

Dear Dallas ISD Board of Trustees,

In May 2013, The Foundation for Community Empowerment (FCE) prepared a Discussion Paper outlining our concerns about the direction and processes of Dallas ISD Superintendent Mike Miles. This paper was prepared in the course of a few weeks when the Superintendent targeted the firing of effective principals in low-income neighborhood schools. In preparing the paper, we relied heavily on interviews with many educators, researchers, parents, students and others, as well as books and articles by education professionals on all sides of these issues. Since we are not professional educators or scholars, and because time was limited, our aim simply was to state our position in an informal treatise designed to spark a wider conversation among stakeholders in Dallas.

Yet the crisis occurring in Dallas ISD was, and is, too serious to drop. We were not satisfied with stating our position without a more thorough engagement with and presentation of supporting research. Thus over the course of the summer, FCE continued to analyze Dallas ISD and solicited the help of professional education researchers in Texas and around the country to review and comment upon our May 2013 "Discussion Paper." We were amazed by the amount of responses we received. Some of these scholars were already well aware of the firestorm raging in Dallas ISD, such as renowned education historian Diane Ravitch who posted a critique of Miles' first year on her blog. Others were not aware of what was occurring in Dallas specifically, but resonated with our position as the same market-driven education reforms championed by Mike Miles have already proven to be damaging to other districts around the country. Still others, who did not share our views, helped us clarify and sharpen our understanding of these important issues.

In the course of engaging these researchers, new issues came to light that exacerbated concerns about Mike Miles' leadership and effectiveness as Superintendent of Dallas ISD. Most notable is the investigation into allegations that Miles' improperly attempted to influence the outcome of a bid for a Dallas ISD vendor contract, as well as allegations of a subsequent cover-up into the matter and the bullying of a cabinet member. Yet the tenure of Superintendent Miles was problematic long before he became the subject of a special investigation.

Over the course of his first year, a number of alarming events called the efficacy of his leadership into question. The Miles administration faced an internal audit for violating district policies with respect to hiring practices used to assemble his staff. Then, over the course of the year, an unprecedented number of these senior level staff members left the district mid-year, in spite of historically high salaries. It is now documented that many of the principals who were pressured to resign or retire in light of Miles' newly adopted Principal Evaluation Rubric actually led their schools to meet or exceed state standards, several with distinctions. The news media reported that the Miles administration faced double the amount of end-of-year teacher vacancies than Dallas ISD normally experiences from year to year, a clear indication of the low-morale pervading the district. These are just a few of myriad examples of what prompted us to seek help evaluating the crisis in Dallas ISD.

Engaging with researchers in Texas and around the country yielded fruitful results. We were able to revise and expand upon our May 2013 “Discussion Paper,” and produced the enclosed report complete with citations and references to scholarly research pertaining to education reform and pedagogy. This report provides an overview of the history and current constituency of Dallas ISD, reviews the research and best practices of competing approaches to educate this population, and evaluates the record of Mr. Miles’ administration to date—all to answer the central question of how to best address the educational and social needs of the children in our community. Additionally, since the issues facing Dallas ISD are so vast, FCE commissioned two additional reports completed by leading scholars in the field of education.

Dr. Decoteau J. Irby, of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, agreed to complete a comparative analysis of the educational theories contained in Miles Destination 2020 Plan to those found in best practices research in education. Examining Miles’ brand of education reform he writes:

The Miles’ administration represents a new wave of non-educators who are committed to reforming schools based on business principles. With a focus almost solely on the importance of training school leaders to comply with business concepts such as Total Quality Management, many so-called “transformational” and “innovative reform strategies” fail. They fail because they undermine the very purpose and nature of school leadership, teaching, and student learning. Market-oriented school reform principles narrow the curriculum and reduce the work of teaching to standardized instruction and benchmarking.

Dr. Irby’s report examines the Miles administration’s first year reform efforts and covers five elements that superintendents must attend in order to improve student learning. These include (1) district culture-climate, (2) school culture-climate, (3) principal quality, (4) teacher quality, and (5) community engagement. This report is enclosed in this package of materials for your review.

Dr. Julian Vasquez-Heilig, of the University of Texas at Austin, completed a report that traces Miles’ reform philosophy throughout his career in public education. Examining his tenure at Harrison District 2 in Colorado Springs, documents published by his consulting firm, and his affiliation with the Broad Foundation, Dr. Vasquez-Heilig illustrates that Miles embodies what some have called “trickle-down education reform.” Evaluating outcomes of Miles’ reform efforts during his previous superintendency, he writes:

There are several disconcerting data trends in the years spanning Mr. Miles’ time in Harrison, specifically the rates of attrition at the secondary level and academic performance for minority, Free and Reduced Price Lunch, English Language Learners (ELLs), Special Education, and Students “needing to catch up.” The Harrison data complicate the positive spin that Mike Miles has framed about student success during his six years as superintendent in Harrison.

Dr. Heilig's report explores the methods, actions, and results of trickle-down reform efforts under Mike Miles in Dallas ISD, and uses data and evidence to illustrate the complexities and consequences of trickle-down reform in a large, urban district setting. This report is also enclosed for your review.

Now is a critical time for discussion and decision. Superintendent Miles' evaluation is slated for later this month and Dallas ISD is at a crossroads. Miles and his leadership team have substituted community engagement, research-based initiatives, and managed transformation for a self-described "disruptive" series of change initiatives. Miles' policies were initially designed to improve the quality of instruction and increase accountability for educators. But after a year, his administration has been marred by high levels of turnover in his cabinet, a misaligned professional development program, the fostering of fear and mistrust among administrators and teachers, and an investigation into interference with a vendor contract and the subsequent bullying of a senior level official. Should our children continue down this road of disruptive change in the form of chaos and controversy? Or, will the Board of Trustees advocate for constructive change by doing the right thing for our children? We hope this package serves to bring clarity to this decision.

Very Truly Yours,

The Foundation for Community Empowerment

DISRUPTIVE CHANGE: MIKE MILES AND THE CRISIS IN DALLAS ISD

A Report by the Foundation for Community Empowerment

Released September 2013

“So goes the public school system, so goes the city.”

– Linus Wright, former Superintendent, Dallas ISD

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Acknowledgements

In preparing this paper, we relied on interviews with many educators, researchers, parents, students and other stakeholders on all sides of these issues. These include conversations with current and former teachers, principals, administrators and superintendents of Dallas ISD. Additionally, we have learned from the references cited as well as from other books and articles by authors such as David Kirp, Diane Ravitch, Michelle Rhee, Linda Darling Hammond and Charles Murray. We are grateful for this information since we are not professional educators. Nevertheless, we take responsibility for the material in this report and welcome any critiques, corrections or additions.

Executive Summary

How can Dallas education professionals best educate the 158,000 children of Dallas ISD? How can they prepare these children—mostly low income and mostly of color—for productive work, family and citizenship? How are we in Dallas to understand all this and make informed decisions or advocacy for the children within our social and economic context?

This report provides an overview of the history and current constituency of Dallas ISD, to review the research and best practices of competing approaches to educate this population, and to consider the record of Mr. Miles' administration to date—all to answer these initial questions of how to best address the educational and social needs of the children in our community.

The long history of segregation and unequal schooling Dallas ISD evolved through the court system, finally ending in 2003. However, over the last four decades, the demographics of Dallas ISD have shifted dramatically from being predominantly White to comprising Hispanic and African-American populations that greatly exceed statewide averages. As the racial demographics of Dallas ISD have changed, so has the economic composition of the families living in the district. Given the enormous impact that socioeconomic conditions have on student achievement and need for strong and focused leadership, this report highlights the challenges that have been exacerbated on the first year tenure of Superintendent Mike Miles.

Miles and his leadership team have substituted community engagement, research-based initiatives, and managed transformation for a self-described “disruptive” series of change initiatives. Miles' policies were initially designed to improve the quality of instruction and increase accountability for educators, but after a year, the effectiveness of these policies in Dallas ISD remains to be seen. His administration has been marred by high levels of turnover in his cabinet, a misaligned professional development program, the fostering of fear and mistrust among administrators and teachers, and a pending investigation into the inappropriate contracting of a vendor the subsequent bullying of a senior level official.

Our report is meant to stimulate discussion, context and forward-looking recommendations for the district. We call for inclusivity among all stakeholders, the implementation of initiatives that call for high expectations and quality education starting in students' earliest years, college expectations and preparation throughout the district, and a more comprehensive approach to supporting families and communities for the improvement of quality of life issues that no doubt impact the ability of children to achieve.

Introduction

How can Dallas education professionals best educate the 158,000 children of Dallas ISD? How can they prepare these children—mostly low income and mostly of color—for productive work, family and citizenship? Knowing the enormous impact that socioeconomic conditions have on student achievement makes these questions even tougher. With respect to both education and socioeconomic issues, Dallas (and America more broadly) seems more divided and conflicted today than at any time in recent decades.

On one end of the spectrum are advocates of the market-driven system of reform which champions high-stakes testing, “no excuses” policies for teachers and principals regarding student achievement, pay-for-performance schemes, and charter, private, and home-school alternatives to traditional public schools (Ford, 2012; Hursh, 2007). On the other end of the spectrum are advocates for combining academic interventions with wraparound services that address out-of-school factors such as family challenges, inadequate healthcare and housing (Maschi, Hatcher, Schwalbe, & Rosato, 2008), and food insecurity (Reid, 2000). And in between lie various other models presented by advocates for religious schools (Jeynes & Martinez, 2007), home schooling, and program changes ranging from curriculum revision to tutoring (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991).

How are we in Dallas to understand all this and make informed decisions or advocacy for the children within our social and economic context? Income and wealth disparities are the highest since the 1920s, and the middle and upper classes have already voted with their feet by moving to affluent suburbs like Plano and Highland Park, or enrolling their children in private schools.

Yet it is the property wealthy who pay the majority of taxes to fund Dallas ISD. Many of the wealthy contribute to school board candidates and educational nonprofit or advocacy groups, some engaged with Dallas ISD and others competing (such as charter schools, which have tax revenue support). Some also have important contracts with Dallas ISD (with an annual budget of approximately \$1.2 billion), or have invested in for-profit, on-line education companies, or other educational projects.

These and other issues are currently being played out in the new administration of Superintendent Mike Miles during his first year of tenure. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to lay out some overview of the history and current constituency of Dallas ISD, to review the research and best practices of competing approaches to educate this population, and to consider the record of Mr. Miles’ administration to date—all to answer the initial question of how to best address the educational and social needs of the children in our community.

The present controversies surrounding the superintendent have raised serious questions ahead of his upcoming performance evaluation. Throughout his first year, Miles appeared to have a board majority as well as the support of the Anglo leadership of the business and political communities and *The Dallas Morning News*. Yet support for the superintendent is teetering in light of a pending investigation into allegations of misconduct. Notwithstanding this investigation, questions still loom regarding whether Miles’ and his approach to education reform is the right

fit for Dallas. We are hopeful this paper stimulates a broader conversation in Dallas that is based on the research and best evidence on what is most likely to support our children in Dallas ISD.

Much lies in the balance of this decision. As former Superintendent Linus Wright says, “So goes the public school system, so goes the city.”

Dallas ISD: Historical & Contextual Overview

Brief History of Dallas ISD

Seven years after *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, Dallas ISD began the process to desegregate its schools. The Dallas School Board implemented a stair-step integration plan involving only a grade at a time beginning with first grade, which would have effectively postponed full integration until the mid-1970s (Phillips, 2006, pp. 157-158). The NAACP became involved and stated its dissatisfaction with Dallas ISD officials for making it unnecessarily difficult for black children to enter white schools.¹ In 1964, when three grades were purportedly desegregated, the newly passed Civil Rights Act placed greater pressure on the district to integrate more quickly. By September 1967, Dallas ISD declared that the Dallas school system was desegregated. Yet the quickening pace had only hastened white flight to the suburbs and private schools and by decade’s end, only 57 of 177 (32%) campuses were integrated. And at the end of the 1969-1970 school year, 113 campuses were still all white (Phillips, 2006, pp. 157-158).

In 1970, the first litigation regarding the desegregation of Dallas ISD began. Legal action would continue for the next 30 years. A U.S. District Court ruled that a “dual system” still existed in 1971 and ordered Dallas ISD to create a new plan for integrating the school system. After publishing a new plan in July 1971, Dallas ISD would return to court in a series of hearings over the next several years as important parts of the desegregation plan were challenged and new components were ordered by the court. The most divisive part of the court-ordered plan was the busing of black students to white schools. Throughout the 1970s, busing was a contentious issue in Dallas, as in other parts of the United States, and more often than not, black students felt unwelcome when they arrived at their new schools.² All the while, the phenomenon of white flight in Dallas continued to surge.

Although the practice of one-way busing extended into the 1980s, Dallas ISD continued to show signs of segregation. During this time, the Fifth Circuit oversaw the implementation of bond initiatives and alternatives to busing. A new desegregation initiative based on educational programming was established with the institution of neighborhood learning centers and magnet schools to ensure a diverse student body.

¹ See SMU DISD Archive,

<http://web.archive.org/web/20080101052239/http://library.law.smu.edu/disd/background.shtm>

² Ibid.

The long history of judicial oversight of Dallas ISD finally ended in 2003, when the court expressed its hope that Dallas ISD school board members would implement the spirit and substance of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* without the continued need for court supervision (Phillips, 2006).

Today, however, Dallas public schools are nearly as segregated as they were almost 60 years ago when the landmark *Brown* decision sought to end racial divisions in education (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012). But an extraordinary increase in the number of Latina/o students in addition to continued white flight has dramatically reshaped the racial makeup of the school system. Whereas Dallas ISD's enrollment was approximately 60% white in 1970, it is less than 5% white today (Perrone & Bencivengo, 3 May 2013). What has transpired since the 1990s is the re-segregation of schools and the introduction of Latina/o students as the "majority-minority" student population. This in turn has created a phenomenon whereby segregation is not only happening by race, but its now also being implemented by ethnicity, language and poverty (Nieto, 2003; Orfield, 2011). Thus, over the last 40 years, Dallas has undergone a cycle of economic, class, and racial self-segregation that has perpetuated and exacerbated socioeconomic disparities both in the city and its public schools.

Current Demographics and the Economic Landscape of Dallas ISD

Over the last four decades, the demographics of Dallas ISD have shifted dramatically from being predominantly White to comprising Hispanic and African-American populations that greatly exceed statewide averages. As the racial demographics of Dallas ISD have changed, so has the economic composition of the families living in the district. Today, the poverty level in Dallas ISD is one of the highest in the country (Micciche, 4 Nov 2012). Nearly 89% of Dallas ISD students are economically disadvantaged, meaning that they qualify for free or reduced-priced meals. Many students have special education or other needs, disabilities, or learning differences. This group comprises 7.6% of the student population. Unlike private schools and most charter schools, Dallas ISD accepts any student who chooses to enroll. Since the 1980s, Dallas ISD has become the educational system for poor persons of color living in the inner city.

2012-2013 Dallas ISD School Data	
# Students	158,000
# Languages	70
% Free and/or Reduced Lunch	89%
% African American	24%
% Hispanic	69%
% White	5%
% Bilingual/ESL	37%
# Schools	236

Scholars have found that aside from teaching and effective school leadership, students of color – especially those that come from communities that are economically challenged – encounter obstacles that often adversely affect their development and learning outcomes (Noguera, 2011). Without question, Dallas ISD’s social and economic context includes many capable and able students willing to work hard and learn. But it also includes vast numbers of children with undereducated parents who do not have the time (because they are struggling to provide for their families) nor access to the tools necessary for preparing or accessing higher education for their children. A significant number of students are being raised by grandparents, and many upperclassmen at inner-city high schools are forced to function as head of household and are essentially raising their siblings. Children in Dallas ISD encounter challenges such as inadequate healthcare, food insecurity, domestic and community violence, and other conditions that threaten their health, safety, and mental well-being. Historically, low-income students, who disproportionately face such obstacles, have performed below high-income students on most measures of academic success—including standardized test scores, grades, high school completion rates, and college enrollment and completion rates (Reardon, 2013). While educators must confront the reality of low student achievement, education leaders must also contextualize these “results” by considering the family and community challenges that continue to impact basic quality of life chances for many Dallas ISD students and families.

Civic and business leaders must also contextualize the polar opposite opportunities that students even within the Dallas County region face. In Dallas alone, these differences may be exemplified by reviewing basic demographic and state level data. The driving distance between the two district offices is a mere 6.5 miles, however as the data demonstrate, the demographics and funding levels of each district are a world apart. (See Appendix 1 for related data)

Because of the way that the state of Texas funds schools, it is property wealthy citizens who fund the bulk of schools in Dallas ISD. Inequities in funding and educational resources disproportionately place poor and minority children in under-resourced, underperforming schools – even after several decades of school finance lawsuits and policy improvements (Alemán, 2007; Baker & Green, 2005; Carey, 2004; Kozol, 1991, 2005). The system of funding by property value has been contested in the courts since the late 1960s and has been ruled unconstitutional numerous times for the manner by which it disadvantages poor students and economically challenged communities (Alemán, 2007; Cardenas, 1997; Farr & Trachtenberg, 1999; Yudof, 1991).

Socioeconomic Status and the Achievement Gap

“For nearly half a century, the association of social and economic disadvantage with a student achievement gap has been well known to economists, sociologists, and educators. Most, however, have avoided the obvious implication of this understanding – raising the achievement of lower-class children requires amelioration of the social and economic conditions of their lives, not just school reform.” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 11)

The achievement gaps that persist across multiple indicators of student achievement are an epidemic nationwide. These achievement gaps in student proficiency scores, AP testing and access, dropout rates, and college admissions illustrate the disparities that exist among students

of color, low-income students and students who are identified as English Language Learners, when compared to their White and wealthy counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Zarawsky, 2004). For example, 83 percent of Asian American and 78 percent of White students graduate from high school in four years, compared to 57 percent of African-American and Hispanic students who are overrepresented in low-income populations. Moreover, 37 percent of African-American fourth-graders cannot perform basic math skills, compared to only 10 percent of white students (Fulgham, 2013, p. 15).

Over the last several decades, educational researchers have documented disparities in access to quality educational opportunities (Alemán, 2007; Bell, 1980; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Some scholars have also sought to identify specific strategies and models for addressing them by engaging with community members and parents as key partners (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; López, 2001; Sanders, 2008). A survey of the research by Helen F. Ladd (2011)³ shows that some researchers have found links between child poverty and poor health outcomes and how many of those poor health outcomes translate into low cognitive outcomes (Currie, 2009). Others have documented how children who grow up in poverty have limited access to language and problem-solving preparation and education and to various experiences that serve as the basic springboard for future learning. In addition, family poverty and low socioeconomic status during the school years translates into limited access to books and computers at home or to learning experiences away from home (Phillips, 2011). Family poverty during the school years is also typically associated with significant residential movement as families struggle to find stable housing arrangements. Such movement is disruptive not only for the children who move in and out of schools, but also for the other children in schools with high proportions of mobile students (Raudenbush et al, 2011). Children in low-income families also experience far more learning loss during the summer than do their peers from more affluent families.

Unfortunately, many of the schools that serve low-income children continue to be overwhelmed by and ill equipped to meet and serve the needs and challenges of these students. Last year, the U.S. Department of Education released information showing that children of color face harsher discipline, have less access to rigorous course offerings, and are more often taught by lower paid and less experienced teachers.⁴ Schools continue to not have the resources or knowledge base to address the social and emotional problems low-income students carry with them when they come to school.

The lamentable state of urban public schools in Dallas and across America aligns with worsening social and economic problems in American cities (Brooks & Kavanaugh, 1999; Rothstein, 1997). America's child poverty rate has doubled in the last 30 years, and is the second highest among industrialized nations.⁵ Furthermore, social mobility rates have declined in America. The economic status in which a person is born is likely where that person will end up. According to

³ The remainder of this paragraph was informed by a survey of the research found in Ladd (2011, pp. 18-19).

⁴ See Elderman (2012), "America's Public Schools: Still Unequal and Unjust," <http://www.childrensdefense.org/newsroom/child-watch-columns/child-watch-documents/public-schools-unequal-unjust.html#sthash.LuJyR0eB.dpuf>.

⁵ See UNICEF, "Measuring Child Poverty," accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc10_eng.pdf.

research by the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts, 65% of Americans born in the bottom fifth will stay in the bottom two-fifths.⁶

While the role of public education is vitally important, Dallas needs a community-wide paradigm shift which includes making long-term investments in after school and summer programs, literacy (reading and financial), and other community improvements supporting Dallas ISD students. The city of Dallas is noted for its public and private investments in its aggregates and social spaces (i.e. arts venues, museums, hospitals, bridges, parks, etc.). While these are integral for economic growth and tourism, our civic responsibility extends to investments in our human capital. The business, philanthropic, and religious communities should work aggressively to address the conditions of our lower-income communities, including jobs, fit and affordable housing, health care (and sick care), retail and other services. As we consider the vital importance of school-related factors in the discussion of public school transformation, citizens of Dallas should also consider the social and economic conditions of Dallas ISD students to be just as critical.

Education Reform and Dallas ISD

There is endless debate across America on how to “fix” our public schools. The dividing line often times lies in how school reformers describe the root causes of student under-achievement and in the solutions that they propose. Over the past decade, the consensus among most education reform advocates has been that the primary factor contributing to low student achievement is that there are far too many underperforming teachers and ineffective principals, especially in high-poverty schools. For those who hold this view, the only way to improve educational outcomes for students is to change the way that these educators are hired, trained, compensated, and fired (Tough, 2012, pp. 189-190).

Market-Driven Reforms

The intellectual roots of this argument trace back to research published in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Several economists and statisticians claimed it was possible to identify two distinct groups of teachers: those who could regularly raise the achievement level of their students and those whose students consistently fell behind. This idea led to the following theory: If an underperforming low-income student was assigned for multiple years in a row to a high-quality teacher, her test scores should continually and cumulatively improve until she closed the achievement gap with her better-off peers. Education reformers soon expanded on this theory and maintained that if every low-income student had a high-performance teacher, the achievement gap could be eliminated (Tough, 2012, pp. 189-190).

Attempting to ensure that every student has an effective teacher, these education reformers use performance evaluation practices adapted from the competitive-market and private enterprise. Market-driven initiatives such as imposing high-stakes test-based accountability systems for

⁶ See The Pew Charitable Trusts. "*Economic Mobility Project*. The Pew Charitable Trusts, n.d. Web. 05 July 2013. <http://www.pewstates.org/projects/economic-mobility-project-328061>.

teachers and principals and implementing pay-for-performance schemes became the blueprint for reformers promising to turn around low performing schools in record time.

This market-driven approach to education relies on standardized tests as the primary means for evaluation and accountability. In particular, the rise and fall of test scores in reading and mathematics is the critical variable in judging the performance of students, teachers, principals, and schools (Ravitch, 2010).

This style of education reform has been championed by the federal government and by influential corporate philanthropists. Both the No Child Left Behind initiative under President Bush and the Race to the Top initiative under President Obama emphasize standardized testing as the primary measure of school quality. At the same time, philanthropic organizations such as the Gates Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation and the Broad Foundation have spent billions of dollars promoting high-stakes testing and the idea that the lack of quality teaching is the main factor affecting student achievement in urban schools.

In addition to underperforming teachers, the market-driven reform movement cites the public school system's unwillingness to change as the other major impediment to student achievement. Advocates of market-driven reforms view bureaucracy and rigid adherence to the status quo as critical barriers to the implementation of initiatives that will close the achievement gap (Hursh, 2007; McNeil, 2000). A common theme across the market-driven reform movement is the need for radical systems change. Those who hold this view reject slow, incremental change, citing the need to have a sense of urgency about education reform. Instead, they advocate for sweeping change that is disruptive in nature and that allows for schools to "compete" for its students (Hursh, 2007).

The ideas of the market-driven reform movement underlie the educational philosophy of current Dallas ISD Superintendent Mike Miles. Calling for "disruptive change," Miles has implemented a series of reform initiatives intended to improve the quality of instruction and increase accountability for teachers and principals. Hallmarks of his Destination 2020 plan include the introduction of high-stakes testing and pay-for-performance evaluations rooted in market-driven reform models found across the country.

But as Mike MacNaughton (8 May 2013) pointed out in his May Op-Ed piece in *The Dallas Morning News*, the credibility of the market-driven reform movement has faced serious challenges in recent months. Former Washington, D.C., Superintendent Michelle Rhee, widely considered the face of the movement, has faced accusations that she knew about widespread cheating and did nothing to stop it. Former Atlanta Superintendent Beverly Hall has already been indicted in a massive cheating scandal. Bill Gates (03 Apr 2013), writing recently in *The Washington Post*, backed away from teacher evaluations that primarily use student test scores after spending hundreds of millions promoting high-stakes testing. Moreover, a study of Texas test scores of the late 1990s found that students were being kept from taking the test in efforts to game the system and prop up test scores of certain schools (Haney, 2000). This study exposed the "myth of the Texas miracle" but did little to slow the movement toward high-stakes testing education policy.

Furthermore, a 2013 report published by the Economic Policy Institute shows that test scores increased less and achievement gaps grew more in the so-called reform cities than in other urban districts.⁷ Test-based accountability prompted churn that thinned the ranks of experienced teachers, but not necessarily bad teachers. Reported successes for targeted students evaporated upon closer examination while emphasis on widely touted market-oriented reforms drew attention and resources away from initiatives with greater promise.

These same negative trends appear to be occurring in Dallas. After Mike Miles' first year as Dallas ISD Superintendent, end-of-year teacher vacancies have doubled. Turnover among top-level staff is unprecedented. And student performance on standardized tests appears so far to be unchanged.

Holistic Public School Reform

In response to the apparent failures of the market-driven reform movement, a growing number of scholars, authors, and commentators are calling for reforms that aim to save the traditional public school system. Instead of overhauling the public education system and replacing "failed" schools with charter schools and other alternatives, this view believes that America can rehabilitate its public schools with an emphasis on intentional, steady, and progressive year-over-year improvement. Proponents of this perspective also point out that quick turnarounds through disruptive change processes are thus far unproven, and that the evidence reveals little justification for reliance on high-stakes testing. As Diane Ravitch (2010) states, "America's current education problems are due to a 'lack of educational vision' (p. 225), and many other scholars see the vision of the market-driven reform movement as much too narrow (Hursh, 2007; McNeil, 2000; Valenzuela, 2004).

Whereas the market-driven reform movement tends to focus exclusively on school-related factors affecting student achievement, many supporters of the traditional public school system believe in a more holistic vision of education reform. Market reforms focus on organizational and personnel changes as a primary means of attaining instructional quality and improving student performance. Yet a holistic approach does not view the problem as simply an issue of management and efficiency. Since the research suggests that poor children encounter obstacles that adversely affect their development and learning outcomes, sound education policy should also seek to address out-of-school challenges in addition to addressing in-school factors.

