuation school services, mitigating the constant burden of site leaders to validate their programs

- address structural racialization and inequitable processes of continuation schools that exist by design, validated by the funding received by continuation school programs and the students served
- influence change in quality of programming, giving students served by the programs equitable access to college and career opportunities
- program supports system-wide that increase recognition and student success

California offers the Model Continuation High School Recognition Program, a joint project of the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Continuation Education Association (CCEA). The program honors continuation high schools for the comprehensive services they provide at-risk youth through instructional strategies, flexible scheduling, guidance, and counseling. The lack of funding opportunities limit sustainability of comprehensive and effective continuation high school programs needed to support various student challenges.

Continuation program leaders at SUSD offer perspectives that promote supportive, inclusive and community learning partnerships that could potentially lead to State recognition under the California model continuation high school program if properly executed. Achieving state-wide recognition could change the initial perception of continuation high schools, allowing sites to invest in programs influenced by cultural responsive leadership strategies; in line with recognizing the various academic, social, mental, emotional, behavioral challenges that form a culture of diverse experiences. To

ignore the obstacles that continuation school students face would be a socially unjust act on part of the district as a publicly obligated vehicle for empowering all students for success in the community.

Reflection

This study is intended to encourage District Leadership to take notice of the challenges incurred by program leaders and to help to shape discussions of how to best serve the continuation high school population. In addition to the findings, I offer my reflection on the process of completing this project which ended with asking myself, what I understand about myself, my beliefs and values that shape my actions as a culturally responsive leader. I was pleased to learn that many of my preconceptions regarding supportive resources for continuation high school education were also duplicated by the “experts”. I often defer to my own opinion concerning the challenges experienced by continuation high school program leaders as simply commonsensical: pondering the idea that if options are presented, opportunities can be created to move continuation high school programs forward, which are otherwise not represented in general high school program or site funding conversations.

I previously identified my motivation for this work, stating that it stemmed from a quote I read years ago by Charles F. Kettering, an engineer and co-inventor of the electric car starter, “Nothing ever rose to touch the skies unless someone dreamed that it should, someone believed that it could, and someone willed that it must.” Using the quote as a lens brings clarity to what was learned in the process of this study; continuation high

school program leaders believe their efforts can positively impact a students' life, they believe their students are capable of completing program and consistently try to invest in student support services needed in order to focus on equitable opportunities for all students in the district.

Maximizing various partnerships, making staffing agreements to serve in multiple roles, and promoting inclusive decision-making, continuation high school leaders represent a popular African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," which is interpreted as it takes an entire community to raise a child into a viable adult. The "village" demonstrates the cultural responsive will of leadership to advocate for resources, partnerships and supports that empower all students.

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**Appendix A – California High School Enrollment and Dropout Count by County
2014-15**

Name	Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Total	Grade 9-12 Enrollment Total	Annual Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate
ALAMEDA	1,783	67,445	2.6%
ALPINE	2	7	28.6%
AMADOR	31	1,336	2.3%
BUTTE	240	9,651	2.5%
CALAVERAS	21	2,074	1.0%
COLUSA	25	1,395	1.8%
CONTRA COSTA	761	54,543	1.4%
DEL NORTE	88	1,323	6.7%
EL DORADO	101	8,902	1.1%
FRESNO	1,572	59,120	2.7%
GLENN	296	1,840	16.1%
HUMBOLDT	136	5,375	2.5%
IMPERIAL	165	11,786	1.4%
INYO	1,601	3,325	48.2%
KERN	1,455	53,362	2.7%
KINGS	282	8,549	3.3%

Name	Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Total	Grade 9-12 Enrollment Total	Annual Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate
LAKE	75	2,787	2.7%
LASSEN	34	1,506	2.3%
LOS ANGELES	17,333	496,647	3.5%
MADERA	255	9,170	2.8%
MARIN	82	9,359	0.9%
MARIPOSA	9	576	1.6%
MENDOCINO	93	4,091	2.3%
MERCED	387	17,164	2.3%
MODOC	6	434	1.4%
MONO	478	930	51.4%
MONTEREY	336	20,981	1.6%
NAPA	196	6,893	2.8%
NEVADA	2,047	5,452	37.5%
ORANGE	2,384	163,801	1.5%
PLACER	228	23,080	1.0%
PLUMAS	22	691	3.2%
RIVERSIDE	2,065	134,402	1.5%

