Evaluating The College And Career Readiness Of High School Students In Chicago, Illinois- Strategies, Actions And Policy Implications For School Districts

James M. Walton Jr
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Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

National College of Education
National-Louis University
March, 2021
EVALUATING THE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS: STRATEGIES, ACTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of
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In the National College of Education

James M. Walton, Jr.

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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03/23/2021
Date
ABSTRACT

During my course of study in my doctoral program, I was made aware of research where there was considerable concern by businesses and corporations regarding the potential candidates for hire graduating from our nation’s colleges and universities and their readiness to be engaged and contribute in their particular workforce and/or industry.

As detailed in the book *The Global Achievement Gap* (Wagner, 2014), this concern arose as the various human resource departments of these corporations and businesses began to discover an “unreadiness” in the educational preparation of graduating college students. Consequently, college admissions departments throughout our country saw more and more college students admitted to their institutions were not prepared for the level of rigor necessary as they entered into their postsecondary career.

This research study evaluated and investigated how high school graduates are prepared for college and career readiness, with a focus on the Illinois Board of Education and the Chicago Public Schools, the largest school district in the state. This study also advocated for policy recommendations that are geared to improving the probability of high school graduates being adequately prepared for college rigor, as well as the accountability measures and key factors to ensure students are college and career ready upon graduation.
PREFACE

During my tenure as a high school principal serving the school community of a south suburban school district, I received results of the ACT assessment my Junior class had taken that particular school year. I was devastated when I reviewed those results. I was angry, disappointed and educationally ‘heartbroken’ after reviewing those results. The results said that only 12% of my Juniors met and/or exceeded the expectation of being prepared to handle college rigor and be considered career ready. I considered that data to be something of a “clarion call” for me as an administrator. This data had captured my full attention and was ready to take action to have a positive change to this data going forward.

When I was considering where I wanted to focus my administrative career toward, I felt better suited to work with the high school age group. I wanted to be a part of helping them cultivate their goals, aspirations and paths the to the futures that they desired for themselves. And receiving a high school education that prepared them for that future was my singular focus for each of my high school students that I was privileged to serve in my role as their principal.

As I conducted this program evaluation and arrived at my research findings, I began to see where I was on the right path to help these young people. However, I also discovered some aspects of preparing these students that I underestimated, overlooked or didn’t even consider some initiatives that would have truly helped my students along the way. So, the undertaking of the work in this program evaluation and research is something that I know will help me be a better administrator in the years ahead in my educational leadership career.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A question was asked of me some years ago. I had just completed the graduation commencement ceremony for my first Master of Education degree, a truly wonderful and hard earned accomplishment. As my family and I walked toward the exit, the question was asked, “When are you going to start working for your Doctorate degree?” I responded, “Doctorate degree? Well…I really not thinking about a Doctorate degree right now. Plus, we have a relative that is a Doctor.” The reply came, “Yes, but we don’t have a Doctor in OUR family!” I recall this moment in my history because I wholly realize that if it had not been for that conversation I had with my Dad, James M. Walton, Sr., I would not be at this hugely important moment of my future. Dad, while you have been gone for some years now, I have felt you with me every step of this educational journey and this chapter of my life. Thank you for always encouraging me to be more than I ever thought I could be…every single day.

I also am certain that my journey has been inexplicably and positively impacted by my dissertation chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson. He has been a continuous voice of support, encouragement, mentorship, thought partner for me this entire journey. I can’t imagine a better person to be with me during this dissertation phase of the program. Your flexibility, patience, compassion, understanding, positive disposition, feedback, leadership, honest opinions…I could go on. Thank you for being there for me, even when I was not there for myself sometimes.

I was privileged to be in a cohort of some of the most passionate and confidante group of people. I acknowledge all of you as a collective, and thank you for enlarging my perspective and thoughts through your lenses. I believe I am a better educator having been numbered among you,
Thank you for your acceptance, the many conversations and interactions, and your comradery and friendship.

I want acknowledge two of my cohort colleagues that had a considerate impact on me in my doctoral journey. I acknowledge Marisha Butts, now Dr. Marisha Butts-Mitchell. Markisha, thank you for your kindness, your ear, your thoughts and your unwavering support and encouragement. It meant more than you’ll ever know and I appreciate you very much.

The other colleague is Mr. Jared Washington. He and I were the only two African American males in the cohort. We were also New Leaders for New Schools alumni. Whenever our randomly selective groups ended up with the both of us in the same group, Jared would suggest that one of us join another group. He wanted our perspective as Black men and educators to have a voice and be represented in the different groupings throughout the program. Jared would say, “…they need to hear our thoughts about educating black and brown children as black men.” I agreed with that thought and appreciated his insistence that our voice was a part of at least two group conversations as often as possible. My friend, Jared, is no longer with us, but his impact on me will always be remembered. Jared, continue to rest well, my friend!