While it is absolutely the case that poor children need dedicated, passionate, and effective teachers and principals to be successful, there is no evidence that even the best schools can overcome the effects of poverty on student achievement by focusing on in-school factors alone (Noguera, 2011, p. 11). The weight of evidence documenting the effects of socioeconomic factors on student achievement suggests that education reform must also be about engaging families and parents as assets, developing the community economically and socially, and about addressing the basic quality of life challenges that young people confront in their daily lives. The success of our schools is inextricably linked with housing, economic development, employment,

⁷ See <http://www.boldapproach.org/rhetoric-trumps-reality>

healthcare, and criminal justice. The whole Dallas community and its broad base of business, education, and civic stakeholders should work together in a holistic and comprehensive approach to the transformation of the public education system.

The Dallas Achieves Commission

The Dallas Achieves Commission, the last major reform initiative in Dallas ISD prior to Miles' tenure as superintendent, called for such a holistic approach to education reform. Formed in 2006 under then-Superintendent Dr. Michael Hinojosa, Dallas Achieves commission members were appointed to engage a five-year process of identifying needs and opportunities in the district, developing a transformation plan, and creating a roadmap for improving student achievement.

The strength of the Dallas Achieves approach lies in the fact that it brought together a broad, diverse, and inclusive base of community stakeholders to develop a vision and implementation plan for the district and its students. The Commission was comprised of 65 Dallas leaders from the business, education, civic, and faith-based communities as well as parents, students, city and state officials, philanthropists, and grassroots leaders. Dallas Achieves was not the work of the School District operating in isolation, nor was it merely the work of an outside third-party consulting group. Rather, the Dallas Achieves Commission was an unprecedented collaboration between the School District and the entities that make up the entire Dallas community. The plan, developed over nearly a year and a half, was approved by the Commission on a 42-3 vote and then approved by the Superintendent and by the Board of Trustees on a 6-0 vote (with 1 abstention).

This sense of collaboration and stakeholder involvement is the key ingredient missing from the reform efforts of the current Dallas ISD Superintendent. The Dallas Achieves Commission invested in more than a year of community engagement in Dallas and best practices research around the nation before finalizing its transformation plan. Yet the development and implementation of the current plan for Dallas ISD represents much more of an inside, top-down process. There was little, if any, stakeholder involvement in the development of its objectives or the initiatives designed to accomplish those objectives. In contrast, the Dallas Achieves model intentionally sought buy-in at the community and school levels, and developed its vision for Dallas ISD in collaboration with all stakeholders involved.

The Dallas Achieves model is a comprehensive and collaborative approach to education reform rooted in continuous stakeholder engagement, best practices research, and data-driven decision-making.

Comprehensive Community Efforts

In endeavoring to consider and understand the complex socioeconomic factors of the district, as well as the national and best practices data, the Dallas Achieves Commission engaged with parents, teachers, students, administrators, and community organizations at the table. Commission members encouraged dialogue and called for a comprehensive approach to community and educational transformation by utilizing a matrix showing high achieving and engaged students at the center, surrounded by circles of effective teachers, empowered

principals, campus-focused central services, engaged parents and guardians, and a supportive community. The extremes of overreliance on high-stakes testing (i.e. outputs only) and of overreliance on socialization, socioeconomic, or racial accommodations (i.e. inputs only) were rejected and seen as limiting by all the key stakeholders.

Throughout this process, Commission members recognized that lower-income children can learn – and in fact, they based their work on the premise that lower-income children must be encouraged and prepared to learn at high levels from the earliest stage of their schooling. In conducting this work, Dallas Achieves found that it was also essential that efforts at including engaged participants, community stakeholders and Dallas ISD educators was vital to making significant strides in improving student achievement in low-income communities.

Corporate partners also played a significant role. Texas Instruments (TI) invested in research and support for the Margaret Cone Head Start Center in South Dallas, across the street from the Frazier Courts public housing project for more than 10 years. After providing support for better healthcare, nutrition and home counseling, the students were healthier and better adjusted, but academic scores continued to lag. TI then engaged Nell Carvell of SMU's Education School, who developed and implemented a language-rich curriculum that materially improved reading, grammar and comprehension. Those students fed into Frazier Elementary (closed this year), with an exceptional principal, Rachel George, who understood both how to address the deprived socioeconomic conditions of her students and how to produce academic gains based on the Head Start foundation. The result of this leadership and collaboration was that Frazier Elementary was rated Exemplary by the Texas Education Agency from 2001 to 2009 and went on to win many District, state and national awards for student achievement.

Similarly, H.S. Thompson Elementary, near Turner Courts and Rhodes Terrace public housing projects, was rated Academically Unacceptable in 2005. After Kamalia Cotton was named principal, the school put together five straight years of academic success and improvement. It achieved Exemplary ratings from TEA for three years and Recognized for two, and was named a National Blue Ribbon school.

Both of these exceptional principals were known for leadership capacities and frameworks that held high performance expectations of students and teachers in a “children come first” model. They each collaborated with teachers, parents, administrators and the community to build a culture of engaged learning, extracurricular activities and best practice skill-building support for teachers. They, in effect, were implementing the Dallas Achieves comprehensive model of student success through community engagement and high standards.

Seeking to influence the district's work positively, Dallas Achieves continued to strike a balance between the District's context and the possibilities for significant progress. The Commission developed supports for teachers and principals who met the challenges as well as methods for reporting and reviewing progress – with scorecards, a balanced assessment process and limited compensation incentives geared toward progress. This showed early success and produced steady and consistent – although slow – gains in academic achievement.

The Commission understood that quick fixes do not lead to long-term, institutional and sustainable improvements in student achievement. Real improvement in public education has consisted of evolution, not revolution (Kirp, 2013). Transformation is a never-ending process of continuous improvement, relevant professional development and training, teacher innovation and school, teacher, community *and* district accountability. Under the Dallas Achieves plan, graduation rates increased, student achievement ratings increased, and principals showed more effective leadership.

Early Commission Success and Results

The Commission concluded its work in late 2009. In the less than five years of this process, Dallas ISD improved its academic achievement and graduation rates. Below are just a few of the successes that occurred from 2007 to 2009:

- Graduation rates improved from 57% of entering ninth-graders to 66%.
- Of the six urban districts in Texas, Dallas ISD moved from tied for fifth with San Antonio ISD to tied for first with Houston ISD.
- 57% of Dallas ISD's 228 campuses were rated Exemplary or Recognized. This percentage was 37% in 2007. In particular, two schools that were slated to be closed improved their ratings from Academically Unacceptable to Recognized during this time period.
- Overall performance at the 2,300 College Readiness Standard climbed from 20% to 35%. College Readiness Standards serve as a direct link between what students have learned and what they are ready to learn next.
- Even though 48 schools remained at an Unacceptable rating from the state, this number had steadily trended downward, and the number of Recognized and Exemplary schools had increased from 49 to 127.
- More campuses earned principal empowerment. These are detailed processes by which a principal can increase control over a campus based on student achievement and other important criteria. Improvement leaped from 10% to 42% of the campuses.
- Key components that contributed to this positive trend included rethinking of the school culture, improved curriculum, recognition of the importance of continually embedded professional development for all professional staff to ensure sustainability, and the role of parents and community in the process of improved schools.

Challenges with Mike Miles' Record, Leadership and Policies

The Dallas Achieves model has been abandoned and not reconstituted by Superintendent Mike Miles during his first year of leadership. Rather, Miles and his leadership team substituted a self-described "disruptive" series of change initiatives that appear to have their root in the market-driven reform movement. Miles' policies are designed to improve the quality of instruction and increase accountability for educators, but after a year, the effectiveness of these policies in Dallas ISD remains to be seen.

Whatever the pedagogical approaches or curriculum strategies that are promoted by district leadership, a strong and effective district leader is necessary for long-term, sustainable and institutional improvement to occur. Effective leadership requires not just being firm and purposeful with decision-making, but it also requires the creation of a shared vision and goals, the promotion of teamwork and collegiality, the implementation of a research-based, constructive and supportive training plan, and the monitoring and evaluation of long-term, sustainable improvements. Effective district leaders engage all stakeholders and set high standards. They understand their community's assets and leverage their access and distribution of resources to lead their district toward its goals (Brown, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011).

District Leadership: Strengths and Challenges

Strengths	Challenges
Track record of apparent improvement in Harrison School District 2*	Inexperience in large, urban school district
Identifies need for change	Relying on “disruptive” change that alienates
Acknowledges role of principals in campus success	Failed to provide support for principals to fulfill their role and targeted one-third of the District’s principals without transparency or due process
Prepares Destination 2020 plan	Fails to seek collaboration among stakeholders within and outside Dallas ISD
	Has not shown strong advocacy skills for the District in Austin

**If results from one magnet school are not counted, student achievement scores declined.*

Professional Background

Mike Miles is a 56-year-old graduate of West Point, served as an Army Ranger, and later a Foreign Service Officer, primarily stationed in Russia and Poland. He began teaching high school in 1995 and completed the alternative licensing program at the University of Colorado in 1996. His teaching experience was limited to 4 years, and his supervisory experience was in a district one-tenth the size of Dallas ISD.

Miles was a fellow of the Broad Foundation Superintendents Academy, which recruits business, military and other non-education leaders into its programs. The Broad Foundation was founded by the wealthy businessman Eli Broad, who has created training programs for urban superintendents, administrators, principals and school boards. Based on the market-based philosophy that schools should be run as efficiently as businesses, the Broad Foundation

explicitly cites bureaucracy in the education system as the key challenge to improving urban schools.⁸ Broad was a significant funder of the reform in the D.C. schools during Michelle Rhee's tenure as Chancellor (which ended abruptly with the system's results and successes being questioned).⁹

Colorado Springs Record

Miles was Superintendent of Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs from 2006 to 2012. This district comprises 22 schools compared to 223 in Dallas ISD, a considerable change in size and scope. The demographics of Harrison District 2 are also significantly different from that of Dallas ISD. In 2011, 86.9% of students Dallas ISD were economically disadvantaged compared to 68.5% in Harrison District 2.

Miles' record in Colorado appears to have notable successes. His achievements include having the district removed from academic probation, improving graduation rates from 61.5% to 72.4%, narrowing the elementary reading gap for English learners from 32% to 19%, and increasing the average ACT Composite score for juniors from 16.1 to 18.

Yet some aspects of Miles' record at Harrison reveal less attractive outcomes. There are only two high schools in Harrison District 2—Harrison High School and Sierra High School. Between 2007 and 2011, college remediation rates rose from 37.1% to 75.5% for students from Harrison High School. During the same years, the college remediation rates rose from 34.5% to 67.6% for students from Sierra High School.¹⁰

A study of enrollment patterns at Harrison School District 2 since 2006,¹¹ when Miles began his six years as superintendent there, raises troubling questions about what occurred in the district under his watch. When one analyzes enrollment by grade when Mike Miles arrived at Harrison in 2006 in comparison to enrollment by grade as he left to come to Dallas in 2012, the following facts are found:

1. High school enrollment dropped more than 26% while total Harrison School District 2 enrollment remained unchanged. While it appears that kindergarten through grade seven enrollment grew enough to make up for the declines in high school enrollment, the sharpness of those declines is unusual. Local news media noticed this alarming trend and questioned if students with poor test grades were being pushed out as they neared SAT/ACT testing (Routon, 5 Apr 2012).
2. The Promotion Rate (percentage of ninth-grade enrollment reflected in 12th-grade enrollment three years later) dropped more than 31 percentage points in Harrison under

⁸ The Broad Foundation, accessed July 15, 2013, <http://www.broadeducation.org/about/bureaucracy.html>

⁹ See PBS Frontline documentary "The Education of Michelle Rhee" at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/education-of-michelle-rhee/>

¹⁰ Harrison School District 2, accessed July 5, 2013, <http://www.hsd2.org>

¹¹ The following analysis was conducted by retired Dallas ISD teacher, Bill Betzen. See <http://schoolarchiveproject.blogspot.com/2013/05/damage-by-mike-miles-in-colorado.html>

Mike Miles. In Dallas the same measurement improved to record high measurements, going up more than 14 percentage points during the same time period

3. The percentage of ninth-grade enrollment not reflected in 12th-grade enrollment three years later, increased more than 500% in Harrison under Mike Miles. In Dallas that same measurement was improving, shrinking from 2006 to 2012, going down more than 32%, as the percentage of ninth-grade students not reflected in Dallas ISD 12th grade enrollment shrunk from 52% of the total to 35.3%.
4. The Cumulative Promotion Index, the most precise, timely, and predictive of the graduation rate measurements, fell 16 percentage points in Harrison while that same powerful measurement rose more than 20 percentage points in Dallas ISD to the highest, most positive level on record.
5. From the 2005/06 to 2012/13 school years, while elementary enrollment grew enough in Harrison 2 to make up for the loss, eighth grade enrollment dropped 7.2%, ninth-grade enrollment dropped 16.2%, 10th-grade enrollment dropped 22.7%, 11th-grade enrollment dropped 22.3%, and 12th-grade enrollment dropped 33.2%. This trend begs the question: Why does a pattern of student loss exist as students near ACT/SAT testing?

There are other concerns about Miles' leadership while in Colorado Springs that are not revealed in the data. For example, during his tenure in Colorado, Miles' policies created an atmosphere of unrest throughout the district that was widely publicized in the media (Routon, 5 Apr 2012). Although many teachers were fired because they were found to be ineffective in light of performance evaluations introduced by Miles, many other teachers voluntarily left the district in light of the climate that Miles' leadership created.¹² A group of high school students staged protests and walked out of classes, stating that the stress placed on teachers made it difficult for them to learn.¹³ Dallas ISD has already experienced similar events during Miles' first year on the job.

First Year at Dallas ISD: Instability and Disruption

When Miles accepted the role as Superintendent of Dallas ISD, he immediately set about to hire and insert his own leadership team at top salaries (see Appendix 2 for the new hires, their salaries, and their current status). His hiring decisions were controversial for a couple of reasons. First, several of the salaries he offered his leadership team members exceeded historic levels. Second, Miles retained only one incumbent Dallas ISD employee on his leadership cabinet, Shirley Ison-Newsome, and then promptly worked out a severance deal to remove her.

At present, only two of Miles' original cabinet members remain with the District. From his senior leadership team, Jennifer Sprague (Communications Chief), Alan King (Chief of Staff), Marian Hamlett (Finance Director), Rene Barajas (Chief Financial Officer), Eddie Conger

¹² See Balance Bar: District 2 Concerns, accessed August 30, 2012, <http://www.fox21news.com/news/story.aspx?id=667791#.UiFDrRantUQ>

¹³ Ibid.

(Executive Director over the Thomas Jefferson feeder pattern) and Jovan Grant-Wells (Executive Director over the Madison feeder pattern and several magnet campuses) left in less than nine months prior to the end of the school year. Since the school year has ended, Charles Glover (Chief of Human Resources), Kevin Smelker (Chief Operations Officer), and Rebecca Rodriguez (Communications Chief who replaced Jennifer Sprague) have also resigned from Dallas ISD.

Additionally, Jerome Olberton, whom Miles appointed to be his Chief of Staff, resigned in May 2013 in anticipation of his federal indictment for allegedly receiving monetary kickbacks connected to a contract awarded during his former employment with Atlanta Public Schools.

Some degree of turnover during a transitional period is to be expected for any organization. But the fact that so many of Miles' own hires departed so quickly raises serious questions about his leadership and his ability to maintain strong and focused academic programs and schools.

Destination 2020: Year One

Mike Miles's Destination 2020 plan for Dallas ISD is modeled after his Destination 2016 plan for Harrison District 2, which has been celebrated for containing the most rigorous pay-for-performance system in the nation.¹⁴ Destination 2020 faced initial scrutiny as its alignment with goals set by the Board of Trustees was called into question. Since the plan is also remarkably similar to the Destination 2016 plan, not only in content but also in visual presentation, there were concerns that Destination 2020 represented Miles making a prescription for Dallas ISD prior to a diagnosis. Questions remain about whether Miles understands the specific context and challenges of Dallas and the students of Dallas ISD.

Nevertheless, there is much to commend in Destination 2020. Its focus on instructional leadership and classroom teaching and its objective to ensure that all students are college and career ready upon graduation are all laudable ideals. Yet during Miles' first year as superintendent, concerns have arisen regarding some of the processes and decisions he has made in the implementation of the Destination 2020 plan. Key areas of concern include 1) principals and professional development; 2) teachers and classroom instruction; and 3) communication and professional relations.

Principals and Professional Development

A central tenet of Destination 2020 is that effective principals are a key necessity to education reform and improving student achievement. In light of the value placed on ensuring schools have effective principals, the plan promises that Dallas ISD principals will receive "enormous support and professional development," and further states, "the entire system will be geared to supporting principals and helping them improve the quality of instruction and raise student achievement."¹⁵ While these are admirable objectives, several of Miles' first-year initiatives involving principals appear to have been counterproductive to these aims.

¹⁴ SMU Research in Mathematics Education Conference, http://www.smu.edu/Simmons/Research/RME/Participate/RMEConference2013/RMEConference2013_Speakers/MikeMiles

¹⁵ See Destination 2020, The DISD Plan, p. 15.

For instance, Destination 2020 promises to provide “enormous support and professional development” to current principals. Yet, Miles used \$5 million from the sale of district-owned school buses to begin his Principals Fellows Academy. Instead of providing resources for training current Dallas ISD Principals to be proficient in his new system, Miles invested in a new crop of 60 candidates who were paid \$60,000 each to participate in a year of training under the new program. No resources were directed toward the professional development of current Dallas ISD principals. The staff development department that previously provided professional development support for teachers and principals was discontinued because available funding was used exclusively for the Principal Fellows Academy.

Another hallmark of Miles’ first year in Dallas ISD was the introduction of his Principal Evaluation Tool, which was approved by the School Board in January 2013. A central feature of the new tool is that a significant component of principal evaluation is based on student achievement. Although there was little resistance to the idea that student achievement should be factored into principal evaluation to some degree, there was considerable controversy regarding how Miles’ plan was implemented.

When the School Board approved the plan, 68 Dallas ISD principals were immediately placed on “growth plans” (which is Dallas ISD’s HR code for preparing for termination). These principals had worked an entire semester without clear expectations or an approved evaluation tool. Destination 2020 does deliver a warning that “the pressure of change and transformation will be greatest on the principals.”¹⁶ But it also promised that “enormous support” would be provided for principals. There is no evidence that the 68 principals ever received the support or professional development necessary to avoid being placed on a “growth plan.”

There is no doubt that some underperforming principals need to be replaced and that the principal is key to good school performance. Effective principals hire and retain effective teachers and produce results (Murrell, 2006). Yet Miles appears to have terminated certain principals with a track record of effectiveness, calling the credibility of his principal evaluation rubric into question.

In fact, in August 2013, *The Dallas Morning News* featured the story of Lucy Hakemack, former principal at Conrad High School who was pressured into retirement by the Miles administration. Although Conrad High School met state standards with all three distinctions this year, Ms. Hakemack was told that her “methods of leading the school were no longer effective or that they were not leading the school in the right direction” (Hobbs, 12 Aug 2013).

Yet the most publicized of several controversial personnel decisions appears to be the case of Marian Willard, former principal at James Madison High School in Southern Dallas. When Marian Willard took over leadership of Madison, the school was ranked Academically Unacceptable for several consecutive years and was on the brink of closure. Despite being located in the lowest income neighborhood in Dallas, Ms. Willard’s leadership led the school to

¹⁶ See Destination 2020, The DISD Plan, p. 15.

acceptable ratings and placed it on a path of steady improvement (See Appendix 3 for Willard's case and record).

At the writing of this paper no defined principal selection process could be identified. Selections appear to be situational rather than systematic. This fact contributes to a wealth of concerns about transparency and communication in Miles' administration and in the district's development and implementation of school leader hiring, retention, and professional development practices.

Teachers and Classroom Instruction

Interviews with teachers and administrators within the District reveal concerns about Superintendent Miles' new curriculum alignment process, the evaluation of teachers, and high-stakes-testing. A consistent theme in these interviews has been that many teachers feel disempowered as standardized teaching practices are now required in every classroom across the District. Although these practices are designed to promote quality instruction, it is questionable whether such uniformity necessarily translates into effective teaching.

Furthermore, some of Miles' pedagogical objectives appear to be in tension with successful practices used with low-income children. For example, his pre-K program has increased class sizes and has dismantled best practices incorporated into the LEAP curriculum developed by TI and SMU. This program uses tactile, kinesthetic experiences with the alphabet and books, which are crucial for children with little background in reading, and playtime that helps develop social and emotional, as well as cognitive skills. Yet interviews with Dallas ISD educators indicate that Miles' reform approach requires "pants in the chairs" and "no playground time or naps." Such an approach runs counter to accepted best practices for helping low-income children catch up developmentally.

The Destination 2020 plan measures quality classroom instruction in four key areas: 1) lesson objectives; 2) demonstrations of learning; 3) purposeful aligned instruction; and 4) multiple response strategies.¹⁷ Under Miles, these techniques are now required of every teacher in Dallas ISD regardless of preferences or previous successes. The objective of Destination 2020 is to standardize classroom instruction practices across the district in order to ensure that effective teaching occurs in every classroom. Dallas ISD teachers are ambivalent about this uniform approach to pedagogy. On one hand, these practices may benefit new and struggling teachers by providing a sense of structure for lesson planning and delivery. On the other hand, experienced teachers are no longer as free to be creative or to adapt their lessons to the unique context of each classroom or student. All teachers, regardless of experience level, are required to demonstrate that they are using these four practices on a daily basis as the means of instructing their classrooms.

This has led some teachers in Dallas ISD to suggest that Miles' approach is more about compliance than excellence in teaching. When several successful teachers at Dallas ISD's magnet schools reportedly began to leave in light of Miles' instructional policies, Miles made no

¹⁷ See Destination 2020, The DISD Plan, p. 18.

effort to enact a policy to provide already-successful teachers with more flexibility and freedom in pedagogy. Instead, Miles' response was, "If you have teachers leaving because of those four things, first of all, I don't think that's the case, but if that's the case, then maybe they need to leave."¹⁸

Dallas ISD teachers are not only ambivalent about the key areas of teacher evaluation, but also about the process by which teachers are being evaluated under Miles' plan. Under the Destination 2020 plan, an Executive Director is required to make walkthroughs at schools in his or her district and to conduct occasional unannounced "spot observations" of teachers. The plan requires "ten spot observations for every teacher, who is in his [sic] first three years; six for all others."¹⁹ Moreover, now teachers in Dallas ISD must teach with their classroom doors open so that it is apparent to anyone walking the halls that quality instruction is occurring in the classroom.²⁰

Another point of ambivalence is the way Destination 2020 uses test scores to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers and principals. A growing body of research shows that high-stakes testing and rigid personnel evaluations are problematic in furnishing fair, reliable, and useful information on school progress (Gates, 03 Apr 2012). Using standardized tests as the primary tool to rate these students, teachers, or their principals sometimes punishes those in greatest need. Over time, teachers tend to avoid such students who may jeopardize their jobs and reputations, which in turn is harmful to the students who most urgently need talented and experienced teachers (Ravitch, 2010, p. 226).

It is fair and appropriate for teachers to be evaluated in part on student achievement and graduation rates. But the proper measurement is not limited to an abstract standard that applies to students across America or the one currently dominating conversation in Dallas, *i.e.*, STAAR or SAT test scores. Rather, it should be based on year-over-year improvements. If a teacher can help a student gain at least one year of achievement per year, this is significant.

Standardized tests are useful but not scientific instruments (Lemann, 2000; McNeil, 2000). They are social constructions, and their results are most often contingent on the social, economic and family backgrounds of the students being tested. This context does not excuse low-income students nor their teachers and principals or exempt them from evaluation, but the challenges and dynamics are more complex than test scores alone suggest.

A recent American Federation of Teachers (AFT) report²¹ further reiterates the cost of over-testing and the burden it places on already taxed school districts. It should cause advocates of public education and of quality education for all students to pause at the tremendous resources – both financial and time – that testing costs. In the first ever cost study of testing since the implementation of the 2001 No Child Left Behind law, Howard Nelson (2013) conducted the study of two school districts – one in the Midwest and the other on the East coast. What he found

¹⁸ See DISD Blog, <http://www.disdblog.com/2013/04/01/it-depends-what-the-meaning-of-the-word-is-is/>

¹⁹ See Destination 2020, The DISD Plan, p. 26.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ For full report see, <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/testingmore2013.pdf>

was that the cost when considering purchasing and licensing the test, cost of logistics and test administration, test preparation, and the cost to instructional time, the East coast district spent up to \$1,100 annually for students in grades 6th through 11th. The costs for 1st through 2nd grades amounted to \$400, while the cost of testing for 3rd through 5th graders was between \$700 and \$800. Although not exactly the same, the cost for the school district in Midwest was equally disturbing. Rather than spending time and financial resources that could enhance the quality of instruction and experience of students in school, districts were forced to expend valuable resources on testing.

Only time will tell if Miles' approach to quality instruction will serve to improve student achievement in Dallas ISD, but it is not clear whether Miles' pedagogical approach takes into account poverty's effect on student achievement. The social and economic challenges to learning are not likely to be overcome with a few standardized tools and a rigorous enforcement of their use in classrooms. Unannounced spot observations and high-stakes testing fail to understand and respect local complexities and conditions, and miss the mark of enhancing the quality of instruction. Despite the evidence that socioeconomic conditions constitute the biggest factor affecting student achievement, socioeconomic conditions are not explicitly addressed in the Destination 2020 plan.

Communication and Professional Relations

One of the most troubling aspects of Superintendent Miles' first year of leadership in Dallas ISD is the low morale that currently pervades the District. Although periods of transition present unique difficulties for any organization, the turmoil in Dallas ISD during the 2012-2013 school year appears unprecedented. One indicator of this turmoil, and the poor morale among Dallas ISD educators, is the number of end-of-year vacancies. At the end of Miles' first year as Superintendent, there were more than 1700 teacher vacancies by conservative estimates.²² This represents approximately double the average amount of end of year teacher vacancies that Dallas ISD sees from year to year.

Interviews with both Dallas ISD insiders and outsiders reveal that Superintendent Miles and his leadership team lack effective communication skills. A recurring theme in these interviews was that Miles leads more by intimidation than by collaboration. Under the auspices of high-stakes accountability, the Miles administration appears to have created a culture of fear and reprisal. It is unlikely that a militaristic, absolutist culture, brooking no dissent, will lead either to recruiting or retaining the best teachers and principals or to producing the best urban school district in Texas, let alone in America.

