

Local Implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative

As Reported by Texas High School Counselors

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What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal." ~ Albert Pike

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to understand the high school counselor's perception of the integration of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative at the local level, determine how much time high school counselors spent on the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance program (including AchieveTexas), and identify the perceptions of success and barriers within the implementation process.

In the summer of 2012, perceptions of high school counselors of the local implementation of AchieveTexas in Regions 13 and 20 in Texas on their campuses were examined using an online survey. These regions were targeted because their districts had offered and/or received professional development for counselors regarding the local implementation of AchieveTexas. High school counselors reported that successful outcomes for implementation of AchieveTexas included increased enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses (67.9%), increased number of applications for admission to postsecondary institutions (64.2%), and increased graduation rates (62.3%). Barriers to implementation of the AchieveTexas initiative included lack of time and/or information and counselor to student ratios.

Overall, the successful implementation of AchieveTexas requires "buy-in" of principals, counselors, teachers, parents, and the surrounding community. Findings of the study suggest that the AchieveTexas initiative is a tool to guide local districts to implement career clusters on their local campus and help students acquire college and career readiness skills that will benefit them in their future. AchieveTexas requires collaboration at various levels to achieve this goal.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The complex global economy of the 21st Century is changing the nature of education. The ability to compete as a nation and create jobs requires that United States educational systems be implemented in a new way. The old notion of high school students who are either “work-bound” or “college-bound” no longer applies. In 2012, Gallup research showed that our educational and workforce preparation did not meet the college and career readiness goals (Lopez, 2012). Today’s students need preparation for both areas. Focusing on academics only or a set of skills for a certain job is insufficient for long-term success. Students of the 21st Century need to be equipped with knowledge to apply solutions in complex systems and problems in this global society. Many high skill occupations (such as professional, technical and managerial) require four year degrees and above (Holzer & Lerman, 2009). Students of today need to experience rigorous academics and career preparation to become globally competitive in today’s marketplace (Achieve, 2008).

Schools are the beginning of college and career information for students. Their goal is to make students aware of careers and provide current information of the requirements of those careers (Legislative Budget Board, 2013). The skill set required of today’s youth is significantly different than that of twenty years ago. Students need to know how their current course material is applicable to their future career goals (Legislative Budget Board, 2013). In a college readiness report by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 21st century skills include the following: cognitive strategies, content and academic behaviors, contextual skills and awareness (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org>, 2012).

Additionally, according to The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, “today’s economy has changed and students need experiences that address: (a) flexibility and adaptability (b) initiative and self- direction (c) social and cross cultural skills (d) productivity and accountability and (e) leadership and responsibility”.

National Career Clusters™ Framework

In 2008, the National Career Clusters™ framework was created to allow students to investigate various career options to better prepare themselves for college or career. The Career Clusters™ includes sixteen categories that focus on occupations with a skill set needed for college and future employment (National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, 2013). The 16 clusters are listed below:

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology and Communications
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security

- Manufacturing
- Marketing, Sales and Service
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics

(<http://www.careertech.org/career-clusters/>)

AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative

In response to these federal guidelines, the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative was created to provide a foundation for college and career readiness objectives and promotes the development of a 21st century skill set while students are still in high school. AchieveTexas was developed in 2005 by educational professionals and representatives from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), postsecondary institutions, regional educational service centers, the Texas Business and Education Coalition, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission. Achieve Texas was first implemented in 2008 in Texas public schools. AchieveTexas is a framework to help schools reorganize their curriculum into a sequence of rigorous academic and technical courses that are based on students' personal interests and career aspirations (www.achievetexas.org).

AchieveTexas uses 122 Programs of Study (POS) models to align with the sixteen Career ClustersTM (www.achievetexas.org). POS are a way of organizing curriculum within a career cluster and highlight a selection of rigorous courses and activities that students can choose in creating their educational plans. Secondary courses and activities connect to students' college and career goals (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The POS are models and local districts choose which courses to offer and how to deliver them. For

example, within the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics cluster, a student could focus on the POS of Engineering and Technology with the career goal of Mechanical Engineering. The targeted Texas industry area would be Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing. With the POS, students visualize the sequence of academic and technical courses they will take, how the courses relate to each other, and the careers where course content will be utilized. This early career exploration approach allows students to see the bigger picture of their educational pursuits on paper while in high school in a much less costly environment than starting the exploration process in college. Currently, the average college student incurs approximately \$8,240 per year for public universities (The College Board, 2013), and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is a push for more education training beyond high school in the coming years.

Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program and Significance of the High School Counselor

In 1990, Texas Education Agency published the Comprehensive Development Guidance and Counseling Program (CDGP) for Texas public schools which included four components: (1) Guidance Curriculum, (2) Responsive Services, (3) Individual Planning, and (4) System Support. In 1998, the CDGP was updated by TEA and the Guidance Advisory Committee to address more recent campus trends for guidance on Texas campuses (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Currently, school counselors are under the 2004 Guidance Plan (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

High school counselors are the personnel in local districts who guide students within the CDGP to experience career awareness throughout elementary, middle, and

high school (Texas Education Agency, 2008). High school counselors are also responsible for ensuring that students complete secondary requirements and transition on to the college level and they can play a significant role with the local implementation of AchieveTexas. “ Schools that fully implement the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program exhibit students with increased test and in class scores, better quality interactions with teachers, are satisfied with their education and its relevance to their future, and report that they are exposed to college and career information” (Texas Counseling Association, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Employers in Texas have expressed that students are not adequately being communicated the importance of future occupations and that without this knowledge there are critical shortages of qualified workers (Legislative Budget Board, 2013 p. 460). American high schools are facing the challenges of global competition and the need for graduates to possess higher skill levels (Achieve and the Education Trust, 2008) Currently in Texas, 72% of high school students are graduating from high school (Texas Counselors Association, 2013) and over 80% of jobs require middle or high skill which means they require some training or postsecondary education. Over the past decade, Texas has not sufficiently prepared students for college and career. “Only about 55% of high school graduates attend college which ranks Texas at 42nd nationwide” (Texas Counseling Association, 2013). Recent statistics show that for every one hundred 9th graders in high schools, only fourteen of these students finish college, and only 33% of entire state of Texas has some postsecondary education. In addition, many students who do attend college require some form of remedial coursework. In Texas, about 38% of

students who attend a two-year college and 24% of students who attend a four year university need some form of remediation (Texas Public Policy Foundation, 2007). Currently, approximately 30% of students are dropping out of high school in Texas (National Career Pathways Network, 2009). This information has resulted in the development of AchieveTexas and other statewide initiatives such as the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (Texas College and Career Readiness Standards, 2008).

Career pathway frameworks such as AchieveTexas are a way local districts can bridge educational gaps and prepare students for both postsecondary pursuits and career aspirations. School counselors are the key personnel guiding students to make logical choices while in high school that will directly impact their future college or career path. This research was the first to focus on the perceptions of high school counselors concerning local implementation efforts of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative framework and the information helps with future examination of AchieveTexas.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which school districts in Regions 13 and 20 in Texas were actively implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas as perceived by high school counselors. High school counselors are the faculty in the school that aid students in selecting courses and deciding on career pathways. Data, as reported by high school counselors in Region 13 and 20 in Texas, were collected to determine perceptions of indicators of success from local implementation such as attendance rates, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test scores increasing, and student motivation. Identification of any possible barriers encountered by high school counselors during the implementation process was also studied. Furthermore,

high school counselors identified how their time was spent as it related to the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Model. There are obvious connections between this model and the eight implementation steps of AchieveTexas.

The insights of high school counselors add to current knowledge related to AchieveTexas. School districts need more information on workforce development and the employment outlook for the various Career Clusters™ and this study focused on this through the high school counselor's view point.

The following research questions guided this study.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do high school counselors perceive that their local districts were implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas Initiative?
2. How much time do high school counselors spend on AchieveTexas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Program?
3. What indicators of success do high school counselors observe with the implementation of AchieveTexas (e.g. attendance rates, higher Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores)?
4. What barriers do school counselors encounter within the eight implementation steps of the AchieveTexas initiative?

Definition of Terms

AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative is a college and career readiness program that is sponsored by the Texas Education Agency. Funding for the initiative comes from the Carl D. Perkins IV Career and Technical Education Reauthorization Act of 2006 (www.achievetexas.org).

B.E.S.T. is a Business Education Success Team (www.achievetexas.org).

Career Clusters™ are a way of organizing curricula, instructions and assessment around specific occupational groups. Texas has adopted the U. S. Department of Education's Career Cluster™ System and there are 16 broad Career Clusters™ (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Career guidance is structured developmental experiences presented by the school counselor from kindergarten through 12 that helps students determine their abilities, skills, and overall personal and career interests (www.tea.state.tx.us).

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is education that prepares students for the workforce; formerly called vocational education.

Career pathways are clusters of occupations within each career cluster used to provide students an academic foundation in a concentrated area that will lead to various careers (Hull, 1993).

The *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Reauthorization Act of 2006* was federal legislation supporting secondary and postsecondary programs that build the academic, career and technical skills of students (www.acteonline.org)

Constructivism is a theory of learning relating to philosophy and psychology. Learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from their experience (Fosnot, 1996; Steffe & Gale, 1995).

An *extended learning experience* is learning that is done outside the classroom such as membership in a Career and Technical Student Organization, an internship, job shadowing or service learning (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

An Education Service Center (ESC) provides educational assistance to educators.

There are 20 Education Service Centers in Texas. The Region 13 ESC is in Austin, Texas, and the Region 20 ESC is in San Antonio, Texas, and surrounding areas (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Professional School Counselor must hold a master's degree and have two years of classroom teaching experience

Professional development is training for educators and school counselors to help them stay current on trends and legislation in education.

Program of study (POS) is a way of organizing curricula and educational activities within a career cluster related to a specific academic or career goal. POS highlight the academic, social and career preparation needed to obtain the identified career goal (www.achievetexas.org).

Seamless transition refers to the delivery of a curriculum or program that promotes efficiency by reducing duplication of courses and provides logical progression of courses that meets the requirements of two or more educational organizations (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

A Texas Achievement Plan (TAP) is an educational plan based on Programs of Study suggesting the high school courses needed to prepare students for graduation and transition to postsecondary education (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Assumptions and Limitations

- Participants understood the voluntary nature of their participation and those who completed the survey gave consent by participating in the study.

- Participants provided honest responses for survey items, and had a common understanding of the terminology and concepts related to the study.
- All participants were high school counselors in Region 13 and 20 of Texas.
- High school counselors' self-reported perceptions were the primary source of data of the study which must be considered in the interpretation of the results. Self-report instruments carry limitations such as the possibility of the participants providing socially acceptable responses. To better address the limitation, the instrument was completed anonymously to increase the participants' desire to respond honestly.
- The convenience sample population of high school counselors in Texas in Regions 13 and 20 prevents the generalization of the findings to school counselors in other schools, in other areas of the state, and across the United States.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review begins with Constructivism which is the guiding theoretical framework for this study, the evolution of CTE (i.e. the legislative acts that have contributed to the development of CTE in the United States) is presented next, Programs of Study and Career Clusters, the College and Career Readiness standards are presented, followed by a discussion of the components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program (which defines the roles of school counselors as identified by the Texas Education Agency), and lastly, the synthesis of these roles in the implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative is presented. The perceptions of high school counselors in the local implementations efforts of AchieveTexas are the focus of this study.

Theoretical Framework

In the past, vocational guidance has been based on career development theories from a “objectivist” point of view, such as Super’s (1990) life span trait and factor theory (where students would identify personality traits related to choice of work), Krumboltz’s social learning theory (Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1996) emphasizing people’s learning experiences are shaped by their personalities and Gottfredson’s (1996) theory of circumscription and compromise (where individuals socialization and environment determines their career choice). However in recent years, social constructivist career development theory has moved to the forefront (Griedr-Reed, Conkel-Ziebell, 2009). According to Chen, 2003, “Social constructivist theory believes career development is a

socially constructed process that reflects individual actions and the person's interactions with others". "Constructivism career development is a way to merge trait factor, development and post-modern theories to help students' maneuver in the 21st century" (Grier-Reed et al, 2003). Constructivism is based upon the following eight points and how it supports the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative, as well as how the school counselor specifically can be instrumental in providing this type of "constructivist" learning environment.

"Learning should take place in authentic, real-world environments".