I owe my career in education to the chance that Dr. Creg E. Williams took when he hired me as a “day-to-day” substitute teacher; telling me to come to his school every day. Creg, I appreciate your confidence in me to become a teacher by giving the opportunity to engage with students and seek to improve their academic abilities. Dr. Williams also encouraged me to go for my first Master degree a few years later. I thank you for seeing in me what I could not. Thank you for mentorship and friendship these many years.
Prior to this doctoral cohort, I was very fortunate to have been a part of two dynamic collectives of educators: the Loyola University-Chicago’s Teachers for Chicago, and the New Leaders for New Schools Cohort 7 (Chicago and national). I appreciate the energy and synergy these cohorts had throughout the program; we wanted to make a difference with the students we were serving in our respective schools. In the Loyola cohort, I acknowledge Monica Morrow, Michael Durr, Jacqueline Jackson and Arlicia Sanders-Alston. I thank each of you for your support and encouragement during our cohort, and the love and friendship we share even today.

In the New Leaders’ Chicago cohort, I was honored to be among this amazingly talented and committed group of educators. I am blessed to work in the “vineyard” with all of you. I want to acknowledge Edward Morris, Jr., Sheila Barlow, Miyoshi Knox and Liz Dozier. I appreciate your sense of purpose and urgency in providing your best efforts to improve children’s educational experiences wherever you were and when you could. I acknowledge Annette Moore who has become more than a colleague over the years. Annette, you have become my “Baby Sista”! Thank you for your prayers, your continuous and timely encouragement and your amazing friendship. Thank you for letting me be your “Big Brother” (BB). I also want to acknowledge Dr. Mellodie Brown. “Dr. Cherry”, thank you for your encouragement in completing this dissertation process. I was inspired by what you were able to accomplish. Thank you for your words of encouragement and believing I could achieve the same accomplishment.

I had never been in a national educational collective prior to my New Leaders experience. To be among so many liked-minded educators that wanted to make a difference for the lives of economically challenged, under-served and under-educated students of color was truly a
validation that the core values all children having the capability to attain high academic achievement that I had were shared across the country. In the New Leader national cohort, I acknowledge Katerina Sidbury, Sha-hara Jackson, Nykeshia Jenkins-Rycraw, Jubilee Ransome, Marshae Newkirk and Rahshene Davis, affectionately known as my “New York Niecy Poohs”. Katerina, thank you for bestowing the honor of being your “Uncle Jimmy” to me and sharing that title with everyone I’ve named. The impact of all of you are indelibly and inextricably a part of my life and my heart.

To my beautiful mother, Jean B. Walton, thank you for bringing me into this world. You have been a constant positive motivating force in my life, and I love you forever. To my siblings, Janet, Joanie and Julian, thank you for your continuous support of me my entire life. I cannot tell how much each of you truly mean to me, and I cannot imagine life or an existence without you being my sisters and brother. I love you without question and forever.

I am fully persuaded that this journey to receive my Doctor of Education is a journey that has to have a crucial base of support that must be in place and in harmony with such a journey. That base of support has been my immediate family…the best family EVER! To my children, James (Jay) M. Walton, III, Candace (“St. Louis”) and Morionte (Mario) Hamell, Jacqueline (Kiki) Walton and Alexander (Straight A) Williams. All of you have been a real part of my journey. And, while we may not have talked about my doctoral efforts, I know you have been rooting for me, encouraging me and praying with me the whole time. I love each of you dearly and deeply; all of you make me proud every single day.
Most importantly of all, I thank and appreciate my wife, Cheryl. “Beautiful Woman”, the things you have done to help me along this journey have been amazing, miraculous, uplifting, encouraging, humbling, supportive, caring, life giving…I could go on and on. Thank you for everything, every smile, every hug, every kind word, every loving gaze, every prayer on my behalf and every chance you took to let me know that you support me. I love you and I thank you.

DEDICATION

In my acknowledgements, I mentioned my Dad, James M. Walton, Sr. Dad was the person that mentioned the thought of me pursuing my Doctor of Education degree. While I immediately rebuffed that suggestion, his encouraging words of what could be possibly next in my educational journey stayed with me consistently through the years. Because of his words, I stand near the end of this wonderful journey to achieve this very esteemed and prestigious hallmark of my educational career.

Dad, you know I wish you were still here with me. I wish you could watch me defend my dissertation. I wish I would be able to look out and see you smiling at me as I receive my degree. I wish I could hug you and celebrate with you and tell you I love you and take a photo with you holding my doctoral degree. But this one thing I truly know…you will be with me in all of the above, just like you have been with me since you went Home to Glory January 15, 2008. Love you forever, Dad! Thank you for everything!!!
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this program evaluation is to investigate in what way(s) high school students are prepared for college and career readiness upon graduation from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) District. In addition, I will explore the ways in which the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) constructs policy and systems of support to school districts, such as CPS, to assess and monitor by what method(s)/means high school graduates are prepared for college and career readiness upon the completion of their high school career at the school, school district and state levels. As of 2019, ISBE had 1,018 public high schools with over 611,000 students attending those schools. The state’s student population is 47.6% White, 26.4% Hispanic/Latino, 16.7% African American, 5.1% Asian and 3.8% two or more other races. The state had over 94% student attendance in that year. The percentage of students meeting and/or exceeding in the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) English Language Arts (ELA) and Math was 34% and 17% respectively, with a composite score of 25.5% (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2019).