Although Miles states that he has had more than 300 meetings in the community, meetings in and of themselves do not equate to collaboration. There is a vast difference between the relatively easy work of attending an event versus the hard work of negotiation and the give and

²² See "Mass Exodus of DISD teachers," at <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2013/06/19/mass-exodus-of-disd-teachers-end-of-year-disd-vacancies-double/>

take required in large, complex publicly funded organizations, with so many legitimate stakeholders.

An example of this lack of collaboration was Miles' response to assistance offered by the Board of the Dallas Achieves Commission. The chairman of Dallas Achieves wrote him a letter in July 2012, offering to meet with him, both to extend support and discuss the history of Dallas Achieves. The meeting was finally held in late September. Superintendent Miles was briefed on the Dallas Achieves initiative, offered support and urged to reach out to a list of key leaders in Dallas. He did not respond to any of these suggestions, until the last few weeks of public outcry toward the end of school year.

The poor communication exhibited by Miles' administration has to do with collaboration, not presentation. He has a good PowerPoint presentation that is effective in large meetings with business and other leaders who have little working knowledge of Dallas ISD. He has garnered public support of important political and business leaders (but this is always the case in Dallas for new Superintendents – as occurred with Superintendents with troubled tenures, including Waldemar Rojas and Yvonne Gonzalez). That support quickly wanes when plans prove ineffective.

During his first year, Superintendent Miles has had an ambiguous relationship with the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees. The Board has voted in favor of Miles' hallmark initiatives, including Destination 2020, the Principal Fellows Academy, and the Principal Evaluation Rubric. Yet most of the Board's favorable decisions have come in the form of a split vote, usually six in favor and three opposed. Furthermore, the three dissenting votes have consistently been the African-American members of the Board who represent districts in Southern Dallas, the most economically distressed areas of the city.

Representing neighborhoods with large black populations, the dissenting Board members have expressed the concerns of the families and communities they serve. Many in the African-American communities of Southern Dallas do not believe that Superintendent Miles has done an adequate job of listening to and addressing their concerns. Parents have expressed concerns that Dallas ISD has made decisions concerning their neighborhood schools without bringing them to the table. The clearest example of this tension between Miles' administration and the African-American parents of Dallas ISD is the removal of two principals highly valued by the community, principal Leslie Swann of Lincoln High School and Principal Marian Willard of Madison High School. The same is true for some in the Hispanic community as well, such as when Principal Anthony Tovar of Sunset High School was inexplicably placed on a "growth plan" and subsequently retired.

In television and newspaper interviews, Miles has consistently attributed resistance to his policies and processes as unwarranted resistance to change and reform.²³ But this explanation

²³ See Dallas Morning News Editorial, "John Wiley Price shouldn't meddle in Mike Miles' DISD business," at <http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/north-south-dallas-project/editorials/20130430-editorial-jwp-risks-harming-most-those-he-claims-to-protect.ece>

does not actually address the real questions or concerns that his first year in leadership has raised. Such a response appears to represent a way of deflecting criticism, however constructive it may be.

Large public school systems need leaders who can bring public as well as private funding and programs to assist students and staff. As a community, we should be supporting the time-honored profession of teaching by preparing, supporting and paying our teachers more. Interviews with area state legislators reveal that, despite significant legislative public school issues pending (including funding, testing, charter schools, etc.), Miles has not lobbied in Austin on behalf of Dallas ISD nor even sought contact with some of its key legislators, albeit he has responded to calls. Carrying the banner for Dallas ISD, rather than relying only on hired lobbyists and consultants, is a major component of the role of superintendent. Dallas ISD needs strong advocacy in Austin.

Citizens of Dallas and the families of Dallas ISD deserve a superintendent who has their best interest at heart and who seeks to represent them well at all times. That is why many people took issue with Superintendent Miles when he served as a keynote speaker for a luncheon in Colorado Springs in April 2013. There, Miles gave a speech that was widely considered to be ridiculing and disparaging of Dallas ISD, its teachers, and administrators. To many in Dallas, these behaviors reflect either disrespect for crucial stakeholders or an unwillingness to collaborate, or both.

Pending Investigation

In June 2013, controversy relating to Mike Miles' leadership reached a new high when then Dallas ISD communication chief Rebecca Rodriguez filed a series of complaints against the superintendent to the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). She alleged that Miles used 'undue influence' by pulling an agenda item from the June 13, 2013 monthly Board Briefing, and expressed concerns that the agenda item was pulled because the vendor who was awarded the contract was not Mike Miles favored vendor. Rodriguez also complained about bullying by Miles and his administration.

According to news reports,²⁴ when OPR began to look into the matter, Miles contacted lead OPR investigator Don Smith and told him to suspend the investigation into his actions for "the good of the district." Miles, however, stated that he originally suspended the investigation because Dallas ISD was still in negotiations with a former employee. Smith said that a few days later Miles contacted him and told him to continue the investigation but "to keep it discreet." Smith stated that he was also instructed to turn over immediately a copy of all the investigation documents to two Dallas ISD attorneys. At this point, Smith was so concerned with Miles' apparent attempts to limit the investigation that he asked School Board President Eric Cowan to consider hiring outside legal counsel.

²⁴ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/08/dallas-isd-trustees-in-closed-door-meeting-to-discuss-investigation-of-superintendent-mike-miles.html/>

On July 22, 2013, the Board of Trustees unanimously agreed to hire former US Attorney Paul Coggins to conduct an independent investigation. Coggins' report is expected to be delivered to the School Board on September 5, 2013.

Recommendations

Dallas ISD deserves an inclusive, fully vetted public conversation on these issues, including an authentic dialogue about civic responsibility and the need for organizations and institutions to improve the socioeconomic context for our public school students. The choice we make is crucial in shaping the futures of individual students as well as the District. Public education should involve the engagement of all, not just a small politically powerful and well-connected group. Moreover, education reform must not devolve into a contest between adults. The needs of our children and their families must take priority.

The competitive market approach to education leaves the most vulnerable children behind (as it does the job market). When schools are closed, their students and families suffer chaos, confusion and transportation issues. The approach also neglects the vast talents, experiences and human capital that parents bring with them. Although those that come from lower end of the economic ladder are often seen as empty vessels or as contributing to the drain on our economic engine, we should view them as assets in contributing to the District's turnaround. We should, instead, work to achieve balance – where we both bring out the best in our capable students and teachers, and provide appropriate support for children and families that have economic challenges.

A better path forward includes the development and implementation of the following five core values and tenets:

1. ***Inclusivity, collaboration and partnership building***. The Dallas Achieves Commission created substantive change in only a few years of existence. We recommend revisiting and re-instituting the transformation/accountability process that was begun with the Commission. The District could build upon the plan's strengths and modify where needed. More than anything, creating a culture of inclusivity, collaboration and partnership building are essential to transforming a community (Benson & Harkavy, 2001; Callahan & Martin, 2007). If organizations in business, civic and community circles are valued as part of the solution, Dallas ISD is more likely to not only build unity and take advantage of multiple perspectives that are already operating in the broader community, but the District will be better positioned to foster the buy-in that is needed when making substantial changes.
2. ***An organization that values high expectations and academic preparation from the earliest years***. Mandating, strengthening and funding effective full-day kindergarten and pre-K programs (Lynch, 2004) on every campus is essential to turning the District around. Together with providing educator training and certification, and with implementing service delivery of developmentally appropriate, language-rich, curriculum-relevant programming, successful school district leaders are able to see real

change in a relatively short amount of time. In his study of the core organizational beliefs and structure of highly successful schools in Texas, Scheurich (1998) found that successful district leaders held and instituted the following core beliefs and values in their schools: 1) all children can succeed at high academic levels, 2) schools are child- or learner-centered, 3) all children must be treated with love, appreciation, care, and respect, 4) the racial culture, including the first language of the child is always valued, and 5) the school exists for and serves the community (p. 460). He also found that their organizations all had a strong, shared vision, they promoted loving, caring environments for children and adults and facilitated a district culture that was collaborative, innovative, open to new ideas, and had school staffs that held themselves accountable for the success of all children. Dallas ISD can be positioned to do this, but it must start early with children and be led by the superintendent.

3. ***Core academic excellence.*** Together with the previous recommendation of beginning to create a district organizational culture that promotes high expectations is the ability of the District to focus on core academic excellence. Dallas ISD must enhance reading, grammar and writing (including book clubs, etc.) in elementary schools. This cannot just focus on achievement scores as is with market-driven reform proposals. Rather, strategies for focusing on numeracy for better conceptual understanding of mathematics in elementary schools and strengthening math, science and computer science in middle schools (including chess clubs). They must be culturally-relevant and include opportunities for all its students to partake in these programs.
4. ***Rigor in critical thinking, college preparatory programs.*** Offering a mix of science, engineering and computer classes, as well as a range of liberal arts that build critical thinking, problem-solving skills, independent learning, creativity, Advanced Placement courses and training, SAT and ACT prep courses, along with the arts and other extracurricular activities.
5. ***Holistic and comprehensive educational and quality of life opportunities.*** Equalizing learning opportunities outside school, such as summer school programs, summer jobs, etc.

Conclusion

Dallas ISD leaders and educators cannot do all this alone. Rather, the District needs a plan that will include all stakeholders and require input, buy-in, and support and funding from the whole community. There already exists a wealth of knowledge as well as untapped human and financial resources. It will also require the type of district leadership that has been missing – where community input is valued and considered, where transparency is evident, and where research-based approaches are implemented. Research on student-measured performance indicates that only 10-20% of the variance shown belongs to the classroom (i.e., teachers and teaching) and a similar amount to the school (i.e., school culture, facilities and leadership). Some have stated that up to two-thirds of what explains student achievement is beyond control of the schools (i.e., family background, motivation to learn and peer pressure). Our perspective is that District

leadership must not ignore and alienate those that might help contribute positively. If we enact an exclusively top-down framework to the District's challenges, we will not move forward positively. Children will not be served.

This is, of course, a long-term strategy, but it is one more likely to produce enduring and sustainable improvements to public education. In contrast, under the current Superintendent, there is a slash-and-burn, brook-no-dissent formula. Some in Dallas say this is exactly what we need and what the School Board wanted. We disagree, and in any case a wider community conversation is deserved before that decision is made.

Of course, we need to improve our public schools and student achievement. But how that is best done deserves a community-wide conversation. And the political, business, religious and philanthropic communities must accept responsibility for their roles in producing a socioeconomic context in which education can flourish. These communities can help by augmenting and supporting programs, but more importantly they can improve economic, housing, healthcare and other conditions in which our lower-income schoolchildren live.

An "all hands on deck" effort is needed immediately for Dallas ISD. A holistic and comprehensive approach to education reform recognizes the need for parental and community engagement to partner with schools in improving student achievement and graduation rates. We must all join hands in this common cause in an inclusive and transparent manner.

Appendix 1

What is evident is that although the number of students served by Dallas ISD has decreased, the level of diversity and students of color has increased. Over the last ten years, the district has become more Hispanic and more economically-disadvantaged. It has continued to lose its White students. The district relies heavily on state funding to make ends meet and is now more dependent on federal funding than it was in 2002. Several scholars have noted that school funding is heavily dependent on local property wealth. Although the so-called “Robin Hood” system of funding has “re-captured” local funds so that property poor school districts may be brought up to a certain level of equity, the state of Texas still does not fund school districts equally, much less equitably (Alemán, 2007; Baker & Welner, 2010; Cardenas, 1997). As school leaders have learned over the years, legal strategies may vastly improve the state of local funding (Baker & Green, 2005; McUsic, 1991; Yudof, 1991), however in states like Texas where so much of the funding formula is dependent on local property wealth, inequity will continue to persist (Alemán, 2007). This phenomenon is evident in comparing Dallas ISD and Highland Park taxable value per pupil. In 2002, Dallas ISD’s taxable value per pupil amount to 31% of the total taxable value per pupil for Highland Park ISD. In 2012, this value had decreased to only 27% of Highland Park ISD’s total taxable value per pupil. While property wealthy districts continue to state that having to “give back” part of their local funding is making it difficult to maintain their educational programming, districts that are limited by their property values will always be dependent on the state legislature for funding and the willingness of state legislators to raise levels of “equalized” funding.

Dallas ISD – Highland Park ISD Comparison, 2002 to 2012

	<i>Dallas ISD</i>		<i>Highland Park</i>	
	<i>2002</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2012</i>
<i># Schools</i>	220	236	7	7
<i>Students</i>	163,562	157,085	5,869	6,770
<i>Ethnicity:</i>				
% African American	34	24	0	0
% Hispanic	57	69	1	5
% White	7	5	97	90
% Economically Disadvantaged	76	86	0	0
% Bilingual/ESL	29	37	1	1

<i>Funding & Taxes</i>				
Taxable Value per Pupil	343,973	474,714	1,116,216	1,738,938
Total Revenue per Pupil	6,641	11,118	7,378	10,686
Total Operating Expenditures per Pupil	6,205	9,674	6,319	8,785
% State Funding	14	28	3	22
% Local Funding	84	54	97	78
% Federal Funding	2	18	0	0

Source: Texas Education Agency, Snapshot data, 2002 and 2012.

Appendix 2

Departures of Senior Dallas ISD Officials During Mike Miles' First Year

1. Alan King (\$225,000) – Chief Financial Officer and Chief of Staff

Former CFO under Michael Hinojosa, served as the Interim Superintendent before Mike Miles, then hired on as Mike Miles' Chief of Staff. He left the District and then returned and is currently serving as the Interim Chief of Internal Audit for the District. He has announced plans to leave, effective Aug. 31, 2013. The Chief of Staff position was filled by Jerome Olberton until his resignation in May 2013, and the Chief Financial Officer Position is currently vacant (with Jim Terry serving as Interim).

2. Shirley Ison-Newsome (\$170,000) – Assistant Superintendent

Only veteran Assistant Superintendent that Mike Miles retained upon his assumption of the Superintendent position. However, a severance deal was arranged just two months into the school year. This position is currently vacant.

3. Eddie Conger (\$130,000-\$137,183) – Executive Director for the Jefferson Feeder Pattern

Left in November to run a charter school. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.

4. Dora Saucedo (\$130,000-\$137,183) – Executive Director for the Pinkston Feeder Pattern

Resigned in December after being found to have fabricated an invoice for moving expenses. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.

5. Leonardo Caballero (offered \$170,000) – Chief of Staff

Accepted the position, which would have paid him \$80,000 more than he was earning in his post as the Special Assistant to the President of Lamar University. However, he changed his mind and decided not to come. The Chief of Staff position no longer exists.

6. Jennifer Sprague (\$185,000) – Chief of Communications

One of several staff members Miles brought with him from Colorado with moving expenses paid. Though her salary was nearly double what she earned in Colorado, she spent only six months in the District. This position was filled by Rebecca Rodriguez until she resigned in June 2013. This position is currently vacant.

7. Gary Kerbow (\$123,000) – Purchasing Director

Retired in wake of a mishandled bid for federal funds costing the District a potential of \$10 million in funds for expansion of wireless Internet to campuses.

8. Marian Hamlett (\$153,000) – Finance Director

Resigned and took a position with Dallas Can Academies.

9. Pam Brown (\$90,000) – Reading Director

Came to the District from Irving ISD. Does not appear to have left in order to take another job position. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.

10. Miguel Solis (\$64,000) – *Special Assistant to the Superintendent*

One of several staff members Miles brought with him from out of state with moving expenses paid. This position is currently filled by Justin Coppedge.

11. Emma Cannon (\$99,000) – *Manager of Accounts Payable*

This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.

12. Marita Hawkins (\$105,000) – *Director of Benefits*

This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.

13. Jamal Jenkins (\$150,000) – *Executive Director of Human Resources*

This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.

14. Rene Barajas (\$199,000 with a \$20,000 potential bonus) – *Chief Financial Officer*

Left after 92 days for Garland ISD, where he will be earning \$189,500. This position is currently vacant, with Jim Terry serving as Interim.

15. Steve Korby (\$154,000) – *Executive Director for Finance Department*

Korby did not cite a specific reason for his mid-year resignation, and simply informed reporters that “it’s time,” and that he had planned his departure since early fall.

16. Leslie Williams (\$130,000 - \$137,183) – *Executive Director for the Carter Feeder Pattern*

17. Jovan Grant-Wells (\$130,000 - \$137,183) – *Executive Director*

Recently accepted a position with Garland ISD.

18. Tina Patel (\$106,000) – *Attorney for Dallas ISD*

Terminated

19. Jerome Olberton (\$185,000) – *Chief of Staff*

Resigned in May 2013 in anticipation of his indictment for allegedly receiving monetary kickbacks connected to a contract awarded by Atlanta Public Schools.

20. Charles Glover (\$182,000) – *Chief of Human Capital Management*

Resigned in June 2013 and accepted a position with Bellwether Education Partners

21. Kevin Smelker (\$220,000) – *Chief of Operations*

Decided to retire and move back to Colorado in June 2013.

22. Rebecca Rodriguez (\$155,000) – *Chief of Communications*

Abruptly resigned after three months on the job.

Appendix 3

The Case of Marian Willard

Marian Willard took over leadership of James Madison High School in 2006 and led the campus to Academically Acceptable ratings when many of Dallas ISD's high schools were rated Academically Unacceptable for consecutive years.

During her tenure, Ms. Willard was presented with unique challenges that any fair evaluation of her performance must consider. For example, under former Superintendent Hinojosa, Ms. Willard was required to take the sophomores and juniors of Spruce High School when Spruce was reorganized in 2008 and reopened with only incoming freshmen and senior students. Until the school year 2010-2011, Madison was rated Acceptable for many years, even with large numbers of students from Spruce with poor academic records, and even when the majority of comprehensive high schools in Dallas were low performing.

While community members and students in Southern Dallas campaigned to retain Ms. Willard at Madison, the effort to remove Ms. Willard received public support from some powerful players in Dallas' educational landscape. Several reports appeared in the local television media, *The Dallas Observer* and *The Dallas Morning News*, with claims that Madison High School has produced no college-ready students and that principal Marian Willard deserved termination based on student outcome data.

Counterarguments were presented to the local media offering explanations for why claims of a lack of college readiness at Madison were erroneous. Nevertheless, writers at *The Observer* and several reporters at *The Dallas Morning News* persisted in publishing inaccuracies concerning Madison's achievement rates.

SAT Scores

College readiness SAT scores of 1100 or above are a function of the academic level of students who walk in the door as ninth-graders, not a function of high school campus leadership.

The approach to "college-readiness" taken by Superintendent Miles and others will often mischaracterize South Dallas campus leadership because South Dallas comprehensive high schools have ~90% low income, minority children. South Dallas is an area of pervasive, deep, multigenerational poverty with no programming to attract even lower middle-class students. Dallas magnet schools effectively pull all the advanced academic students from the eighth-grade feeder schools and leave only students with low levels of reading and math skills as entering ninth-graders for South Dallas high school campuses.

As a result, the PSAT scores of incoming ninth graders define the known limits of growth for SAT results. SAT growth is not elastic in the way that Superintendent Miles and other advocates of these metrics suggest.

Below is a chart with PSAT and SAT scores pulled from the MyData portal available for Dallas ISD high campuses. These high school scores demonstrate typical growth patterns in SAT scores over four years of high school in those campuses that are top-rated nationally and those high schools with high numbers of minority students in deep poverty.

Dallas ISD Data from MyData Portal											
2012-2013 Campus Data Packets											
	Average 9th Grade PSAT				Average SAT Scores			Average Growth from PSAT to Senior SAT Scores		Low Income Students	
High School	Reading	Math	Total		Reading	Math	Average SAT				
TAG Magnet	55	55	110		640	655	1295		195	35%	
Science/Eng. Magnet	49	55	104		563	645	1208		168	67%	
Booker T.	48	46	94		531	516	1047		107	27%	
Madison	31	35	66		360	383	743		83	88%	
Lincoln	30	32	62		324	366	690		70	89%	
Roosevelt	31	34	65		352	368	720		70	85%	
Samuell	35	36	71		357	395	752		42	89%	

As is apparent from two of the top-rated schools in the nation, TAG and SEM, student growth on SAT tests, even with high performing peers and the best teachers and curriculum, tops out at less than 200 points from PSAT to senior SAT scores. This is the typical growth curve for highly motivated and academically accomplished students in the most stable high schools in Dallas with much less poverty than most comprehensive high schools. Compared to neighborhood schools, TAG and SEM are well supplied, have stable campus leadership, and have little teacher and student turnover.

Booker T. Washington (BTW), the downtown Dallas arts magnet, also uses a heavy academic filter before students are allowed to audition into the school. BTW has the lowest poverty rate of any Dallas public high school and the highest rate of students who were not enrolled in Dallas public schools their previous eighth-grade year (50%). Yet, even with a million-dollar foundation assisting in student supplies and teacher training, BTW's PSAT-to-SAT growth rate is barely more than 100 points with highly motivated, mostly middle- and upper-income Anglo students.

The peer effect on student achievement as a result of recruiting a critical mass of high achieving students at TAG, SEM, and BTW is substantial and is receiving attention by education researchers. Dr. Ed Fuller of Penn State states:

“So, all other factors being equal, schools are more likely to exhibit greater growth rates if high achieving students enter the school. While other factors such as the non-random distribution of effective teachers or principals may explain this phenomenon, the academic achievement of incoming students would increase the likelihood that a school could recruit and retain effective teachers.”²⁵

²⁵ <http://fullerlook.wordpress.com/2012/12/18/bias-in-tx-growth-measure-austin-and-idea/>

In contrast, Madison High School serves a community of minority students in deep poverty. While the rate of per-student spending has been similar to TAG and BTW, neither of the latter two schools are Title I schools, but both magnets have enjoyed extremely high rates of funding by Dallas taxpayers as well as low student-teacher ratios.

To portray inner-city schools as failures when they cannot produce SAT student growth rates twice that of TAG or SEM or BTW is profoundly misleading. There are no comprehensive high schools in the United States that can produce such revolutionary growth rates on SAT scores when their incoming students are scoring an average of 62-70 on combined reading and math PSAT scores.

Ms. Willard produced a PSAT/SAT growth rate similar to the one produced by BTW Principal Tracy Fraley who was promoted to an Executive Director position by Superintendent Miles in January 2013. Prior to that, Principal Fraley was voted Principal of the Year in DISD. Under her leadership, BTW's student recruiting efforts were extended into the northern Dallas suburbs, insuring BTW a higher percentage of out-of-district middle and upper-income Anglo students with previous records of high academic achievement. Simultaneously, however, this decreased seats at BTW available to lower income, minority students from Dallas public schools.

While Ms. Willard's was principal, Madison High School exceeded the SAT growth rate of Samuell High School and had a much better track record on state accountability exams and meeting federal AYP than Samuell, which has consistently failed on both measures. Samuell High School also has one of the worst records of student achievement on TAKS tests in the state of Texas. Yet Superintendent Miles promoted the former principal of Samuell High School to an Executive Director position upon his arrival in Dallas.

(Note: The percentage of students tested on PSAT and SAT tests varies widely by campus. Some high school principals lower participation in SAT testing to increase the average campus score. Madison has consistently tested a high percentage of students. The above SAT graph used the data available from the latest campus packets and did not attempt to track a cohort through graduation or make corrections for the percentage of students tested.)

Authentic College Readiness Data

ACT and SAT scores are less predictive of college readiness than high school grades and the level of rigor of high school classes. The predictive power of the SAT has been described both in popular media²⁶ and in research completed by the College Board.²⁷ For low-income, ESL, and minority students, the SAT has weaker predictive power than it does for the white male population used to originally norm the test.

²⁶ http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/class-struggle/post/time-to-retire-the-sat/2012/09/27/48d9c64a-08b8-11e2-afff-d6c7f20a83bf_blog.html

²⁷ http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/sat/12b_6661_SAT_Benchmarks_PR_120914.pdf

The following chart indicates the disconnect between SAT scores and successful completion of the first year of a Texas state college.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board tracks all Texas high school graduates who enter a public community college or state university in Texas. Students are segmented on the basis of grade point averages their first year of college.

The data comparing Dallas high school graduates for 2007 and 2011 show most Dallas high schools improving college enrollment rates and college success rates. ACT and SAT scores have not improved significantly for most schools during the same time period.

Depicting inner-city, high-poverty high schools as failures based on the proxies of ACT or SAT scores fails to give an accurate picture of the improvements occurring in the college entrance and success rates of most Dallas high schools.

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD DATA							
Comparison of 2007 and 2011 Graduating Seniors-Dallas High Schools							
	2007		Successful		Enrollment-% of Senior Class		
					2007	2011	
% of total senior class =/ > 2.0 college gpa			2011				GROWTH
SEM	43%		74%	31%	60%	95%	35%
Adamson	14%		30%	16%	24%	48%	24%
Sunset	20%		36%	16%	30%	50%	20%
Hillcrest	25%		36%	11%	33%	56%	23%
WHITE	27%		38%	11%	41%	53%	12%
Kimball	16%		25%	9%	32%	46%	14%
Madison	15%		22%	7%	33%	42%	9%
Pinkston	15%		21%	6%	25%	45%	20%
Molina	23%		28%	5%	34%	47%	13%
Booker T	30%		35%	5%	39%	44%	5%
Samuell	15%		20%	5%	20%	34%	14%
Carter	25%		29%	4%	44%	51%	7%
North Dallas	25%		29%	4%	41%	45%	4%
Wilmer Hutchins	14%		16%	2%	31%	38%	7%
WWilson	31%		32%	1%	43%	45%	2%
Health Magnet	57%		57%	0%	70%	71%	1%
Business	46%		46%	0%	65%	66%	1%
Thomas Jefferson	33%		31%	-2%	49%	45%	-4%
Bryan Adams	31%		27%	-4%	34%	47%	13%
Roosevelt	17%		12%	-5%	28%	32%	4%
Lincoln	26%		20%	-6%	41%	43%	2%
SOC	19%		11%	-8%	29%	41%	12%

Removing the magnet high schools from the chart on successful college transitions for Dallas high schools puts Madison High School as the most successful in college transition *when compared with Dallas high schools with similar demographic challenges*. Increases in successful

college transition rates from 2007 to 2011 at Madison were in spite of the large number of failing Spruce students who were transferred to Madison in 2008.

To further emphasize the improvements in college readiness and participation at Madison High School, a decade ago, Madison graduated only 87 students out of a much larger student body. For the class of 2011, 200 students graduated. The increase to a successful state college transition of 22% of Madison students is based on the current figure of 200 high school graduates, or double the graduation numbers of a decade ago. The increase in college readiness has occurred in parallel with higher graduation figures, a testament that Ms. Willard did not lower academic standards to increase high school graduation rates.