School counselors who teach and guide students within the framework of AchieveTexas offer real-world information to aide students in finding their career pathways. According to Gysbers (2008) , students who receive career counseling during high school tend to have higher grades, more satisfaction with their school experience and more progress toward future employment. School counselors, too, are learning through newly-acquired constructs to guide and assist students. During the high school years, students can obtain work-based learning experiences such as an apprenticeship, internships and job shadowing programs. These are real-world work experiences for students (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

"Learning should involve social negotiation and mediation".

Social interaction between the school counselor and the students provides new and varied constructs for learning. "School counselors increase students' on task behavior and academic performance and reduce disruptive behaviors "(Texas Counseling Association, 2013). Both the counselor and the students gain experience and information from the interactions in which they engage. For example, socialization in the form of

interactions with teachers, school counselors, administrators, and other students requires students to build new constructs based on their interactions with the other parties. As students move toward particular career pathways, interactions with others within the context of their learning environments can help them to decide whether they enjoy the “social context” of that particular career pathway or not. Throughout the duration of their high school years, trial and error in interactions with others can help the students make career decisions that can potentially save them valuable time and money in the future.

“Content and skills should be made relevant to the learner”.

If knowledge is to matter to a person, it must be relevant to the individual’s current situation (Doolittle & Camp, 1999, Pintrich & Scunk, 1996). If the school counselor understands the relevancy of the AchieveTexas initiative, then their acceptance and support of it will likely be increased. Content and skills should be understood within a framework of the learner’s prior knowledge. According to Ruby Payne, for learning to occur one must “convert the concrete to abstract”. These are called mental models which are structures or patterns of information (Payne, 2007). These can include various learning experiences such as telling a story, visual-aides, analogies or metaphors (Payne, 2007). POS are mental models that promote comprehension of a challenging mental task (Alexander, 2013). AchieveTexas POS provide a framework to enable each district to create templates for their students based on Career ClustersTM of their choice. POS are also the threads that students, teachers, parents, and counselors can use to make sense of the curriculum, sequence of courses, and career goals for students (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

“Learners should be assessed formatively to inform future learning experiences”.

Learning is an invisible, ongoing process. Students must be continually assessed to determine how learning is occurring. During the process of creating a career portfolio, or Texas Achievement Plan, a student may realize that a particular career does not appeal to them. At this stage, it is imperative that the counselor acknowledge this information and use it as a teachable moment upon which to build. They can also use career guidance resources to reassess students. Therefore, it is important that the Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs) be reviewed at least once a year to address any changes by the student (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

“Students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware”.

This concept is at the core of constructivism, which holds that “all learners are active participants in their construction of knowledge and meaning (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). Vgotsky (1978) emphasized that learners build on mental signs in order to identify concepts and/or relationships. Piaget (1977) believed that “students construct new knowledge based on the generalization of new relationships. In relation to both these theorists’ views, the Center for Public Education in “Defining a 21st Century Education” (2013) emphasized the importance of creating well rounded students who were ready to transition to work. “When students’ create their own learning plans, they are engaged in their own development and success” (Chait et al, 2007).

“Educators are Facilitators of learning”.

School counselors began their careers as teachers (Texas Education Agency, 2013) and have been trained to solve problems and identify opportunities for students in the

school environment. AchieveTexas' vision is for educators to function as active advisers to students. School counselors are very influential in helping students to decide on a career path and with their position, spend many hours with students (Texas Education Agency, 2008). All educators, counselors included can integrate the College and Career Readiness Standards in their learning environments and can help students to connect the classroom to the real-world setting

“Educators provide multiple perspectives”.

The school environment including school counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents are all resources who help students understand the AchieveTexas Initiative and how to construct meaning for their futures with student course selections and TAPs (Texas Education Agency, 2008). Implementing new initiatives requires effort by all personnel in a school district. The first step of any initiative is to build acceptance. The school counselor is vital in helping members of both the school and the local community to understand the concept of Career Clusters™, as well as, the Texas Achievement Plans. The TAPs helps students to think about their long term plans before their postsecondary education begins and to plan for their futures.

The Evolution of Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE), formerly vocational education, has been a part of public education curriculum in the United States for more than 100 years. In the early 1900s, the establishment of CTE programs in public schools was to develop a national workforce that was educated and that could be competitive in a global society. During the past century, governmental support of CTE in public schools has continued to

reflect the need for secondary students to pursue post-secondary education. Legislative decisions have impacted CTE over the past century (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 *Federal Legislation Supporting Career and Technology Education*

Legislation Date	Legislative Act	Major Provision
1917	The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917.	Created funds for career and technical programs (Barlow, 1976).
1937	The George-Dean Act	Funds home economics education and research (Parker, 1987).
1946	George-Barden Act	Extended vocational funding (Parker, 1987).
1963 (amended in '68,'72)	The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (Included Smith Hughes Act of 1917)	Increased funding for vocational education and reauthorized SH funding (Paulter, 1999).
1976	Educational Ammendments of 1976, Title II	Legislation emphasized planning and accountability. Five year plans adopted and an annual plan/accountability report required.
1990	The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act –Career and Technology Education (Perkins II)	Encouraged school to work transition. Funded Tech Prep and focused on vocational-technical education reform and a post secondary education.
1990 (amended in the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994)	Tech Prep	Joined secondary and postsecondary (P-16) education programs.
1994 (authorized in 1984 and reauthorized 1998)	The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1994(Perkins III).	Development of articulated secondary and postsecondary education programs (Brown, 2000).
2006-current	The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (Perkins IV)	Changed name to Career and Technical Education and provided a coherent and rigorous content combining academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills. Programs of Study.

Smith-Hughes Act of 1917

The Smith Hughes Act was the first vocational education act implemented by the U.S. federal government. The Act was the initial catalyst for the movement toward segregation of vocational education from other components of comprehensive high school curricula in public schools. In addition to providing federal funds for career and technical programs in schools in order to prepare blue-collar students with practical knowledge and skills for work in the home, on farms, and in factories (Barlow, 1976; Lynch, 2000), the Act specifically stipulated that schools receiving funds were to solely allocate them to support the needs of such programs. In addition, the Act conveyed the government's intent for schools to use the money to hire vocational teachers who possessed adequate experience in their areas of instruction.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act

Near the end of the 20th century, the U.S. government demonstrated its continuing commitment to support and promotion of CTE in public schools with its authorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act in 1984 (i.e., the Perkins Act). The Perkins Act emphasized articulated secondary and postsecondary education programs for a seamless transition from secondary to postsecondary programs. (Brown, 2000). Primary focus was on the following:

- (a) promoting integrated career and technology and academic curricula and instruction,
- (b) developing technical preparation education, (c) promoting participation of special populations (d) developing state systems of performance standards and measures, and (e) incorporating all aspects of industry into the curricula and instruction.

Perkins II

In 1990, the Perkins Act was amended, and the resulting revisions legislation came to be known as Perkins II. The revised Act focused on vocational-technical education reform and encouraged college education for secondary students. Through the Perkins II legislation, Tech Prep was funded with articulation agreements between schools and community colleges (Silverbers, et al., 2004; Steinberg, 1998).

As a result of the authorization of Perkins II in 1990, Tech Prep articulated secondary and post-secondary (P-16) education programs and focused on the following: (a) an associate degree or two year certificate, (b) technical preparation in at least one field of engineering technology, applied science, mechanical, industrial, or practical art or trade, or agriculture, health or business, (c) student competence in mathematics, science and communication through a sequence of courses, and (d) gainful employment. (U.S. Congress, P.L. 101-391, 1990). In essence, the purpose of Tech Prep was to build a bridge between the students' experiences in high school and their responsibilities in life (Bragg, Layton, & Hammond, 1994). In April 2011, federal budget revisions indicated that Tech Prep would no longer be funded.

Perkins III

The Perkins Act was revised yet again in 1998, and the emphasis of the resulting legislation (i.e., Perkins III) was quality vocational and technical programs with academic integration. With this revision, CTE was no longer a separate entity. Instead, Perkins III supported the alignment of career and technical education program reform with state and local reform efforts.

Perkins IV

With the 2006 reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, also known as Perkins IV, three critical areas were revised: (a) the name change to career and technical education instead of vocational education, (b) Tech Prep became a separate federal funding stream, and (c) state funding was maintained at 5 percent of a state's allocation. Specific indicators of program success were introduced, including licensures, certifications, and postsecondary program enrollment and states were required to offer career and technical programs of study (POS), which could be adopted by local educational agencies and postsecondary institutions. The POS were to include four components:

- Incorporation and alignment of secondary education and postsecondary education elements;
- Academic and CTE aligned in a progression of courses
- Opportunity for secondary education students to participate in dual or concurrent enrollment programs or other ways to acquire postsecondary education credits; and
- Opportunity to earn an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree

(<http://cte.ed.gov/acrn/ncdg/ncd>)

Perkins IV from 2007 through 2013

Perkins IV was reauthorized again in July 2007 for six years through 2013. The United States Department of Education continued the Perkins grant for 2013-2014. Currently, Texas Education Agency requires each secondary school receiving federal Perkins funding to offer at least three career pathways (TAC 74.3). However, school

districts are encouraged to go beyond this minimum requirement. Former Career and technical education (CTE) Programs now include several clusters within their framework. Family and Consumer Sciences includes the career clusters Education and Training, Human Services and Hospitality and Tourism. Agricultural Sciences is now Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and Business Education now encompasses Business Management & Administration, Finance and Information Technology. CTE courses provide applied knowledge with a career focus. CTE courses are grouped in “coherent” sequences that coincide with a common goal and help students explore careers. Career Pathways provide a structure in leading to a career (Legislative Budget Board, 2013).

Program of Study Models

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), issued a design framework to help states incorporate the four Perkins funding requirements. The POS Model identified ten key components supporting the development and implementation of POS. These included: (1) legislation and policies, (2) partnerships, (3) course sequences, (4) college and career readiness standards, (5) teaching and learning strategies, (6) guidance counseling and academic advisement, (7) credit transfer agreements, (8) professional development, (9) technical skills assessments, and (10) accountability and evaluation systems (Jardine, Klein, & Schoelkopf, 2010). State and local agencies were allowed to identify the specific objectives to be addressed in their POS with consideration of geographical differences among schools, as well as educational, workforce, and economic situations (Programs of Study: Local Implementation Readiness and Capacity Self-Assessment, 2010).

College and Career Readiness in Texas

The College and Career Readiness Standards resulted from the 79th legislation identified the knowledge and skill set that a student must acquire in order to be successful at the postsecondary level (Texas College and Career Readiness Standards, 2008).

College and Career Readiness Standards differ from the high school graduation standards in that they focus on overall content and high level thinking. High school courses provide core knowledge, skills, literacy and math (Texas College and Career Readiness Standards, 2000). According to Conley (2010), there are four criteria that define college and career readiness for the student:

- *Key cognitive Strategies* include problem formulation, research, interpretation
- *Key Content Knowledge* include foundational content and “big ideas” from core subjects
- *Academic Behaviors* self management skills: including time management, study skills, goal setting, self-awareness, and persistence
- *Contextual Skills and Awareness* (transitions) include admission requirements, college types, affording college, college culture and relationships with professors (Conley, 2010).

“Rigorous college and career readiness standards should include a full range of academic and cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills that students need to be successful in entry-level college courses and in entry-level careers” (Programs of Study: Local Implementation Readiness and Capacity Self- Assessment, 2010).

Conley (2010) identified seven Principles of College and Career Readiness:

- (1) Create a college-going environment,
- (2) Align core academic programs with College Readiness Standards,

- (3) Have students apply self-management skills and academic behaviors,
- (4) Help college and career become real for students,
- (5) Develop assignments and grading more like college,
- (6) Construct the senior year to be more challenging, and
- (7) Build a connection with postsecondary programs (Conley, 2010).

Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program

In 1990, TEA published the Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program (CDGP) for Texas Public Schools, which included four components of comprehensive guidance programs in Texas. Currently, counselors follow the 2004 revised version.

The first component, guidance curriculum, refers to the systematic inclusion of guidance content for all students in a school. The second component, responsive services, refers to school counselors' activities that address immediate concerns of students on a daily basis. Individual planning, the third component, refers to school counselors' systems for helping students monitor their own progress and development over time and the final component of the Texas CDGP is system support, which includes counselors' contributions to school programs and staff support activities.