The state’s average SAT scores for ELA and Math were 497.5 and 497, respectively. SAT states the minimum score to meet college and career readiness standards for both subjects is 540. The CPS average scores were 472 (ELA) and 472.4 (Math). The state’s data shows that 34.5% of 2019 public high school graduates were considered to be “college-ready”. 86.6% of the state’s freshmen were considered on track for graduation. The 2019 graduation rate was 86%, post-secondary enrollment is 73%, and post-secondary remediation rate is 44%, with students needing remediation in Reading (13%) or Math (35%) (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2019). I examine the systems of supports, accountability and effectiveness currently in place to evaluate
how this structure supports preparing students for college and/or career readiness from these constructs.

Rationale

It is generally understood that most high school districts in Illinois currently have curriculum systems that are aligned with the mission and vision of the various state districts. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has published a 5-year Vision (2019-2024) that addresses the core initiatives for their district: Academic Progress, Financial Stability and Integrity (CPS 5 Year Vision, 2019). These three initiatives also strive for Equity in Education as an infused and embedded unifying determinant to bring this Vision forward. I investigate components of the Vision: the curriculum systems and supports in place to ensure the delivery of high quality rigorous education, and how Equity in Education is demonstrated within the curriculum to support college and career readiness. I also investigate the core value of Academic Excellence with regard to providing diverse curriculum and programs with high academic standards to prepare students for future success.

For high school districts, the perceived purpose of these curriculum systems are designed to give students the academic experiences, learning activities and instruction to be adequately prepared for college, career and beyond at the end of their high school career. CPS aligns with this perception in their 5-Year Vision. Cawelti and Protheroe (2003) conducted four studies highlighting high poverty and at-risk student populations that support this understanding. In a case study of Ohio school districts, Kercheval and Newbill (2002) also pointed to similar findings of district mission and vision stating curricular goals and objectives for their student populations. For this evaluation, I investigate the college and career readiness support systems for high school seniors graduating from CPS. In most high school districts, an assessment that
determines student readiness is given to pupils during the course of their high school career. I examine the publicly accessible data regarding such an assessment.

There is a perceived “reality” among parents of high school graduates being ready for college; and career rigor exists for stakeholders, especially parents, within a given high school community. The question may arise whether this is the reality for all students. Based on findings by former Assistant U.S. Secretary of Education for Research and Improvement Chester Finn (2017), it is more perception than reality for parents, as well as for students. Finn states, “. . . surveys consistently show that the overwhelming majority of U.S. kids plan to go to college. Their parents expect this too . . . both children and parents believe that students are on track to gain entry to and to succeed in college (pg. 4). Finn (2017) also discloses, “. . . our K-12 education system has never gotten more than one-third of young Americans to the ‘college-ready’ level by the end if the 12th grade” (pg. 4).

For ISBE, high school Juniors take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) to assess college and career readiness of its students. According to the 2019 Illinois Report Card, 97.4% of Illinois’ high school Juniors participated in the administration of the English Language Arts (ELA) and Math assessments. For the students taking the ELA assessment, 36.7% met and/or exceeded, while 34.8% met and/or exceeded taking the Math assessment. In reviewing CPS SAT data, 95% of Illinois’ high school Juniors participated in the administration of the English Language Arts (ELA) and Math assessments. For the students taking the ELA assessment, 26.3% met and/or exceeded, while 26.7% met and/or exceeded taking the Math assessment.

I have been privileged to serve as a high school principal in Illinois. While it is understood that students graduating high school may go into the work force or the military,
the prevailing thought is high school graduates will go on to college and/or career. I hold and embody the belief that all students should be adequately prepared for their future, college or otherwise. However, the research presents a different perspective. Greene and Forster (2003) stated the following, “The results show that only 70% of all students in public high schools graduate, and that only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend a four-year college” (pg. 1). This can be viewed as a sobering statistic. For ISBE and CPS, the data paints a dire circumstance regarding the capability and preparedness of the high school graduates entering college. The 2019 graduation rate for ISBE was 86.2%, while only 35.8% of graduates are adequately prepared to handle college rigor according to the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) results. For CPS, the graduation rate was 76.5%, with 26.5% of those graduates ready for college and career rigor.

In August of 2015, Univision News sponsored a national survey conducted to determine students’ perception of whether they prepared for college or work. This research was performed by Bendixen and Amandi International who surveyed 2,200 recent high school graduates asking their opinion in two of three areas of their high school experience: their overall high school experience and their readiness for college or work. Key findings of this survey are as follows:

I. With regard to the perception of their high school experience:
   • 94% believed a good high school education is somewhat or very important for achieving goals and dreams
   • 75% gave their high schools a grade of “A” or “B”
   • 81% rated their teachers as Excellent or Good
   • 88% felt optimism and confidence in achieving their goals and dreams

II. With regard to the readiness for college or work after graduation:
   • 54% currently enrolled in a college or university said their high school did not prepare them well for college
• 59% entering the workforce after graduation said they were not well prepared for work
• 60% said they were not well prepared in the area of technology
• 36% currently enrolled in a college or university needed to take remedial or developmental courses to catch up

These sources provide a very sobering statistic and seemingly undeniable reality. As stated previously, the state has a 24.9% of its graduates prepared for college rigor, with post-secondary remediation at 47%.