The chart below shows Madison in the middle of low-income Dallas high schools in the percentage of graduating seniors making a successful transition to the state university or community college. The schools with the highest transition rates still enroll Anglo, middle-income students who skew the success rates of Woodrow, White, and Hillcrest.

There is little justification for choosing Madison as an example of a school with low college readiness when almost half its graduating seniors were enrolled in postsecondary education in 2011.

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD DATA						
Comparison of 2007 and 2011 Graduating Seniors-Dallas High Schools						
				Enrollment-% of Senior Class		
	2007		Successful	2007	2011	
% of total senior class \geq 2.0 college gpa			2011			GROWTH
SOC	19%		11%	29%	41%	12%
Roosevelt	17%		12%	28%	32%	4%
Wilmer Hutchins	14%		16%	31%	38%	7%
Lincoln	26%		20%	41%	43%	2%
Samuell	15%		20%	20%	34%	14%
Pinkston	15%		21%	25%	45%	20%
Madison	15%		22%	33%	42%	9%
Kimball	16%		25%	32%	46%	14%
Bryan Adams	31%		27%	34%	47%	13%
Molina	23%		28%	34%	47%	13%
North Dallas	25%		29%	41%	45%	4%
Carter	25%		29%	44%	51%	7%
Adamson	14%		30%	24%	48%	24%
Thomas Jefferson	33%		31%	49%	45%	-4%
WWilson	31%		32%	43%	45%	2%
Hillcrest	25%		36%	33%	56%	23%
Sunset	20%		36%	30%	50%	20%
WHITE	27%		38%	41%	53%	12%

Summary

Superintendent Miles and numerous media reports successfully convinced Dallas ISD trustees that there was no indication of college readiness in the students of Madison High School and played a major role in the termination of Principal Willard. Those claims were based on fallacious interpretations of TEA data along with negative portrayals of South Dallas campuses and its leadership. Other than rebuttal posts from the Dallas Friends of Public Education website and from *disdblog.com* demanding accuracy in the reporting of college readiness figures, there has been no attempt on the part of reporters at *The Dallas Morning News* or *The Dallas Observer* to dive into TEA data and better understand the context of student growth indicators.

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The Challenge of Disruptive Leadership in Dallas ISD

An examination of the Miles Administration's goals and leadership practices

This report was commissioned by The Foundation for Community Empowerment P.O. Box 796368, Dallas, TX 75379. The views contained in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the beliefs or opinions of The Foundation for Community Empowerment's board members or employees.

September 3, 2013.

The Challenge of Disruptive Leadership In Dallas ISD: An examination of the Miles Administration's goals and leadership practices

A Report Commissioned by

The Foundation for Community Empowerment

P.O. Box 796368

Dallas, TX 75379

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Matthew Birkhold, M.A.

Executive Summary

When members of the Dallas community first contacted me with the idea of producing a research report about the Miles administration, I didn't fully understand the sense of urgency. As an outsider, it wasn't until I started the preliminary research for this project that I came to understand fully the potential harm that Miles' 'disruptive' market-based "reform" approach may do to Dallas ISD. I had seen his style of leadership before. I have made a career of studying its effects. The Miles' administration is the latest in a growing trend of non-educators – armed with business principles, promises of "transformation," and the latest *change* jargon (e.g. "disruptive innovation") – who are attempting to transform urban public school districts into quasi-privately-run publicly-funded organizations. Their espoused aims are to close achievement gaps, place quality teachers in front of every student, and remove ineffective principals. The measure of success: higher test scores.

The few academic gains achieved under such regimes are too often the results of teaching to the test and accountability "gaming" rather than improved student learning. Instead of improving schools, Miles' market-based school reform principles are likely to narrow the curriculum and discourage culturally relevant pedagogical practices and differentiated instruction – the very practices documented to increase achievement with Dallas' student population. This is what happens when school leaders insist that the best measure of individual student learning is if a student is able to pass a standardized test. It is a consequence of framing school improvement almost exclusively in terms of raising select students test scores to ensure a passing rate for a respective school. Miles is laying a foundation whereby school leaders are expected to be top-down managers who seek teacher compliance with standardized procedures to improve test scores. Miles is shifting professional development from intensive developmental mentoring and coaching for teachers to rudimentary compliance-oriented information sharing sessions.

This report examines Miles' disruptive leadership, new evaluation methods, and Destination 2020 plan and how his narrow objectives and lack of attention to process undermine the very purpose and nature of school leadership, teaching, and *student learning*. His "transformations" do little if anything to prepare students for citizenship or the work demands of 2020. I lived and worked in North Philadelphia when Paul Vallas was CEO. I witnessed firsthand his push to implement disruptive market-based reforms in the School District of Philadelphia. The fallout was immediate. The results have since proven disastrous. It is my hope that those concerned enough about the present and future of DISD to read this report will use its contents to critique disruptive leadership but most importantly to imagine the kind of leadership that will place DISD on a *long term* path for success.

Sincerely,



Decoteau J. Irby, Ph.D.
Project Consultant

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INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Dallas Independent School District Board of Directors voted to hire Mike Miles as superintendent of schools. During his first year, Mike Miles unveiled the Destination 2020 plan for district improvement. Based on ample evidence and by his admission, Miles inherited an improving district but argued that the DISD he inherited is “fairly traditional,” “far from adaptive,” and unable to change to meet the demands placed on schools by a changing economy. Because the 2020 economy will require that students have a vastly different set of skills than is required today, Miles wants every DISD student to be ready for college upon graduation or be ready for the 2020 workplace. Miles believes that the DISD he inherited will not meet its goals of preparing students for 2020. In Destination 2020, he explains “we continue to conduct business as usual. A transformation is needed, and time is against us. We need to do things differently. We need to challenge ourselves, our students, our parents, and our community.” In order to begin doing things differently, Miles declared that over the next three years, his leadership efforts will focus on:

- Effective teachers. We will reach our destination by placing an effective teacher in front of every child.
- Effective principals. We will reach our destination if we make principals the key to reform.
- Professional and high-functioning central office. We will reach our destination if the central office staff is one of the most efficient and competent in the nation.
- Leadership density. We will reach our destination if we expand leadership density.
- Engaging parents and the community. We will reach our destination if our parents and community partners become engaged in graduating college- and career-ready students and if the various groups work in reinforcing ways.

Few would take issue with these goals. But questions abound in regard to *how to best achieve these goals* and whether Miles is the best leader to bring DISD closer to them. Notable to Destination 2020 is the adoption of ‘*disruptive innovation*’ as the *primary driver of change*. As it turns out, initiating his ‘transformation’ has come with initial high costs, including an overhaul of Dallas ISD cabinet leadership, the forced removal of numerous district administrators and school principals, and the resignations of other district employees, including approximately 1000 teachers. Miles’ decisions and the first year fallout of his policies and leadership style brought to the forefront of many peoples’ minds a deep concern for the future of Dallas ISD’s largely low income Latino/a and Black student population. What will Miles’ policies mean for DISD students? Dallas families? District employees? The Dallas community’s business and political

climates? Is there reason to worry? After probing numerous district documents, blogs, surveys, state and district data, looking to the scholarly literature on promising practices, and events led by fellow Broad graduates and like-minded market-driven reformers, there is reason for the Dallas community to be very concerned about the future of Dallas ISD.

The Miles' administration represents a new wave of non-educators who are committed to reforming schools based on business principles. With a focus almost solely on the importance of training school leaders to comply with business concepts such as Total Quality Management, many so-called "transformational" and "innovative reform strategies" fail. They fail because they undermine the very purpose and nature of school leadership, teaching, and student learning. Market-oriented school reform principles narrow the curriculum and reduce the work of teaching to standardized instruction and benchmarking. The reforms reduce student learning to test performance. They reduce school improvement to raising test scores of enough individual students to ensure a passing rate for a respective school – the students who are targeted for improvement are often those just below the line of passing but who show promise for helping tip the school to an acceptable pass rate. Those students who do not show such promise, they are disposable.

Such "reforms" harm also harm principals. They reduce leaders to teacher monitors who seek compliance with standardized procedures to improve test scores. When leaders' primary responsibilities are gaining teacher compliance and raising test scores, their measures of success are reduced to fidelity of implementation and data-based decision-making. Under immense external pressure to raise student performance on standardized tests, it is no wonder that leaders become authoritarian and top-down managers. Professional development is compliance-oriented rather than developmental. Teachers adopt routinized and standardized instructional practices rather than culturally relevant differentiated instruction to reach a wide array of students. Test scores become more important than student learning. It is impractical to believe that such "transformations" prepare students to be citizens and workers prepared for the demands of 2020. Miles' disruptive change mindset, new evaluation methods, and Destination 2020 plan will not only fail to improve the quality of Dallas schools but may also erode the gains made under the Dallas Achieves plan.

This report expounds on the above claims and sets out an argument for why the Miles administration's "disruptive change" leadership style and Destination 2020 is likely to harm Dallas ISD's staff, students, and community. Specifically, the report examines the Miles administration's first year reform efforts and covers five elements that superintendents must attend in order to improve student learning. These include (1) district culture-climate, (2) school

culture-climate, (3) principal quality, (4) teacher quality, and (5) community engagement. Each section contains a discussion of the Miles administration's effect on the respective school quality element. Each discussion is followed by an explanation of what recent scholarly research tells us about the most promising ways for school leaders to support and improve each element (see Table 1 in appendix). Overall, the best strategies for improving schools and raising student achievement for the *long run* is to (a) foster a district climate in which principals and teachers feel valued for their professional contributions and (b) recruit and retain leaders that set forth a vision for learning and provide the supports teachers need to carry out that vision.

By bringing to light the rationale behind Destination 2020 as well as illuminating several shortcomings of the Miles administration's efforts, The Foundation for Community Empowerment hopes this document will foster a constructive conversation and debate about how to best move forward Dallas ISD. The Foundation for Community Empowerment believes the findings contained in the report will shed light on Mile's leadership shortcomings while also promoting a broader conversation about school quality.

FINDINGS

I. District Culture-Climate

Positive District Climate Summary A positive district climate is one in which relationships of trust and open communication exist between district offices and schools. These factors allow for the creation and maintenance of a coherent process of schools and a district central offices working together to negotiate the fit between external demands on schools and school goals (Honig, 2013; DiPaola & Smith, 2008*).

Recommendations Based on the most recent scholarly research, promising approaches to fostering positive district climate include:

1. Establish and maintain intensive partnerships between central offices and principals utilizing performance management systems that allow central offices to support schools more systematically (Honig 2013).
2. District leaders establish and maintain a trusting environment between district and schools by modeling, and supporting opportunities for open communication, mutual regard, and the development of social ties (Daly & Finnigan, 2012).
3. Adopt clear goals developed *in collaboration with schools* and provide central office support to schools to reach those goals (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

The Miles administration's effect on district climate. When Miles became Superintendent of Dallas ISD, he immediately built a new leadership team that would lead based on his espoused belief in disruptive innovation – complete with its reliance on increased centralization, reduced transparency, and hierarchical relationships that seek to achieve compliance from building leaders and teachers. As of August 2013, only two of Mile's original cabinet members remain with the District (see Table 2 in appendix)). These high rates of turnover undermine organizational development and reduce the solidarity and social ties required to develop trusting relationships between a central office and schools. Although turnover is certainly expected during any administrative change, the extent and especially the

troubling nature of many departures call into question Miles' commitment to fostering a positive district climate. Committing to and establishing a positive district climate is critical for DISD now and in the long term. Without strong social ties (to the leader or the organization), there exists no basis for schools and district central offices to work together, to respond to external demands on schools, and collaborate to set and meet district goals.

What does research tell us about district climate? Historically, school district central offices have functioned primarily to meet school districts' business and compliance needs. Although central administrators are responsible for managing the school organization, central offices are no longer solely school management sites. With the passage of No Child Left Behind, school district central offices are expected to play a primary role in improving student performance. Central offices can best fulfill this new responsibility by intentionally developing trusting relationships between district administrators, principals, and ensuring good relations with external publics – including local businesses, the media, elected officials, universities, and community agencies (Moore, Gallagher, & Bagin, 2011).

The superintendent and central office (and in some cases regional) administrative personnel are responsible for supporting principals and developing their capacities to lead district schools. Principals who have central administrators that mediate the effects of external demands by offering resources and supports are better positioned to create environments where principals and staff can work collaboratively to solve problems and improve student performance (Honig, 2013; Daly & Finnigan, 2012). In districts with positive cultures, principals consider central office staff as partners, central office generates data and professional development opportunities relevant to improving the teaching and learning taking place in schools, and superintendents lead in ways that increase the autonomy of staff and principals by building on their strengths (Honig, 2013).

By systematically leading in ways that increase the autonomy of, and build upon the strengths of central office staff, principals, and teachers, superintendents can greatly improve district climate. Schools typically function with great policy incoherence because they face internal and external policy demands that often conflict. By allowing principals to develop school-wide goals to serve as simplification systems that improve the district, districts allow schools to take the lead in developing coherence. This can be formulated by creating in-school collective decision making structures and maintained by collectively deciding to bridge or buffer external demands. Within this system, district central offices support these decision-making processes by gathering information about school goals, strategies, and the experiences of other districts and schools (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

II. School Culture-Climate

Positive School Climate Summary Positive school climate is a feeling of social, emotional, and physical safety amongst teachers and students that includes positive student-student relationships, positive student-teacher relationships, and positive teacher-administrator relationships.

Recommendations Based on the most recent scholarly research, promising approaches to fostering positive school climates include:

1. Create an environment of optimism and camaraderie through a “we” approach to leadership rather than a hierarchical approach; practice transformational leadership (Pepper & Thomas, 2002).
2. In primary grades, address bullying and student behavioral problems by implementing school-wide culturally appropriate Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
3. At all grade levels, adopt and implement restorative approaches to discipline (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005), reduce the use of zero tolerance, suspensions, and other exclusionary practices ([The Equity Project at Indiana State University](#)).
4. Create an inclusive and caring environment by utilizing cooperative learning processes and service learning (Blum, 2005).

The Miles administration’s effect on school climate. In Destination 2020, the Miles administration outlines two school climate/culture-related goals to be achieved by 2015, including: 1. Safe and Secure Schools: Ensure a safe, secure and welcoming environment for all students, parents, staff, and the community (see Destination 2020 pg. 22) and 2. Culture: Create and sustain a positive and compassionate “common culture” throughout the district that leads toward accomplishing our vision and mission (see Destination 2020 pg. 18). At face value these goals align with the literature on school climate. However, in Destination 2020, the ways that the goals are operationalized (and translated into practice) have little to do with climate. They do not relate to critically important and broadly accepted climate goals and objectives such as improving relationships or addressing student, teacher, and staff emotional, physical, and psychological well-being and satisfaction.

During the 2012 academic year, teachers and staff in Dallas ISD took to social media at unprecedented levels to voice concerns about the Miles administrations' policies and practices. The *DISD Blog* and *The School Archive Project* demonstrate teachers', staff's, and community members' coordinated efforts at expressing their disapproval of the Miles administration. While such forms of dissent can sometimes reflect outlying views, employees' and stakeholders' willingness to (a) create alternative outlets for dissent and (b) take action to utilize these outlets, signals a breakdown or shrinkage of legitimate internal mechanisms for expressing dissent within the school organization. In other words, if school and district climates are positive, then teachers and staff feel valued and are willing to express their concerns within the school organization without fear of reprisal. The rise in alternative forums for dissent suggests an emergent crisis in communications and relations within Dallas ISD and signals the deterioration of school and district climate.

Paradoxically, these practices embolden the 'common' school culture that Destination 2020 seeks to advance by squelching internal dissent, ensuring compliance and unquestioning consent, and centralizing decision-making in ways that undermine otherwise open and democratic educational organizations. The practices do not foster relationships among teachers and staff or across the broad spectrum of stakeholders within the school community. They do even less to create effective schools that ensure the physical, psychological, and socio-emotional well-being of students.

Some data that the Miles administration sites as evidence of good morale is misleading. For example, in November 2012, Dallas ISD administered a school climate survey to district teachers and staff to ask employees about their opinions on district core beliefs, work satisfaction, and other related questions. The [DISD climate survey results](#) are available on DISD's website but are weakened by low response rates and methodological issues. First, the survey was administered by Dallas ISD. While self-administered surveys are more cost effective, to reduce skewedness born of fear of reprisal, it is better practice to employ third parties to administer these sorts of surveys. Second, the fact that the climate survey was administered in November (early in the school year) provides the district valuable information about where it needs to go in terms of improving climate but less about how teachers felt at the end of the year, after experiencing Miles' "tough decisions."

In addition to these methodological issues, one could argue that *the Destination 2020 goal of having teachers "agree with the core beliefs" altogether misses the point of improving school climate* as a school reform strategy. Research shows effective school leaders seek to understand and foster strong relationships in the school community, establish positive school

conditions (physical buildings and more), support teachers and staff, and implement positive behavior and a restorative approach to handling conflicts with the intent of increasing school-connectedness and engagement. These practices are positively correlated with improved student performance.

What does research tell us about school climate? School climate is a multi-layered and complex construct. School effectiveness research has emerged in the past 30 years that identifies important indicators of school climate. A generally accepted definition of positive school climate is as follows: School climate is a feeling of social, emotional, and physical safety amongst teachers and students that includes positive student-student relationships, positive student-teacher relationships, and positive teacher-administrator relationships. Positive school climate is associated with little to no teacher and administrative turnover and a satisfactory work environment for teachers. It also is associated with fair discipline practices, a proactive rather than reactive approach to the inclusion of different racial, ethnic, LGBTQ, differently abled students, and a sense of school connectedness among staff and students. Scholarly literature suggests consistently three best practices to create a positive school climate.

- 1. Adopt a “We” approach to leadership.** School leaders should create an environment of optimism and camaraderie through a “we” approach to leadership rather than a hierarchical approach (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). Scholarship shows that this environment can be created when principals practice transformational leadership. Transformational leaders use the strengths of people in the school to collectively solve problems. This approach differs from authoritarian problem solving where school leaders make demands and rule over people. Teachers who work with principals that utilize their strengths have a higher rate of job satisfaction, stay in their jobs longer, and are more likely to create a classroom environment in which students are nurtured intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Such environments result in respectful student-student interactions, student-teacher engagement, and foster higher academic achievement. The effects are consistent for teachers who work with transformational leaders regardless of socioeconomic factors in the school setting (Thapa, Choen, Guffy & Allesandro, 2013).
- 2. Foster safe school environments.** Because safety is an important aspect of school climate, creating a positive school climate requires attention to school discipline and student socio-emotional well-being. In K-6 schools, research shows that school wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) can help facilitate a positive school climate. More information about PBIS and culturally relevant PBIS ([CRPBIS](#)) can be found by visiting the [Equity Project's website](#). Because PBIS has limited effectiveness in secondary school

settings, many researchers suggest that schools adopt restorative approaches to school discipline as a way to create positive school climates. A restorative approach reinforces the underpinnings of transformative leadership by working with students to improve discipline and safety. When schools adopt and implement restorative practices teachers create school discipline *with* students rather than *forcing discipline on* students. Restorative approaches socialize students to develop an internal locus of control and allows students to learn from their experiences in a way that is nurturing rather than merely demeaning. Restorative practices improve academic performance because students feel more supported (Mirsky, 2007) and connected to school communities. The state of Illinois' Criminal Justice Information Authority's [Implementing Restorative Justice Guidebook](#) is a useful reference to learn more about restorative practices.

3. **Create a caring environment.** Creating an environment where students feel cared about and included is crucial to fostering a positive school climate because it increases student connectedness to school. One way to create this environment within a school is to practice cooperative learning. Cooperative, inclusive classrooms, where team learning is prioritized can break down social barriers such as race, gender, sexuality, class, and academic ability. A caring and inclusive environment can also be created by using culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy. Culturally relevant content and teaching (Gay, 2010a, 2010b; Ladson-Billings, 1994) fosters a sense of inclusion and thus a feeling of care. Finally, schools that engage in community outreach, incorporate community involvement in school (e.g. afterschool, mentor programs, invite community volunteers, etc.) and experiential hands-on learning projects, nurture positive school climate because students feel that their whole lives are relevant to school (Bloom, 2005).

III. Principal Quality

Principal Quality Summary Effective school principals consistently work to develop a clear school vision and utilize a blend of leadership styles and strategies to (a) Set forth a vision and mission for learning, (b) Improve the school's learning core, and (c) Promote a positive school climate.

Promising Approaches Based on the most recent scholarly research, promising approaches to improving principal quality include:

1. Prepare principals to raise student achievement *by improving core learning context* (i.e. daily teaching and curriculum in general education) and promoting inclusion, access and opportunity for all students (Theoharis, 2009).
2. Create a positive learning environment by using collaborative and shared decision making between teachers, staff, and principals and develop clear expectations and goals to carry out decisions (Mendels 2012; Pepper, 2010).
3. Facilitate the creation of positive school climate demonstrated by safety, trust, and respect (Mendels, 2012)
4. Prepare principals to lead the creation of professional learning communities that facilitate shared leadership, provide opportunities for professional development amongst staff, lead with an instructional orientation, and act openly and honestly with faculty about decisions, performance, and student expectations (Sanzo, et al., 2011).

The Miles' administration effect on principal quality. In Miles first year as superintendent, Dallas ISD lost over one fourth of its building principals. In documents available on DISD's principal effectiveness webpage, it is clear that that Miles' intent is to get tough on principals he deems ineffective: "there are 223 principals leading Dallas ISD schools for the 2012-2013 year. In the two previous school years between 93 and 96 percent of principals appraised received satisfactory evaluations. It is likely that the percentage of satisfactory evaluations will be lower this year." Only time will tell if the 68 principals placed on improvement plans in 2012-13 will be a success. Many principals decided not to wait around to find out. A majority of the principals who will not be returning in the 2013-14 academic year led schools that

met standards (i.e. not identified as in need of improvement), many with distinctions (see Table 3 in appendix). What this suggests is that Miles' attempts to "improve" or replace ineffective principals, through his new principal effectiveness evaluation model, had an effect of dissuading otherwise effective principals from returning to DISD.

The Miles administration should and could have focused the first few years on setting forth a vision, educating principals on procedural changes and new expectations, and (re)training principals. But what principals are trained to do and how they are expected to lead their schools matters. Our review of evaluation and training professional development content revealed a dearth of leadership training goals centered on equity-focused curricular and pedagogical school change reform. The absence of this specific language implies that principal development in DISD may soon be geared almost exclusively toward training principals to evaluate for the purposes of providing rudimentary feedback, collecting documentation for 'accountability' purposes (e.g. retention and incentives), and managing teachers. Simply put, principal training is moving toward teaching principals to adopt standard systems for monitoring levels of teacher compliance and achievement outcomes. Ironically, these sorts of goals were low priorities among districts in the Wallace Foundations' [Recent Leader Standards Report](#) which fell behind goals focused on equity and such. The absence of principal training for cultural competence and equity-focus schools is especially troubling considering that DISD serves a student population that is socio-economically marginalized. Collectively, Miles' priorities signal to school leaders that they have two options: comply or leave.

What does research tell us about effective urban school principals? School principals are under immense pressure to raise student achievement. Expecting that individual school leaders can and should achieve mastery in all instruction and management areas is almost certain to set them up for imminent failure. Instead, it is imperative that superintendents and district administrators focus principal recruitment, training, and retention efforts toward developing leaders who understand *their primary* responsibilities are to:

- (a) Set forth a vision and mission for learning,
- (b) Improve the school's learning core (e.g. general curriculum and teaching), and
- (c) Promote a positive school climate.

The vision and mission for learning, instructional improvement, and what is required to improve climate will be different for different schools, even within the same district. School leaders should understand and respond to organizational contexts (strengths and weaknesses), student populations (strengths and needs), and political contexts (external and internal demands on the organization) in their formulation of a school vision aligned with a district vision.

But even though contextual factors differ, effective leaders will almost always encounter a need and opportunities to lead change in four ways: creating and sustaining a competitive school culture, empowering others to make significant decisions, offering instructional guidance to teachers, and developing and implementing school change initiatives (Leithwood, K., Seashore-Louis, K., Anderson, S., and Wahlstrom, K., 2004).

The proven way to raise student achievement is by *improving the core learning context* in the school. The core learning context refers to the daily teaching activities and curriculum in general education. Strong leaders are committed to increasing inclusion, access, and opportunity for all students – English language learners, special education, low-income, etc. – to have access to the core learning context (Theoharis, 2009). Such leadership requires that principals commit a substantive amount of time and energy identifying and extending to teachers professional development opportunities (especially mentoring and coaching) that helps them improve instruction for all students.

Finally, principals can accomplish these objectives by distributing leadership (what Miles' prefers to call Leadership Density). This is also important for the professional well-being of principals. Given that school leaders' demands are so varying and immense, it is unrealistic to expect one school principal to be an expert on all areas of school management (Theoharis and Brooks, 2012). Instead leaders must have *sufficient* knowledge and skills to develop and guide teams so that leadership is distributed throughout the building. The positive side effect of the distributing leadership is that it professionalizes teaching and allows teachers to collectively make important curricular, pedagogical, and organizational decisions which improve job satisfaction and school climate.

IV. Teacher Quality

Teacher Quality Section Summary	Teacher quality improves when leaders conduct evaluations and observations of teachers and provide them with supports to improve their ability to deliver the curriculum. Teachers must develop, on an ongoing basis, content knowledge, cultural competence, and be able to differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.
Promising Approaches	<p>Based on the most recent scholarly research, promising approaches to improving teacher quality include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop teachers' cultural competence, respect for diversity of students, parents, and communities (e.g. low-income, language, ethnic, and racial minorities, special needs, etc.), and ability to differentiate instruction to reach multiple learning styles (Gay, 2010a, 2010b; Milner, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994).2. Conduct multiple teacher observations, led by multiple people, including peers - after previously notifying teachers of observation (Ho & Kane, 2013). Use evaluations to develop teaching capacity.3. Create strong, trusting, affective relationships between teachers and principals (Price, 2011).