In addition to the development of a CDGP, TEA also identified six basic roles from which school counselors might act in their implementation of a CDGP. The roles included: (a) guidance, (b) counseling, (c) consultation, (d) coordination, (e) assessment, and (f) program management. As explained by TEA, in their role as guidance counselor, school counselors are to aid teachers who teach the guidance curriculum at their schools and to assist students in determining their educational, career and overall personal plans. Regarding the second identified role (i.e., counseling), school counselors are to possess

Master's degrees in counseling and to counsel students individually, as well in small groups, using research-based theories such as counseling practice. The overall systematic effectiveness of the guidance program in a school is directly related to the counselor-to-student ratio at the school. Texas recommendation is one counselor per 350 students and a mandatory ratio of one counselor per 500 students district-wide at the elementary level (Cloutd, 1994). When a counselor has a larger ratio, the students receive less individual attention. District or campus staff may identify students who are high priority and thus require more individual or small group attention, and a smaller student to counselor ratio would reflect that. Depending on the demographics of a given campus, the number of students in a counselor's load who have a need for more individual time would dictate lower ratios overall. Considerations for special needs populations need to be taken into account which include students who are educationally/economically disadvantaged, physically/emotionally disabled or abused, transient students, possible dropouts, and migrant (Texas Education Agency, 2013). These students have added challenges that require more time to address.

The school counselor is often the liaison between students, parents, school, and community. Therefore, the school counselor who works from the role of consultant serves as a child advocate on campus. Advocacy efforts of the counselor involve helping students and their families and the school community with immediate concerns and long term planning regarding the student. In addition, school counselors working from the role of coordinator engage in collaborative efforts with school personnel and community agencies to gather resources for at-risk students. Assessment, which is the fifth identified role of school counselors, involves leading the implementation of campus state testing

programs and interpreting the assessment results for the district. Finally, in their program management role, counselors plan and implement various programs within the school, including the Safe and Drug Free School Initiative, tobacco-free campaigns, and various parental involvement programs. In addition, school counselors are responsible for overseeing the local implementation of these programs.

School Counselor's Roles Related to the Eight Implementation Steps of AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative

Texas Education Agency created AchieveTexas based on Career Clusters™ and POS. Within the AchieveTexas framework, students have opportunities to take courses, experience extended learning, and create possible future career paths all while in high school (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative is based on the following eight steps and the high school counselor's roles are identified within each step.

Step 1: Implement AchieveTexas

In the first step of AchieveTexas implementation, Career Clusters™ and POS are introduced to the faculty, the parents and the students. School counselors inform all school personnel of how AchieveTexas addresses a rigorous curriculum, incorporates the College and Career Readiness Standards, incorporates individual learning, promotes programs for postsecondary success, and helps students to become contributing members of society (Texas Education Agency, 2008). In Step 1 the school district might plan special meetings with educational partners. For example, the school counselor's role might be that of coordination to present a program to students' parents to educate them

about the POS in the school or to inform them of Career Clusters™ that are offered at the local district.

Step 2: Span all grades

Students must be exposed to career information and exploration at all levels of education. The school counselors' role is to provide guidance at all levels of education. School counselors guide and counsel students to: (a) begin identifying careers at the elementary level, (b) exploring possible careers at the middle school level, (c) discovering a career cluster or pathway by the high school level, (d) preparing and studying for a career at the postsecondary level, and (e) choosing a career for themselves (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Step 3: Implement Texas Achievement Plans

Students need a plan for the future. Working with school counselors with career awareness beginning at the elementary level, and with career exploration activities beginning at the middle school level, students in high schools have a real advantage over college-aged students who are just beginning to examine career choices. With AchieveTexas, all eighth-grade student students should begin high school with a POS that includes a college education, a training goal, and a career choice. This is called a Texas Achievement Plan (i.e., TAP). The TAP is reviewed at least once per year with the school counselor and includes updates that need to be made as the student begins to decide on their career path in high school (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Step 4: Enhance guidance

While students are exploring careers, they need guidance from supportive adults. This is the primary role that the school counselor provides at the school. It is important

that the school counselor is available and able to counsel and guide students as they go through the career exploration process (Texas Education Agency, 2008). Enhancing the guidance students receive includes making them aware of local job opportunities and of the ways their current interests and education could lead them to a job in their community. School Counselors assist students to see the relationship between the courses they take and their future careers (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Step 5: Build seamless connections

To build seamless connections in education means transitioning students from each level of education to the next in a coherent and logical way. The school counselors within the local school districts are program managers and help teachers to provide sequences of courses and challenging curriculum. “The idea is to build a program that provides a smooth educational path from elementary, middle school, high school through post-secondary education and on to a meaningful career” (Texas Education Agency, 2008). Building a seamless educational experience allows room for students to earn certifications and college credits while in high school. Dual credit, advanced technical credit, or articulation agreements with local community colleges are options for students (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Step 6: Establish extended learning

Learning is an ongoing experience. Students are motivated when their learning extends beyond the classroom and applies to a real-world setting. School counselors’ (in their various roles of guidance, counseling, coordination and program management) are key members in the school that can emphasize various types of educational opportunities in students’ lives to help advance them to college and future careers. Career and

Technical Student Organizations (CTSO), apprenticeships, occupational training programs, internships, and job shadowing programs are various venues that school counselors can use to extend students' learning to real-world environments. "These type experiences are considered 'co-curricular' rather than extra-curricular due to the high quality learning experiences that are linked to the classroom experiences" (Texas Education Agency, 2010, p. 29).

Step 7: Build strong partnerships

Building partnerships within the school, among the parents, and within the community is a critical aspect of successful implementation of the AchieveTexas program and of the school counselor on a daily basis. In the initial stages, school counselors act as program manager and can assist the school and local community in determining the vision for their AchieveTexas program. Local stakeholders can be involved to discuss what clusters are of importance in the local community and what type of extended learning partnerships can be formed (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Step 8: Offer professional development

For AchieveTexas to be successful long-term, all key personnel need to be educated about the initiative. School counselors can help guide their faculty to understand the importance of the AchieveTexas Initiative by coordinating a rigorous curriculum built on Career ClustersTM and POS, and to help the school district align the programs from elementary to postsecondary education (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Summary

The College and Career Readiness Standards and the Eight Steps of AchieveTexas are the framework on which to build a coherent sequence of courses at the

local level. Texas has created 122 POS models to guide students to guide students within the 16 Career Clusters™ and these documents help students see the relationship between the courses they are taking and what they could do in the future. AchieveTexas was created to help students become life-long learners by designing their high school curriculum experience as a foundation for their future career choice (Texas Education Agency, 2008). To date, there have been no studies pertaining to school counselor perceptions of local implementation of AchieveTexas. Yet, the need continues for studies on AchieveTexas local implementation efforts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand high school counselors' perceptions of the integration of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative at the local level, determine how much time high school counselors spent on the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance program (including AchieveTexas), and identify the perceptions of success or barriers within the implementation process.

In order to identify success or barriers during implementation of the AchieveTexas initiative, the perspective of the high school counselors, who are essential for implementation at the local level, must be understood. The following research questions guided this study.

Research Questions

1. To what extent did high school counselors perceive their local districts implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas Initiative?
2. How much time do school counselors spend on AchieveTexas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Program?
3. What indicators of success did the high school counselors observe with the implementation of AchieveTexas (e.g. attendance rates, higher TAKS scores)?
4. What barriers did high school counselors encounter with the eight implementation steps of the AchieveTexas Initiative?

Research Design

The quantitative study collected data through a self-report survey instrument designed to examine to what extent high school counselors perceive their local districts implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas Initiative, the amount of time spent on Achieve Texas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Program, what indicators of success did the high school counselors observe with the implementation of AchieveTexas, and what barriers high school counselor encountered with the eight steps of the AchieveTexas Initiative.

Sample

The convenience sample for this study included high school counselors in Regions 13 and 20 in Texas. These regions were targeted because their districts have offered and/or received professional development for counselors regarding the local implementation of AchieveTexas. In addition, several of the local districts within these two regions have been identified by the AchieveTexas as having best practices as identified by AchieveTexas coordinator Dr. Karen Alexander. According to Texas Education Agency, there are 677 high school counselors in the two regions surveyed. The researcher attempted to survey all 677 high school counselors and 105 participants responded. Approximately half (49%) of the surveys were incomplete resulting in a sample size of 53 useable survey responses.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a modified version of *Survey 201, Self-Assessment: Eight Steps of the AchieveTexas Implementation* developed by Alexander

and Brown (2009) for the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative. Instrument modification and approval was granted by the lead author (Alexander) for this dissertation study. The survey instrument was comprised of 35 questions including the following sections: (1) background information, (2) the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental School Guidance Program, (3) local implementation, (4) the Eight Steps of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative, (5) indicators of success, (6) barriers to implementation and (7) comments and suggestions.

Pilot Study

In the spring of 2012, the instrument was sent to current school counselors in Region 19 of Texas for a pilot test to determine readability and validity. The potential participants were notified via email through a Region 19 ESC contact (Appendix A). Attached to the email was a consent letter informing the counselors of the survey, its purpose, an invitation to participate, and a link to Survey Monkey to begin the survey (Appendix B). Feedback was requested from the respondents regarding the pilot survey to assist the researcher with the design of the final survey. Respondents were asked to provide comments and suggestions regarding clarity of items and organization of questions and to specify difficulty of items or redundancy.

At the completion of this survey, all participants were given an opportunity to register to win a \$25 Visa Gift Card. Thirteen high school counselors answered the pilot study. The feedback included suggestions for improving instrument readability, layout, sequencing, and purpose. In addition, data obtained from the pilot study were used to determine instrument validity. The instrument was reviewed by the dissertation committee for face validity prior to the pilot study. Revisions made to the survey

following the pilot study included clarification of content for readability based on feedback from the pilot study and the dissertation committee provided an additional review of these suggested changes.

Data Collection

The modified study instrument was comprised of 35 questions, which were used for gathering data related to (a) participants' background information, (b) the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental School Guidance Program, (c) school counselors' local implementation efforts of the AchieveTexas program, (d) the eight steps of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative, (e) participants' indicators of successful implementation, (f) participants' perceived barriers to implementation; and finally, (g) optional comments from participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this quantitative study utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20 for Windows) with each subscale being analyzed separately. As data was received by SurveyMonkey™, it was entered into SPSS to run statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentage were used to analyze the responses. SurveyMonkey™ kept all responses anonymous and all responses were recorded directly to the site and no personal information was collected. The researcher used only compiled data.

Participant, District, and Campus Demographics of the Sample

In total, 105 surveys were submitted from high school counselors in Texas Educational Regions 13 and 20. Of the 105 submitted surveys, approximately half were incomplete and, therefore, were eliminated from the sample. Participants were asked to

provide background information related to participants' years of experience as high school counselors. The distribution of participants based on their years of experience is as follows: 0-1 years = 1.9% ($N=1$), 2-5 years = 20.8 % ($N=11$), 6-10 years = 30.2% ($N=16$), 11-15 years = 18.9% ($N=10$), and 16 + years = 28.3 % ($N=15$).

Regarding counselors-to-student ratios on the campuses represented by the sample, the mean was 367.47, with a minimum of one counselor per 45 students and a maximum of one counselor to 574 students. Participants were asked to identify characteristics of school districts and campuses, affiliated Texas education region, school district size, and campus grade levels (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 *District and Campus Characteristics*
 $N=53$

Variable	#	%
Texas Education Region		
Region 13	36	67.9
Region 20	17	32.1
District Size		
1A	4	7.5
2A	4	7.5
3A	7	13.2
4A	19	35.8
5A	19	35.8
Setting		
Rural	21	39.6
Suburban	25	45.3
Urban	8	15.1
Campus Grade Levels		
9-12th Grades	48	90.6
10-12th Grades	3	5.7
PK-12th Grades	1	1

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which school districts in Texas Educational Regions 13 and 20 were actively implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas as perceived by high school counselors. The study addressed the following four research questions.

1. To what extent are Region 13 and 20 high school counselors implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas?
2. How much time do high school counselors' spend on AchieveTexas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Program?
3. What indicators' of success (e.g. graduation rates, lower dropout rates, etc.) are the high school counselors observing in their school?
4. What barriers have high school counselors in Region 13 and 20 encountered in the implementation of the AchieveTexas initiative?

This chapter presents the results of the data analyses for the four stated research questions. Within that discussion is a presentation of the descriptive statistics of participants' responses to survey items that relate to each of the eight steps of the AchieveTexas implementation process. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results as they relate to research questions, two, three, and four, respectively.

Research Question 1

The first research question was: To what extent are Region 13 and 20 high school counselors implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas?

Step 1: Implement AchieveTexas.

Regarding the phases of implementation (Research question 1) among the districts and campuses represented by the population sample used for this study, about one-third of campuses are at the Initial phase of development (i.e., 2-3 years), and another third are at the Implementing phase of development (i.e., 4-5 years) of the AchieveTexas program. For campus approaches, most are using a Career and Technical Education (CTE) approach, rather than an approach that is school-wide.