The “Blueprint for College Readiness – A 50-State Analysis” by Glancy, et al (2014) details three anchors within their analysis:

*Table 1: Blueprint for College Readiness - Policies*

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While this analysis provides the college and career readiness policies for all fifty states, for the rationale of this program evaluation, I will investigate the Anchor 1 data as it relates to how ISBE supports CPS and its policy efforts preparing high school graduates for college and career
readiness. From a national perspective regarding Anchor 1, six states had all four policy sections in place, including a statewide college and career readiness definition; twenty-two states had three of the four sections (Section 1, 2 and either 3 or 4); nine states had Section 1 and 2. Only two states had all ten policies in place (Georgia, Indiana). Forty-eight states and forty-six states had College and Career Readiness Standards and Assessments Policies in place respectively. However, eighteen and twenty-four states had K-12 Graduation Requirements Aligned and K-12 Accountability Policies in place respectively.

For Illinois, the College and Career Readiness Standards and Assessments Policies (Section 1 and 2) of Anchor 1 appear to be in place state-wide. However, Sections 3 and 4 (K-12 graduation requirements aligned and K-12 Accountability Policies) are not. Illinois does have a statewide definition for College and Career Readiness. Looking more closely at the state’s graduation requirements, this study clarified this section as follows: “H. S. course requirements match statewide college admissions.” Currently, Illinois has no such requirement for its high schools. Additionally, as previously stated, Illinois has no K-12 Accountability policy in place that would use College and Career Readiness standards to determine or predict how high school graduates will perform when they enter college or their career.

Having served as a high school principal, where the overarching mission and vision is to prepare all students to be college ready by graduation, I consider this to be a great problem of concern. This data suggests that only one of every four graduating students are, by this assessment, prepared for college. It is difficult to defend the preparing students to be college ready, when the data suggests otherwise. I investigate the factors for this current college ready student percentage.
I believe in the premise of preparing all students for any future endeavor they may have upon graduating from high school, whatever that endeavor may be. In light of Wagner’s (2014) detailing of the Seven Survival Skills articulated in the “Global Achievement Gap,” I consider it critically important that all graduating high school students are exposed to and engaged in the academic environment that prepares them for our ever evolving global society. Therefore, I evaluate how the Illinois State Board of Education supports high schools to effectively prepare students for post-secondary opportunities. I have heard it said that we must prepare our students for jobs and careers that have yet to be created. If I am to contribute anything to this emerging society, I must secure and ensure that my students are appropriately prepared to compete within our global society.

Not only do I believe this is to be a crucial understanding as a high school principal, I believe this is the perception of every high school across the state and beyond. The parents/guardians of these students want their children to be prepared for a useful, successful and productive life and future. The people living within the school community want these students to be equipped, skilled and prepared to maintain, as well as improve, the social and economic environments from which the students come. Furthermore, the business community desires these emerging youths to be capable, confident, prepared and positive contributors as employees of their businesses and industries, with the ability to continue the iterations, innovations and expansions of the businesses as the global society continues to emerge and evolve. Moreover, the postsecondary institutions that our students will enter after graduating would also benefit from receiving youngsters prepared for the rigor of college as well.
Goals

The goal of this program evaluation is to evaluate the policies, procedures, curriculum and instructional practices currently in place that prepare students to become college ready by graduation. The Illinois State Board of Education has supports, structures and systems of monitoring and analysis of effectiveness identified within their organizational apparatus. The Board is responsible for providing the support and oversight to the high school districts of the state for all students, from special needs to Advanced Placement to International Baccalaureate Program. The intended purpose of these systems is to prepare all students for college and/or career by the end of their high school career. The state’s role is to provide and ensure the oversight and support necessary for all students to engage in the academic experiences, learning activities and instruction needed to attain the benchmark College Readiness scores as specified by the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) given to them as high school juniors annually. The students should also have the ability to meet and/or exceed the standards of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

By investigating this program, I examine the effectiveness of how college readiness is achieved within the state’s current construct. I collect quantitative data that are available related to College Readiness historical data. Among these data, the historical state-wide data on college readiness of high school graduates related to the data related to college/career readiness. I examine the state’s policies and processes regarding College and Career Readiness Standards and Assessments Policies K-12, Graduation Requirements alignment and K-12 Accountability Policies to investigate the alignment of these policies and how they promote college readiness for all students. Finally, I hope my study will make recommendations that will have a positive
impact on how the state supports and monitors the supports of getting high school graduates the adequate preparation to successfully handle college rigor and being career ready.