The Miles administration's potential effect on teacher quality. Miles insistence on compliance and standardized instruction that focuses teaching students to succeed on tests will undermine the very teaching practices that are demonstrated to work best in districts that serve low socio-economic, English language learners, and racially and ethnically diverse students. Successful teaching approaches include culturally responsive teaching and differentiated inclusive instruction. In his first year, Miles' initiated the first step in a four year process of implementing a new teacher evaluation system that will narrow the curriculum. Although, he seeks input from teachers about the evaluation process (unlike the principal evaluation system), eight principles and parameters will "guide" the initiative:

1. Student academic achievement results will count for 50% of a teacher's evaluation.
2. Focus on results, not process and paperwork
3. Embraces individual accountability
4. Must be fair, accurate, and rigorous

5. Includes all classroom teachers and must be equally rigorous for all grades and disciplines
6. Compensates teachers based on their overall effectiveness and that compensation should be differentiated
7. Implementation must be standardized
8. Starts with “version one,” knowing that there will have to be revisions

This rather long list of “principles and parameters” leaves very little room for administrators and teachers to collaborate and build consensus around methods of evaluation. Again this “process” of involving teachers seems to be more an exercise in achieving compliance rather than authentic engagement with teachers in a collaborative decision-making process. The new SPOT evaluation, to be conducted by principals further exemplifies the importance of compliance. In the coming year, principals will conduct SPOT observations that evaluate teachers in four categories: 1) lesson objectives; 2) demonstrations of learning; 3) purposeful aligned instruction and 4) multiple response strategies. Under the Miles plan, teachers are no longer free to adapt their pedagogical approaches to the unique contexts of each classroom or student. Instead they are required to prove that they are using the four SPOT practices on a daily basis as the means of instructing their students. The rigid, pre-establish principles and parameters combined with SPOT requirements reveal what is forthcoming for DISD teachers. The almost 1000 teachers that have fled the district were clearly concerned about what lies ahead. Those teachers that remain should be concerned too.

In their critical evaluation of the Gates sponsored Measuring Effective Teaching studies, Rothstein and Mathis (2013) suggest that school communities faced with rigid achievement score-based effectiveness standards ask not about whether or not tests are good sources of evidence for measuring teacher effectiveness – this is a debate for educational researchers and methodologists to sort out. A more apt question is *“What are the effects of attaching high stakes, either in the form of pay-for-performance or through retention and non-retention decisions, to the various measures of effective teaching?”* It is often the case that students’ scores do increase in the face of high stakes accountability. But, the increases on tests are attributed primarily to “accountability gaming” and teaching narrow test-specific skills to students. Here’s a summary of what education researchers know thus far:

1. **High stakes testing for accountability leads to “accountability gaming.”** With high stakes accountability measures in place, principals and teachers are more likely to be dishonest in a number of ways. These include: under-reporting on certain indicators (e.g. dropout) and over-reporting on others (e.g. graduation), tampering with the pool of student

test-takers by increasing special education placements, skipping students past tested grade levels, expelling and suspending students (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Jacob, 2005), and falsifying student answers. While Atlanta is the poster-child for cheating, it is well-documented as a national post-NCLB concern. The extent of “accountability gaming” in its myriad forms is only emerging more clearly as of recent. Texas Education Agency is in the process of creating a new investigative division to address accountability gaming practices.

2. **High stakes testing for accountability reduces the quality of the teaching pool.** High stakes tests deter teachers from seeking employment or remaining in challenging districts, schools, classrooms, and tested subject areas. High stakes testing often strains relationships between administrators and teachers. Administrative support is the single most important factor related to teacher job satisfaction (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Overwhelmingly, perceived lack of administrative support (not pay or incentives) is cited as the main reason urban school teachers consider leaving their positions (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011). It is less likely that teachers feel supported in high accountability districts and schools where leaders lead with “compliance without capacity responses” (DeBray, Parson, & Woodworth, 2011).
3. **High stakes testing for accountability narrows the curriculum.** Students who attend high stakes accountability schools get less exposure to relevant content and high quality instruction. According to Nelson (2013), author of [Testing More, Teaching Less](#), the time students spend taking tests ranged from 20 to 50 hours per year in heavily tested grades. Students can spend 60 to more than 110 hours per year in test prep at an estimated annual testing cost per pupil of \$700 to more than \$1,000 per pupil in grades that have the most testing. Numerous studies find that students who are exposed to high stakes testing regimes do increase their scores on the achievement tests they are prepared to take. But these same students’ scores *do not improve* on national tests such as [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), the SAT, and other tests. This underscores the fact that students can be taught to perform well on tests without actually learning (see Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Jacob, 2005).
4. **Pay for performance schemes undermine teacher productivity and satisfaction.** Tying evaluations to performance incentives flies in the face of research on employee motivation in school organizations (Kohn, 1993/1999) and private corporations alike (Pink, 2011). Based on years of research on employee motivation, even top companies in the business world are relying less on incentives and more on cultivating employee autonomy, creativity,

and nurturing conditions where intrinsic motivations drive employee performance, output, and innovation (Pink, 2011).

Narrowed foci on tested subject areas and mandated standardized instruction discourages and undercuts the ability of teachers to employ culturally relevant and differentiated teaching methods that are proven to be most effective with low socio-economic and diverse student populations (Gay, 2010a; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2011). Pay for performance models have no effect on improving teacher quality and in fact, research on employee satisfaction, creativity, and productivity demonstrate that pay incentives have the exact opposite effect of reducing satisfaction, creativity, and productivity (Kohn, 1993/1999; Pink, 2011). The most troubling result of teacher attrition brought on by the effects of high stakes testing is that “low-income, low-achieving students – often students of color and recent immigrants – bear brunt of accountability strategies (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008, pg. 107).”

What does research tell us about effective urban teachers? Research has long demonstrated that teachers with a strong degree of cultural competence are critical to students performing well in school districts like Dallas (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; 2010a). Culturally competent teachers strive to validate the values, prior experiences, and cultural knowledge that students bring to class with them and by doing so, take a comprehensive approach to teaching the whole child – socially, emotionally, and intellectually. This comprehensive approach to teaching requires explicitly creating a classroom climate, using instructional techniques, and assessment instruments that validate the various cultural experiences of a diverse student body (Gay, 2010a).

Practicing culturally competent teaching also means practicing differentiated instruction. While many teachers may experience a moral dilemma when faced with the possibility of using different instructional methods for different students because they feel like they might be contributing to racial, ethnic, gendered discrimination or discrimination based on ability, research shows that helping teachers make a distinction between equity and equality can help assuage this dilemma. While equality in instruction means applying the exact same *standardized* techniques to all students, equity involves recognizing that students from distinct backgrounds have distinct needs and that what works for one group of students may be detrimental to another (Milner, 2011).

Finally, teacher effectiveness increases when teachers have positive work relationships with principals and administrative support. As Linda Darling-Hammond writes in the [Education Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform](#) (2007) report:

“It is the work leaders do that enables teachers to be effective — as it is not just the traits that teachers bring, but their ability to use what they know in a high-functioning organization, that produces student success. And it is the leader who both recruits and retains high quality staff — indeed, the number one reason for teachers’ decisions about whether to stay in a school is the quality of administrative support – and it is the leader who must develop this organization.”

According to research, teachers feel they have positive work relationships with principals when they are explicitly aware of the expectations of principals and when principals provide joint teacher-principal professional activities, which include practices like shared decision making.

V. Community Engagement

Community Engagement Summary	Students excel when they receive academic support from both outside of school as well as inside of school. Successful schools find ways to involve parents and community members in schools.
Promising Approaches	Based on the most recent scholarly research, promising approaches to engaging communities include:

1. Work with community based organizations (CBOs) as a mediators between communities and schools (Warren, et al., 2009)
2. Where possible, implement place-based education (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011) and integrate service learning opportunities.
3. Be transparent about decision-making processes and use culturally sensitive/relevant language in conveying educational standards to parents and community members (McCormick & Ozuna, 2012)

Community Engagement under the Miles Administration. Miles had the opportunity to engage in best community engagement practices by continuing to implement the Dallas Achieves Plan. Because that plan was built upon not only community engagement but also resembled the kind of collaborative leadership between the DISD and CBOs that research shows will create a positive school and community climate, the Dallas Achieves Plan would have led to long-term improvement in student performance and community health. However, Miles' practice of disruptive change and transactional leadership exemplified by his decision to implement Destination 2020 may deteriorate the relationship between the school district and parents because community members now feel betrayed by the DISD's leadership.

What does research tell us about school-community engagement? Students perform better in school when they have support from parents and community members. Within school districts that are socio-economically disadvantaged and racially and ethnically diverse, there is often a gap between what parents actually know about district educational standards and what teachers and administrators want parents to know. On behalf of community members, this gap is often interpreted as culturally, racially, and ethnically disrespectful. This lack of regard for local communities works to fuel distrust between schools and parents, making

parental involvement difficult to foster. To fill this gap, researchers have suggested that rather than trying to figure out ways to convey this information to parents without their input, school professionals are better served by inviting parents to offer feedback about school parent communications and then frame communications based on this feedback (McCormick & Ozuna, 2012). Invitational two-way conversations also have the potential to begin mending poor relationships between parents and schools (Warren, et al., 2009).

Community based organizations (CBOs) are central to facilitating school and community relations. With community-cultural connection to school, students experience an enhanced sense of belonging to school, teachers, and other students, which in turn leads to increased engagement with school and improved outcomes (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). In partnerships with CBOs, teachers and school administrators can begin the work of building relationships with parents that are often critical in improving student classroom performance while working to create a more inclusive culturally sensitive environment (Warren, et al., 2009).

In sum, while there is a long standing relationship between community involvement and improved student performance, in districts that demographically resemble Dallas, schools and districts must assume that community engagement is made difficult by preexisting poor relationships and mistrust between community members and schools. These relationships can be mended and maintained by intentionally building relationships. Community engagement facilitated by CBOs can work to extend a positive school climate into the community and provide the holistic basis needed for Dallas students to perform better in school. School officials must collaborate with CBOs to build these bridges.

CONCLUSION

A Narrower Dallas ISD?

It is impossible to – as Miles expresses his Destination 2020 plan will do – increase leadership density (or distributed leadership), place a high quality teacher in front of every student, and improve student learning if he continues to carry out Destination 2020 as currently conceived. The effects will not prove favorable to parents, teachers, students, or the broader community. Dallas ISD is at a crossroads where educational access and opportunities will be either broadened to all students, including socio-economically and historically underperforming students or narrowed, reducing access to high quality education. Under regimes like the Miles administration, it is very likely that a narrower Dallas is on the horizon. The narrowing effect of Miles policies and leadership practices are clear:

- Increasingly centralized and corporatist leadership style that diminishes district climate
- Evaluation practices that strain principal-teacher relations, harm school climate, and make recruitment and retention of quality principals and teachers less plausible.
- Narrowed school curricula and instruction that are not aligned with DISD student needs

The disruptive change leadership approach equates to centralized decision-making, lack of transparency, and solely transactional leadership. It does not reflect transformational leadership as Broad graduates want stakeholders to think. Disruptive innovation as a reform style contradicts positive school climate and culture. It establishes a culture of fear of reprisal, secrecy, and seeks to punish and remove those who dissent from the ‘common’ culture. It represents a concerted effort at narrowing the diversity of perspectives that are critically important for schools that operate on principles of diversity and democracy. In schools, it narrows the curriculum, so much so that teachers become disposable and volunteers (i.e. TFA members) can “teach” with almost no content knowledge or training in instructional methods. Should Dallas continue to expanding opportunities to inexperienced “teachers” who only commit to teaching for 2 years (Mckenzie, 2013)? Leaders become compliance monitors. Disruptive innovation leadership, the non-educators who represent it, and their practices disempower districts and schools.

What would a narrower Dallas look like? We have districts in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Chicago among others to look to as examples of what this disruptive change leadership produces (Shulevitz, 2013). It would look like this: Mass displacement of principals, teachers, and auxiliary staff; school closings; an influx of inexperienced volunteer “teachers” (e.g. Teach for America); disoriented students, parents, and communities; mass protests; a proliferation of charter schools; the hiring of Education Management Organizations

(EMO) to “turnaround” schools – these trends equate to increased privatization of public education and undermine the public democratic participation required to ensure public schooling is viable. These are the adverse outcomes that result when a superintendent (or CEO) shapes the district into a hierarchical, opaque organization that relies on militaristic leadership; where *one* leader is willing to make ‘tough’ decisions with minimal authentic input from others in the organization or broader community.

Broad-style leaders despite all of the “disruptions” intended to improve schools, fail repeatedly to transform or reform districts into school organizations that improve student learning for low socio-economic, racial, and ethnic minority student populations. Miles’ continued work in Dallas ISD will indeed change Dallas. It will indeed be disruptive. But if we look to research on what works, what does not work, and look to other districts for examples, we can project that the changes will not meet the immediate learning needs of Dallas’ children or prepare them for life in 2020. To avoid this narrowing, Dallas needs a superintendent who is willing to (a) foster a district climate in which principals and teachers feel valued for their professional contributions and (b) set forth a vision of learning and success for all students and provide principals and teachers with the supports to carry out that vision.

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Links

Education Leadership: A bridge to school reform: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Pages/Bridge-to-School-Reform.aspx>

DISD Code of Student Conduct 2013-14:
http://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/Domain/11/code_of_conduct.pdf

The Equity Project at Indiana University: <http://www.indiana.edu/~equity/resources.php>

National Assessment of Educational Progress: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/>

Testing More, Teaching Less, <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/testingmore2013.pdf>

Recent Leaders Standards Report, <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-training/Documents/Recent-Leader-Standards.pdf>

Implementing Restorative Justice:

<http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/BARJ/SCHOOL%20BARJ%20GUIDEBOOOK.pdf>

CBIS: http://www.equityallianceatascu.org/sites/default/files/CRPBIS_Matters.pdf

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APPENDIX

Table 1. District Goals and Report Alignment

Table 2. Central office Dallas ISD turnover during 2012-13 school year

Table 3. Schools where principals will not return for 2013-14 school year and ratings

Table 1. District Goals and Report Alignment

Destination 2020 Goals	Report Element
1. Teachers: Ensure highly effective teachers for all students	Teacher Quality
2. Principals: Ensure highly effective leader for every school	Principal Quality
3. Safe and secure schools: Ensure a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for all student, parents, staff, and community	School Culture-climate, Community engagement
4. Parental involvement: Develop shared responsibility between parents/guardians and schools that foster academic success and self-management of learning.	Community Engagement, Teacher Quality
5. Rigor: Implement rigorous curriculum and engaging educational practices and experiences.	Teacher Quality, Principal Quality
6. Culture: create and sustain a positive and compassionate “common school culture” through the district that leads toward accomplishing our vision and mission.	District Culture
7. Human Resources: Hire, retain, and develop highly effective employees for every position.	District Culture, Principal Quality
8. Data and Innovation: Make managerial decisions based on appropriate, reliable, and valid data and best practices, and develop and continually improve new, innovative ways of schooling to meet the needs of students in the 21st century.	All Elements
9. Central Office: Organize central services to encourage and enhance a positive culture throughout the district, support the campuses and positive culture on each campus by removing barriers that prevent achieving our goals.	District Culture
10. Facilities: Systematically upgrade and maintain our facilities to provide every student an efficient learning environment.	Not addressed

Table 2. Central office Dallas ISD turnover during 2012-13 school year

Position & Salary	Background	Status
Chief Financial Officer and Chief of Staff(\$225,000)	Alan King was district CFO under Michael Hinojosa, served as the Interim Superintendent before Mike Miles. He was hired on as Mike Miles' Chief of Staff. He left the District and then returned and is currently serving as the Interim Chief of Internal Audit for the District. The Chief of Staff position is currently filled by Jerome Olbertson, and the Chief Financial Officer Position is currently vacant (with Jim Terry serving as Interim).	Vacant
Assistant Superintendent (\$170,000)	Shirley Ison-Newsome was the only veteran Assistant Superintendent that Mike Miles retained upon his assumption of the Superintendent position. However, a severance deal was arranged just two months into the school year. This position is currently vacant.	Vacant
Executive Director for the Jefferson Feeder Pattern (\$130,000-\$137,183)	Eddie Conger left in November 2012 to run a charter school. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.	Vacant
Executive Director for the Pinkston Feeder Pattern (\$130,000-\$137,183)	Dora Saucedo resigned in December after being found to have fabricated an invoice for moving expenses. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.	Vacant
Chief of Staff (\$170,000)	Leonardo Caballero accepted the position. However, he changed his mind and decided not to come despite the promise of a substantially higher salary (more than double) than he was earning in his post as the Special Assistant to the President of Lamar University. The Chief of Staff position no longer exists.	Eliminated
Chief of Communications (\$185,000)	Jennifer Sprague, one of several staff members Miles brought with him from Colorado with moving expenses paid. Though her salary was nearly double what she earned in Colorado, she spent only six months in the District. This position was later filled by Rebecca Rodriguez (\$155,000). She resigned in June 2013. This position is currently vacant.	Vacant
Purchasing Director (\$123,000)	Gary Kerbow retired in wake of a mishandled bid for federal funds costing the District a potential of \$10 million in funds for expansion of wireless Internet to campuses.	Unknown
Finance Director (\$153,000)	Marian Hamlett resigned and took a position with Dallas Can Academies.	Unknown

Reading Director (\$90,000)	Pam Brown served as Reading Director. She came to DISD from Irving ISD. It does not appear that she left in order to take another position. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.	Vacant
Special Assistant to the Superintendent (\$64,000)	Miguel Solis relocated to DISD as one of several staff members Miles brought with him from out of state with moving expenses paid. After leaving the position, this position is currently filled by Justin Coppedge.	Filled
Manager of Accounts Payable (\$99,000)	Emma Cannon (Background?). This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.	Vacant
Director of Benefits (\$105,000)	Last held by Marita Hawkins. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.	Vacant
Executive Director of Human Resources (\$150,000)	Last held Jamal Jenkins. This position is currently vacant per the latest organization chart available from Dallas ISD.	Vacant
Chief Financial Officer (\$199,000 + potential for \$20,000 bonus)	Rene Barajas left after 92 days for Garland ISD, where he will be earning \$189,500. This position is currently vacant, with Jim Terry serving as interim.	Vacant (Interim)
Executive Director for Finance Department (\$154,000)	Steve Korby did not cite a specific reason for his mid-year resignation, and simply informed reporters that "it's time," and that he had planned his departure since early fall.	Unknown
Chief of Staff (\$185,000)	Jerome Olberton resigned in May 2013 in anticipation of his indictment for allegedly receiving monetary kickbacks connected to a contract awarded by Atlanta Public Schools.	Unknown
Chief of Human Capital Management (\$182,000)	Charles Glover resigned in June 2013 and accepted a position with Bellwether Education Partners	Unknown
Chief of Operations (\$220,000)	Kevin Smelker relocated from Colorado Springs to be chief of operations at DISD. He decided to retire and move back to Colorado in June 2013.	Unknown
Attorney for Dallas ISD (\$106,000)	Tina Patel was terminated. The reason is unknown.	Unknown

Executive Director for the Carter Feeder Pattern (\$130,000 - \$137,183)	Leslie Williams is no longer with DISD. The reason for her departure is unknown.	Unknown
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Table 3. Schools where principals will not return for 2013-14 school year and ratings

Dallas ISD School	2012-13 principal	2012-13 rating
Adamson High School	Evangelina Kircher	Met standard with one distinction
Billy Dade Middle School	David Welch	Improvement required
Blanton Elementary School	Randall Shaw	Improvement required
Brashear Elementary School	Derrick Batts	Met standard and all distinctions
Bryan Adams High School	Stanley Vanhoozer	Met standard
Bryan Elementary School	Orethann Price	Met standard with two distinctions
Business Magnet High School	Edith Krutilek	Met standard with one distinction
Carpenter Elementary School	Tanya Johnson	Needs improvement
Cochran Elementary School	Alejandra Lara	Improvement required
Conner Elementary School	Lyn Tanner-Cade	Met standard with two distinctions
Conrad High School	Lucy Hakemack	Met standard and all three distinctions
Cowart Elementary School	Pamela Nunez	Met standard with one distinction
Cuellar Elementary School	John Donnelly	Improvement required
Donald Elementary School	Jody Brandon	Met standard
Douglass Elementary School	Robert McElroy	Met standard with one distinction
Gonzalez Elementary School	Maria Cruz	Met standard
Health Magnet High School	Myrtle Walker	Met standard with two distinctions
Highland Meadows Elementary School	Sylvia Jordan	Improvement required
Hogg Elementary School	Sylvia Segura	Improvement required
Holmes Middle School	Keith Baker	Met standard
Johnston Elementary School	Deborah Kilgore	Met standard and all distinctions
Kennedy Elementary School	Jon Rice	Met standard
Kennedy-Curry Middle School	Regina Rice	Met standard and all distinctions
Libscomb Elementary School	Jessica Linwood	Met standard
Lincoln High School	Leslie Swann	Met standard with two distinctions
Madison High School	Marian Willard	Met standard
Manns Middle School	Carlos Lee	Improvement required
Marsh Middle School	Raymundo Gonzalez	Met standard
McNair Elementary School	Virginia Lockwood-Terry	Met standard and all distinctions
Mills Elementary School	Glorious Crowder	Improvement required

Peeler Elementary School	Helen Lopez	Met standard
Pinkston High School	Norma Villegas	Improvement required
Pleasant Grove Elementary School	Ellen Perry	Improvement required
Roosevelt High School	Leicha Shaver	Improvement required
Rowe Elementary School	Curtis Holland	Met standard and all distinctions
Salazar Elementary School	Juan Herrera	Met standard with one distinction
Seagoville Middle School	Kathryn Kreger	Met standard with one distinction
South Oak Cliff High School	Rodney Cooksy	Met standard
Spence Middle School	Roberto Basurto	Met standard with one distinction
Spruce High School	Rawly Sanchez	Met standard
Stonewall Jackson Elementary School	Olivia Henderson	Met standard with one distinction
Sunset High School	Anthony Tovar	Met standard with one distinction
		Met standard and all three distinctions
TAG Magnet High School	Michael Satarino	
Tasby Middle School	Jose Cardenas	Met standard
Thomas Jefferson High School	Aamir Ashiquau	Met standard
Titche Elementary School	Julie Crabtree	Met standard
Twain Elementary School	Clifford Greer	Met standard with two distinctions
Walker Middle School	Grace Casey	Met standard with one distinction
Wilmer Hutchins Elementary School	Torreyo Page	Met standard
Withers Elementary School	Andrea Cockrell	Met standard and all distinctions
Zumwalt Middle School	Verna Farmer	Improvement required

Table contents, credited to Matthew Hagg: <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/>, retrieved August 23, 2013.

About The Foundation for Community Empowerment

The Foundation for Community Empowerment was created to be a change agent. Since 1995, it has marshaled people, data, ideas and resources to lift up South Dallas and make Dallas a whole city. In whole cities, people have equal economic opportunities, are equally self-sufficient and participate equally in political and civic life – regardless of what neighborhood they live in or how much money they have.

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Press Release: Digging into Data and Evidence: Mike Miles, Dallas ISD, and Trickle-Down Education Reform

Dallas, Texas [**Foundation for Community Empowerment**] September 4, 2013

A new report entitled *Digging into Data and Evidence: Mike Miles, Dallas ISD, and Trickle-Down Education Reform* by Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig, Lindsay Redd and Dr. Ruth Vail was released today by the Foundation for Community Empowerment.

Educational reformers throughout the United States are increasingly adopting the top-down reform mind-set. Known as administrative or trickle-down reform, educational policy and reformers are primarily emphasizing standardization from the top down. By contrast, pedagogical reformers argue that schools should recognize and adapt to the individual capacity and interests of students rather than systemic standardization

The approaches of Dr. Michael Hinojosa and Mike Miles to reform education in Dallas ISD could not be more different. Dr. Hinojosa embraced community involvement to establish student-centered goals while internally working through learning communities. As a whole, Dr. Hinojosa's actions establish his profile as a pedagogical reformer. Mike Miles, however, focused his efforts as a top-down reformer. His actions in the 2012-2013 school year illustrated his primary commitment to standardization within the district through the Principal Evaluation System and the Leadership Development Fellows Academy.

The first year of implementation of Miles' Destination 2020 plan has been a rocky one. What is Mike Miles track record on education?

The report finds that Harrison data complicate the positive spin that Mike Miles has framed about student success during his six years as superintendent in Harrison. Harrison did not meet a single goal in the area of Elementary and High School Mathematics within the most vulnerable subgroups: Free and Reduced Price Lunch, Minority, English Language Learners (ELLs), Special Education, and Students "needing to catch up."

Harrison's accelerated levels of attrition also complicate the positive spin that Mike Miles has framed about student success during his six years as superintendent in Harrison.

How have schools in Dallas ISD performed over the past year? The report utilizes scale scores for the STAAR 3rd, 8th, and Math and English I Reading End of Course (EOC) to sample student performance during Miles' tenure across elementary, middle and high school levels. The statistical analyses show a mixed bag. While there was progress in middle school, overall elementary and high school performance on the STAAR and EOC are not statistically significant for most groups.

The report concludes "our democracy now depends on communities holding politicians and school leaders accountable for the persistently failing trickle-down educational policy approaches."

For more information about the Foundation for Community Empowerment, visit:
<http://www.fcedallas.org>

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Digging into Data and Evidence: Mike Miles, Dallas ISD, and Trickle-Down Education Reform

Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig
Lindsay Redd, M.A.
Dr. Ruth Vail

Executive Summary

Educational reformers throughout the United States are increasingly adopting the top-down reform mind-set. Known as administrative or trickle-down reform, educational policy and reformers are primarily emphasizing standardization from the top down. The existence and origins of administrative or trickle-down reform has a long history, yet the implications have changed in the modern context. Exploring the methods, actions, and results of trickle-down reform efforts under Mike Miles in Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), we use data and evidence to illustrate the complexities and consequences of trickle-down reform in a large, urban district setting.

Origins of the Debate: Administrative versus Pedagogical Reform

Resting on the purpose of public education in America, the debate between administrative and pedagogical reform philosophies began nearly 100 years ago. On one side were the administrative reformers that argued that the primary goal of schooling was a uniform structure in the mold of Frederick Taylor industrialism that solely prepared individuals for an efficient placement in the workforce and factories.¹ Pedagogical reformers proffered that schools should recognize and adapt to the individual capacity and interests of students rather than systemic standardization² —a position that aligns more closely with the socio-constructivist conception of teaching and learning.³

The administrative reformers have focused primarily on top-down reforms. More recently they have been dubbed trickle-down reformers because they have sought to improve student achievement via a primary focus on organizational performance and aggressive “uniform” goals (high-stakes tests, evaluation rubrics, and standards) rather than student-centered learning approaches.

The administrative reformers sought to apply a top-down model where expert bureaucrats ran schools seeking social and economic efficiency. They supported multiple ability tracks,

¹ Tyack, D. (1974). *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

² Ibid.

³ Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Edited by M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman)

standardized curriculum, detailed records of students and upgraded training for education professionals.⁴ Administrative reformers argued that the governance of city schools was immersed bureaucracy and inefficiency and should be turned over to a legion of educational experts. The administrative reformers were concerned with organizational performance and aggressive “uniform” goals (in today’s terms: high-stakes tests and standards) rather than student-centered learning approaches. Reformers who focus primarily on top-down reform have been dubbed trickle-down reformers.⁵

The pedagogical reformers counterpoint to administrative progressives was that the key to student success was not centered in a sole focus on management processes, but rather on critical thinking, curriculum, and pedagogy to meet the needs of each unique student. Pedagogical reformers concentrated on inspiring teachers to change philosophy, curriculum, and methods by giving them independence to increase student achievement and success.⁶

Table 1. Key Tenants of Administrative and Pedagogical Reform Philosophies

	Pedagogical Reform (Student-Centered Education Reform)	Administrative Reform (Trickle-Down Standardized Reform)
Purpose of Education	Meet the individual needs and interests of a student to foster their cognitive growth.	Ensure workplace and career readiness through the standardized approaches.
Characteristics	Individualization Focus on curriculum, instructional practices, pedagogy, and critical thinking to achieve student success	Uniformity Focus on administrative structures, managerial processes, curricular standardization, and to impact student success

Trickle-Down Education Reform

Educational historian David F. Labaree of Stanford University suggested that the modern educational policy environment is heavily influenced by this long-standing debate between administrative (top-down) and pedagogical reform approaches.⁷ He argued that the administrative reformers won the struggle to focus school reform on the management of schools and the measurement of standardized systemic structures. The top-down reformers agenda is dominating the conversation about educational reform and policymaking in the United States. From Michelle Rhee to Eli Broad, the trickle-down reform philosophy is strategic and politically

⁴ Cuban, L (1988). Constancy and Change in Schools, 1880 to Present. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Contributing to Educational Change*. (pp. 85-104). Berkeley, CA.: McCutchan.

⁵ http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletter/November_-_December_1993_Accountability_in_Education/Education_Reform%3A_Schools_Need_A_New_Attitude/

⁶ Tyack, D. (1974). *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁷ Labaree, D. F. (2005) Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance. *Paedagogica Historica*, 41, 275-288

powerful. In practice, trickle-down reformers bring the mindset of a standardization model to schools through various educational policies (i.e. Common Core, testing, centralized curriculum). As recently seen in Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), Louisiana, Chicago, and Washington DC, trickle-down reformers are taking the helm in states and major metropolitan cities and implementing extensive changes based on the top-down administrative structures focusing on the standardization required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race To The Top (RttT).⁸

The Superintendency and Reform in Dallas ISD

The passage of NCLB was a cornerstone for the reform movement in Dallas ISD. By 2005, Dallas had multiple schools facing sanctions for failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Two years later in 2007, the number grew to 29 campuses across Dallas ISD who fell under the Title I School Improvement Plan.⁹ The administrative reform measures of NCLB, and later reinforced by RttT incentives, created the political and social climate that demanded reform in Dallas ISD. The reform, however, came in two distinctly different waves under the leadership of Dr. Michael Hinojosa and Mike Miles.

Dr. Michael Hinojosa, superintendent for Dallas ISD from 2005-2011, took up the call for reform in Dallas ISD by developing a plan that includes several elements of pedagogical reform. Hinojosa focused on the establishment of annual and five-year targets for student achievement in the areas of college readiness, advanced placement, SAT/ACT testing, graduation rates, and the five TAKS state assessments measuring reading, writing, math, science and social studies.¹⁰ To achieve the academic goals, Hinojosa put in place several actions: (1) dissolved district offices, (2) established learning communities to address the needs of the district, (3) created a Request for Proposals system that allowed principals to submit plans to redesign curriculum on individual campuses.¹¹ Dr. Hinojosa's plan to reinvigorate Dallas ISD was fostered by the inclusion of numerous stakeholder organizations.¹² The implementation of Hinojosa's reform, however, was inhibited by budget crisis in 2008. The demands of budget cuts made it almost impossible to implement the initiative focused on curriculum and pedagogy.¹³

Dr. Hinojosa stepped down from Dallas ISD to accept another position in Georgia in 2011. In 2012, Mike Miles was approved by the board and hired as the new superintendent in Dallas ISD. Mike Miles began his Dallas ISD reform efforts through a series of initiatives: Year 2020, Destination 2020, and Imagine 2020. Together these efforts comprise a plan aimed at guiding the reform process in Dallas ISD. The actions outlined in Destination 2020 and Imagine 2020 revolve around the Year 2020 goal that "Dallas ISD will have the highest college- and career-ready percentage of graduates of any large urban district in the nation." College- and career-readiness for the Year 2020 goal is further defined as 90% of Dallas ISD students graduating on time, 60% obtaining 21 or higher on the ACT or 990 on the SAT reading/math sections, 80%

⁸ <http://cloakinginequity.com/2013/05/21/la-and-the-recovery-school-district-approach-sb1718-a-p-t-barnum-circus/>

⁹ <http://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/Shared/evalacct/evaluation/final2009/EA08-189-2-School-Improvement.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.cftexas.org/document.doc?id=70>

¹¹ http://www.dfpe.org/pdf/redesign_FAQ.pdf

¹² http://www.dallascityhall.com/council_briefings/briefings0307/032107_DallasAchieves.pdf

¹³ <http://lakewood.advocatemag.com/2008/09/30/reconstitution-and-the-Dallas-ISD-budget-crisis-if-its-good-for-the-duck/>

proficient on workplace readiness assessments, and 90% entering college, the military or career-ready jobs out of high school.¹⁴

The actions under Miles' Destination 2020 were focused developing standardization and infusing Dallas ISD with a new group of leaders trained on the core beliefs of Miles' top-down reform. Over the course of the 2012-2013 several actions were take to implement Destination 2020: (1) creation of a new cabinet,¹⁵ (2) dismantling of Hinojosa's learning communities into strategy feeder patterns,¹⁶ (3) establishment of the Leadership Development Fellows Academy to train new principals according to the core beliefs outlined in Destination 2020,¹⁷ and (4) creation and implementation of a new Principal Evaluation System ended with numerous non-renewals based on short-term data.¹⁸ The actions of the Destination 2020 plan, however, prompted backlash from the Dallas community. The Principal Evaluation System was question as to implementation and potential targeting of principals. Specifically, the community voiced concerns about the intent of the Fellows Academy, its over \$5 million price tag,¹⁹ and perceived targeting of schools in southern Dallas.²⁰

The approaches of Dr. Hinojosa and Mike Miles to reform education in Dallas ISD could not be more different. Dr. Hinojosa embraced community involvement to establish student-centered goals while internally working through learning communities. As a whole, Dr. Hinojosa's actions establish his profile as a pedagogical reformer. Mike Miles, however, focused his efforts as a top-down reformer. His actions in the 2012-2013 school year illustrated his primary commitment to restructuring and realigning the leadership within the district through the Principal Evaluation System and the Leadership Development Fellows Academy. The differences in approaches reflect the ongoing debate of administrative and pedagogical reform philosophies.

Broad Foundation and The Trickle-Down Approach to Education Reform

Mike Miles is a former high school teacher, middle school principal, coordinator of administration services and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.²¹ So where does his trickle-down reform philosophy originate? Some have argued that his selection as a Broad fellow underscored and buttressed his commitment to trickle-down reform.²² The Broad

¹⁴ <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/14381>, Specific goals from the original lease of Destination 2020 were updated for the start of 2013-2014 school year. Above mentioned goals are most recent version of the goals.

¹⁵ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20120510-dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-outlines-ambitious-plan-to-help-make-district-one-of-the-nations-best.ece>

¹⁶ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20120516-reaction-mixed-on-massive-reorganization-in-dallas-isd.ece>

¹⁷ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/05/majority-of-the-dallas-isd-principals-fellows-have-jobs-in-district-next-year.html/> and <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130408-dallas-isds-aspiring-principals-will-soon-take-leading-role-in-district.ece>

¹⁸ Unclear true impact of the growth plans with some principals choosing to retire or quit to avoid firing and/or demotion. <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/08/dallas-isd-demoted-and-encouraged-principals-to-leave-how-did-their-schools-perform-in-state-ratings.html/>

¹⁹ <http://www.dallasisd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=7954&ModuleInstanceID=24529&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=22160&PageID=20637>

²⁰ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/05/dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-to-address-south-dallas-church-protest-planned.html/>

²¹ <http://vimeo.com/39674558>

²² http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2012/04/predicting_mike_miles_future_a.php

Superintendent Academy is known for producing fellows who are encouraged into urban districts with the aim of implementing significant “disruptive” educational reform. Mike Miles is one such “Broadie.”

The Broad Foundation is comprised of multiple entities that reach into various fields including K-12 education. The Broad Foundation was created by Eli and Edythe Broad in 1999 as part of their goal to engaged in philanthropic work and eventually give away a majority of their fortune earned through previous business ventures.²³ The patriarch of the foundation is Eli Broad, who led Kaufman and Broad (KB) Homes and SunAmerica. According to Eli Broad, he and his foundation work from the concept of venture philanthropy, which demands returns on the investment of funds given to organizations through measurable results (accelerated reform) and the “art of being unreasonable.”²⁴

The Eli Broad philosophy of venture philanthropy runs throughout of the foundation that addresses K-12 education—The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation Education. Comprised of The Broad Center (leadership training) and The Broad Prize for Urban Education (monetary award for districts showing academic achievement in urban districts), the foundation focuses training and awarding administrators in urban districts.²⁵ Within The Broad Center lie the Broad Superintendents Academy and The Broad Residency programs that train urban school district leaders for administrative and superintendent positions.

The Broad Superintendent Academy has trained the likes of Mike Miles. The academy is a highly selective training program with allusive selection criteria. Specifics as to exact qualifications needed or what Broad interviewers are looking for in a candidate are largely unknown. The Broad Center denies that it aims to train top-down reformers,²⁶ but an internal memo reveals otherwise. The March 2012 board member memo calls for a revamping of the academy to create a cohort of leaders to “disrupt the status quo.” The selection process should target “passionate, civic-minded, and *disruptive* non-traditional leaders with significant political experience” and those with “a history of implementing an aggressive reform agenda.”²⁷

Through the Broad Superintendent Academy and The Broad Residency programs, the Broad Center has been busy training and placing some of the most controversial public school district superintendents and state education leaders—including Mike Miles. They have created a large footprint of trickle-down superintendents in places such as California, Chicago, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Texas. Broad continues to make their presence palpable with various administrative staff placements.

²³ <http://givingpledge.org>

²⁴ Broad, E. (2012). *The art of being unreasonable*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc. and Safer, M. (2011, April 23). 60 Minutes: Why and how Eli Broad is giving billions away.

²⁵ <http://www.broadprize.org> and <http://www.broadcenter.org>

²⁶ Retrieved from The Broad Center Commentary <http://www.broadcenter.org/commentary082012>

²⁷ <http://www.edlawcenter.org/news/archives/other-issues/elc-obtains-confidential-njdcoe-school-turnaround-plan.html>

However, Broad fellows also have acquired reputations for having the propensity to find trouble by creating “unreasonable” maladaptive and illicit disruptions.²⁸ The case of Mike Miles in Dallas ISD is another example of a controversial Broad superintendent finding trouble. In July 2013, the school board announced that Mike Miles had apparently violated policy with regards to an OPR investigation dealing with a contract for community and parent services.²⁹ The board voted unanimously to spend up to \$100,000 and hire an outside investigator. The matter was referred to Paul Coggins, former U.S. District attorney.³⁰ Moving forward, the Dallas ISD School Board will be obtaining a report from the ongoing investigation after Labor Day in 2013.³¹ Moreover, Miles’ superintendency is plagued with turnover. Notably, the number of experienced teachers and principals that resigned under Miles was the largest in the history of Dallas ISD.³² A plethora of veteran teachers and principals decided to retire or go to other districts. According to education blogs, Dallas ISD had over 1,700 vacancies in July 2013.³³ In a reaction to this, Mike Miles sent a request to surrounding districts to not hire Dallas ISD teachers.³⁴ Some critics have argued that Miles has lost control and has “intimidated” teachers and principals who had been with the district. Some principals have filed lawsuits, such as former principal, Dr. Shaver, who was fired.³⁵

Mike Miles Student Success Track Record

Mike Miles came to Dallas ISD with a reputation of being a top-down reformer. He is the product of the Broad Superintendents Academy, a trickle-down reform mecca funded by the deep pockets of The Broad Foundation. Prior to arriving in Dallas ISD, he was the superintendent of Harrison, a very small district of a little more than 13,000 students in Colorado.

Harrison School District

Our analysis of Mike Miles’ education “reform” track record begins in Harrison School District in Colorado. There are several disconcerting data trends in the years spanning Mr. Miles’ time in Harrison, specifically the rates of attrition at the secondary level and academic performance for minority, Free and Reduced Price Lunch, English Language Learners (ELLs), Special Education, and Students “needing to catch up.” The Harrison data complicate the positive spin that Mike Miles has framed about student success during his six years as superintendent in Harrison. There were certainly gains made after overall achievement indicators were observed in 2004-2005 and

²⁸ <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/21886773/Publication%20PDFs/Featured%20Graduate%20Broad.docx>

²⁹ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/20130722-trustee-miles-statement-on-Dallas-ISD-investigation-violates-spirit-of-public-information-act.ece>

³⁰ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/07/dallas-isd-trustees-unanimously-approve-to-hire-ex-u-s-attorney-paul-coggins-for-district-investigation.html/>

³¹ <http://dallasexaminer.com/news/2013/jun/03/Dallas-ISD-cleans-house/>
<http://content.bandzoogle.com/users/houstonisdwatch/files/Fired-Dallas-ISD-principal-wants-her-job-back-citing-missed-hearing-deadline-Dallasnews.pdf>

³² <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130816-more-principals-leave-dallas-isd-than-in-previous-years.ece>

³³ <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2013/06/19/mass-exodus-of-Dallas-ISD-teachers-end-of-year-Dallas-ISD-vacancies-double/>

³⁴ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/07/dallas-isd-is-trying-to-prevent-teachers-from-quitting-for-other-districts-weeks-before-school-year-starts.html/>

³⁵ <http://content.bandzoogle.com/users/houstonisdwatch/files/Fired-Dallas-ISD-principal-wants-her-job-back-citing-missed-hearing-deadline-Dallasnews.pdf>

2005-2006 in Harrison. However, in light of the troubling attrition rates and poor academic performance of students in mathematics and writing, those gains were not enough to bring the district back to the high levels of achievement seen in the pre-Miles era during the 2003-2004 school year, in which 82% of students graduated.³⁶

Dallas ISD STAAR Analysis 2012-2013

The first year of implementation of Miles' Destination 2020 plan has been a rocky one. Mike Miles himself explained that it was a tough year and that "even I could not anticipate some of the tough things that happened in Dallas." Despite the turbulent year, Miles self reports his first year efforts as "proficient."³⁷ Critics, however, continue to question Destination 2020. After the drastic restructuring of the central office that ended in unprecedented resignations, increased dismissal of principals with the new Principal Evaluation System, and a seemingly disproportionate negative focus on southern Dallas, critics have said otherwise. The full impact and success of Destination 2020 is yet to be seen, but the first year has certainly started in a troubling direction.

So how have schools in Dallas ISD performed over the past year? To investigate this question we obtained 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 STAAR and EOC school-level data. Since there are only two years of data available, we used paired t-tests to understand whether the change in means on the exams between years were statistically significant at the school level. We are limited in the statistical tools that we have available to us due to the fact there are only two years of data available and that we do not have student-level data readily available.

For elementary, the 3rd grade performance of Dallas ISD students show positive statistically significant results for all students in reading and negative results in mathematics between 2012 and 2013. Latina/os and at-risk students show significant increases at the school level for both STAAR reading and math. Whites, African Americans and ELLs do not show statistically significant increases in reading or math performance in 3rd grade between 2012 and 2013 in Dallas ISD.

Overall, the 8th grade reading and mathematics STAAR results between 2012 and 2013 were quite promising for middle schools. For example, the 8th grade performance of Dallas ISD students show statistically significant increases for all student groups in mathematics. For reading, there were statistically significant results for all student groups except African Americans and Whites between 2012 and 2013.

The Dallas ISD EOC Algebra I and English I Reading results did not show statistically significant increases for high schools. Student performance did not exhibit any statistically significant increases for any student groups in English I Reading. For Algebra I, there were only statistically significant results for Whites between 2012 and 2013.

In summary, the results under Miles' tenure in Harrison and Dallas ISD are a mixed bag. The high-levels of attrition and the fact that Harrison missed the mark in the accountability system

³⁶ https://www.hsd2.org/sites/www.hsd2.org/files/u99/district_performance.pdf

³⁷ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130629-dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-calls-tough-year-a-success.ece>

for its most vulnerable populations are red flags. In Dallas ISD, the modest improvement over one year (between 2012 and 2013) for Latina/os in 3rd grade is commendable. However, the performance for African Americans, ELL, and White students lagged. Also, there was a statistically significant decrease in Math scores for all students in 3rd grade. The 8th grade STAAR data is significant and positive across student groups for math and reading. The EOC test score data did not show statistically significant improvements during Miles tenure.

Educational Outcomes and Community Empowerment

What is the alternative to trickle-down reformers? The answer is a community empowered to be accountable to themselves and to the nation—an “indigenous” educational policy approach where communities democratically set achievement and outcome goals. For some communities, maybe high-stakes test scores derived by the Pearson test score development company is the goal; or perhaps a community will choose to focus on a new, more valuable set of outcomes. Community-based accountability would seek to influence the process of schooling choices in each community and would then motivate policy makers from communities to lobby state and federal governments for the resources to achieve its accountability goals rather than focusing solely on high-stakes testing results. This turn of events in the frame of accountability would be novel because politicians (local, state, and federal) would also be held accountable—they could be shamed and pressured—if resources to meet the community goals do not materialize. Accountability would become a two-way street.

A return to a community-based schooling would foment a multiple measures approach to community education outcomes—outcomes derived by the community—driven by a desire to see their children succeed, rather than a continuing focus on failed high-stakes testing and accountability policies persistently promoted in state capitols and Washington, DC.

Community-based accountability may also usher in a turn in community involvement in schools. In the United States, our communities, our parents, our educators must see themselves as the solution rather than the problem. A return to a community-based schooling would foment a multiple measures approach to community education outcomes—outcomes derived by the community—driven by a desire to see their children succeed, rather than a continuing focus on failed high-stakes testing and accountability policies persistently promoted in state capitols and Washington, DC.

Politicians and reformers in the United States are currently focused on trickle-down reformers addiction to “efficiency” in education, also known as top-down policy solutions. Considering that our peer countries such as Singapore, China, and Finland are investing heavily in pedagogical and curricular reforms in their K–12 and Higher Education systems and experiencing fabulous results compared to the United States,³⁸ our democracy now depends on communities holding politicians and school leaders accountable for the persistently failing trickle-down educational policy approaches.

³⁸ Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future. New York: Teachers College Press.

Digging into Data and Evidence: Mike Miles, Dallas ISD, and Trickle-Down Education Reform

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Lindsay Redd, M.A.
Dr. Ruth Vail

September 4, 2013

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Introduction

The roots of the debate between administrative versus pedagogical reform philosophies has a nearly 100-year history. The progressive reform era in education in the 1920s came into prominence in the era of prohibition and rapidly changing student demographics. An awakening of social conscience among the muckrakers, prohibitionists, and education reformers spurred the movement dubbed the progressive era. Progressive education reformers, so named by historians, are the precursors of the current educational policy discussions of today.

On one side were the administrative reformers argued that the primary goal of schooling was a uniform structure in the mold of Frederick Taylor industrialism that solely prepared individuals for an efficient placement in the workforce and factories.¹ In today's language, the tenants of administrative reformism could be considered neoliberal. On the other side were the pedagogical reformers who proffered that schools should recognize and adapt to the individual capacity and interests of students rather than systemic standardization²—a position that aligns more closely with the socio-constructivist conception of teaching and learning.³

The administrative reformers have focused primarily on top-down reforms. More recently they have been dubbed trickle-down reformers because they have sought to improve student achievement via a primary focus on organizational performance and aggressive “uniform” goals (high-stakes tests, evaluation rubrics, and standards) rather than individualized student-centered learning approaches.

The administrative reformers sought to apply a top-down model where expert bureaucrats ran schools seeking social and economic efficiency. They supported multiple ability tracks, standardized curriculum, detailed records of students and upgraded training for education professionals.⁴ Administrative reformers argued that the governance of city schools was immersed bureaucracy and inefficiency and should be turned over to a legion of educational experts. The administrative reformers have focused primarily on top-down reforms. More recently they have been dubbed trickle-down reformers⁵ because they have sought to improve student achievement via a primary focus on organizational performance and aggressive “uniform” goals (high-stakes tests, evaluation rubrics, and standards) rather than individualized student-centered learning approaches.

¹ Tyack, D. (1974). *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

² Ibid.

³ Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Edited by M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman)

⁴ Cuban, L (1988). Constancy and Change in Schools, 1880 to Present. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Contributing to Educational Change*. (pp. 85-104). Berkeley, CA.: McCutchan.

⁵http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletter/November_December_1993_Accountability_in_Education/Education_Reform%3A_Schools_Need_A_New_Attitude/

The pedagogical reformers counterpoint to administrative progressives was that the key to student success was not centered in a sole focus on management processes, but rather on critical thinking, curriculum, and pedagogy to meet the needs of each unique student. John Dewey (as cited by Tyack) argued,⁶

It is easy to fall into the habit of regarding the mechanics of school organization and administration as something comparatively external and indifferent to educational purposes and ideas... We forget that it is such matters as the classifying of pupils the way decisions are made, the manner in which the machinery of instruction bears upon the child that really controls the whole system. (p. 176)

Pedagogical reformers concentrated on inspiring teachers to change philosophy, curriculum, and methods by giving them independence to increase student achievement and success (Tyack, 1974).⁷ John Dewey argued that democratic education required “substantial autonomy” for teachers and children. He theorized that children needed education that was authentic—allowing them to grow mentally, physically and socially by providing student-centered opportunity to be creative, critical thinkers.⁸

Table 1. Key Tenants of Administrative and Pedagogical Reform Philosophies

	Pedagogical Reform (Student-Centered Education Reform)	Administrative Reform (Trickle-Down Standardized Reform)
Purpose of Education	Meet the individual needs and interests of a student to foster their cognitive growth.	Ensure workplace and career readiness through the standardized approaches.
Characteristics	Individualization Focus on curriculum, instructional practices, pedagogy, and critical thinking to achieve student success	Uniformity Focus on administrative structures, managerial processes, curricular standardization, and to impact student success

Trickle-down Corporate Reform Philosophy Context

Educational historian David F. Labaree of Stanford University argued that the modern educational policy environment is heavily influenced by this long-standing debate between

⁶ Tyack, D. (1974). *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

administrative (top-down) and pedagogical reform approaches.⁹ He argued that the administrative reformers won the struggle to focus school reform on the management of schools and the measurement of standardized systemic structures. The trickle-down reformers agenda is dominating the conversation about educational reform and policymaking in the United States. From Michelle Rhee to Eli Broad, the top-down reform philosophy is strategic and politically powerful. In practice, trickle-down reformers bring the mindset of a standardization model to schools through various educational policies (i.e. Common Core, testing, centralized curriculum). As recently seen in Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), Louisiana, Chicago, and Washington DC, trickle-down reformers are taking the helm in states and major metropolitan cities and implementing extensive changes based on the top-down administrative structures focusing on the standardization required by No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.¹⁰

No Child Left Behind

The implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was a major victory for trickle-down reformers, as competition for federal education dollars and an emphasis on charter and private management organizations was placed into law for the first time in our history. The coupling of top-down accountability measures with free-market school choice as the lever to encourage efficiency is based on the management practices heralded by trickle-down reformers as the fix to public education for historically underserved students. However, NCLB does not require changes to curriculum or pedagogical practice that would directly affect students, but rather a focus on the top-down management of our public schools.

NCLB codified a national top-down reform with broad bipartisan support. The success of NCLB is primarily dependent on threats to teachers and administrators through evaluation of test scores. The law required schools to meet strict federal performance indicators. Each school and district is required to satisfy annual benchmarks known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). If schools failed to meet each of the individual growth indicators on high-stakes testing instruments, they would be subject to public shame, less funding, threats to school staff jobs, and even building closure. The school turnaround initiatives required by NCLB opened the door to private and charter management organizations and placed emphasis on firing teachers and staff, requiring that a significant portion of a school's staff be replaced. NCLB is clearly the most far-reaching federal education law in the history of the United States has a *sole* focus on trickle-down educational policy for our public schools.

Race to the Top

Barack Obama buttressed NCLB with a large-scale grant program that embraced the top-down educational reform fomented by NCLB. The most significant change was to the incentive system. Whereas NCLB was mostly “stick,” its cousin, Race to the Top (RttT), is far more “carrot.” States would, instead, apply for competitive grants from the federal government, which would be used to implement more stringent accountability measures, greater competition, and

⁹ Labaree, D. F. (2005) Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance. *Paedagogica Historica*, 41, 275-288

¹⁰ <http://cloakinginequity.com/2013/05/21/la-and-the-recovery-school-district-approach-sb1718-a-p-t-barnum-circus/>

social & economic efficiency. The goal of both Bush and Obama's approach is centralized trickle-down reform. In RttT, there is no greater emphasis on what or how students are learning, but solely how schools and districts measure up to a limited set of indicators.

RttT monies were shoehorned into the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This new competitive grant program offers states the opportunity to apply for Federal education funds to states that make a commitment to "increased productivity and effectiveness." Key initiatives championed under RttT are teacher pay models that require statistical value-added metrics, developing and building data systems to measure student growth, the development and "scaling up" of common standards and assessments, and data driven instruction.

The Superintendency and Reform in Dallas ISD

Notably, there is a breed of educational policy leaders in the mold of Arne Duncan and Rod Paige that prioritize entering urban school district administrative positions to execute educational policies codified by NCLB and RttT that are centralized, top-down, and standardized. However, not all educational leaders are enamored with NCLB, RttT, and other top-down education reforms—some leaders, such as Dr. Michael Hinojosa, are focused on reforming curriculum and pedagogy to meet the needs of individual students rather than expecting administrative reforms to trickle down to success on the classroom level.

A Pedagogical Reformer: The Case of Dr. Michael Hinojosa

The passage of NCLB delineated specific actions school districts had to take if school failed to meet AYP.¹¹ By 2005, many schools in Dallas were already facing sanctions for failure to meet AYP. By 2007, Dallas ISD had 29 campuses in the Title I School Improvement Program including schools in Stage 1 (8), Stage 2 (7), Stage 3 (8), and Stage 4 (6).¹² NCLB requires Stage 4 schools to draft a campus restructuring plan and to implement it if they miss AYP again and enter Stage 5 (five years of consecutively missing AYP targets). With the potential consequences of restructuring faced by campuses, Dallas ISD called for change.