Participants' were asked to identify the specific criteria used for determining which Career Clusters™ would be addressed on their campuses (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 *Criteria for Career Cluster Selection and Consideration (N=53)*

	<i>f</i>	%
Student needs or interest	39	73.6
Community interest of concerns	23	43.4
Economic development factors	33	62.3

Participants' responses revealed that the three Career Clusters™ most frequently represented by programs of study on participants' campuses were: (a) Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications; (b) Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; and (c) Health Science (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 *Career Clusters Offered on Campus*

	<i>f</i>	%
Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	40	75.5
Architecture and Construction	26	49.1
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	43	81.1
Business, Management & Administration	36	67.9
Education & Training	30	56.6
Finance	18	34
Government & Public Administration	10	18.9
Health Science	40	75.5
Hospitality & Tourism	20	37.7
Human Services	27	50.9
Information Technology	25	47.2
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	22	41.5
Manufacturing	10	18.9
Marketing, Sales & Service	14	26.4
Science, Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM)	28	52.8
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	19	35.8

Arts, AV Technology, and Communications was the Career Clusters™ most commonly-represented with 81.1% ($f=43$) of respondents indicating programs of study related to that cluster on their campuses. There was an equal representation (75.5%, $f=40$) of the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources and the Health Science Career Clusters™ as indicated by the frequency distribution data. Of the 16 Career Clusters™, the least-represented were Government and Public Administration and Manufacturing, both for which only 18.9% ($f=10$) of respondents indicated POS on their campuses (Table 4.2).

Step 2: Span All Grades.

Regarding methods of directing career development in the school districts the large number of respondents (78.9%, $f=42$) either agreed (28%) or strongly agreed (50.9%) that students' identified career goals were used to plan their post-secondary education programs. Likewise, 83.3% ($f=44$) strongly agreed that students in their school districts consider potential career plans when selecting courses from those offered at their high schools. In reference to the discussion of careers at the elementary level, almost a quarter (23%, $f=12$) did not know to what extent this was accomplished at the elementary schools in their districts, which likely is because all of the sample participants were high school counselors (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 *Counselor Perceptions of Career Education Spanning All Grade Levels Promoting College and Career Readiness (N=53)*

	Don't know		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Discuss careers at the elementary	12	22.6	0	0	0	0	6	11.3	20	38	15	28.3
Explore various careers at the middle school	5	9.4	1	1.9	1	1.9	5	9.4	26	49	15	28.3
Consider potential career plans when selecting courses at the high school	1	1.9	2	3.8	1	1.9	5	9.4	20	38	24	45.3
Plan post secondary education programs based on identified career goals	1	1.9	2	3.8	1	1.9	7	13.2	15	28	27	50.9
Complete post secondary education programs	1	1.9	1	1.9	3	5.7	9	17	25	47	14	26.4
Accomplish career plans	4	7.5	1	1.9	3	5.7	10	18.9	22	42	13	24.5
Develop life-long learning	1	1.9	1	1.9	4	7.5	10	18.9	22	42	15	28.3

Step 3: Implement Texas Achievement Plans

The first section pertaining to Step 3 included three items for which participants were to choose a response from a Likert scale that included the following six response options: *Don't Know*, *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. Descriptions of methods specific to each question were described on each subscale (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 *Step 3 How Campuses devise the Implementation Texas Achievement Plans (N=53)*

	Don't know		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Career Clusters of interest	3	5.7	2	3.8	3	5.7	9	17	27	51	9	17
High school courses that are compatible with their education/	0	0	2	3.8	2	3.8	9	17	26	49	14	26
Postsecondary education or career goal	0	0	2	3.8	1	1.9	12	23	25	47	13	25
State approved AchieveTexas Programs of Study	7	13	3	5.7	6	11	10	19	20	38	6	11
Students' career goals or interests	1	1.9	2	3.8	3	5.7	4	7.5	31	59	12	23
Extended learning opportunities	2	3.8	2	3.8	3	5.7	12	23	24	45	9	17
Career Portfolios to showcase students' abilities	6	11	3	5.7	10	19	11	21	15	28	7	13

The third section pertaining to Step 3 consisted of only one item. The item was: “In my school, components of the Texas Achievement Plan could support the Personal Graduation Plan [(PGP)].” The response options that were offered were, “Yes,” “No,” and “I don’t know.” The large majority of respondents (88.7 %, $f=47$) indicated that their campus TAPs could support students’ PGPs. Only 7.5% ($f=4$) indicated that their campus TAPs could not support their students’ PGPs, and 3.8% ($f=2$) did not know whether or not their campus TAPs were supportive of students’ PGPs.

Step 4: Enhance Guidance

Although the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that both academic and career counseling are made priorities on their campuses, research revealed that academic counseling (86.8%, $f=46$) was more commonly identified as a priority than was career counseling (60.4%, $f=32$). A similar response pattern was identified for the amount of time available for academic and career counseling, with 64.1% ($f=34$) reporting adequate time for academic counseling and 52.8% ($f=28$) reporting adequate time for career counseling. For students-to-counselor ratios, 58.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the ratios are conducive to quality one-on-one counseling with students.

The second section pertaining to Step 4 included nine items, also Likert-format and containing the same response choices as items in the first section. All of the items focused on aspects of counseling services related to system support of student career planning on participants' campuses. Three of the items addressed the extent to which respondents believe that academic planning and career guidance resources are available to not only educators, but also to students and parents. Two of the items addressed the extent to which students are involved in devising their personal academic plans, as well as their personal career goals. The degree to which comprehensive guidance software or other technologies are being used to support both academic planning and career guidance on participants' campuses was addressed by two of the items in this section. One item focused on participants' perceptions of the ways in which local AchieveTexas POS models assist students and parents with personal planning, and the final item addressed

the extent to which participants believe that teacher aide them with college and career advising.

A large number of respondents indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed academic planning and career guidance resources are available to educators (80%, $f=42$), students (89%, $f=47$), and parents (79%, $f=42$). Additionally, more than half of respondents (60.4%, $f=32$) reported that they disagreed, strongly disagreed, didn't know, or were neutral concerning whether or not students and parents were using the AchieveTexas POS model to assist them with personal planning for students (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 *Step 4 Ways to Enhance Guidance on Local Campuses (N=53)*

Availability of Counseling	Don't know		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Academic counseling is made a priority	0	0	3	5.7	1	1.9	3	5.7	16	30	30	56.6
Academic counseling is given adequate time	0	0	4	7.5	7	13.2	7	13.2	14	26	20	37.7
Career counseling is made a priority	0	0	2	3.8	10	18.9	9	17	14	26	18	34
Career counseling is given adequate time	0	0	3	5.7	11	20.8	11	20.8	13	25	15	28.3
Students to counselor ratio is conducive to quality one on one counseling	1	1.9	10	18.9	21	39.6	8	15.1	8	15	5	9.4
Academic planning and career guidance resources are available to educators	0	0	1	1.9	3	5.7	7	13.2	30	57	12	22.6
Academic planning and career guidance resources are available to parents	0	0	1	1.9	2	1.9	6	11.3	27	51	15	28.3
Local AchieveTexas Programs of Study (POS) models assist students and parents in personal planning	7	1.9	2	3.8	8	15.1	15	28.3	17	32	3	5.7
Teachers aide counselors with college and career advisement for students	2	3.8	3	5.7	10	18.9	8	15.1	23	43	7	13.2
Students are involved in setting their personal academic plans	0	0	1	1.9	2	3.8	4	7.5	29	55	17	32.1
Students are involved in setting their personal career goals	0	0	1	1.9	2	3.8	6	11.3	28	53	16	30.2
Comprehensive guidance software or other technology is being used to support academic planning	1	1.9	4	7.5	8	15.1	4	7.5	22	42	14	26.4
Comprehensive guidance software or other technology is being used to support career guidance	0	0	4	7.5	8	15.1	5	9.4	22	42	13	24.5

Step 5: Build Seamless Connections

A great majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that students on their campuses are provided opportunities to earn AP credits (91.1%, $f=48$) and to enroll

in dual credit courses (98.2%, $f=52$). Although still a majority, a much smaller and equal percentage (58.5%, $f=31$) of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that students have opportunities to earn ATCs and to enroll in an Early College High School.

The second section pertaining to Step 5 included five items. Each of the items addressed one of the following strategies: (a) faculty collaboration for curricula alignment, (b) co-development of curricula among faculty members, (c) student mastery of material in progressively challenging K-12 curricula, (d) coordination of articulation agreements that align with credits for Associate degrees, and (e) coordination of articulation agreements that align with credits for Bachelor degrees.

The participants reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed that faculty collaborate to align curricula (75.5%, $f=40$), that faculty members work together to co-develop curricula (75%, $f=40$), and that students master progressively more challenging material as they move through the grades (83%, $f=44$). Furthermore, more participants agreed and strongly agreed that articulation agreements are coordinated to align with credits for Associate degrees (62%, $f=33$) than they are to align with credits for Bachelor degrees (48%, $f=25$) (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Step 5 Build Seamless Connections for High School to College (N=53)

	Don't Know		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Options for students												
Earn Advanced Placement credit	1	1.9	1	1.9	2	3.8	1	1.9	13	24.5	35	66
Earn Advanced Technical Credit	3	5.7	6	11.3	6	11.3	7	13.2	13	24.5	18	34
Earn Dual Credit	0	0	0	0	1	1.9	0	0	15	28.3	37	69.8
Enroll in Early College High School	1	1.9	8	15.1	8	15.1	5	9.4	11	20.8	20	37.7
Work together to align curriculum	1	1.9	0	0	5	9.4	7	13.2	23	43.4	17	32.1
Work together to develop curriculum	1	1.9	1	1.9	5	9.4	6	11.3	24	45.3	16	30.2
Students achieve mastery of material in progressively challenging k12 curriculum	1	1.9	0	0	3	5.7	5	9.4	28	52.8	16	30.2
Articulation agreements are coordinated and aligned for credit with Associates degree	4	7.5	4	7.5	7	13.2	5	9.4	19	35.8	14	26.4
Articulation agreements are coordinated and aligned for credit with a Bachelor's degree	5	9.4	4	7.5	11	20.8	8	15.1	13	24.5	12	22.6

Step 6: Establish Extended Learning

Of the three types of extended learning experiences addressed in the survey, opportunity to develop skills for employability had the highest percentage of agreement followed by opportunity to join CTSOs (75.5%, $f = 40$) and, finally, career-based learning opportunities (77.4%, $f = 41$).

Step 7: Build Strong Partnerships

Results revealed that almost the entire sample of participants either disagreed, strongly disagreed, didn't know, or were neutral concerning the involvement of a B.E.S.T. in local AchieveTexas implementation efforts (88.7%, $f = 47$) and the facilitation of continuous improvements by a local B.E.S.T. (90.6%, $f = 48$). Participants indicated various responses to the rest of the items related to Step 7 (Table 4. 7).

Table 4.7 Building Strong Partnerships (N=53)

	Don't Know		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Partnerships at all grade levels are helping students succeed.	5	9.4	3	5.7	8	15.1	9	17	21	40	7	13.2
Partnerships are facilitated with local, community and work force representation.	4	7.5	2	3.8	9	17	12	23	20	38	6	11.3
The Quality of partnerships is increasing.	4	7.5	3	5.7	6	11.3	13	25	20	38	6	11.3
The Quantity of partnerships is increasing.	4	7.5	3	5.7	8	15.1	13	25	18	34	6	11.3
Regional p-16 leadership of the career cluster initiative is evident.	8	15.1	3	5.7	11	20.8	14	26	9	17	6	11.3
A BEST is assisting the AchieveTexas initiative.	15	28.3	8	15.1	11	20.8	13	25	4	7.5	2	3.8
The BEST is facilitating continuous improvements.	15	28.3	8	15.1	11	20.8	14	26	3	5.7	1	1.9

Step 8: Offer Professional Development

For all of the professional development activities addressed in this section, approximately a third of participants either didn't know about or were neutral about them. Regarding participation in AchieveTexas training, only 16.7% ($f=9$) indicated agreement that they had participated in related training activities; whereas, 26.4% ($f=14$) indicated disagreement. Of all of the professional development activities, teachers' acquisition of knowledge about emerging technologies (51.4%, $f=27$) was the one with which the most respondents agreed (Table 4.8.)