Research Questions

Regarding the utilization-focused approach perspective to this research, I find my evaluation will be participatory and collaborative. Specifically, my study will need to incorporate both characteristics to have the authenticity and balance for what I examine. For this study, the primary research questions are/will be:

**Primary Questions**

1. How does the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) ensure that all high school graduates are prepared for college?

**Secondary Questions**

1. To what extent does ISBE and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) policy ensure graduates will be prepared for college and career?

2. Are there supports, structured guidance and oversight of effectiveness in place within ISBE and CPS that would foster and cultivate college and career readiness for students? What are the components of college and career readiness that ISBE monitors and supports?

3. How can students know they are engaging in a college readiness curriculum?

4. How is student knowledge of engaging in a college readiness curriculum measured?

5. What contributes to parents’ perception of college and career readiness for their student?
Conclusion

To gain a better understanding of how college and career readiness is supported currently, I examined literature focused on the following topical areas: 1) The Achievement vs. The Opportunity Gap 2) State and District Policies Required to Support Systems for College and Career Readiness and 3) Building Teacher Capacity through Curricular and Professional Development Supports.

As I conduct this evaluation of how CPS supports the preparation of high school graduates and the systems ISBE policy has in place to support college and career readiness, I seek data that suggests how this is being manifested to the benefit of the student. I also look for supportive publicly accessible data that informs my program evaluation with regards as to how the college and career readiness of graduating high school students is being achieved or not. I plan to construct a literature review that will provide a contextual understanding that I base my evaluation on students being prepared for college and career readiness.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The investigation of how prepared high school graduates are for college rigor and career has a myriad of literature regarding college and career readiness. In reviewing topics that have bearing on my evaluation, I searched for topics that would have influence in this preparation. I have come to see the conversation of the Achievement Gap versus the Opportunity Gap bears review on this evaluation. I review how this conversation impacts students’ preparation.

Secondly, in order for students to be adequately prepared for college and career, I review policies and systems of support embedded in the states’ boards of educations and school districts to ensure student preparedness. I review how states and school districts work together to help students prepare academically for their futures.

Finally, in order to help students arrive at their desired goal being college and career ready, I review what the literature says regarding teachers’ capacity to prepare students through curricular means, and the professional development educators receive to execute that goal. Overall, I explore considerations that are related to my program evaluation that gives additional context to my research.

The Achievement Gap vs. The Opportunity Gap

According to the Glossary of Education Reform from the Great Schools Partnership (2013), “…opportunity gap refers to inputs—the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities—while achievement gap refers to outputs—the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits” (p. 2-3). The term “achievement gap” has been a consistent component in the decades’ long educational conversation in the United States. There have been numerous studies, assessments, research data and reports from multiple perspectives regarding the impact the achievement gap has had for the millions of students who have matriculated through educational careers over the years. Recently a second term has made its way into this conversation and, by some accounts, has begun to be used in place of the achievement gap when the discussion centers on the academic progress of students.

11
That term is the “opportunity gap,” and more educators are using this term to discuss the differences of academic performance among students.

By definition, the achievement gap in education has been defined by Susan Ansell (2004) as “the disparity in academic performance between groups of students” (p. 1). For contextual purposes, the origin of this educational phenomenon can be linked to Brown v. the Board of Education Supreme Court decision of 1954. The achievement gap has been an identified part of the educational landscape for more than fifty years. According to Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis (Stanford CEPA), as well as general consensus, the achievement gap is determined along racial, ethnic and socioeconomic constructs. In their Educational Opportunity Monitoring Document (2013), Stanford CEPA described the data trends in six categories: National and State achievement gap trends, National achievement trends, State gaps and socioeconomic disparities, State achievement gaps, and Actual and predicted gaps. For the purpose of this review, I focused on state-related data for Illinois.

Stanford CEPA based their analysis on multiple data. One section of data is from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Their analysis states that, “achievement gaps have been narrowing because Black and Hispanic students’ scores have been rising faster than those of White students” (pg. 1). For the assessments in Reading and Math given to 17 year olds in 2013, the NAEP data shows the following statistics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Assessed</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
<th>Hispanic Students</th>
<th>White Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>269.03</td>
<td>274.09</td>
<td>295.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>288.06</td>
<td>294.3</td>
<td>313.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While achievement gaps are narrowing, this data shows Black and Hispanic students are still below White students in both Reading and Math as they head toward the end of their high school career. Even though Hispanic and Black students made measurable strides in closing the gap with White students in Reading (+15 points, +23 points) and Math (+16 points, +19 points), the gap is very evident in this data.