Name	Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Total	Grade 9-12 Enrollment Total	Annual Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate
SACRAMENTO	2,253	73,098	3.1%
SAN BENITO	84	3,446	2.4%
SAN BERNARDINO	3,756	129,780	2.9%
SAN DIEGO	3,485	159,417	2.2%
SAN FRANCISCO	323	19,724	1.6%
SAN JOAQUIN	1,114	43,761	2.5%
SAN LUIS OBISPO	137	11,267	1.2%
SAN MATEO	364	27,861	1.3%
SANTA BARBARA	380	20,509	1.9%
SANTA CLARA	2,891	82,430	3.5%
SANTA CRUZ	279	12,142	2.3%
SHASTA	214	8,596	2.5%
SIERRA	1	109	0.9%
SISKIYOU	11	1,763	0.6%
SOLANO	460	19,916	2.3%
SONOMA	582	21,552	2.7%
STANISLAUS	805	32,593	2.5%
SUTTER	134	6,508	2.1%

Name	Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Total	Grade 9-12 Enrollment Total	Annual Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate
TEHAMA	40	2,867	1.4%
TRINITY	8	438	1.8%
TULARE	607	29,485	2.1%
TUOLUMNE	27	2,201	1.2%
VENTURA	929	44,840	2.1%
YOLO	162	9,115	1.8%
YUBA	169	3,940	4.3%
	Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Total	Grade 9-12 Enrollment Total	Annual Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate
Statewide Total	53,804	1,955,355	2.8%

Appendix B – SUSD 2015-16 Enrollment by Ethnicity

Appendix C – SUSD Historical Completion Stats

Appendix D – Direct Services to Sites

- **Custodial Services-** Centrally-allocated custodians will be provided to some school site campuses. However, any SUSD school site can provide additional resources to hire additional staff
- **Health Services (Nurses)** -Health Services provides a variety of medical support services directed at maintaining overall student health. These services include screening for vision and hearing, providing diabetes support, and acting as a part or full time school nurse for your school site
- **Community School Program Manager** - Serves as a liaison between school site and community, promoting collaboration and engagement opportunities
- **School Security Officers** – Centrally-allocated SSOs will be provided to some school site campuses. However, any SUSD school site can provide additional resources to hire additional staff.
- **Restorative Justice Coordinators** - Optimizing the educational environment in support of academic achievement
- **Counselors-** Centrally-allocated counselors will be provided to some school site campuses. However, any SUSD school site can provide additional resources to hire additional staff.
- **AAMA Facilitators** - Program to accelerate the achievement of African American Male students in all facets. The ultimate purposes to create learning conditions engage, encourage and empower African American Male students

- **Psychologist** Centrally-allocated psychologist will be provided to some school site campuses. However, any SUSD school site can provide additional resources to hire additional staff.
- **Mental Health** - Mental Health Interns are deployed to school sites to provide classroom intervention; professional development for staff; individual, group, and family counselling services; and case management
- **Psychologist Services** - School Psychologists can provide a variety of mental health and behavior intervention services directed at promoting the social-emotional functioning of students. Such services include student counselling (group/ individual), crisis support, consultation with staff and parents regarding student behavioral interventions, coordination of and participation in SST/504 meetings, and implementation of class/ and school- wide social-emotional learning programs.

Appendix E – Search Criteria

Scope and Search Criteria

The scope of literature reviewed for this study includes peer-reviewed articles found using ERIC (EBSCO) and Google Scholar in three topic areas. The keywords used in the literature search for continuation high school education were: (“CONTINUATION HIGH SCHOOL” and “CALIFORNIA”), (“CONTINUATION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS” and “CALIFORNIA”), (“CONTINUATION HIGH SCHOOL”). The search criteria yielded limited results as a continuation high school is not a widely researched subject and is not a popular trend. In order to expand my results, I replaced continuation high school with alternative high school as continuation high school is one form of the alternative high school education program. The keywords used in the modified search were: (“ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL” and “CALIFORNIA”), (“ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL”). The keywords used in the literature search for budget models were: (“CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICTS” and “BUDGET”), (“SCHOOL DISTRICTS” and “BUDGET MODELS”), and (“SITE BASED BUDGETING”). The keywords used in the literature search for culturally responsiveness were: (“CULTURALLY RESPONSIVENESS” and “K12 EDUCATION”), (“CULTURALLY RESPONSIVENESS” and “SCHOOL DISTRICTS”), and (“CULTURALLY RESPONSIVENESS” and “SCHOOL BUDGETS”).