Table 4.8 *Step 8 Professional Development (N=53)*

	Don't Know		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Engaging in professional development related to AchieveTexas	9	17	5	9.4	9	17	19	35.8	6	11.3	3	5.7
Utilizing Education Service Center assistance.	3	5.7	2	3.8	10	18.9	13	24.5	19	35.8	5	9.4
Experiencing business and industry related to collaborations such as internships.	7	13.2	4	7.5	12	22.6	17	32.1	11	20.8	2	3.8
Team Teaching for academic integration.	4	7.5	4	7.5	13	24.5	11	20.8	17	32.1	2	3.8
Learning about emerging technologies and the related career opportunities.	4	7.5	2	3.8	6	11.3	12	22.6	22	41.5	5	9.4

Research Question 2

The second research question was: How much time do school counselors spend on AchieveTexas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (TCDG) framework? Descriptive statistics were used to derive results for this question. Within each of the four components, the largest number of respondents indicated that they spend only 25% or less of their time on AchieveTexas (Guidance Curriculum; 62.3%, $f = 33$, System Support, 58.5%, $f = 31$; Responsive Services; 47.2%, $f = 25$; Individual Planning, 39.6%, $f = 21$). Less than 10% respondents indicated that they spend 76-100% of their time within any one component of the TCDG framework. Within the Responsive Services and the Individual Planning components, approximately one-third of respondents agreed that they spend 26-50% of their time on AchieveTexas. Fewer respondents spend 26-50% of their time on AchieveTexas within the System Support (22.6%, $f = 12$) and the Guidance Curriculum (22.6%, $f = 12$) components (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 *Time Spent on AchieveTexas within the Texas Developmental Guidance Program*

Time Spent on AchieveTexas	0-25%		26-50%		51-75%		76- 100%	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Guidance Curriculum	33	62.3	12	22.6	3	5.7	5	9.4
Responsive Services	25	47.2	17	32.1	10	18.9	1	1.9
Individual Planning	21	39.6	19	35.8	8	15.1	5	9.4
System Support	31	58.5	12	22.6	6	11.3	3	5.7

Research Question 3

The third research question was: What indicators of success (e.g. graduation rates, lower dropout rates, etc.) do high school counselors observe as the result of implementation of AchieveTexas in their schools? Regarding successful outcomes on their campuses, three were identified. Increased enrollment in CTE courses (67.9%, $N=36$) was observed by the largest number of participants who indicated either agreed or strongly agreed. An increase in the number of applications for admission to postsecondary institutions (64.2%, $f=34$) was the second indicator, and increased graduation rates (62.3%, $f=33$) was the third indicator. Of all other outcomes, approximately half reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed to having observed them. Lastly, a majority of respondents either *didn't know*, *disagreed*, *strongly disagreed*, or *were neutral* concerning the observation of an increase in SAT and ACT scores for students on their campuses (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 *Indicators of Successful Outcomes on the Local Campuses(N=53)*

	Don't Know		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Increased student attendance	7	13.2	1	1.9	5	9.4	8	15.1	27	50.9	5	9.4
Increased enrollment in CTE Courses	7	13.2	0	0	2	3.8	8	15.1	27	50.9	9	17
Increased graduation rates	8	15.1	1	1.9	4	7.5	7	13.2	22	41.5	11	20.8
Increased administrator support	7	13.2	1	1.9	3	5.7	12	22.6	22	41.5	8	15.1
Increased parental support	8	15.1	2	3.8	3	5.7	12	22.6	21	39.6	7	13.2
Increased community buy-in to the AT	8	15.1	1	1.9	5	9.4	14	26.4	22	41.5	3	5.7
Increased partnerships with postsecondary institutions	8	15.1	1	1.9	5	9.4	10	18.9	21	39.6	7	13.2
Increased student applications to postsecondary institutions	8	15.1	1	1.9	4	7.5	6	11.3	23	43.4	11	20.8
Increased scores on Texas standardized tests	7	13.2	1	1.9	5	9.4	15	28.3	21	39.6	4	7.5
Increased SAT/ACT scores	7	13.2	1	1.9	5	9.4	15	28.3	20	37.7	5	9.4
Decreased drop- out rates	8	15.1	1	1.9	6	11.3	9	17	21	39.6	7	13.2

Research Question 4

The last research question was: What barriers have high school counselors in Texas Education Regions 13 and 20 encountered in the implementation of the AchieveTexas Initiative? The survey included a list of nine possible barriers to implementation that counselors might have encountered on their campuses. For each of the listed outcomes, participants were to choose one response from a Likert scale, which included the six following response options: *Don't Know*, *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. In relation to barriers to implementation of AchieveTexas, 69.9% ($f=36$) of respondents, the largest amount, either agreed or strongly agreed that lack of information was a barrier to implementation, followed by 60.4% ($f=32$), who indicated that lack of core teacher support was a factor. Conversely, the largest numbers reported that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that lack of counselor support 58.5% ($f=31$) and lack of career and technical teacher support (57.9%, $f=28$) are barriers to implementation. Regarding lack of AchieveTexas resources on their campuses, 81.1% ($f=43$) indicated this is a barrier (Table 4.11)

Table 4.11 *Barriers to Implementation on the Local Campuses (N=53)*

Barriers	Don't know		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Lack of information	3	5.7	2	3.8	5	9.4	6	11.3	28	52.8	8	15.1
Lack of core teacher support	6	11.3	1	1.9	9	17	11	20.8	23	43.4	3	5.7
Lack of Career and Technical teacher support	5	9.4	2	3.8	26	49.1	8	15.1	12	22.6	0	0
Lack of counselor support	6	11.3	7	13.2	24	45.3	10	18.9	4	7.5	2	3.8
Lack of administrator support	6	11.3	3	5.7	19	35.8	9	17	13	24.5	3	5.7
Lack of funding	8	15.1	2	3.8	2	3.8	9	17	21	39.6	11	20.8
Lack of professional development opportunities	6	11.3	2	3.8	3	5.7	11	20.8	22	41.5	9	17
Lack of community support	6	11.3	1	1.9	15	28.3	10	18.9	19	35.8	2	3.8
Lack of AchieveTexas resources	7	13.2	2	3.8	7	13.2	16	30.2	16	30.2	4	7.5

Summary

In this chapter, descriptive statistics related to the four research questions were presented and discussed. Participants' responses to items relating to the first question revealed that the Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications career cluster is the cluster most often represented by POS on high school campuses. Additionally, it was determined that students' identified career goals generally are being used to plan their postsecondary education programs and that campuses are working to build seamless connections between secondary and postsecondary curricula by offering students a great deal of opportunities to earn postsecondary educational credits. Participants' responses to items pertaining to the second research questions provided evidence that counselors are addressing AchieveTexas in larger groups more than in individual planning sessions with students. Regarding indicators of success, it was noted that counselors perceived increases in student enrollment in CTE courses and in the numbers of student applications to postsecondary institutions as successful outcomes of their AchieveTexas implementation efforts. Lack of core teacher support, but not counselor or CTE teacher support, was identified as an obstacle to implementation, as well as issues pertaining to lack of funding. Conclusions and suggestions for future research are presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, a discussion of the theoretical framework, interpretation of findings, and recommendations for future research related to the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative.

Summary of the Study

The framework for this study was Social Constructivism, which emphasizes that learning should take place in “authentic, real-world environments. The AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative applies components of Constructivism within its framework and provides students with opportunities for involvement in Career and Technical organizations, apprenticeships, internship and job shadowing opportunities (Step 6, Texas Education Agency, 2008). Within the Constructivism model, socialization is a key component of learning. In the school environment, students interact with administrators, counselors, teachers, and their peers every day. They learn about themselves and identify and explore career interests within this environment. The school counselors are key players in the local implementation of AchieveTexas because they provide guidance and counseling service that expose students of all ages to career information and encourage exploration of future career options in their futures (Step 4 Enhance Guidance, Texas Education Agency, 2008) The overall goal for AchieveTexas is to build networks within the campus and local community that will offer students a wide array of opportunities to construct meaning for their college or career path or both.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which school districts in Texas Education Regions 13 and 20 were implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas as perceived by high school counselors. Research questions examined not only the extent of implementation within school districts and on campuses, but also the amount of time that high school counselors spent on AchieveTexas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program. In addition, research questions addressed high school counselors' perceptions of both outcomes resulting from successful implementation efforts and barriers to the implementation process at the local level. The following four research questions were addressed in this study:

1. To what extent did school counselors perceive that their local districts were implementing the eight steps of AchieveTexas Initiative?
2. How much time do school counselors spend on AchieveTexas within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Program?
3. What indicators of success did school counselors observe with the implementation of AchieveTexas (e.g. attendance rates, higher Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores)?
4. What barriers did school counselors encounter within the eight implementation steps of the AchieveTexas initiative?

Data analysis for this quantitative study utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20 for Windows) with each subscale being analyzed separately. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses.

Interpretation of Findings

Step 1: Implement AchieveTexas

Regarding the phases of implementation (Research question 1) among the districts and campuses represented by the population sample used for this study, about one-third of campuses are at the Initial phase of development (i.e., 2-3 years), and another third are at the Implementing phase of development (i.e., 4-5 years) of the AchieveTexas program. For campus approaches, most are using a Career and Technical Education (CTE) approach, rather than an approach that is school-wide. However, the AchieveTexas program was designed to be not only a school-wide program, but also a program that is district-wide and that includes partnerships with community members and organizations. As noted, “one of the primary goals of AchieveTexas is to vastly increase the quantity and quality of partnerships supporting education....[and] the idea is to spread the tasks of program building over large groups of educators and employers” (TEA, 2008a, p. 16). That AchieveTexas primarily is mentioned only within CTE programs’ indicates that CTE teachers might be the group that carries the burden of all program building efforts on campuses. Yet, “It is critical during the early stages of system redesign [and implementation] to establish buy-in from all stakeholders” (TEA, 2008a, p. 5), which can be done by including all stakeholders including counselors in the process of program design (TEA, 2006, 2008a).

AchieveTexas organizes learning around 16 nationally recognized Career Clusters™ and programs of study (Texas Education Agency, 2006, 2008a). Texas Education Agency requires each secondary school to offer at least three career pathways. “Local

districts in Texas are free to choose which clusters to implement...[and] not all schools will be able to offer all 16 clusters” (TEA, 2008a, p. 4).

Currently in Texas, the 83rd legislature met on January 8, 2013 and stated that CTE must be a focus and that four CTE courses are required in the high school graduation plan (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Additionally, TEC 33.005 for the Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program and TEC 33.006 for Counselors requiring a four year plan and aiding in more student planning (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The core course changes are as a result of Texas House Bill 3 (2009). New career-related electives and CTE courses are a result of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills revisions. Programs of Study are based on the Recommended High School Graduation Program Plan and can be modified for the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) Plan on campuses (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

Among the schools represented by the high school counselors in the sample, there is a prevalence of three Career Clusters™ (i.e., Arts, A/V Technology & Communications; Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources; and Health Science). This might be explained by the demands of local industries in the regions sampled. Region 20, for example, has a large rural population and provides ample opportunities for careers within the Agriculture career cluster. In fact, one of the districts in this area houses a Agriculture, Food & Natural Resource magnet program with program facilities that have received national attention for being more state-of-the art than most postsecondary training facilities. Also, within the boundaries of Region 20, is San Antonio, where the University of Texas has both a medical school, a Health Science Center and the South Texas Veterans Health Care System. Therefore, careers within the Health Science cluster

are prevalent in San Antonio and surrounding areas. Austin, Region 13, is the second fastest growing metro area in Texas and home of the state capitol which employs the most people in Austin (approximately 65,000 people), Dell, Inc.(employs approximately 17,000) and The University of Texas(employs approximately 13,000) people (Largest Employers, 2013).

Another explanation for the prevalence of these three Career Clusters™ might be simply school history and tradition. Or it could indicate that the majority of students actually prefer to take courses within these clusters, and because funding is constrained in Texas public schools, schools only hire teachers for courses that suit the majority of students. Current data from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) follows a similar enrollment pattern for secondary students in CTE courses except the largest majority of enrollment in CTE courses in Texas is within the Business Management & Administration cluster, followed by Arts/A/V Technology & Communications, Health Sciences and Human Services. The submission of PEIMS data by school districts is required to the Texas Education Agency (PEIMS, 2012).