In focusing on Illinois’ rising freshmen students (8th graders), Stanford CEPA finds, “In some states, particularly those in the upper Midwest, like Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota, the white-black achievement gap has generally been larger than a standard deviation over the last decade, regardless of grade or subject” (p. 3). Stanford CEPA assessed these students in the following data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Assessed</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
<th>Hispanic Students</th>
<th>White Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>246.32</td>
<td>256.57</td>
<td>276.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>254.67</td>
<td>268.66</td>
<td>293.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Stanford CEPA, determined that there is a correlation to socioeconomic disparities and racial achievement gap, offers this rationale:

“Because higher-income and more-educated families typically can provide more educational opportunities for their children, family socioeconomic resources are strongly related to educational outcomes. If racial socioeconomic disparities are the primary explanation for racial achievement gaps, we would expect achievement gaps to be largest in places where racial socioeconomic disparities are largest…” (p. 6).

In all data presented in the analysis, the suggested achievement gap rank order is White students, Hispanic students and Black students.

Pedro Noguera (2008), in reflecting on his experience in researching the achievement gap said, “… I could not understand why schools that possess a track record of success in educating
affluent White students are largely unable to produce similar success with students of color from low- or middle-class backgrounds” (p. 139). However, because of his research, Noguera offers: “…part of the answer lies in the difficulty educators experience in responding to the different needs of poor and affluent students…strategies that work for some students simply are not effective for others” (p. 139). Noguera and Wing (2006) also addressed the achievement gap in schools. A graduating high school student, when asked to reflect on the high school experience one year after graduation, shared the following, “…[we] identified that our main concern was racial inequities…[we] exist as two separate schools. On one hand, students were graduating and going on to continue their education…On the other hand, students were failing out…” (p. 267).

When the conversations turn to the educational systems in North America, the different types of schooling options come into the discussion. Education is generally acquired in three different phenomena: public schools, private schools and charter schools. Of the three, public school data is constructed for most research in achievement gap studies. Diane Ravitch (2010) recounts that longtime critics of public education are quick to recall “…a supposed golden age of public schooling forty or fifty years ago” (p. 269). However, Ravitch points to three significant changes that have occurred in public schooling,

“…legally sanctioned racial segregation ended…the courts and Congress required the public schools to open their doors to students with disabilities, a move that was necessary but expensive and challenging for the schools…changes in federal immigration policy brought millions of non-English-speaking students into the nation’s public schools” (p. 269).

The merging of these three changes could arguably be the marker of when the achievement gap began its existence in our nation’s educational systems.

Ravitch also points to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that called for a halt to racial discrimination in schools and the resulting effects of that Act. She says, “[During] the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, the schools were lambasted by critics [as] a “crisis in the classroom” …In response came…pedagogical experiments such as open classrooms and student freedom to select
their own curriculum. In 1983, a federal commission declared that the United States was “a nation at risk” because of the failings of our schools” (p. 298). These thoughts seem to inextricably imply to the premise that the United States may not have fully known and/or adequately prepared for the major changes to our educational system.

In shifting the focus to the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Charles Payne (2008) explored the achievement of its high school students over time. Payne recounts that for CPS, “…high schools remained stagnant.” “There has been a significant rise in the number of Black and Latino students taking Advanced Placement (AP) tests and a modest increase in the numbers of students passing the algebra/geometry sequence…while the student body was becoming poorer. Students from low-income families went from 68 percent of all students in 1993 to 85 percent by 2002” (p. 13-14). In spite of this compelling data, Payne goes on to say that CPS “…is still very much a failing system…of those CPS graduates who started college right after high school, only a third have college degrees six years later, about half the national average, suggesting that even the system’s better prepared students are not well prepared…” (p. 14). While there is data that suggests CPS high students are taking more rigorous course work, data also exists that they are still unprepared for college rigor.

Based on the centrally-themed definition, the racial and socioeconomic conditions provide what arguably could be called the “foundational structures” by which the achievement gap has consistently manifested itself in our educational systems across the country. Since Brown versus the Board of Education, the apparent divisive conditions for students are predicated on their racial ethnicity and financial circumstance. Milner, IV (2015) calls these factors into question as well. He frames the conversation this way, “…due to individual, structural, systemic forms of racism, black and brown students may experience poverty in ways that are qualitatively (and perhaps quantitatively) different from white students” (p. 24). In a number of what he calls “interrelated suppositions”, Milner, IV says, “Students are (and should be viewed as) more than mere test scores. The U.S. obsession with test scores can make it difficult for teachers to focus on teaching that fosters student development and learning
to build long-term academic and social success” (p. 24). Another supposition Milner, IV believes important is that:

“Although socioeconomic status and poverty matter to student success, race remains a constant theme in understanding and addressing disparities in education. Even students of color from middle- and upper-class backgrounds can experience inadequate educational opportunities . . . more students of color are not reaching their academic and social potential than white students . . . ” (pp. 25-26).

Noguera (2012) believes the discussions on the achievement gap should be re-framed. In a question-and-answer article for Context.org entitled “Reframing the Achievement Gap,” he was asked about closing the gap. Noguera responded, “I would reframe it . . . the most pressing issue today facing the country is inequality, and that the achievement gap is an educational manifestation . . . The only way we can really think about reducing disparities in achievement is by addressing social inequality” (p. 1). When asked about Black and Latino male students missing in colleges and universities nation-wide, Noguera answers:

“. . . unless concerted efforts are made to address the problem, we will continue to see black and Latino males vastly underrepresented in higher education. The good news is that there are schools that are more successful in educating black and Latino males and preparing them for college, and we have to learn from these schools and what they are doing differently. Typically, those schools provide a much more supportive learning environment — not only focused on academic needs” (pp. 2-3).

