EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Shape of Texas High School Education: Administrator, Counselor, and Parent Viewpoints on HB5 Endorsement Implementation

Foundations and the Importance of Data

The research included in this report was produced with the support of the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium. The Consortium is comprised of foundations and philanthropists from across Texas interested in ensuring that parents, educators, policymakers, media, and the general public have objective data about public education. The Consortium has strived to ensure that the research contained in this report is objective and non-partisan.

Created in 2011, the Consortium is comprised of 35 foundations from throughout Texas and focuses its work on leveraging private resources to produce credible and necessary data on the most important educational challenges facing Texas. Local foundations and philanthropists determine the Consortium’s research focus, priorities, and partners.

For more information on the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium please visit www.tegac.org.

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Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium
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Key Findings: The Challenges of Preparing Texas Students for Career Success

- **Decentralization vs. State Guidance:** Most school districts and counselors are comfortable with the legislative intent behind Guided Pathways, but many are frustrated by a perceived lack of state guidance for implementation decisions.

- **Complexities of the Counselor Role:** Counselors are integral to carrying out the requirements of Guided Pathways, but most districts report that counselors have limited time and multiple responsibilities, and many districts feel they do not have enough counselors. Counselors report support for the mandate but a need for revised job descriptions to support new workload to provide effective, individualized advisement for students making career choices at an early age.

- **Middle School Counselors Have a Critical Role:** Training and support has been focused on high school counselors but since students choose endorsements at the end of 8th grade, middle school counselors require similar knowledge of HB 5.

- **Parents and Students are in Need of More Education and Support:** Parents, counselors, and administrators highlight the need for more individualized guidance for both parents and students.

In 2013, Texas HB 5 (83R), also known as Guided Pathways, introduced a new system of graduation requirements into the state high school education environment. The policy aims to promote college and career readiness through a system of endorsements, specializations that allow high school students to choose a pathway based on their future college and career aspirations.

5 Endorsements with Examples of Typical Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUSINESS &amp; INDUSTRY</th>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>PUBLIC SERVICE</th>
<th>ARTS &amp; HUMANITIES</th>
<th>MULTI-DISCIPLINARY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typically includes:</td>
<td>Typically includes:</td>
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<td>An all inclusive plan:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Health Science</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>STEM</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>World Languages</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>Cultural Studies</td>
<td>Public Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Advanced Maths</td>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welding</td>
<td></td>
<td>Culinary Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto Tech</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
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Research Questions

- How are school districts in Texas implementing HB 5?
- How were implementation strategies selected within the districts?
- What implementation practices show promise for success, and how can they be replicated by other districts?
- How do counselor workload and job functions relate to supporting student choice around their endorsement paths?
- How do communication flows between districts and schools to parents and students support the quality of the HB 5 implementation and endorsement selection process?

Study Design

- Exploratory, qualitative study
- Research conducted between Sept 2015-August 2016
- Districts sampled to ensure geographic, socio-economic,
- Focused on implementation strategies and perceptions of district administrators, counselors, and parents across Texas
- 31 in-depth interviews with district and school administrators were conducted across 21 districts
- 34 interviews with counseling staff across 23 districts (1,100 counselors contacted)
- 289 parents surveyed from 75 different school districts
STRONG FOUNDATIONS:  
Statewide Trends

- Districts support maintaining strong educational pathways for students, oftentimes requiring students to take higher level math and sciences, even if not required by a particular endorsement track.
- Vertical integration between middle and high schools is stronger than expected in many areas. However, middle school counselors need additional training support since they are responsible for advising 7th and 8th graders on endorsement selection in tandem to graduation planning efforts.
- Counselors are generally supportive of HB 5 as an intervention but uncertain of parent understanding or engagement in the endorsement selection process.
- There is widespread training of counselors through both TEA and district-level efforts, as well as UT OnCourse implementation, but there are many different materials in circulation, creating confusion for staff.
- Districts who have modified counselor roles and workloads, as well as experimented with counseling team functions to accommodate HB 5 activities, generally have more satisfied counselors.
- Counseling staff who expressed being “well led” by their district or school leadership, or “well supported” by lead counselors typically expressed greater appreciation for the endorsement process and higher levels of job satisfaction.
- Counselors generally need greater exposure to resources to share with children and families.