Two Career Clusters™ that appear to be under-represented on campuses are Government & Public Administration and Manufacturing, both of which are represented by programs of study on less than 20% of the participants' campuses. Again this follows PEIMS data (2012) reporting only 914 students (in the state) enrolled in the Government & Public Administration career cluster and 12,565 total students enrolled in the Manufacturing career cluster on high school campuses in Texas. A possible implication of lack of attention to certain Career Clusters™ is a misperception that career opportunities are limited. Yet, it is imperative that educators groom governmental

leaders, as well as skilled workers in manufacturing industries, to meet the global challenges that our country might face in the future. Jobs that fall into the Manufacturing career cluster are at an ever-increasing demand in both the United States and Texas (TEA, 2006, 2008a). That few high school students are offered opportunities to engage in programs of study pertaining to Manufacturing careers might actually be of detriment to them, considering that Texas is the “largest producer and consumer of oil” (TEA, 2008a, p. 15) and that “Texas manufacturing workers take home paychecks that are 22 percent higher than the national average” (TEA, 2008a, p. 12). In other words, high-paying manufacturing jobs are available to Texans, but the Texas schools in this study are not offering this program of study to meet the needs of the current and future workforce.

Step 2: Span All Grades

Recent statistics from the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc, 2013) show that CTE students in high school graduate at 90.18% percent compared to 74.9% of the national average of freshman. Currently, in Texas over a million students are enrolled in CTE courses (PEIMS, 2012).

TEA (2006, 2008a) emphasizes that attention to career development should span all grades and that there should be a different focus of career development at each of the four campus levels (i.e., elementary, middle school, high school, and postsecondary). Results from this study show (23%) of high school counselors have a lack of knowledge about career development activities at the elementary level. This suggests that counselors might not be collaborating on vertical alignment of their campus programs. Without

vertical alignment, educators may duplicate activities of earlier grades or fail to address gaps in the career development of students.

Regarding the proposed focus for the high school level, which is student preparation for postsecondary education or employment, high school counselors agreed that students' plans for postsecondary education are being driven by their long-term career goals, which also influence their high school course selections. This suggests that high school educators are focusing on students' career development to some extent. Yet, counselors lack AchieveTexas knowledge, training, and resources, and they may not be directing their focus with the AchieveTexas POS model as a guide. Implementing strategies to help students with course selections and choices for postsecondary education is the focus of the key components for implementation at the local level.

Step 3: Implement TAPs

Legislation signed by Governor Rick Perry in 2007 required Personal Graduation Plan (PGPs) be devised by TEA for each student and reviewed annually. Similarly, AchieveTexas includes a Texas Achievement Plan (TAP) for each career cluster in 8th grade. In essence, TAPs are no more than pre-constructed PGPs from which students can choose (of the Career Clusters™ offered on their campuses). The TAPs are aligned with the 4x4 design (i.e., four required credits of each of the four core subjects) of the PGPs already used in Texas schools, and they can be modified or tailored to reflect the specific programs of study on campuses. Of the counselors in the sample, 88.7% agreed that their campus TAPs could support their students' PGPs. This is promising, as the AchieveTexas program is intended to improve, and not to replace, current campus practices. If educators are able to understand that implementation of TAPs does not

create new work for them, and that it can, in fact, reduce some of their work (as the TAPs are pre-constructed), then buy-in is likely to be greater.

Step 4: Enhance Guidance

Enhancing guidance in schools means expanding both the quantity and the quality of college and career guidance (TEA, 2006, 2008a). In this study, results reveal that the majority of the high school counselors in the sample agree that both academic counseling and career counseling are priorities on their campuses. The majority also agree that their campuses allot adequate time for both types of counseling. However, results suggest that counselors believe that academic counseling is a greater priority and is afforded a more adequate amount of time than is career counseling. This finding is relevant in that, at the high school level, academic and career counseling ideally should be intertwined. For example, when a school counselor sits down with a student to offer academic advising for course selection or to devise a PGP, it makes sense that discussion of career goals and postsecondary education goals be included in the advising session. An implication of these results is that some educators differentiate between academic counseling and career counseling and might not see the ways in which the two are interwoven. .

An important, but not surprising, result was that the majority of counselors in the sample (58.5%) do not believe that the counselor-to-students ratios on their campuses are conducive to quality one-on-one counseling with students. The number of students assigned to each counselor ranged from 45-574. Combining this statistic with the results of this study showing that almost all counselors in the sample agree that students are involved in establishing their own academic and career goals suggests that career and academic advising likely is accomplished on at least some campuses by activities with

large groups of students, rather than by individual counseling sessions with students (TEA 2006, 2008a) Overall, the recommendation by TEA is 300 to one counselor-to-students ratio. TEA further states that “Cutting the ratio by 10, 20, or 30 percent...can make a huge difference in a student’s guidance experience” (p. 10) because cutting the ratios can enhance guidance for students overall or hiring more counselors in the district would also benefit the students.

Step 5: Build Seamless Connections

In regard to building seamless connections between secondary and postsecondary programs of study, almost all of the counselors in the sample agreed that students on their campuses are offered opportunities to earn college credits via Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses. However, only about half as many counselors agreed that students have opportunities to earn Advanced Technical Credits or to enroll in Early College High Schools. A goal of the AchieveTexas program is to help secondary and postsecondary institutions align their curricula so that a student’s postsecondary credits earned in high school can easily transfer to a postsecondary institution, which TEA (2006, 2008a) suggests can be done via the institutions’ co-development of curricula into “single coherent program[s] of study that span grades 11-14 or 9-16” (p. 12). Co-development of curricula among secondary and postsecondary institutions also is an interesting area of exploration for future research. At least three quarters of counselors’ in the current study agreed that faculty members on their campuses work together to co-develop and align curricula. However, the survey used did not include items that specified counselors’ perceptions of campus efforts to co-develop curricula with institutions of higher education. Specific attention to collaborative efforts across

institutions that span grades 9-16 might help to inform state and regional leaders of the AchieveTexas Initiative of ways to help facilitate collaboration among the various institutions.

Step 6: Establish Extended Learning

Regarding extended learning opportunities for students (i.e., Step 6), results signify that of the majority of the campuses represented by the sample offer students' opportunities to develop skills for employability, to join Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), and/or to participate in career-based learning projects. Again, this study did not include a qualitative component, nor did it include items that addressed specific opportunities for students (e.g., membership in FCCLA). Therefore, it cannot be determined how students acquire skills for employability or how their participation in specific CTSOs and career-based learning projects enhance their career development.

Step 7: Build Strong Partnerships

Although approximately half of the counselors in the study sample agreed that their campuses engage in partnerships with community organizations and members and that both the quantity and the quality of the partnerships are increasing, a majority either disagreed with or had no knowledge of a relationship between their campus and a Business Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.). In addition, the counselors' (35.9%) did not agree or did not know (28.3%) there was regional AchieveTexas leadership on their campuses. The responsibility of [a B.E.S.T.] [is] to build buy-in to the redesign of education among leadership" (TEA, 2008a, p. 16). This logically means that involvement of a B.E.S.T. is crucial to successful implementation of the AchieveTexas program. Of course, regional leadership is paramount for helping both school

administrators and community leaders understand the significant role that a B.E.S.T. plays in the enhancement of student career development. For schools that are new to AchieveTexas or that are in the early phases of AchieveTexas implementation, establishment of a B.E.S.T. might be a crucial starting point or next step in the implementation process.

Step 8 Offer Professional Development

The data pertaining to AchieveTexas professional development activities of the counselors in the sample indicated that approximately (17%) had no knowledge of AchieveTexas training activities on their campuses or were neutral (35.8%) about the availability of training opportunities. Furthermore, less than 20% agreed that they actually have participated in training activities related to AchieveTexas and approximately a fourth indicated that they have had no training. Without knowledge of or training for implementation of AchieveTexas on their campuses, the ability to achieve the buy-in necessary for a successful AchieveTexas program is limited. Implementation of AchieveTexas “will require significant professional development for [both] teachers and counselors” (TEA, 2008a, p. 18).

Time Spent on AchieveTexas

Regarding the time that counselors spend on AchieveTexas activities within the four components of the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (TCDG) (Research question 2) framework, the results indicated that the largest number of counselors spent 0-25% of their time on AchieveTexas in any of the four TCDG component areas. The component for which the most counselors spend 0-25% of their time on AchieveTexas is the Guidance Curriculum component (62.3%) followed by the

System Support component (58.5%). Earlier in this chapter it was suggested that counselors might conduct academic and career guidance activities with large groups of students more than they do with individual students. Although addressing students as a group makes sense when counselor-to-student ratios are high. It is necessary for counselors and teachers to find individual time to talk to students about AchieveTexas and their TAPs. According to TEA, the recommended ratio is one counselor per 250 students (www.teastate.org).

Indicators of Success

With regard to counselors' perceptions of successful outcomes related to the implementation of AchieveTexas on their campuses (Research question 3), almost three quarters of the counselors in the sample agreed that their campuses have experienced increased enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses (67.9%), an increase in the number of applications for admission that students send to postsecondary institutions (64.2%), and increased graduation rates (62.3%). Participants' responses are indicative only of successful outcomes they've observed in their schools that might or might not be related to the implementation of AchieveTexas.

Barriers to Implementation

Barriers to implementation (Research question 4) included lack of information about the AchieveTexas program and lack of funding. Only 37.9 % of the counselors' indicated agreement that there is a lack of AchieveTexas resources on their campuses. When counselors who indicated they either didn't know about or were neutral about the availability of AchieveTexas resources are included in the percentage, it jumps to an astonishing 81.1%. This indicates that there is a wealth of information currently available

to educators on their campuses but might imply that the lack of information might be a lack of time to investigate AchieveTexas resources due to counselor to student ratios as previously mentioned.

Finally, the majority of counselors indicated that neither counselor support (58.5%) nor support from Career and Technical teachers (57.9%) is a barrier to implementing the AchieveTexas program on their campuses. Overall, the majority of surveyed counselors agreed that lack of core teacher support is a barrier to implementation. This result provides insight to a possible explanation for the Career and Technical approach evidenced on most campuses that are using AchieveTexas.

The AchieveTexas Initiative emphasizes the need for a multi-disciplinary approach and supports the notion that “All classes [should] integrate academics such as English and mathematics with career education” (TEA, 2008a, p. 12), likewise, teachers of core courses should encourage the integration of students’ learning in both core and career education courses. Benefits of career pathways, as cited by CTE directors (Legislative Budget Board, 2013) include having faculty reassess how CTE courses are vital to local and state wide employment needs and an overall reconsideration of how CTE provides a valuable component to education in general.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the sample was from only high school counselors in Regions 13 and 20 and not the entire state of Texas. The survey response was voluntary. The number of school counselors’ responding to the survey and the timing of the survey was a limitation. For future studies, the researcher would envision having the counselors fill out the survey earlier in school year rather than at the end of the

school year when testing, graduation and scheduling is occurring. Lastly, the conclusions cannot be generalized beyond this sample.

Recommendations for Local Implementation

The current study is the first to focus on high school counselors perceptions of local implementation efforts of AchieveTexas. Future recommendations for local implementation of AchieveTexas include:

1. Build buy-in from local communities that can create partnerships with the school districts. Plan community meetings to inform key community leaders of what is developing at the district level.
2. Provide specific high school counselor professional development at Texas School Counseling Association on the “how-to” local implementation of AchieveTexas. Texas School Counseling Association is the association in Texas that” supports school counselors, provides advocacy and best practice resources to empower school counselors to deliver comprehensive guidance and counseling programs which promote student success” (Texas Counseling Association, 2013).
3. Provide specific high school principal professional development at the Texas Association of Secondary Principals’ Association and Texas Association of School Administrators’ meetings each year for strategic local implementation of AchieveTexas
4. Promote the use of Parent’s Night at the local campuses to discuss TAP plans.
5. Provide specific teacher professional development to understand local implementation of AchieveTexas and TAP plans. Discussing students’ future

career pathways increase collaboration between CTE teachers and academic teachers (Legislative Budget Board, 2013, p. 463).

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research studies for the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative include:

1. Examine current career development programs, methods, and strategies used on campuses that could inform state and regional leaders of the AchieveTexas Initiative and ways to help districts and campuses use the AchieveTexas model to both complement and enhance aspects of their current programs. By presenting AchieveTexas as an improvement to, rather than as a replacement of, their current campus practices, buy-in likely would be greater. The current economic realities projections for 2008-2018 emphasize that half of all new jobs in the United States will require postsecondary degrees (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

2. Research educators' perceptions of the tasks associated with each type of counseling within the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program in Texas. AchieveTexas supports specific legislation pertaining to school counselors including the following : (1) TEC 28.0212 Personal Graduation Plans (2) TEC 33.007-Counseling Public School Students Regarding Higher Education (3) TEC 33.005 Support of the Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program model. Moreover, current research supports that "Students who attend schools that are implementing a Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program earn higher test scores and class grades, have more positive relationships with their teachers and feel their education is more relevant "(Texas Counseling Association, 2013).