The term “opportunity gap” has been defined as any significant and persistent differences in academic performance between different groups of students. The opportunity gap sets its focus on equity and access in education for all students. Another definition used for this educational phenomena is that it refers to the random occurrences in which people are born have a determining factor(s) on the opportunities in life that they may have access to. In other words, the opportunity gap seeks to identify factors that may affect the opportunity and access that
students have in their educational acquisition. *The Glossary of Education Reform* (2014) cited the following:

- Students from lower-income households may not have the financial resources that give students from higher-income households an advantage when it comes to performing well in school, scoring high on standardized tests, and aspiring to and succeeding in college. Minority students may be subject to prejudice or bias that denies them equal and equitable access to learning opportunities. For example, students of color tend to be disproportionately represented in lower-level courses and special-education programs, and their academic achievement, graduation rates, and college-enrollment rates are typically lower than those of their white peers.

- Economically disadvantaged schools and communities may suffer from less-effective teaching, overcrowded schools, dilapidated facilities, and inadequate educational resources, programs, and opportunities—all of which can contribute to lower educational performance or attainment.

- Students raised by parents who have not earned a college degree or who may not value postsecondary education may lack the familial encouragement and support available to other students. These students may not be encouraged to take college-preparatory courses, for example, or their parents may struggle with the complexities of navigating the college-admissions and financial-aid process.

- Minority students may be subject to prejudice or bias that denies them equal and equitable access to learning opportunities. For example, students of color tend to be disproportionately represented in lower-level courses and special-education programs,
and their academic achievement, graduation rates, and college-enrollment rates are typically lower than those of their white peers. (p. 1).

Teach for America (TFA, 2018) argued that the opportunity gap is the “correct term” to apply versus the achievement gap when comparing the differences in data of students from low-income and affluent communities. TFA recognizes the commonly used achievement gap as, “. . . [a] commonly used in education-related conversations . . . that refers to the disparity in academic outcomes between lower-income students . . . and their affluent peers” (p. 1). TFA has come to embrace the term opportunity gap as the correct term in looking at those differences. For TFA:

“. . . [the] ‘opportunity gap’ refers to the fact that the arbitrary circumstances in which people are born—such as their race, ethnicity, ZIP code, and socioeconomic status—determine their opportunities in life, rather than all people having the chance to achieve to the best of their potential . . . draws attention to the conditions and obstacles that young students face throughout their educational careers . . . [and] accurately places responsibility on an inequitable system that is not providing the opportunities for all kids to thrive and succeed” (p. 2).

Ibram X. Kendi (2018) also affirms the opportunity gap describes more accurately what is occurring in education today. Kendi asserts that the achievement gap is a racist term that has been in education for 100 years. During an interview discussing the achievement and opportunity gaps in September, 2019, Kendi reveals the typical conclusion the average person comes to about the academic achievement gap is that Black/Latinx/Native American children are lower in achievement to White/Asian children because “there is something wrong with them.” Kendi contends this a misdirection of educational thought that has been the “fuel” behind accountability measures and supports in education, rather than taking a look “at these larger structural factors that are actually impacting what's happening in the classroom.”
Kendi believes the opportunity gap is more focused on the actual problem that would bring the appropriate solution(s), while the achievement gap continues to highlight the racial: “. . . the achievement gap is furthering racist ideas, while obviously the opportunity gap doesn't necessarily do that” (p. 3). This perspective could potentially cause a shift in how learning gaps are handled, with the hope that equity and access is provided based on leveling the “playing field” for all students.

State and District Policies Required to Support Systems for College and Career Readiness

The Department of Education (DOE) asserts the following, “education systems only are as strong as the expectations they hold for their students. But for too long, our nation's schools have not set consistently rigorous goals for students” (p. 1). To that end, the DOE have encouraged that all states create “. . . [take] the lead in developing and adopting rigorous standards . . . that build toward college and career readiness by the time students graduate from high school” (p. 2).

Wagner (2014) proposed that there is a global achievement gap in the United States. He has spoken with Fortune 500 companies, as well as college and university presidents, regarding this gap. Businesses have stated that college graduates lack some of the “skill set” needed to be assets to their corporations. University presidents have stated that college applicants lack the readiness to handle college rigor and are under-prepared for college. Wagner’s work serves as a pillar to my research and evaluation of high school students being prepared for college, career and beyond. I search the literature to determine what policies exist at the state and district level that seek to ensure high school graduates are college ready.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the United States had the following data regarding high school college readiness policies:
Table 4

*State High School College-Readiness Policies, by State: 2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State(s) has college-readiness definition that includes cut scores on statewide mandatory high school assessments</th>
<th>State(s) has mandatory high school English and Mathematics assessments with state-adopted college-ready cut scores</th>
<th>State(s) has college-readiness benchmark that guarantees placement into credit-bearing postsecondary coursework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6 (Arkansas, Florida, Texas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Virginia)</td>
<td>11 (Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia)</td>
<td>5 (Florida, Kentucky, Texas, Louisiana, West Virginia)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this data, it would appear that the United States has established college-readiness policies in less than ten percent of the nation.