Taking up the call, Superintendent Dr. Michael Hinojosa began to look at different models to reform the district.¹³ A plan to reinvigorate Dallas ISD came to fruition as numerous stakeholder organizations began to involve themselves in the plan to change the course of the school district. Dr. Michael Hinojosa was one of the conduits for the creation of a partnership with the business community known as Dallas Achieves.¹⁴ Their goal was to create a framework of reform or transformation plan to establish macro-goals known as "The Road to Broad."¹⁵

¹¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>

¹² <http://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/Shared/evalacct/evaluation/final2009/EA08-189-2-School-Improvement.pdf>

¹³ http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/04/pdf/school_turnaround.pdf

¹⁴ http://www.dallascityhall.com/council_briefings/briefings0307/032107_DallasAchieves.pdf

¹⁵ http://www.broadfoundation.org/about_foundations.html

The plan delineated by several macro goals. The first goal was to establish annual and five-year targets for student achievement in the areas of college readiness, advanced placement, SAT/ACT testing, graduation rates, and the five TAKS state assessments measuring reading, writing, math, science and social studies. This plan was presented at Dallas City Hall and the Mayor. A Dallas ISD news release on October 9, 2007 stated:

Today we celebrate three extraordinary gifts illustrating the community's belief in and support for Dallas ISD, along with other significant gifts from Dallas individuals and institutions, some of whom began helping us almost two years ago," said J. McDonald Williams, Co-Chair of the Dallas Achieves Commission and founder/chairman of the Foundation for Community Empowerment.¹⁶

Following the news release, the superintendent began to realign the goals for the plan by dissolving district offices and creating learning communities to address the needs of the district. The Dallas Morning News (DMN) reported that "under former Superintendent Dr. Michael Hinojosa, schools were clustered by grade levels and geography. For example, the district's southeast elementary learning community included 22 elementary schools in the southeastern part of Dallas ISD."¹⁷

During Dr. Michael Hinojosa's superintendency, there was also a focus on high schools when he called for Request for Proposals (RFPs) from principals to submit plans to redesign curriculum on their campuses.¹⁸ The campuses were tasked with the challenge to equitably offer and provide access to rigorous programs such as offering individualized college-career pathways for students. Initially, RFPs were developed by high schools based on needs and input from teachers, parents and community.

The Dallas Friends of Public Education produced a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document. In this document, the philosophy behind high school redesign was stated as follows:

The nature and organization of the comprehensive high school model can create barriers to providing all students with equal access to and support for learning at high levels. Therefore, the Dallas ISD began looking at ways to add rigor, relevance and relationships in its comprehensive high schools. To that end, all Dallas ISD high schools are undergoing a reform initiative to improve the academic rigor of their high school experience, keep more students in high school, and prepare graduates for college and the workforce.¹⁹

¹⁶ <http://www.cftexas.org/document.doc?id=70>

¹⁷ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20120516-reaction-mixed-on-massive-reorganization-in-dallas-isd.ece>

¹⁸ http://www.dfpe.org/pdf/redesign_FAQ.pdf

¹⁹ http://www.dfpe.org/pdf/redesign_FAQ.pdf

By 2008, the budget crisis in Dallas ISD made it almost impossible to implement the initiative focused on curriculum and pedagogy.²⁰ Many teachers were let go and it was hard to implement many of the academy models. The only funding available was School Improvement Funds for campuses that had been chronically low-performing and not meeting AYP.²¹ Many Dallas ISD high schools were reconstituted (Oak Cliff, Samuell, etc.) to meet requirements of school turnaround under NCLB. The reconstitutions in Dallas ISD were plagued by principal turnover and a massive influx of inexperienced and uncertified teachers.²²

Most of the reconstituted campuses attempted to implement career academies, but the respective programs were slowly realized. Most of these campuses experienced a high turnover in both teachers and principals, coupled with the district's reconstitution plans to replace teachers and principals, as part of their corrective action plans²³. A few campuses (Hillcrest, Woodrow and W.T. White) were not in the turnaround category, but still opted to submit proposals to redesign under the district RFP Process.²⁴ Notably, the redesign of these campuses focused on college-pathways and career pathways.²⁵ While many Dallas ISD high schools did maintain a focus on career pathways,²⁶ one excellent example of curriculum reforms in Dallas ISD focused on college-pathways is Woodrow Wilson High School. It became the first IB World School in Dallas ISD during Hinojosa's tenure.²⁷ In sum, Dr. Michael Hinojosa's superintendency was clearly focused on reforming curriculum and pedagogy to meet the needs of individual students rather than expecting administrative reforms to trickle down to success on the classroom level. Dr. Hinojosa stepped down from Dallas ISD to accept another position in Georgia in 2011.

A Trickle-down Reformer: The Case of Mike Miles

In 2012, Mike Miles was approved by the board and hired as the new superintendent in Dallas ISD. Mike Miles came to Dallas ISD with a reputation of being a top-down reformer. He is the product of the Broad Superintendents Academy, a trickle-down reform mecca funded by the deep pockets of The Broad Foundation (see forthcoming section The Broad Foundation and Trickle-Down Reform Approach to Education Reform). Prior to arriving in Dallas ISD, he was the superintendent of Harrison, a very small district of a little more than 13,000 students in Colorado.

²⁰ <http://lakewood.advocatemag.com/2008/09/30/reconstitution-and-the-Dallas-ISD-budget-crisis-if-its-good-for-the-duck/>

²¹ <http://www.pegasusnews.com/news/2008/jun/10/dallas-isd-prepares-six-high-schools-dallas-achiev/>
http://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/Domain/84/CP%20Brochure_2012.pdf

²² Hamilton, M., Vasquez Heilig, J. & Pazey, B. (2013). A nostrum of school reform?: Turning around reconstituted urban Texas high schools. *Urban Education*.

²³ <http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/20100309-Editorial-DISD-must-act-now-6653.ece>

²⁴ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20100131-Dallas-students-get-look-at-9-9277.ece>

²⁵ <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=high+school+redesign+and+woodrow+wilson&mid=AAD9F0C3A509762BBD8CAAD9F0C3A509762BBD8C&view=detail&FORM=VIRE7>

²⁶ http://www.dfpe.org/pdf/redesign_FAQ.pdf

²⁷ <http://lakewood.advocatemag.com/2011/01/13/Dallas-ISDs-redesigned-schools-will-accept-applications-beginning-this-month/>

Miles hiring was supported²⁸ by Arne Duncan, himself a trickle-down reformer. Duncan believed that a “reform” minded superintendent was what Dallas needed.²⁹ However, many were critical of the selection of Mike Miles. He had only completed a master’s degree and was not certified as a superintendent in Texas.³⁰ Moreover, Mike Miles was coming from Harrison Schools, a small Colorado district. Debate arose around whether his experience in a small-district was appropriate for a large, urban district serving tens of thousands of students. However, the Dallas ISD School Board and the Mayor were convinced— at the time— that Mike Miles could do the job that lay ahead.³¹

Destination 2020 in Dallas

Mike Miles began his efforts in Dallas ISD through a series of initiatives: Year 2020, Destination 2020, and Imagine 2020. Together these efforts comprise a plan aimed at guiding the reform process in Dallas ISD. The actions outlined in Destination 2020 and Imagine 2020 revolve around the Year 2020 goal that “Dallas ISD will have the highest college- and career-ready percentage of graduates of any large urban district in the nation.” College- and career-readiness for the Year 2020 goal is further defined as 90% of Dallas ISD students graduating on time, 60% obtaining 21 or higher on the ACT or 990 on the SAT reading/math sections, 80% proficient on workplace readiness assessments, and 90% entering college, the military or career-ready jobs out of high school.³²

To achieve his Year 2020 goal, Mike Miles presented Destination 2020 plan to the Dallas Board of Trustees in May 2012.³³ The plan focuses primarily on improving principal and teacher quality in order to increase student achievement. The eight key targets are (1) ensure staff members understand the direction of the district and Core Beliefs, (2) improve the quality of instruction, (3) develop principals into effective instructional leaders, (4) ties teacher and principal evaluation to student achievement data, (5) create a professional and high-functioning central office team, (6) restructure the department of school leadership, (7) create a career-ready certificate, and (8) create the strategic feeder pattern (Imagine 2020). Within each of the above-mentioned Destination 2020 key targets, lie the sub-goals, action plans, and measurable outcomes that are the driving components behind the top-down educational reform process in Dallas ISD.

²⁸ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/92100776/Dallas-Mayor-Mike-Rawlings-and-DALLAS-ISD-Superintendent-Mike-Miles-to-discuss-improving-North-Texas-public-education>

²⁹ <http://cityhallblog.dallasnews.com/2012/11/mayor-rawlings-asked-education-secretary-duncan-to-come-to-dallas-so-he-is-starting-with-pinkston-visit-on-tuesday.html/>

³⁰ <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2013/05/17/Dallas-ISD-superintendent-lacks-state-superintendent-certification/>

³¹ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20120510-dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-outlines-ambitious-plan-to-help-make-district-one-of-the-nations-best.ece>
<http://www.smudailycampus.com/news/metropolitan/new-Dallas-ISD-superintendent-looks-toward-the-future-1.2944881#.UgcD3m3PTvs>

³² <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/14381>, Specific goals from the original lease of Destination 2020 were updated for the start of 2013-2014 school year. Above mentioned goals are most recent version of the goals.

³³ <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/14380>

Destination 2020 in Action

Implementation of Destination 2020 began with Mike Miles hiring a new cabinet and restructuring the central office.³⁴ Most of the people he brought in, were over paid in comparison to their past jobs and experience.³⁵ Some argued that this reform minded superintendent believed the less experience, the better. The next order of business the dismantling of the learning communities established under Dr. Michael Hinojosa³⁶ and creation of five administrative divisions. Each new administrative division served a specific feeder pattern. Miles believed that a new structure would create a “healthy competition among the groups.”³⁷ In addition, he hired twenty executive directors to each oversee a feeder pattern including a newly crafted principal evaluation plan.

The prized feature and top priority of Miles’ Destination 2020 plan was the Leadership Development Fellows Academy that began in the 2012-2013 school year.³⁸ Following an application process geared to seek out reform minded future leaders who aligned with the district’s core beliefs, “Fellows” were selected and paid a salary of \$60,000 to shadow existing principals and participate in intensive leadership training. The training included an in-depth review of the Destination 2020 plan along with leadership professional development. Fellows reportedly cost \$22,000 each to train. This yielded a year one price tag of \$5.3 million for the program.³⁹ The expense of training the Fellows was tied to a two-year Dallas ISD service agreement, though reports have surfaced that some graduates of the program moved out of state for employment.⁴⁰ At the end of the academy, Fellows were told that they would compete for vacant principal positions within the district. Miles believed that “struggling Dallas ISD principals would have to compete to keep their jobs” creating a cohort of Miles-grown principals would allow the district to “have high-quality principals.” He said, “My job is to forecast and have good vision and implement well, and I suspect we’ll have a higher quality principal corps in the 2013-14 school year. And if we don’t, you’ll get rid of me.” Of the 57 graduates of the 2012-2013 Fellows Academy, Mile Miles reported to the board in May that 41 took positions as principals (20) and assistant principals (21).⁴¹ A subsequent news report stated that 19 Fellows will hold principal positions for 2013-2014.⁴²

³⁴ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20120510-dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-outlines-ambitious-plan-to-help-make-district-one-of-the-nations-best.ece>

³⁵ <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2012/05/16/Dallas-ISD-announces-leadership-staff-restructuring/>

³⁶ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20120516-reaction-mixed-on-massive-reorganization-in-dallas-isd.ece>

³⁷ <http://www.bizjournals.com/dallas/print-edition/2012/06/08/new-dallas-superintendent-lays-out.html?page=all>

³⁸ Also referred to as the School Leadership Academy Dallas. Modeled after the School Leadership Academy in New York.

³⁹ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/05/majority-of-the-dallas-isd-principals-fellows-have-jobs-in-district-next-year.html/> and <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130408-dallas-isds-aspiring-principals-will-soon-take-leading-role-in-district.ece>

⁴⁰ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/07/dallas-isd-principal-leadership-academy-fellow-leaves-disd-for-tennessee-district.html/>

⁴¹ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/05/majority-of-the-dallas-isd-principals-fellows-have-jobs-in-district-next-year.html/>

⁴² <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/metro/20130624-dallas-isd-trustees-take-aim-at-superintendent-mike-miles-prized-principal-leadership-academy.ece>

The Fellows Academy came with a great deal of scrutiny on the grounds of cost and intent of the program. Carrying over a \$5 million price tag, critics viewed this as a means to have taxpayers foot the bill to train outside principals rather than allocate funds to support existing principals. Moreover, the implementation of a new principal evaluation plan created the appearance of clearing the way for a cadre of Miles' loyal principals. January 2013 marked the beginning of a new principal evaluation plan put in place by Mike Miles. The Principal Evaluation System increased site visits and oversight by Miles' newly appointed executive directors, tied evaluation to school/feeder pattern State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) results, and put a comprehensive review in the hands of the newly appointed executive directors amongst other changes. The previous principal evaluation identified seven principals as needing an improvement plan whereas the new evaluation model placed 68 principals on "growth plans."⁴³

After only five months of implementation, the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees was presented with a list of potential principals on growth plans who had to improve or be fired.⁴⁴ Community members and groups rallied behind targeted principals because they believe they have not been given enough time under the new evaluation system.⁴⁵ The exact number of non-renewed principals following Miles' new principal evaluation plan is publicly unknown, but 60 new principal positions were open for the 2013-2014 school year and reporters indicated at least 21 of these positions were the result of demotion or firing under Miles.⁴⁶ The results of the Principal Evaluation System paired with the community upheaval over principal firings at schools that "met standards," led to threats by the board to non-renew Miles' Fellows Academy. During the June 2013 board meeting, concerns about the program were expressed. The debate over funding the program was further complicated by the fact that Miles already sent out acceptance letters to 45 individuals for the 2013-2014 Fellows Academy. Eventually \$4 million was approved for the continuation of the program, but critical attention has been pointed at the executive restructuring, principal evaluation system, and Fellows Academy within the Destination 2020 plan.

The disruptive restructuring, hiring, and Destination 2020 actions continued to gather public attention in the media. In only one year, Mike Miles had all but two of his original cabinet members leave the district.⁴⁷ The substantial number of resignations and vacancies caught the attention of the local media— a sense of Dallas ISD chaos was displayed to the public. Long time educators were given "walking papers." Many of these issues appeared on blogs, such as the DISD Blog and DMN Blogs.⁴⁸ The southern schools seemed to be his main target. The majority

⁴³<http://www.dallasisd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=7954&ModuleInstanceID=24529&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=22160&PageID=20637>

⁴⁴ <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2013/04/10/dozens-of-disd-schools-could-have-new-2013-2014-principals/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130328-dozens-turn-out-to-protest-new-dallas-isd-principal-evaluation-system.ece>

⁴⁶ Unclear true impact of the growth plans with some principals choosing to retire or quit to avoid firing and/or demotion. <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/08/dallas-isd-demoted-and-encouraged-principals-to-leave-how-did-their-schools-perform-in-state-ratings.html/>

⁴⁷ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/06/two-chiefs-out-in-dallas-isd.html/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.DallasISDblog.com/2013/04/17/Dallas-ISD-debacle-the-fellows-program/>

of these schools served African American students.⁴⁹ Mike Miles believed that the failure of these schools was due to the principal's leadership and teachers that were causing the schools to not move forward. IN response to the mass firings, many Black Leaders showed up to the school board meetings to voice their concerns. The speakers included pastors, students, parents, and community members of the Black community including Dallas NAACP President Juanita Wallace who called for Miles' removal.⁵⁰ These community members felt that Mike Miles was targeting primarily African American principals. After several disgruntled board meetings, the school board began to be split on issues regarding the leadership of the Miles as superintendent of Dallas ISD.⁵¹ Board members who served the seemingly targeted communities of south Dallas questioned agenda items and principal growth plans. Despite criticism, Miles continued with his above mentioned evaluation plan that resulted in the dismissal of principals in south Dallas schools.⁵²

Furthering the concept of targeting particular schools, Destination 2020 calls for a limited strategic feeder pattern initiative. Thematically named Imagine 2020, the strategic feeder pattern initiative will purportedly pilot teacher incentive pay, curriculum development, increased parental involvement, and extended school hours. The goal is raise the expectations while providing the resources to "accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning."⁵³ Interestingly, the selected schools for the feeder pattern initiative Madison, L.G. Pinkston, and Lincoln Magnet all had principals who were dismissed. Both Madison and Lincoln were classified as "met standard" by the state of Texas and are located in southern Dallas.⁵⁴ Imagine 2020 is not yet implemented and is set to unfold over the 2013-2014 school year and the direction, and possible expansion, is uncertain.

Mike Miles' Philosophy: Focal Point, LLC

Mike Miles' trickle-down approach to school reform is also very apparent in his consulting firm Focal Point LLC. Focal Point claims to have influenced teachers and administrators in more than 50 client districts across the nation.⁵⁵ They offer, "training in systems thinking, building leadership density, curriculum alignment, organizational effectiveness, action planning, and other school reform initiatives."⁵⁶

Focal Point: Trickle-down Reform

Exploring the leadership focus of trickle-down reformers like Mike Miles provides insight into practices that ignore the buy-in process needed to develop practices from teacher level to the

⁴⁹ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/05/dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-to-address-south-dallas-church-protest-planned.html/>

⁵⁰ <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2013/05/08/critics-want-disd-superintendent-fired-over-principal-evaluation-plan/>

⁵¹ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/06/protest-planned-at-home-of-dallas-isd-superintendent-mike-miles-on-saturday.html/>

⁵² <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130523-dallas-isd-trustees-approve-firing-principals-at-madison-roosevelt-high-schools.ece>

⁵³ <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/20500>

⁵⁴ 2011-2012, <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/08/dallas-isd-demoted-and-encouraged-principals-to-leave-how-did-their-schools-perform-in-state-ratings.html/>

⁵⁵ <http://www.focalpointed.com/about-focal-point/about-focal-point>

⁵⁶ <http://www.focalpointed.com/about-focal-point/about-focal-point>

administrative level.⁵⁷ Focal Point offers various resources to trickle-down school reformers such as action plans, rubrics and systemic models to “reform” schools.⁵⁸ While some of the templates and power-point presentations on their website call for actionable steps and monitoring of instructional practices, a careful analysis of these resources reveals that they ignore key components of effective leadership practices that require the involvement and empowerment of teachers, parents, students and community to transform educational outcomes.⁵⁹ Instead, Miles’ “systems thinking approach” focuses on data based models with a top-down approach to educational reform.

A careful analysis of Focal Point resources reveals that they ignore key components of effective leadership practices that require the involvement and empowerment of teachers, parents, students and community to transform educational outcomes.

Analyzing Focal Point’s District Action Plans

The resources on the Focal Point website suggest that district’s action plans should systemically follow a flow-chart/model to implement a systemic reform. The district’s plans should focus on the vision tightly aligned to the district’s philosophy to establish a strategic plan based on needs and specific goals. The goals are centered solely on student achievement data and outcomes. Based on these data goals a district plan is developed to target specific actions for schools and departments.⁶⁰ The budget and staff development are to be incorporated within the school action plan. According to Focal Point, the systems thinking approach is to train “leaders to operationalize” the system by “identifying connections, focusing on leverage points and using system archetypes,” because of a belief that “this is the reform element most needed today.”⁶¹

We noted that the trickle-down approach proposed by Focal Point in their documents that are publicly available online are missing key components such in leadership practice such as: (1) collectively establishing a vision; (2) engendering the empowerment of teachers, parents, students in the change process; (3) involving stakeholder in leading the change planning process and; (4) ensuring meaningful stakeholder capacity building.⁶²

Effective Instructional Feedback

Another document (a PowerPoint presentation) on the Focal Point website discusses “high quality instruction” and includes a quote from Mike Schmoker (2006).⁶³

⁵⁷ Bodilly, S. J., Glennan T. K., Kerr, K. A., & Galegher, J. R. (2004). Introduction: Framing the problem. In R. K. Glennan, S. J. Bodilly, J. R. Galegher, & K. A. Kerr (Eds.), *Expanding the reach of education reforms: Perspectives from leaders in the scale-up of educational interventions* (pp. 1-34). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

⁵⁸ <http://www.focalpointed.com/resources/free-resources>

⁵⁹ Wallace Foundation. (2010). *The school turnaround field guide*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>

⁶⁰ <http://www.focalpointed.com/sites/default/files/images/Action%20Plan%20Rubric%20%20--%20Jul%2006.pdf>

⁶¹ <http://www.focalpointed.com/sites/default/files/images/Operationalizing%20Systems%20Thinking%20%282%29.pdf>

⁶² <http://www.focalpointed.com/sites/default/files/images/Action%20Plan%20Rubric%20%20--%20Jul%2006.pdf>

⁶³ <http://www.focalpointed.com/sites/default/files/images/Effective%20Instructional%20Feedback%20--%20June%2009.pdf>

Our greatest opportunity for better schools: a simple, unswerving focus on those actions and arrangements that ensure effective, ever-improving instruction...Instruction itself has the largest influence on achievement.

While the call for high quality instruction is proffered by Focal Point to be at the center of the reform, there is no definition or criteria defining “effective teaching ” or “quality instruction.” As is, the Focal point documents solely focus on a process where administrators are charged with providing feedback to teachers utilizing a standardized instructional rubric. Based on the rubric, the administrators assess teachers’ success and progress via monitoring levels ranging from weak, proficient and advanced. The “administrator collects data from the feedback instrument” and the snapshot data is to be shared with the staff within 24 hours to help develop additional professional development and coaching strategies.

While administrator assessments are valuable, there are no specific examples for teacher support systems calling for collaboration among staff to develop think tanks of instructional practices or pedagogical knowledge in the Focal Point documents. In a pedagogical model of school reform, teachers would be the driving force in sharing lessons or discussing best-practices through professional learning communities to improve teaching and learning.⁶⁴ Moreover, the curriculum standards are not identified to support core content knowledge to be taught and could pose a big gap in future student outcomes by short-cutting curriculum to only achieve higher results on high-stakes tests.

Another area of concern is the lack of instructional delivery strategies to help students to develop critical thinking skills.⁶⁵ The top-down assessments seem to only address a “one-size fits all” approach to teach quality. Flexibility in student learning is not visible, as the model is solely top-down and standardized. As a result, Miles’ reform approach is heavily dependent an administrator collecting standardized data, versus a collective effort by teachers and administrators to improve instructional practices. Much research in this particular area has pointed out that effective schools’ practices are collective, reflective and purposeful.⁶⁶

Miles’ reform approach is heavily dependent an administrator collecting standardized data, versus a collective effort by teachers and administrators to improve instructional practices.

⁶⁴ DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

⁶⁵ Elmore, R. (2007). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice and performance* (4th ed.). Cambridge, MA. Harvard Education Press.

⁶⁶ Wallace Foundation. (2012, January). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>

Ravitz, J. (2010). Beyond changing culture in small high schools: Reform models and changing instruction with project-based learning. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(3), 290-312. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2010.491432

Broad Foundation and the Trickle-down Approach to Education Reform

Mike Miles is a former high school teacher, middle school principal, coordinator of administration services and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.⁶⁷ So where does his trickle-down reform philosophy originate? Some have argued that his selection as a Broad fellow underscored and buttressed his commitment to top-down reform.⁶⁸ Is the Broad trickle-down approach to school reform the right fit for Dallas? We will now turn to a brief exploration of the Broad Foundation, Eli Broad's philosophy of venture philanthropy and the guiding tenants of The Broad Superintendents Academy

Birth of the Broad Foundation

Billionaires Eli & Edythe Broad come from humble beginnings in Detroit. The couple both worked their way through the Detroit public school system, then Eli Broad continued on to Michigan State University. Eventually graduating with a degree in accounting and later becoming a CPA. In 1957, Eli Broad started up a construction business with family member Donald Kaufman. Kaufman and Broad formed KB Homes; a company that would eventually be publically traded and turn sizable profits.⁶⁹ In 1971, Broad purchased a life insurance company called SunAmerica. SunAmerica grew and was ultimately merged with AIG in 1999.⁷⁰

The sale and merger of SunAmerica in 1999 marked a turning point for the Broads. Although the couple established a foundation for charitable giving back in the 1960s, the 1999 sellout spurred the growth of the foundation with Eli taking the lead. Then in 2010, Eli and Edythe Broad signed The Giving Pledge, stating they would pledge 75% of their wealth to venture philanthropy. The Broads identified public education as a focal point of their giving.⁷¹ As of 2011, the Broads have given \$500 million to public education and \$2 billion to The Broad Foundations.⁷²

Venture Philanthropy

Eli Broad is guided by his self-defined criteria of venture philanthropy. In Eli Broad 2012 book, *The Art of Being Unreasonable*, he outlines criteria for his giving. Eli Broad prescribes to the notion that running The Broad Foundation more like a for-profit than a non-profit. He further clarified that he is not operating a charity and that he expects results for each dollar spent.⁷³ Some have called Eli Broad a “control freak” and a “bully” as his giving is known to come with strings attached.⁷⁴ Eli Broad responds by stating that he is “not a bully, but I am not a potted plant either” maintaining a primary role in the decision-making of the various initiatives in The Broad Foundations.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ <http://vimeo.com/39674558>

⁶⁸ http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2012/04/predicting_mike_miles_future_a.php

⁶⁹ Colacello, B. (2006). Eli Broad's Big Picture. *Vanity Fair*, (December), 324–330; 379–384.

⁷⁰ Broad, E. (2012). *The art of being unreasonable*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc. and Safer, M. (2011, April 23). 60 Minutes: Why and how Eli Broad is giving billions away.

⁷¹ Retrieved from The Giving Pledge <http://givingpledge.org>

⁷² Safer, M. (2011, April 23). 60 Minutes: Why and how Eli Broad is giving billions away.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ http://blogs.laweekly.com/arts/2012/07/eli_broad_moca_book.php

⁷⁵ Safer, M. (2011, April 23). 60 Minutes: Why and how Eli Broad is giving billions away.