Appendix F – Recruiting Text

My name is Marla Williams. I am a Financial Services Director in the Financial Services Office. I am also a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University. I am conducting research on continuation education programs here at Sunset Unified School District (SUSD). I am inviting you to participate because you are an administrator with direct participation or oversight of continuation education at either a site or district level. The research will become part of a doctoral dissertation and will be used to inform SUSD in further strategies for promoting equity, access, and in practice decisions that support continuation school sites.

Participation in this research includes individual interviews of no more than one and one half hour. During the interview participants will be asked to describe their perceptions and experiences in primary budget development processes and its impact on the site's operational budgets for the respective academic year. The interview will also solicit for suggestions for potential recommendations or strategies for enhancement. Follow up interviews may be conducted as necessary lasting approximately 45 minutes. All information shared will be kept confidential (including interview responses). Any information included in the findings of this study will be presented anonymously so that no one will know the individual identity of participants unless prior permission is provided by participants. Pseudonyms will be used in place of the district name as well as participants' name to protect all identities. Your participation in this study is solely

voluntary; if you decide not to participate, there will not be any negative consequence whatsoever.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at marlaw@mail.sfsu.edu

Appendix G – Informed Consent

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

“Dollars and Sense: Examining Academic Investments in Urban Continuation School Programs”

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research study is to examine the effectiveness of continuation education programs through the various lenses of practice, access and equity at Sunset Unified School District. This study is for Marla Williams’ doctoral dissertation and is not a report for the district or conducted by the district. Findings will be shared with the district to inform strategies and enhance discourse on programming support of continuation education programs.

The researcher, Marla Williams, is a Financial Service Director of the Sunset Unified School district. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an administrator with some degree of assumed responsibilities over continuation education programming in the Sunset Unified School District.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- a) You will be interviewed for between 60-90 minutes by the researcher about your experiences with continuation education programs.

- b) You may be invited to participate in a follow-up interview no longer than 30-45 minutes.
- c) Interviews will be scheduled at your choice of convenient locations and times.
- d) You will be interviewed fall 2016. The interview will be audiotaped.
- e) You will allow Marla Williams to use the interview information for qualitative results.

RISKS

Participation in the study involves minimal risk. However, no names or identities will be used in any published reports of the research. One potential risk is loss of privacy. The risk will be minimized by keeping all research data in a locked cabinet/desk in a secure location and in password protected files to which only the researcher and proxy will have access. Any names or identifying information of individual participants will be changed or omitted in the study. Pseudonyms will be assigned to replace the actual institution, site, and participant names.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All research data will be stored in a locked desk in a secure location as well as in a password protected data file which can be accessed only by the researcher. Any audiotapes if retained after transcription will be destroyed after one year. Data analysis

(specifically from financial data) may be used in further inquiries from District leadership in budget system and process planning efforts.

DIRECT BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits to the participant.

COSTS

There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

COMPENSATION

There will be no payments for participation in this study

ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is not to participate in the research.

QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Marla Williams about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at marlaw@mail.sfsu.edu or 510-372-7944, or you may contact the research advisor, Dr. Jamal Cooks, at jamalc@sfsu.edu or 510-708-0344.

Questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to the San Francisco State University Office for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to participate in this research study, or to withdraw your participation at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research study will have no influence on your present or future status in the Sunset Unified School District.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Research Participant

Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher

Appendix H – Participant Demographic Survey

1. What is your gender?

_____male

_____female

2. What is your ethnicity?

African
American

Asian

Hispanic/Latina/o

White

other

3. What is your role in leadership with regards to continuation education schools?

_____District Leader (DL) **or** _____School Leader (SL)

4. How many years of K12 education do you have?

0-5

6-10

11-15

>15

5. How many years of SUSD experience do you have?

0-5

6-10

11-15

>15

6. How many years of continuation education programming experience do you have?

0-5

6-10

11-15

>15

7. How many students are impacted by your current role in continuation education

(i.e., site or district-wide program size)?

<100

100-200

201-300

>300

Appendix I – Participant Survey

1. Are you directly involved in the budgeting process for your site/department?
☐yes or ☐no
2. How long have you worked in a capacity which required your participation in budget development?