3. Investigate the relationships between counselor-to-students ratios and student involvement in the development of academic and career goals. Current ratio recommendations are 1 to 300 but many campuses have exceeded this recommendation. Research indicates that 83% of students with failing grades, who partake in small group counseling, show improvement in their grades (Texas Counseling Association, 2013).

4. Analyze school size with regard to utilization of AchieveTexas. Ratios of counselor to student “ should be low enough to meet high priority needs of the students and the school community” (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

5. Survey Career and Technical faculty for “buy-in” of AchieveTexas.

6. Qualitative study of “Best Practices” of how schools are implementing college and career readiness. There is ongoing longitudinal research with The Central Texas Student Futures Project by the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas in Austin focusing on increasing the rate of students in Texas going to college in central Texas.

7. Examine use of Texas Achievement Plans on school campuses in Texas. In this study concerning Texas Achievement Plans in eighth grade, approximately one-third (32.5%) of the high school counselors in the sample indicated that they either disagreed with, didn't know about, or were neutral about the notion that Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs) on their campuses focus on Career Clusters™ of interest. The extent to which students are interested in the courses offered on their campuses might be a new avenue for future research on the topic.

8. Examine career cluster frameworks design in other states and school counselor's role in career counseling. According to Texas Counseling Association, students

participating in career development curriculum are more understanding of their career possibilities, have an increase in self-efficacy and overall engagement in school (Texas Counseling Association, 2013).

Summary

TEA created the college and career initiative AchieveTexas to aide public schools in the adoption of career pathways and to prepare students for college and career aspirations. AchieveTexas offers 122 customizable career pathway templates and resources which are available to educators, parents, teachers on the website www.achievetexas.org. AchieveTexas recommends that high school students have a plan for college and career and is supported by Texas Education Code, Section 28.0212 which includes the Personal Graduation Plan. AchieveTexas' Texas Achievement Plan for Eighth Graders aligns with the Personal Graduation Plans and allows students' flexibility in their course selections and future career selection (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The AchieveTexas' philosophy is that no career is better than another but is based on the goals of each individual student (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS CONSENT LETTERS

February 27, 2012

Dear Region 13 Education Service Center:

Hello. My name is Jodi Walker. I am the Coordinator for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education program and Senior Lecturer at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Currently, I am a Doctoral student at Texas Tech University in Family and Consumer Science Teacher Education. As part of the requirements to complete the Ph.D., my dissertation topic is: *Local Implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative as Reported by Texas High School Counselors*.

This letter is to request permission and assistance in gathering data to analyze for this study. I would like to ask your permission to email the high school counselors in Region 13 an electronic survey. I am attaching a copy of the survey instrument. This study has been reviewed by the Texas Tech University Human Subjects Protection Committee which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulation

Participation is voluntary and the participants are able to stop at any time. All participant responses will be anonymous and confidential. There are no known risks to taking this survey although it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures. However, benefits of this survey may help with further studies concerning the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative.

Your support of a timely response from your high school counselors will allow the results to be tabulated as quickly as possible. I want to thank you in advance for your

assistance in helping me complete this study. Please, contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Jodi Walker, M. Ed.

FCSE-Doctoral Candidate

Texas Tech University

Jodi.walker@txstate.edu

Dr. Karen Alexander

FCSE-Committee Chair

Texas Tech University

karen.alexander@ttu.edu

APPENDIX B

HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR CONSENT LETTER

February 27, 2012

Dear High School Counselor:

My name is Jodi Walker. I am the Coordinator for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education program at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas and a Doctoral student at Texas Tech University in Family and Consumer Science Teacher Education. As part of the requirements to complete the Ph.D., I am completing my dissertation titled: *Local Implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative as Reported by Texas School Counselors*. This study has been reviewed by the Texas Tech University Human Subjects Protection Committee which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulation. Participation is voluntary and participants are able to stop at any time. All participant responses will be anonymous and confidential. There are no known risks to taking this survey although it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures. However, benefits of this survey may help with further studies concerning the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data to analyze for this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will improve the quality of my research findings. I am emailing you a link to the electronic survey. Please, complete the questionnaire and return it via survey monkey. The survey is available online through [DATE] at the following URL: [URL]

Please, answer each question as completely and honestly as possible. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Your immediate response to the survey will allow the results to be tabulated as quickly as possible. I want to thank you in advance for your assistance in completing this survey in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Jodi Walker, M. Ed.

FCSE-Doctoral Candidate

Texas Tech University

Jodi.walker@txstate.edu

February 27, 2012

Dear Region 20 Education Service Center:

Hello. My name is Jodi Walker. I am the Coordinator for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education program and Senior Lecturer at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Currently, I am a Doctoral student at Texas Tech University in Family and Consumer Science Teacher Education. As part of the requirements to complete the Ph.D., my dissertation topic is: *Local Implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative as Reported by Texas High School Counselors*.

This letter is to request permission and assistance in gathering data to analyze for this study. I would like to ask your permission to email the high school counselors in Region 20 an electronic survey. I am attaching a copy of the survey instrument. This study has been reviewed by the Texas Tech University Human Subjects Protection Committee which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulation. Participation is voluntary and the participants are able to stop at any time. All participant responses will be anonymous and confidential. There are no known risks to taking this survey although it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures. However, benefits of this survey may help with further studies concerning the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative.

Your support of a timely response from your high school counselors will allow the results to be tabulated as quickly as possible. I want to thank you in advance for your assistance in helping me complete this study. Please, contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Jodi Walker, M. Ed.

FCSE-Doctoral Candidate

Texas Tech University

Jodi.walker@txstate.edu

Dr. Karen Alexander

FCSE-Committee Chair

Texas Tech University

karen.alexander@ttu.edu

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION AND ACCEPTANCE

LETTER

Jodi Walker

Local Implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative as Reported by
Texas School Counselors

I. Rationale

The purpose of this study is to determine Local Implementation Strategies of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative as reported by High School Counselors in Region 13 and 20 in Texas. This study will enhance existing knowledge on the AchieveTexas reform initiative in Texas. It will focus on the school counselor's perspective regarding strategies that have been successful and obstacles preventing successful implementation. In addition, the insights, explanations and experiences of the school counselor responsible for AchieveTexas implementation will add to the limited body of current knowledge related to local AchieveTexas implementation. Finally, this study will provide a clearer understanding for future design and implementation AchieveTexas at the local level.

II. Subjects

Subjects for the study are high school counselors in Region 13 and 20 in Texas. The subjects will be recruited via email from their Region Education Service Center requesting participation in an online survey.

III. Procedures

An email will be sent to the Region Education Service centers in Region 13 and 20 of Texas. Once permission is granted, an email will be sent to the high school counselors in Region 13 and 20. The email will request participants to complete an anonymous survey. The email will contain information explaining the purpose of the research, request for participation, IRB statement, the link for accessing the anonymous survey, date the survey will be available, and contact information.

Data collection from the survey will be anonymous and responses will be found in the Survey Monkey database. Data will be accessible only through the researcher's username and password. The researcher, Jodi Walker, will only have access to the respondents Internet Protocol address. A follow up email will be sent to the high school counselors in Region 13 and 20 as a reminder to complete the survey as well as thanking them for their participation.

Data Collection: Data will be analyzed to find frequencies and means. Subjects will be entered to win a \$100 Visa Gift Card to encourage participation in the survey. There are no foreseeable risks for participants in this study. The subjects will be contacted via email and have access to the survey link from the online survey tool, Survey Monkey.

The responses will be recorded through the online survey tool, Survey Monkey.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained in this way.

IV. Adverse events and liability

The will be no adverse events or liabilities associated with this survey.

V. Consent Form-See attached documents

Attachments

Cover Page

Claim for Exemption

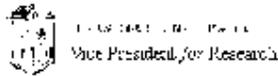
Survey Instrument

Introductory email to Region 13 Education Service Center

Introductory email to Region 20 Education Service Center

Informational email to High School Counselors in Region 13 and 20

Follow-up email to High School Counselors in Region 13 and 20



April 19, 2012

Dr. Karen Alexander
Human Sci Dean's Ofc
Mall Stop: 1210

Regarding: 503365 Local Implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative as reported by Texas School Counselors

Dr. Karen Alexander:

The Texas Tech University Protection of Human Subjects Committee approved your claim for an exemption for the proposal referenced above on April 19, 2012.

Exempt research is not subject to continuing review. However, any modifications that (a) change the research in a substantial way, (b) might change the basis for exemption, or (c) might introduce any additional risk to subjects must be reported to the IRB before they are implemented.

To report such changes, you must send a new claim for exemption or a proposal for expedited or full board review to the IRB. Extension of exempt status for exempt projects that have not changed is automatic.

The IRB will send annual reminders that ask you to update the status of your research project. Once you have completed your research, you must inform the Coordinator of the Committee either by responding to the annual reminder or by notifying the Coordinator by memo or e-mail (donna.peters@ttu.edu) so that the file for your project can be closed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary Cogan".

Rosemary Cogan, Ph.D., ABPP
Protection of Human Subjects Committee

APPENDIX D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Local Implementation of AchieveTexas as Reported by Texas School Counselors

This survey is designed to better understand the local implementation efforts of AchieveTexas. Only a small group of Texas high school counselors have been selected to participate in this survey. Your assistance will offer information about your awareness of AchieveTexas and how your district is implementing the initiative at the local level. Your responses to this questionnaire are completely confidential and anonymous.

The survey is divided into sections. It is essential that you provide responses to the questions in all sections of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire sections include the following:

- * BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- * FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE, DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM
- * LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION
- * THE EIGHT STEPS OF THE ACHIEVETEXAS COLLEGE AND CAREER INITIATIVE
- * INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
- * BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION
- * COMMENTS AND SUBMISSION OF COMPLETION EMAIL.

At the completion of this survey, all participants will be entered to win a \$100 Visa Gift Card. There are a total of 33 questions and it will take you approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Thank you again for your time and assistance!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

AchieveTexas was developed in 2005 by educational professionals and representatives from the Texas Education Agency, postsecondary institutions, regional educational service centers, the Texas Business and Education Coalition, the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission.

AchieveTexas is an ongoing tool to help schools redesign their curriculum into a recommended sequence of courses based on student's personal interests and career aspirations (www.achievetexas.com).

With emphasis on the career clusters, AchieveTexas has eight implementation steps which helps build strong programs that encourage high school completion and college and career readiness (www.achievetexas.org).

This questionnaire should be completed by high school counselors in Region 13 and 20 in Texas. Participation is voluntary and anonymous.

The purpose of this survey is:

- (1) Determine what extent the eight steps of AchieveTexas are being implemented.
- (2) Determine indicators of successful implementation (i.e such as student motivation, lower dropout rates, attendance rates).
- (3) Determine barriers that have been encountered within the eight steps of implementation.

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey!

*** 1. Are you a high school counselor?**

- Yes- Please, continue on with the survey.
- No- Thank you for your time!

2. How many years have you worked as a school counselor?

- 0-1 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16 + years

3. What region of Texas do you represent?

- Region 13 Austin, Texas
- Region 20 San Antonio, Texas

4. My school district size is:

- 1A
- 2A
- 3A
- 4A
- 5A

5. What is the counselor to student ratio at your school district? How many students do you serve?

**6. My school serves students in a/an:
(choose one)**

- Rural setting
- Suburban setting
- Urban setting

7. How knowledgeable are you about the goals developed to implement the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative?

	No Knowledge	Some Knowledge	Knowledgeable	Some Knowledge	Very Knowledgeable
Better serve the needs of students	<input type="radio"/>				
Improve students' motivation to learn	<input type="radio"/>				
Reduce the number of dropouts	<input type="radio"/>				
Prepare students for college and career	<input type="radio"/>				
Increase academic and technical rigor	<input type="radio"/>				
Support efforts to redesign schools	<input type="radio"/>				
Redesign curriculum and instruction to be rigorous and relevant	<input type="radio"/>				
Support a Primary through college (P-16) focus that leads to postsecondary success	<input type="radio"/>				
Meet the needs of employers for highly educated employees	<input type="radio"/>				

8. How supportive are you of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative?

- Unaware
- Not supportive
- A little supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Very supportive

9. How supportive is your school district of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative?

- Unaware
- Not supportive
- A little supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Very supportive

10. Please use the scale below to answer this question:

STRONGLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

AGREE

STRONGLY AGREE

DON'T KNOW (No Knowledge) Please use this response only when you sincerely do not know the answer to an item.