ACHILLES’ HEELS:  
Implementation Tools & Practices in Need of Attention

- Career interest inventory usage is more widespread than expected, but there is limited integration of such materials.
- District software adoption is occurring statewide, but there is no consistency in software choice across districts.
- Highly inefficient and duplicative data entry burden counseling staff.
- Such software and data reporting challenges create significant task inefficiencies that burden and frustrate counseling staff.
- Parents commonly report being unable to access or navigate district communication software after they are provided with initial access codes. Many report “never trying to access again” after frustrating earlier attempts.
- More one-on-one time between counselors and students is needed to make individualized selections, answer specific career questions, and help students make adjustments in their early high school years in order to avoid upsetting sequencing requirements.
- Widespread group education events exist for parents, but low participation is common. Initial findings from a parent survey suggest many parents find such events are not useful.
- Communication channels with parents are often misaligned with parent preferences or access to technology.

Parent Survey Results…

- 23% of parents do not know which endorsement their child has selected
- 31% of parents report not being involved in endorsement selection process
- 51% of parents consider the process itself to be an obstacle or are unsure of its efficacy
- 43% of parents report their student’s understanding as low or they are unsure of understanding
- Half of all parents surveyed are unsure if their students are prepared for entry into a community college, 4-year university, or career path
- 52% of parents are uncertain if their child has completed a career interest inventory; 11% of parents report their students have not had any career assessment. Of the 38% of students who have completed such inventories, only 23% of parents report results being shared with them
- 23% of parents assess information received as poor quality; 61% of parents are uncertain about the quality of information
- 37% report they are receiving limited or no information about HB5; 49% are uncertain if they’re receiving enough information
- 28% of parents are unsure if they are comfortable with their understanding of HB 5; 27% report being somewhat or extremely uncomfortable with their knowledge of HB 5
5 Goals to Enhance Stakeholder Engagement in Career Pathways & Endorsement Selection Process

1 Enhance Consistent Support, Training, and Resource Sharing across State
   • Standardize information shared by TEA and TWC, disseminate through multiple channels
   • Provide consistent and frequent training opportunities (live and online), evaluate participant feedback
   • Ensure HB 5 support positions at ESC level are staffed with full-time, competent, and accountable employees (not consultants, not part-time positions, have counseling experience)
   • Share district and school-level innovations and best practices statewide

2 Support Agile Experimentation at the District & School Levels
   • Expand transition counselor position to more districts to create workload relief
   • Enhance vertical integration between middle and high school counselors, as well as experiment with longer-term cohort following by counselors
   • Conduct widespread job analysis, restructure counselor roles and team-based work strategies in line with best practice exemplars across the state.

3 Create Higher Quality and More Advising Time with Students
   • Identify workload relief options for counselors to enhance job satisfaction for overworked, burned out counseling staff
   • Remove burden of testing functions from counselors, which seems to be a common pain point
   • Strengthen career exploration activities for middle and high school students and connect systematically to endorsement advising
   • Integrate advisement, software, hard copy forms, and data entry into more efficient processes

4 Align Parent Communication Strategies to Parent Preferences
   • Begin consistent conversation around career exploration from earliest grades and keep it going all the way through high school graduation
   • Employ more communication platforms that allow parent choice in message delivery
   • More data collected on technology access and usage by parents, to ensure the most effective communication strategies are in place

5 Focus on Enhancing Industry Partnerships Driven by Economic Development Trends
   • Economic development objectives and industry demand needs to be driving the school partnership model, led by business leaders. Such partnerships must not solely be focused on meeting K-12 educational objectives
   • Industry and business leaders need to be incentivized to lead the partnerships through tax credits, subsidies, and public recognition (such as TWC awards for innovative partnerships)
   • Higher education, industry, and school districts need to work as a tri-part team to ensure successful interventions throughout a student’s entire education and career exploration process

Endorsements Expanding or Limiting Student Choice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endorsements Expanding or Limiting Student Choice?</th>
<th>Counselor Perspective</th>
<th>Parent Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanding</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure/Don't Know</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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