<3 yrs
<5 yrs
<10 yrs
>10 yrs
3. Have you had any prior budgetary experience (hands-on) outside of the Sunset Unified School District?
☐yes **or** ☐no
4. How **familiar** are you with Sunset Unified School District's "Pathway to Excellence" Strategic Plan?

1
extremely

2
moderately

3
somewhat

4
not at all
5. How **familiar** are you with the overall budget allocation process used at Sunset Unified School District?

1
extremely

2
moderately

3
somewhat

4
not at all
6. How **familiar** are you with the site-based budgeting process?

1
extremely

2
moderately

3
somewhat

4
not at all
7. How **familiar** are you with how the district allocates funds to schools?

1
extremely

2
moderately

3
somewhat

4
not at all
8. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its impact on the district?

1
extremely

2
moderately

3
somewhat

4
not at all

9. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its impact on your site?
1	2	3	4
extremely	moderately	somewhat	not at all
10. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Accountability Plan (LCAP) and its impact on the district?
1	2	3	4
extremely	moderately	somewhat	not at all
11. How **familiar** are you with California's Local Accountability Plan (LCAP) and its impact on your site?
1	2	3	4
extremely	moderately	somewhat	not at all
12. How **effective** is the budget development tool in allowing for site budget autonomy when planning budgetary priorities?
1	2	3	4
extremely	moderately	somewhat	not at all
13. How **effective** are the district level support services provided in the annual budget development process (i.e., Financial Analyst, Human Resource, Office of Accountability, Network Superintendents) in assisting you in executing budgeting priorities for your site?
1	2	3	4
extremely	moderately	somewhat	not at all
14. Listed below are contributing elements of the culture of continuation school environments that should be considered when making financial investments for successful programs, check all elements you agree with and feel free to add others?
- ☐ a) student discipline
 - ☐ b) student attendance
 - ☐ c) student academic performance
 - ☐ d) student graduation requirements
 - ☐ e) high school graduation A-G requirements
 - ☐ f) student pathway participation
 - ☐ g) Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- __h) student civic engagement
- __I) student career pathway interest
- __j) barriers for student academic success
- __k) student academic counseling
- __l) student social/emotional counseling
- __m) other(s):
- _____
- _____
- _____

15. The list below names 25 principal behaviors and practices that positively affect dependent variables of student achievement, student attitudes, student behavior, teacher attitudes, teacher behaviors, and dropout rates.

On a scale of 1-4 please rank each behavior on its level of importance to you in managing the needs of continuation high school programs:

Behavior/Practice	1 extremely	2 moderate	3 somewhat	4 not at all
a) Safe and orderly environment	1	2	3	4
b) Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning	1	2	3	4
c) High expectations for student learning	1	2	3	4
d) Visibility and accessibility	1	2	3	4
e) Positive and supportive climate	1	2	3	4
f) Emotional and interpersonal involvement	1	2	3	4
g) Parent and community outreach and involvement	1	2	3	4

h) Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment	1	2	3	4
i) Collaboration	1	2	3	4
j) Norm of continuous improvement	1	2	3	4
k) Classroom observation and feedback to teachers	1	2	3	4
l) Support of teacher's autonomy	1	2	3	4
m) Professional development opportunities and resources	1	2	3	4
n) Protecting instructional time	1	2	3	4
o) Use of student progress for program improvement	1	2	3	4
p) Recognition of student and staff achievement	1	2	3	4
q) Self-confidence, responsibility and perseverance	1	2	3	4
r) Communication and interaction	1	2	3	4
s) Ritual, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions	1	2	3	4
t) Instructional leadership	1	2	3	4
u) Discussion of instructional issues	1	2	3	4
v) Support of risk taking	1	2	3	4
w) Monitoring student progress and sharing findings	1	2	3	4
x) Role modeling	1	2	3	4

16. Would you consider the behaviors marked above as “extremely important” to be significant to culturally responsive leadership?