Has your school used the goals of AchieveTexas in local implementation to:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Better serve the needs of students	<input type="radio"/>					
Improve students' motivation to learn	<input type="radio"/>					
Reduce the number of dropouts	<input type="radio"/>					
Prepare students for college and career	<input type="radio"/>					
Increase academic and technical rigor	<input type="radio"/>					
Support efforts to redesign schools	<input type="radio"/>					
Redesign curriculum and instruction to be rigorous and relevant	<input type="radio"/>					
Support a primary through college (P-16) focus that leads to postsecondary success	<input type="radio"/>					
Meet the needs of employers	<input type="radio"/>					

Four Components of the Texas Comprehensive, Developmental School Guidance a...

The Comprehensive Guidance Program is divided into four categories with the counselor responsibilities listed below. AchieveTexas is designed to support counselors with these responsibilities.

1. Guidance Curriculum-Providing guidance content in systematic way to all students.
Counselor Responsibilities: Guidance, Consultation, Program Implementation and Facilitation and Professional Standards
2. Responsive Services-Addresses immediate concerns of students.
Counselor Responsibilities: Counseling, Consultation, Coordination, Referral and Professional Standards
3. Individual Planning-Assisting students in monitoring and understanding their own development.
Counselor Responsibilities: Guidance, Consultation, Assessment, Professional Standards
4. System Support-Program and staff support activities and services.
Counselor Responsibilities: Program Management, Consultation and Professional Standards

Please, refer to these four steps when answering the following question.

11. Within the Comprehensive, Developmental School Guidance and Counseling Program four components,what percentage of time do you spend on AchieveTexas?

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Guidance Curriculum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
System Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Guidance Curriculum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
System Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

Career Clusters

Career clusters organize learning around Programs of Study that help prepare students for the 21st century. AchieveTexas is based on 16 broad clusters and 79 Programs of Study. The AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative helps students design their educational experiences around a future career goal and helps them transition into postsecondary educational experiences.

12. Please, answer the following questions based on the scale of:

STRONGLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

AGREE

STRONGLY AGREE

DON'T KNOW (NO KNOWLEDGE) Please use this response only when you sincerely do not know the answer to an item.

In my school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Teachers are familiar with career clusters offered in the local district.	<input type="radio"/>					
Counselors are familiar with state and local career clusters.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers are familiar with state and local Programs of Study (POS).	<input type="radio"/>					
Counselors are familiar with state and local Programs of Study (POS).	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers are knowledgeable about Texas Achievement Plans.	<input type="radio"/>					
Counselors are knowledgeable about Texas Achievement Plans.	<input type="radio"/>					

13. What stage of development best describes the implementation activities of AchieveTexas occurring at your school?

- Just beginning (0 - 1 school year)
- Initializing (2 - 3 school years)
- Implementing (4 - 5 school years)
- Reassessing or Improving (5 or more years)
- Other

Other (please specify)

14. What best describes your school's local implementation approach to AchieveTexas?

- School-wide focus
- Career and Technical Education focus

15. In your opinion, is Career and Technical Education (CTE) viewed as college preparation?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

16. Check all that apply:

I have completed an AchieveTexas Professional Development session:

- At my campus.
- At my local school district.
- At my Region Education Service Center.
- I have not completed a professional development session on AchieveTexas.

Other (please specify)

The Eight Steps of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative

To identify the degree of local implementation strategies of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative, one must understand the eight implementation steps of the AchieveTexas initiative.

These steps include the following:

1. Implement AchieveTexas
2. Span All Grades
3. Implement Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs)
4. Enhance Guidance
5. Build Seamless Connections
6. Establish Extended Learning
7. Build Strong Partnerships
8. Offer Professional Development

The following questions will be based on these eight steps.

STEP 1: Implement AchieveTexas

A goal of AchieveTexas is to offer various ways for students to plan their success. Organizing learning into career clusters and Programs of Study offers a way for students to combine academic and career preparation.

The questions below refer to Step 1.

17. Choose all that apply.

In my school, the following career clusters are offered:

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
- Architecture & Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology & Communications
- Business, Management & Administration
- Education & Training
- Finance
- Government & Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing, Sales & Service
- Science, Technology Engineering & Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics
- None of the above
- Other

Other (please specify)

18. When choosing which career cluster(s) to implement, did your school consider:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Student needs or interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community interests or concerns.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic development factors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please, feel free to explain your school's career cluster framework.

STEP 2: Span All Grades

AchieveTexas is designed to span all grades and promote a college and career preparation curriculum that is developmentally appropriate at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. A major theme is lifelong learning.

Please, use the following scale to answer these questions.

STRONGLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

AGREE

STRONGLY AGREE

DON'T KNOW (No Knowledge) Please use this response only when you sincerely do not know the answer to an item.

The question below refers to Step 2.

19. In my school DISTRICT, students:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Discuss careers at the elementary school level.	<input type="radio"/>					
Explore various careers at the middle school level.	<input type="radio"/>					
Consider potential career plans when selecting courses at the high school level.	<input type="radio"/>					
Plan postsecondary education programs based on identified career goals.	<input type="radio"/>					
Complete postsecondary education programs.	<input type="radio"/>					
Accomplish career plans after high school.	<input type="radio"/>					
Develop lifelong learning attitudes.	<input type="radio"/>					

STEP 3: Use Programs of Study and Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs)

AchieveTexas uses two tools--Programs of Study (POS) and Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs).

State-approved AchieveTexas Programs of Study (POS) layout a menu of courses, resources, and potential alignments that bring together cohesive career cluster programs. Schools may modify the information into local Program Of Study "menus" of available courses, resources and alignments.

Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs) are the personal sequence of courses, resources and alignments a student selects with input and guidance from school counselors, teachers, administrators, mentors and parents. It includes requirements of the Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) and incorporates curricular experiences, career learning experiences, extracurricular experiences and service learning experiences. Texas Achievement Plans (TAPs) and/or portfolios are used to support individual progress towards the student's personal college and career goals.

The questions refer to Step 3.

20. In my school, Texas Achievement Plans specify a student's:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Career cluster(s) of interest.	<input type="radio"/>					
High school courses that are compatible with their education/career goal.	<input type="radio"/>					
Postsecondary education/career goal.	<input type="radio"/>					

21. In my school, Texas Achievement Plans utilize:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
State-approved AchieveTexas Programs of Study (POS) models as a framework.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students' career goals or interests.	<input type="radio"/>					
Extended learning opportunities (such as student organizations, work-based learning, job shadowing, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>					
Career portfolios to showcase students' abilities.	<input type="radio"/>					

22. In my school, components of the Texas Achievement Plan could support the Personal Graduation Plan:

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

STEP 4: Enhance Guidance

AchieveTexas expands the quantity and quality of college and career guidance throughout schools.

The questions below refer to Step 4.

23. In my school DISTRICT, regarding the availability of counseling for successful postsecondary transition:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Academic counseling is made a priority.	<input type="radio"/>					
Academic counseling is given adequate time.	<input type="radio"/>					
Career counseling is made a priority.	<input type="radio"/>					
Career counseling is given adequate time.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students-to-Counselor ratio is conducive to quality one-on-one counseling.	<input type="radio"/>					

24. In my school, regarding system support of counseling services:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Academic planning and career guidance resources are available to educators.	<input type="radio"/>					
Academic planning and career guidance resources are available to students.	<input type="radio"/>					
Academic planning and career guidance resources are available to parents.	<input type="radio"/>					
Local AchieveTexas Programs of Study (POS) models assist students and parents with personal planning.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers are involved in college and career advisement.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students are involved in setting their personal academic plans.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students are involved in setting their personal career goals.	<input type="radio"/>					
Comprehensive guidance software or other technology is being used to effectively support academic planning.	<input type="radio"/>					
Comprehensive guidance software or other technology is being used effectively to support career guidance.	<input type="radio"/>					

STEP 5: Build Seamless Connections

The goal for education is seamless connections of learning, organized by articulated courses, co-developed curricula, and real-world relevance. When secondary programs and postsecondary institutions align, students have a sensible program of study throughout their educational experience.

The questions below refer to Step 5.

25. In my school, there is a realistic option for students to:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Earn Advance Placement (AP) credit.	<input type="radio"/>					
Earn Advance Technical Credit (ATC).	<input type="radio"/>					
Earn dual credit.	<input type="radio"/>					
Enroll in an Early College High School.	<input type="radio"/>					
Participate in interdisciplinary, problem/project-based instruction.	<input type="radio"/>					

26. In my school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Faculty work together to align curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>					
Faculty work together to co-develop curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students achieve mastery of material in progressively challenging K12 curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students achieve mastery of material in aligned K12 curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>					
Articulation agreements are coordinated and aligned for credit with Associate's degrees.	<input type="radio"/>					
Articulation agreements are coordinated and aligned for credit with Bachelor's degrees.	<input type="radio"/>					

STEP 6: Establish Extended Learning

Extended learning experiences help further develop, educate, and motivate students in various settings. Examples include membership in Career and Technical Student Organizations (e.g. DECA, FCCLA, FFA), other student organizations, career-based learning experiences, and service learning opportunities.

The question below refers to Step 6.

27. In my school, students have opportunities to:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Be actively involved in Career and Technical Student Organizations.	<input type="radio"/>					
Develop employability skills such as teamwork and leadership.	<input type="radio"/>					
Participate in career-based learning such as career preparation, internships, or job shadowing.	<input type="radio"/>					

STEP 7: Build Strong Partnerships

Building partnerships between education and business is one of the fundamental goals of AchieveTexas. Advising with the local community, as well as, observing the local economy are very important in overall student success. Partnerships can help guide students to future internships and employment.

The question below refers to Step 7.

28. In my school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Partnerships at all grade levels are helping students succeed.	<input type="radio"/>					
Local community and work-force representatives are facilitating partnerships.	<input type="radio"/>					
The QUALITY of partnerships is increasing.	<input type="radio"/>					
The QUANTITY of partnerships is increasing.	<input type="radio"/>					
Regional P-16 leadership of the career cluster initiative (s) is evident.	<input type="radio"/>					
A Business Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.) is assisting the AchieveTexas initiative.	<input type="radio"/>					
The B.E.S.T. is facilitating continuous improvements.	<input type="radio"/>					

STEP 8: Offer Professional Development

Professional development helps educators develop innovative strategies to apply the AchieveTexas initiative within their local district.

The question below refers to Step 8.

29. In my school, educators are:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Engaging in active, hands-on professional development related to AchieveTexas.	<input type="radio"/>					
Utilizing Education Service Center assistance.	<input type="radio"/>					
Experiencing business and industry related collaborations such as internships.	<input type="radio"/>					
Team teaching for academic integration.	<input type="radio"/>					
Learning about emerging technologies and the related career opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>					

30. In my school, AchieveTexas professional development focuses on: (Check all that apply).

- Core teachers.
- Career and Technical Education teachers.
- Counselors.
- Administrators.

Other (please specify)

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The following are indicators of success experienced with the implementation of the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative. Please address the indicators for your school.

31. In my school, the following indicators of successful implementation could be reported:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Increased student attendance.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased enrollment in CTE courses.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased graduation rates.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased administrator support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased parental support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased community buy-in to the AchieveTexas program.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased postsecondary partnership.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased postsecondary applications.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased scores on Texas' standardized tests.	<input type="radio"/>					
Increased SAT/ACT scores.	<input type="radio"/>					
Decreased drop out rates.	<input type="radio"/>					

Other (please specify)

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

When learning a new program, factors can arise that might impact implementation strategies.

The following question refers to any barriers to implementation.

32. In my school, what are possible barriers to implementation of AchieveTexas?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Lack of information.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of core teacher support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of Career and Technical teacher support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of counselor support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of administrator support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of funding.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of professional development opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of community support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Lack of AchieveTexas resources.	<input type="radio"/>					

Other (please specify)

33. Thank you for completing this survey!!

Please, add any comments concerning AchieveTexas here.

*34. Approximately, how long did it take for you to complete this survey?

Once you have completed the survey, please email me at jodi.k.walker@ttu.edu if you choose to be included in the \$100 Visa card drawing. Thank you again for your time and assistance with my research on AchieveTexas!

End of Survey

I appreciate your willingness to assist with my research. Thank you again for your time!

Jodi Walker, M. Ed.
Doctoral Degree Candidate
Family and Consumer Sciences Education Program
Texas Tech University

Thank You

I appreciate your willingness to assist with my research. However, my data collection is limited to high school counselors.
Thank you again for your time!

Jodi Walker

End of Survey