Academics have also critically discussed venture philanthropy. Educational historian Diane Ravitch explains the venture philanthropy approach stating, “venture philanthropists began with different emphasis, but over time they converged in support of reform strategies that mirrored their own experience in acquiring huge fortunes, such as competition, choice, deregulation, incentives, and other market-based approaches.”⁷⁶ Ravitch also cautions against the concept of private foundations, run by America’s wealthy, dictating public education policy. Lacking the oversight and checks placed on public actions and funds, America’s financial elite are influencing and undermining the public school system without bounds.⁷⁷ The work of Janelle Scott of the University of California, Berkeley underscores Ravitch’s concerns with what she refers to as cross pollination of neoliberal philanthropic foundations co-contributing only to like-minded entities.⁷⁸ In sum, the concept of venture philanthropy as applied to educational reform has drawn criticism from some quarters.

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Impact of the Broad Foundation

The Broad Foundation has diverse and a significant role American philanthropy. Headquartered in the founders’ hometown of Los Angeles, California, the foundation aims to utilize “entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science, and the arts.” The Broad Center and The Broad Prize for Urban Education are the two areas of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation Education that serve as the action arms of the larger educational foundation. The Broad Prize for Urban Education is an annual award of \$1 million established in 2002⁷⁹ to honor urban school districts that show “overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among poor and minority students.”⁸⁰

Driven by the founder’s philosophy of venture philanthropy, it is important to note the process and decision-making body for the prize. The Broad Prize for Urban Education in public school districts is not an application-based award; rather a review board evaluates districts. For instance the 2013 prize included board members such as Elisa Villanueva Beard (Teach for America), Christopher Cross (former assistant secretary of education under President George W. Bush), Frederick Hess (American Enterprise Institute and executive editor Education Next), Alexander Sandy Kress (former education advisor to President George W. Bush and Pearson lobbyist) amongst others.⁸¹ Each individual has clearly influenced the development of educational policy

⁷⁶ Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Scott, J. (2009). The politics of venture philanthropy in charter school policy and advocacy. *Educational Policy*, 23(106), 106–136.

⁷⁹ Soon after Rod Paige left, Houston ISD won the first Broad Prize.

⁸⁰ Retrieved from The Broad Prize <http://www.broadprize.org>

⁸¹ Retrieved from The Broad Prize 2013 http://www.broadprize.org/about/decision_makers/review_board.html. Other review members included Anne L. Bryant, Dan Goldhaber, Jane Hannaway, Eric Hanushek, Karen Hawley

and/or participated in significant top-down reform efforts in education. Many of them hold the common tie of supporting measures of high-stakes accountability, alternative teacher certification, and privatization through school choice.

As commendable as the stated mission and core beliefs of the Broad Prize appears to be to improve urban education, it is guided by the trickle-down reform philosophies of Eli Broad. What is the true role of the Broad Prize? According to Broad, “our current public education system is fundamentally broken”⁸² and “entire public school systems must be transformed.”⁸³ What is meant by these vague statements can be culled by diving into their list of *75 Examples of How Bureaucracy Stands in the Way of America’s Students & Teachers*, and quotes from their alumni explaining the importance of Broad. Broad identifies “labor laws, regulations and collective bargaining agreements” as major barriers to the success of our public schools. Throughout the alumni profiles listed on the site there is a constant drum beat that ties inefficiency to poor administrator and teacher management and evaluation, and the necessity of market driven management styles to achieve gains and achieve an efficient system of public schools.

Who are Broad’s allies in the prize? A high-profile board of directors guides The Broad Center. The lineup of board members includes Wendy Kopp (Teach for America founder), Michelle Rhee (StudentsFirst founder and CEO and the former chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools), and Richard Barth (Knowledge is Power Program-KIPP Foundation CEO).⁸⁴ Beyond the ideological background accompanying the above-mentioned individuals in the decision-making process there is that financial contributions to their organizations. Notably, Teach for America, StudentsFirst, KIPP each received funds in 2011-2012 from the parent foundation.⁸⁵ The strong educational ideologies and political ties of the board members coupled with the financial ties to the larger foundation muddle the seemingly admirable mission and core beliefs of The Broad Prize.

The Broad Residency in Urban Education & The Broad Superintendents Academy

Working from the trickle-down reform concept embraced by the founder Eli Broad,⁸⁶ The Broad Center has two primary programs to train educational leaders: The Broad Residency in Urban Education (Broad Residency) and The Broad Superintendents Academy. Both established in 2002, these leadership programs have trained over 400 individuals with 150 graduates of The Broad Superintendents Academy.

Miles, Patricia W. Levesque, Deborah McGriff, Thomas W. Payzant, Delia Pompa, Margot Rogers, Andrew Rotherham, John Simpson, and Gene Wilhoit.

⁸² <http://www.broadcenter.org/who-we-are/mission>

⁸³ <http://www.broadcenter.org/how-bureaucracy-stands-in-the-way>

⁸⁴ Retrieved from The Broad Center <http://www.broadcenter.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors> Additional members include Paul Pastorek, Barry Munitz, Becca Bracy Knight, Harold Ford J., Louis Gerstner, Jr., Dan Katzir, Margaret Spellings, Andrew L. Stern, and Lawrence H. Summers.

⁸⁵ The Broad Foundation. (2012). *The Broad Foundations 2011-2012 report*. Los Angeles, CA.

⁸⁶ Broad, E. (2012). *The art of being unreasonable*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

The Broad Residency is a two-year paid program that trains individuals for managerial positions in education. Requiring applicants to have advanced degrees, at least four years of work experience, and experience in one or more functional business areas (finance, operations, strategy, general management, human resources, or information technology), the Broad Residency directly aims to bring business practices to education. In the specified selection criteria, the application explains “these individuals (experienced business men and women) can bring best practices into an industry that historically has been slow to adopt practices that improve operations.” The accepted candidates are placed in partnership organizations including metropolitan school districts, charter management organizations (CMOs), and state/federal departments of education.⁸⁷ Unlike The Broad Superintendents Academy that typically denies the development of top-down reformers in education,⁸⁸ The Broad Residency is forthright throughout the application process that expressed value placed on disruptive business-minded decision making for educational leaders.

The Broad Superintendent Academy is a highly selective training program with allusive selection criteria. Although specifics are not available for exact qualifications or what Broad interviewers are looking for in a candidate, The Broad Superintendent Academy does disclose in the aggregate track record of graduates and general qualifications for potential Broad candidates. The foundation reports 150 graduates with 96 holding or having held superintendent positions.⁸⁹

While the glossy brochures and soaring mission of Broad seems admirable and innocuous, insight into the design and intended goals of the academy can be found in a July 2012 New Jersey open records request by the Education Law Center. A public records request looking into the New Jersey Department of Education and Commissioner Christopher Cerf (A 2007 Broad Superintendent Academy alum⁹⁰), resulted in the release of a March 2012 board memo regarding The Broad Superintendents Academy.⁹¹ According to The Broad Center memo, several actions for revamping the academy were under consideration by the Broad Board of Directors. Of the proposed changes to the Academy was the creation of the Academy 2.0. Recommendations in the memo would have the Academy focus on the creation of leaders to “disrupt the status quo.” To accomplish Broad’s *Art of Being Unreasonable*, the memo proposes a shift away from core knowledge for future educational leaders and toward reform priorities and reform “accelerators.” The Broad Center memo indicated that the four reform priorities as measurement of educator effectiveness, innovative learning models, accountability, and school choice. Specific reform accelerators accompany the implementation of the four reform priorities. These include strategies for removing obstacles, political navigation, community management, building political presence through public speaking and publishing opportunities, and individualized leadership training.⁹²

⁸⁷ Retrieved from The Broad Residency <http://www.broadcenter.org/residency/> with full list of partnership organizations available at <http://www.broadcenter.org/residency/partners/partner-organizations>.

⁸⁸ Retrieved from The Broad Center Commentary <http://www.broadcenter.org/commentary082012>

⁸⁹ Retrieved from The Broad Superintendents Academy <http://www.broadcenter.org/academy/join/candidate-profiles>

⁹⁰ Retrieved from The Broad Report <http://thebroadreport.blogspot.com>

⁹¹ Retrieved from Education Law Center <http://www.edlawcenter.org/news/archives/other-issues/elc-obtains-confidential-njdoe-school-turnaround-plan.html>

⁹² Retrieved from Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2012/08/20/Local/Graphics/Broadmemos.pdf>

In the 2012 memo, Academy 2.0 would market the research done on high-profile successful reform leaders to refine the selection process to target “bold visionary leaders with a proven history of breakthrough reforms,” “passionate, civic-minded, and *disruptive* non-traditional leaders with significant political experience,” and those with “a history of implementing an aggressive reform agenda.” Specific names such as Wendy Kopp, Michelle Rhee, Christopher Chef, Joel Klein, and Pete Gorman were mentioned as profiled leaders used as exemplars. Another key aspect gleaned from the memo was the desire to “drive talent to strategic locations with strong conditions for reform.” Essentially, locating and facilitating the placement of Broad graduates into reform primed placements in urban areas in the United States to maximize the impact of the Broad Academy.⁹³

In sum, while seemingly innocuous, the reform agenda actually espoused by Broad in the shadows is the same as that of the other privatization education forces, like Michelle Rhee’s Student’s First, The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, and this is reflected in the make-up of their board members. These are trickle-down reforms for top-down reformers.

Broad Trickle-down Reformers Find Trouble

Over the last 11 years, the Broad Center has been busy training and placing some of the most controversial public school district superintendents and state education leaders— including Mike Miles. They have created a large footprint of market-minded superintendents in places such as California, Chicago, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Texas. And Broad continues to make their presence palpable with various administrative staff placements. However, Broad fellows also have acquired reputations for having the propensity to find trouble by creating “unreasonable” maladaptive and illicit disruptions.⁹⁴

Mike Miles Finds Trouble

In July 2013, the school board announced that Mike Miles had apparently violated policy with regards to an OPR investigation dealing with a contract for community and parent services.⁹⁵ The board voted unanimously to spend up to \$100,000 and hire an outside investigator. The matter was referred to Paul Coggins, former U.S. District attorney.⁹⁶ Moving forward, the Dallas ISD School Board will be obtaining a report from the ongoing investigation after Labor Day in 2013.⁹⁷

⁹³ Retrieved from Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2012/08/20/Local/Graphics/Broadmemos.pdf>

⁹⁴ [https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/21886773/Publication PDFs/Featured Graduate Broad.docx](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/21886773/Publication%20PDFs/Featured%20Graduate%20Broad.docx)

⁹⁵ [http://www.dallasnews.com/news/20130722-trustee-miles-statement-on-Dallas ISD-investigation-violates-spirit-of-public-information-act.ece](http://www.dallasnews.com/news/20130722-trustee-miles-statement-on-Dallas-ISD-investigation-violates-spirit-of-public-information-act.ece)

⁹⁶ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/07/dallas-isd-trustees-unanimously-approve-to-hire-ex-u-s-attorney-paul-coggins-for-district-investigation.html/>

⁹⁷ [http://dallasexaminer.com/news/2013/jun/03/Dallas ISD-cleans-house/](http://dallasexaminer.com/news/2013/jun/03/Dallas-ISD-cleans-house/)
<http://content.bandzoogle.com/users/houstonisdwatch/files/Fired-Dallas-ISD-principal-wants-her-job-back-citing-missed-hearing-deadline-Dallasnews.pdf>

Turnover has plagued Miles' superintendency. Notably, the number of experienced teachers and principals that resigned under Miles was the largest in the history of Dallas ISD.⁹⁸ A plethora of veteran teachers and principals decided to retire or go to other districts. According to education blogs, Dallas ISD had over 1,700 vacancies in July 2013.⁹⁹ In a reaction to this, Mike Miles sent a request to surrounding districts to not hire Dallas ISD teachers.¹⁰⁰ Some critics have argued that Miles has lost control and has "intimidated" teachers and principals who had been with the district. Some principals have filed lawsuits, such as former principal, Dr. Shaver, who was fired.¹⁰¹

Miles has experienced high-levels of turnover amongst the various departmental leadership and cabinet positions. For example, Jamal Jenkins, a former Broad Residency graduate, was brought on by Miles to be an Executive Director of Human Resources. Mr. Jenkins left prior to the conclusion of Mr. Miles' first year as head of Dallas ISD. In his case the HR position was already vacated by mid October 2012.¹⁰²

Other Broad Fellows Find Trouble

Miles is in similar company with many other Broad Fellows. Broad's "art of being unreasonable" top-down reform approach to public school districts has not been without significant contention.¹⁰³ For example, charges of ignoring teacher concerns and implementing divisive orders have resulted in several high profile incidents of the superintendents Broad has trained. Their superintendent trainees are making headlines as their jobs are on the line due to many issues of impropriety and an unusually large volume of worker grievances.¹⁰⁴ In Rhode Island, 82% of teachers in the state feel less respected than they had prior to Deborah Gist coming into power.¹⁰⁵ In the Rochester school district in NY employees overwhelmingly gave a vote of "no confidence" (95% of those who voted) to Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard.¹⁰⁶ Many others have been involved in high profile departures from their school districts. Los Angeles Unified School District head, John Deasy, was recently rated by his teachers and earned a score of 1.36 out of 5 possible points.¹⁰⁶ This is coupled with his controversial Ph.D., in which, he only earned nine hours of credit before being awarded the degree from The University of

⁹⁸ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130816-more-principals-leave-dallas-isd-than-in-previous-years.ece>

⁹⁹ <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2013/06/19/mass-exodus-of-Dallas-ISD-teachers-end-of-year-Dallas-ISD-vacancies-double/>

¹⁰⁰ <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/07/dallas-isd-is-trying-to-prevent-teachers-from-quitting-for-other-districts-weeks-before-school-year-starts.html/>

¹⁰¹ <http://content.bandzoogle.com/users/houstonisdwatch/files/Fired-Dallas-ISD-principal-wants-her-job-back-citing-missed-hearing-deadline-Dallasnews.pdf>

¹⁰² <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2012/10/dallas-isds-hr-executive-director-position-is-open-what-happened-to-the-new-hire.html>

¹⁰³ Samuels, Christina A. (2011/06/08). Critics target growing army of broad leaders. *Education Week*, 30, 1.

¹⁰⁴ <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/21886773/Publication%20PDFs/Featured%20Graduate%20Broad.docx>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.wpri.com/news/local/mcgowan/gist-contract>

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.dailynews.com/general-news/20130711/teachers-union-gives-lauds-superintendent-john-deasy-an-f>

Louisville.¹⁰⁷ And, the late Maria Goodloe-Johnson was fired for financial impropriety in Seattle.¹⁰⁸

Mike Miles Student Success Track Record

While Mike Miles propensity to attract criticism relative to his trickle-down approach to school reform is not under debate, his track record for improving student success is. We will now analyze publicly available data to examine student outcomes in Harrison School District in Colorado. We will then conduct a school-level analysis of STAAR scores in Dallas ISD.

Harrison School District

There are several disconcerting data trends in the years spanning Mr. Miles' time in Harrison, specifically the rates of attrition at the secondary level. At the aggregate, over time, the numbers do not appear to be problematic, as Harrison enrolled 11,165 students district wide in 2006-2007, and had enrolled 11,203 at the end of tenure (See Appendix 1). However, this small net of 48 students is due to enrollment increases in the primary grades and masks the significant losses at the secondary level. For instance, the graduating class of 2006-2007, Mr. Miles' first year as Superintendent, was 739. However, in 2011-2012 that number had fallen by 208 students to just 531—a drop of 28%. For comparison, during that same time period, Colorado Springs School District saw only a 13% drop (See Appendix 4).

Notably, though the 2006-2007 cohort exhibits a significant loss, it is possible that the attrition could be due to anomaly in a particular cohort. However, there was a steady rate of attrition year over year in Harrison. For example, looking at the seventh grade population during Miles' first year in office, you will see that there were 794 students, and if you were to follow that cohort to graduation, Mr. Miles' last year in office, you will see a negative change of 33%, or 263 students lost, in those 6 years. Similarly, the student cohort that was in 6th grade when Mr. Miles' took over Harrison had a 39% attrition rate by junior year of high school (See Appendix 2). Again, comparing this to the same cohort trend in Colorado Springs, the 7th grade cohort of 2006-2007 had a 19% increase in enrollment by the time the class of 2012 was ready for graduation (See Appendix 4). The following cohort, 6th grade to 11th, saw a change of less than 1% over that same time period.

While traditional metrics of student progress remained virtually unchanged during Miles six-year tenure in Harrison— completion rates fell from 76.5% to 75.8% and dropout rates that remained at about 3%. However, it is clear from the attrition data that students were fleeing to neighboring districts. Also, although Miles touted bringing up the overall graduation rate from 61.5% to 74.1%, and that number fluctuated greatly throughout his 6 years, dipping below 65% twice, he did so while shedding a significant portion of Harrison's secondary population.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-09-11/news/36840500_1_john-e-deasy-doctorates-robert-felner

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20110302/PC1602/303029950>

¹⁰⁹ https://www.hsd2.org/sites/www.hsd2.org/files/u99/district_performance.pdf

Turning to academic accountability within the Colorado state performance measures, in the sixth and final year of Miles' leadership in Harrison, the district did not meet a single goal in the area of Elementary and High School Mathematics within the most vulnerable subgroups: Free and Reduced Price Lunch, Minority, English Language Learners (ELLs), Special Education, and Students "needing to catch up."¹¹⁰ Though Harrison middle schools fared better, meeting four of the five *mathematics* measures, in *writing* only one of those five subgroups met the expected standards.¹¹¹ Considering that Dallas ISD is comprised of similar students, the forthcoming analysis of school-level STAAR outcomes will illuminate whether in the same way trends of poor-performance occur amongst special populations.

The Harrison data complicate the positive spin that Mike Miles has framed about student success during his six years as superintendent in Harrison. There were certainly gains made after overall achievement indicators were observed in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 in Harrison. However, in light of the troubling attrition rates and poor academic performance of students in mathematics and writing, those gains were not enough to bring the district back to the high levels of achievement seen in the pre-Miles era during the 2003-2004 school year, in which 82% of students graduated.¹¹²

Dallas ISD STAAR Analysis

The first year of implementation of Miles' Destination 2020 plan has been a rocky one. Mike Miles himself explained that it was a tough year and that "even I could not anticipate some of the tough things that happened in Dallas." Despite the turbulent year, Miles self reports his first year efforts as "proficient."¹¹³ Critics, however, continue to question Destination 2020. After the drastic restructuring of the central office that ended in unprecedented resignations, increased dismissal of principals with the new Principal Evaluation System, and a seemingly disproportionate negative focus on southern Dallas, critics have said otherwise. The full impact and success of Destination 2020 is yet to be seen, but the first year has certainly started in a troubling direction.

How have schools in Dallas ISD performed over the past year? To investigate this question we obtained 2012 and 2013 STAAR and End of Course (EOC) school-level data. Since there are only two years of assessment data available, we used paired t-tests to understand whether the change in means on the exams between years were statistically significant for the entire district. We are limited in the statistical tools that we have available to us due to the fact there are only two years of data available and that we do not have student-level data readily available.

Our statistical analysis utilizes STAAR and EOC scales scores for 3rd, 8th, and Math and English I Reading End of Course (EOC) to sample student performance across elementary, middle and

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² https://www.hsd2.org/sites/www.hsd2.org/files/u99/district_performance.pdf

¹¹³ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130629dallasisdsuperintendentmikemilescallstoughyearearsuccess.ece>

high school levels in Dallas ISD. TEA relates,¹¹⁴

Scale scores can be interpreted across different sets of test questions. Scale scores allow direct comparisons of student performance between specific sets of test questions from different test administrations. A scale score is a conversion of the raw score onto a scale that is common to all test forms for that assessment. The scale score takes into account the difficulty level of the specific set of questions on which it is based. It quantifies a student's performance relative to the passing standards or proficiency levels.

For elementary, the 3rd grade performance of Dallas ISD students show positive statistically significant results for all students in reading and negative results in mathematics between 2012 and 2013 (See Table 2). Latina/os and at-risk students show significant increases ($\alpha=.05$) at the school level for both STAAR reading and math. Whites, African Americans and ELLs do not show statistically significant increases in reading or math performance in 3rd grade between 2012 and 2013 in Dallas ISD.

Table 2. Dallas ISD 3rd Grade STAAR Reading and Math: Paired Samples T-Test of Average Scale Scores (2011-2012 and 2012-2013)

	Mean Δ	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading All Students	+7.853	41.249	2.277	142	.024
Latina/o	+14.717	46.810	3.543	126	.001
African American	-.023	49.902	.004	86	.997
White	+12.500	44.590	1.121	15	.280
ELL	+12.582	51.800	1.801	54	.077
At-Risk	+8.264	40.288	2.427	139	.016
Math All Students	-9.161	43.590	2.513	142	.013
Latina/o	+9.309	47.942	2.264	135	.025
African American	+2.023	58.377	.321	85	.749
White	+30.688	62.339	1.969	15	.068
ELL	+7.832	52.507	1.707	130	.090
At-Risk	+7.881	44.028	2.141	142	.034

Overall, the 8th grade reading and mathematics STAAR results between 2012 and 2013 were quite promising for middle schools (See Table 3). For example, the 8th grade performance of Dallas ISD students show statistically significant increases for all student groups in mathematics. For reading, there were statistically significant results for all student groups except African Americans and Whites between 2012 and 2013.

¹¹⁴ <http://www.tasb.org/legislative/legislative/reports/2012/20120608/0staar.html>

Table 3. Dallas ISD 8th Grade STAAR Reading and Math: Paired Samples T-Test of Average Scale Scores (2011-2012 and 2012-2013)

	Mean Δ	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading All Students	+15.000	20.780	-4.331	35	.000
Latina/o	+16.829	20.125	-4.947	34	.000
African American	+11.361	39.271	-1.736	35	.091
White	-9.727	39.256	.822	10	.430
ELL	+24.133	23.576	-5.607	29	.000
At-Risk	+18.636	33.363	-3.209	32	.003
Math All Students	+23.394	20.910	-6.427	32	.000
Latina/o	+23.594	24.233	-5.508	31	.000
African American	+24.290	28.671	-4.717	30	.000
White	+32.714	29.062	-2.978	6	.025
ELL	+33.966	24.218	-7.552	28	.000
At-Risk	+25.375	17.814	-8.058	31	.000

The Dallas ISD EOC Algebra I and English I Reading results did not show statistically significant increases for high schools (See Table 4). Student performance did not exhibit any statistically significant increases for any student groups in English I Reading. For Algebra I, there were only statistically significant results for Whites between 2012 and 2013.

Table 4. Dallas ISD Algebra I and English I Reading End of Course: Paired Samples T-Test of Average Scale Scores (2011-2012 and 2012-2013)

	Mean Δ	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
English I All Students	+25.694	81.926	-1.882	35	.068
Reading Latina/o	+23.294	70.672	-1.922	33	.063
African American	+8.971	91.191	-.574	33	.570
White	+51.500	117.180	-1.522	11	.156
ELL	+5.520	47.919	-.576	24	.570
At-Risk	-4.828	39.987	.650	28	.521
Algebra I All Students	+35.896	184.080	-1.596	66	.115
Latina/o	+45.833	204.140	-1.824	65	.073
African American	+6.691	158.858	-.312	54	.756
White	+148.438	203.135	-2.923	15	.010
ELL	-21.031	126.981	.937	31	.356
At-Risk	+21.308	128.773	-1.193	51	.238

Conclusion

Educational Outcomes and Community Empowerment

Top-down reformers continue to offer trickle-down education reforms as the dominant paradigm despite a growing vocal dissatisfaction in urban communities across the nation with the limited success of their standardized approaches. Despite mounting opposition, clearly Tayloristic efficiency models of systemic reform are ruling the day—such as high-stakes testing and accountability, centralized and standardized curriculum, and evaluation rubrics—to name just a few.

What is the alternative to trickle-down reformers? The answer is a community empowered to be accountable to themselves and to the nation—an “indigenous” educational policy approach where communities democratically set achievement and outcome goals. For some communities, maybe high-stakes test scores derived by the Pearson test score development company is the goal; or perhaps a community will choose to focus on a new, more valuable set of outcomes.

In the current era, most states have reams of data that can be disaggregated in ways previously unthinkable. We can follow students from pre-kindergarten to any number of outcomes such as higher education, workforce, and incarceration. Thus, a community-based and driven accountability model would involve a process where superintendents, school boards, school staff, parents, students, and community stakeholders set short-term and long-term goals based on their priorities. Maybe those goals are higher ACT and SAT scores. Or a community may choose to focus on increasing the percentage of students enrolled and completing higher education. Perhaps the local priorities are employment and salary gains for their students. Each of these goal statements would serve as an alternative to the intense focus on state-determined test scores and standardized curriculum that trickle-down leaders push as the centerpiece of any reform. This new form of accountability would allow a district to drive locally based approaches that focus on the *process* of education for one-year, five-year, and ten-year terms.

One example of the focus on the process of education instead of on high-stakes testing outcomes is in San Antonio’s Café College resource centers. Mayor Julian Castro funded these college-knowledge information centers in response to the community making higher education enrollment and graduation a priority. As a result, the city has placed both its resources and its will behind that goal. This focus on the process rather than the outcomes is a stark contrast to the current trickle-down approaches pressed for decades by trickle-down reformers in Texas schools.

Community-based accountability should appeal to political conservatives that espouse the ideals of local control and liberals that support community empowerment. The state and federal government role could be relegated to calculating baselines for a set of 10–15 goals that communities set in a democratic process relative to the current levels of those particular outcomes. This accountability goal-setting would seek to influence the process of schooling choices in each community and would then motivate policy makers from communities to lobby state and federal governments for the resources to achieve its accountability goals rather than focusing solely on high-stakes testing results. This turn of events in the frame of accountability would be novel because politicians (local, state, and federal) would also be held accountable—

they could be shamed and pressured—if resources to meet the community goals do not materialize. Accountability would become a two-way street.

A return to a community-based schooling would foment a multiple measures approach to community education outcomes—outcomes derived by the community—driven by a desire to see their children succeed, rather than a continuing focus on failed high-stakes testing and accountability policies persistently promoted in state capitols and Washington, DC.

Community-based accountability may also usher in a turn in community involvement in schools. In the United States, our communities, our parents, our educators must see themselves as the solution rather than the problem. A return to a community-based schooling would foment a multiple measures approach to community education outcomes—outcomes derived by the community—driven by a desire to see their children succeed, rather than a continuing focus on failed high-stakes testing and accountability policies persistently promoted in state capitols and Washington, DC.

Politicians and reformers in the United States are currently focused on top-down reformers addiction to “efficiency” in education, also known as trickle-down policy solutions. Considering that our peer countries such as Singapore, China, and Finland are investing heavily in pedagogical and curricular reforms in their K–12 and Higher Education systems and experiencing fabulous results compared to the United States,¹¹⁵ our democracy now depends on communities holding politicians and school leaders accountable for the persistently failing top-down educational policy approaches.

¹¹⁵ Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York: Teachers College Press.