_____ yes

_____ no

17. Please rank the following seven traits of culturally responsive schools in order of importance to you as a leader (1 being most important and 7 being least important):

Culturally Responsive Schools
(Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), 2012)

	1. Students are recognized and treated as intellectually capable, with particular attention toward those whose futures are most tenuous
	2. Instructional and assessment practices build on and legitimize students’ prior knowledge, real-life experience, culture, and language
	3. Classroom practices stimulate students to construct knowledge, make meaning, and examine cultural biases and assumptions, drawing on linguistic and experiential resources they bring
	4. Within the classroom and school, students practice participating as citizens in a diverse and democratic society
	5. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups
	6. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups
	7. School programs and instructional practices draw from and integrate community and family language and culture, and help families and communities to support the student’s academic success

Appendix J – Participant Interview Questions

1. Describe what culture looks like in continuation school programs through your personal lens of leadership.
2. In reference to the elements of culture listed in the previous survey, explain their importance within continuation school program?
3. In reference to the elements listed above, explain how they influence financial planning for continuation school programs?
4. Describe what cultural responsiveness looks like in continuation school programs through your personal lens of leadership.
5. Does cultural responsiveness have a place in financial decision making within your educational environment? Explain.
6. What strategies do you employ in your budget planning priorities that support the education of continuation school students?
7. What district shared values are easily identified within your program that promotes student success?
8. What are some challenges that occur in supporting operational needs of continuation education programs?
9. How do you maximize program potential given the resources provided to operate the program?
10. Do you have autonomy in making decisions concerning your program? Is there some level of joint decision-making? If so, who else is involved in this process?
11. How does your program support college readiness preparation for continuation school students?
12. How do you ensure that each student has access to a pathway/trajectory that leads to career readiness?
13. How does student equity “in action” look within the continuation school program under your leadership?

14. What support services are provided to students who may be experiencing challenges with completing your program and successfully attaining college readiness status?
15. Name a major contribution to the success of your continuation school program in the district.
16. Describe a major challenge found in the work that you lead for continuation school education programs in the district?
17. What additional support(s) do you feel are needed to enhance or accelerate your program?
18. What motivates you to continue with this work?
19. What would you do more of related to educating continuation school students if you had additional time and/or funding?
20. How do your personal values and beliefs shape your actions as a culturally responsive leader?
21. Would you consider yourself a “change agent” for your program? Explain.
22. What evaluation tools exist for 12th grade students in continuation high school programs to share their educational experiences in the district?
23. Share one of the most impactful success stories of a current continuation high school graduate that will be college bound.
24. Do you have any additional comments? If so, please share.

Appendix K - Culturally Responsive Schools (CSDE, 2012)

1. Instructional and assessment practices build on and legitimize students' prior knowledge, real-life experience, culture, and language
2. Classroom practices stimulate students to construct knowledge, make meaning, and examine cultural biases and assumptions, drawing on linguistic and experiential resources they bring
3. Within the classroom and school, students practice participating as citizens in a diverse and democratic society
4. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups
5. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups
6. School programs and instructional practices draw from and integrate community and family language and culture, and help families and communities to support the student's academic success

Appendix L – Cultural Responsiveness (CSDE, 2012)

Indicate whether the following value statements are TRUE for your program, the district, or both in reference to continuation high school students' educational experience by placing a checkmark in the appropriate box:

Cultural Responsiveness			
#	Statement	Program	District
1	Schools should honor, respect, value and understand diversity in theory and practice		
2	A culturally responsive education curriculum should be embedded with the concepts of Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. Rigor- exposing students to challenging class work with academic and social support: Relevance – demonstrating how student will use their learning; and Relationships – building caring and supportive connections with student, parents, and communities		
3	Classroom and school-wide traditions, values and practices should reflect respect for family and community assets, including students' native languages, cultural experiences, and family knowledge		
4	The curriculum content should reflect the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of society and the world		
5	A culturally responsive education provides meaningful and valuable exposure to students, faculty and staff from different cultures, ethnicities, religions and other forms of differences		
6	Teachers must be aware of their students' histories and community strengths taking into account the various styles and strategies that students employ for learning		
7	Learning styles are influenced by students' personalities, cultural backgrounds and life experiences, therefore teachers should employ multiple pedagogical strategies so that students of all backgrounds learn in ways that are most comfortable for them while also expanding their learning repertoires		

Appendix M - Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education

Guidelines for Policymakers

January 17, 2012

The Connecticut State Board of Education (CSDE) provides the following guidelines to support collaboration among the state's various stakeholders to build high-quality, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally responsive education programming in the state.

Connecticut State Department of Education's Responsibilities:

Develop and promote a comprehensive, statewide program to implement Culturally Responsive Education in schools as a means to increase student achievement and student engagement.

- Provide resources and technical assistance to school districts to help implement a Culturally Responsive Education, in accordance with this policy statement. This leadership includes promoting strong student and family engagement and the full involvement of all major partners.
- Provide professional development to train educators and highlight best practices in Culturally Responsive Education.
- Employ highly qualified, experienced educators as departmental curriculum consultants and program managers who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of our student body, and who are knowledgeable about culturally responsive education content, methods and pedagogy, including culturally responsive diagnosis, measurement and assessment.
- Take leadership in guiding statewide efforts to increase recruitment and retention of teachers of color.
- To ensure a safe school climate, designate State Department of Education staff, to the extent of its authority, to provide oversight and technical assistance to create positive school climates and anti-bullying practices that are consistent with state and federal civil rights laws and bullying legislation.

School District Responsibilities Pre-Kindergarten-12:

Create a culture of value and support for the meaningful discussion of culture throughout all schools.

- Develop and implement policies and procedures that assist teachers and administrators in creating Culturally Responsive Education learning environments that address every student's needs.
- Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students.
- Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Provide safe and effective learning environments to discuss cultural differences, such as race, religion and national origin at all grade levels.
- Promote efforts to improve school climate as a critical component for effective learning and school reform.
- Employ highly qualified teachers who are knowledgeable about culturally responsive education content, methods and pedagogy, including culturally responsive diagnosis, measurement and assessment.
- Implement high-quality, culturally responsive prekindergarten-12 curriculum; instruction and assessments aligned with state expectations.
- Review all disciplinary policies to ensure that they encourage students to stay in school rather than excluding them from school.
- Ensure full compliance with state bullying laws and all state and federal civil-rights legislation.
- Provide leadership to lead districtwide efforts to increase recruitment and retention of teachers of color.
- Collaborate with all families, with particular outreach to culturally diverse families in the development of curriculum, instructional methods and expectations for student learning.
- Encourage community participation in events during and beyond the school day which promote the importance of culturally responsive education.
- Provide appropriate resources for a broad array of extra-curricular programs to maximize the number of students involved and connected to school in constructive, adult-supervised activities (e.g., clubs, leadership activities, service learning, and peer mentoring).

School Responsibilities:

Require the development of Culturally Responsive Education strategies and methods that lead towards cultural competency across all content areas supporting skills needed in a global workforce.

- Implement a system of support for all students that include supplemental and intensive education about and in response to cultural backgrounds.
- Demonstrate a respect for students' identities and welcome a diverse community to participate in schools.
- Acknowledge and respond to students' diverse learning styles.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in activities (e.g., clubs, leadership activities, service learning and peer mentoring) that promote a school climate for learning about different cultures.
- Provide an environment rich in culture of all forms, from teaching materials to teaching strategies in all school curricula and classrooms.
- Work with and support families to identify and address their critical role to assist in providing a culturally responsive learning environment.
- Invite parents and other community members into schools to share their home cultures with the school community.
- Increase sensitivity and understanding of the process of second language acquisition that students experience by encouraging teachers to learn a new language.
- Ensure that all professional opportunities are culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Student Responsibilities:

Engage in comprehensive efforts to learn about one's own cultural history and an understanding of how culture affects learning.

- Demonstrate a respect and understanding of individual differences and diversity and demonstrate respect toward others.
- Contribute to creating and sustaining culturally rich learning environments, such as sharing of your own culture and experiences,
- Observe the laws, rules, policies, and procedures of the classroom, school, district, community, state and nation.
- Serve as a positive role model toward others in school, at home, and in the wider community by living a life that demonstrates empathy, caring and compassion.
- Become actively involved in school activities in addition to academic requirements.
- Develop positive and meaningful relationships with peers and school personnel.
- Begin developing the positive attitudes and skills necessary for entering a diverse, global workforce.
- Learn to speak another language.

Appendix N - Seven Traits of Culturally Responsive Schools

1. The curriculum content is inclusive, meaning it reflects the cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity of society and the world
2. Students are recognized and treated as intellectually capable, with particular attention toward those whose futures are most tenuous
3. Instructional and assessment practices build on and legitimize students' prior knowledge, real-life experience, culture, and language
4. Classroom practices stimulate students to construct knowledge, make meaning, and examine cultural biases and assumptions, drawing on linguistic and experiential resources they bring
5. Within the classroom and school, students practice participating as citizens in a diverse and democratic society
6. School-wide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups
7. School programs and instructional practices draw from and integrate community and family language and culture, and help families and communities to support the student's academic success