The above-mentioned data is seemingly contradicted by data presented by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCLS) with regard to states having a college-readiness definition and assessments for states. In Webster’s (2015) article, she presents the following:

- Thirty-three states and the District of Columbia have adopted statewide definitions of college and career readiness. (as of May, 2015)
- Twenty-two states will administer an assessment aligned to state standards than can be used as a college entrance exam by the 2017 school year.
- Many states are using their definitions of college and career to better align K-12 and postsecondary education policy. (p. 1)

As for measuring college and career readiness, Webster incorporated data from Achieve, a nonprofit education organization that is leading the effort to help states make college and career readiness a priority for all students. In Achieve.org’s annual report, *Closing the Expectations Gap* (2014), the chronicle stated:

- All 50 states have adopted college and career ready standards
- 23 states and the District of Colombia now require students to take courses in English language arts and mathematics aligned to state college and career ready standards
Thirty-five states use end-of-course examinations to ensure student mastery of state standards

22 states plan to administer an assessment aligned to state standards that can be used for college entrance or course placement (p. 39 - 40)

With respect to what the Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) has in place for college and career readiness at the high school level, it has developed a guide called the ISBE College and Career Ready Indicator (April, 2018). Within this document, ISBE seeks to clarify its determination of college and career readiness for its high school graduates from a seemingly comprehensive perspective of the following characteristics:

Table 5

**ISBE College and Career Ready Indicator (April, 2018)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguished Scholar</th>
<th>1. GPA: 3.75/4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. ACT Composite Score: 30 or SAT Composite Score: 1400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. At least one academic indicator in each English language arts (ELA) and mathematics during junior or senior year (Algebra II at any time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Three career ready indicators during junior or senior year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 95% attendance junior and senior year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College and Career Ready</th>
<th>1. GPA: 2.8/4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. 95% attendance in high school junior and senior year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. EITHER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) College and Career Pathway Endorsement under Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act; OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) All of the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One academic indicator in each of ELA and math during junior or senior year (or Algebra II at any time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify a career area of interest by the end of the sophomore year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Three career ready indicators during junior or senior year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicator of college and career readiness also contains Academic and Career Ready factors that help to define the state of readiness for postsecondary education and career for high school graduates.
Chicago Public Schools (CPS) also lays claim to the purpose that they, as a district, are committed to preparing high school graduates for college and career rigor. Within the secondary coursework available to all students, CPS has all of the components that ISBE details in their College and Career Readiness Indicators throughout the district. CPS identifies having College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards via the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and gives the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) to its high school juniors to measure their readiness for college rigor.

CPS points to the Consortium on Chicago School Reform with regard to the Freshmen On Track data and the readiness of its high school graduates for college and career readiness. Within their 2019-2024 district vision, CPS shows a significant increase in Freshman On Track rate (69% to 89.4%) and Graduation Rate (56.9% to 78.2%) from 2011 to 2018. They also highlight the average PSAT 10 composite score rose seven points to 903, but the average SAT composite score fell five points to 951 from 2017 to 2018. According to data on SAT’s website, the composite score suggested for readiness for college rigor is 1010 for 12th graders and 970 for 11th graders taking the assessment.

ISBE provides resources to their school districts to support college and career readiness efforts. One of those resources is the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act. This Act includes a voluntary process for school districts to award College and Career Pathway Endorsements to high school graduates. Students earn endorsements by completing an individualized learning plan, a career-focused instructional sequence, and professional learning opportunities. Within the PWR is a framework called the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE). This framework is designed to help guide school districts organize college preparation and career exploration for students. There are three components to this framework:

- College and Career Pathway Endorsements on High School Diplomas: a new system for districts to validate the hard work of students preparing for life after high school
• Transitional Math Instruction to Avoid Remediation: a new statewide system that increases college readiness for high school seniors and reduces remedial education needs,

• Competency-based High School Graduation Requirements (Pilot): establishes a pilot program for voluntary school district participation in moving from “seat time” graduation requirements to competency-based high school graduation requirements.

The PWR Act was signed into law in 2016, and amended in 2018.

CPS has established the Office of College and Career Success for grades 6-12. The plan put forth for CPS students is called Learn.Plan.Succeed (L.P.S). L.P.S. is comprised of six components:

1. College
2. Employment
3. Military
4. Gap Year Programs
5. Job Training Programs
6. Apprenticeships

Within each component, students are to receive the information, support and resources to help them be prepared for and achieve their desired goal. The primary support for students are the school counselors and postsecondary coaches.

Build Teacher Capacity of College and Career Readiness through Curricular and Professional Development Supports

The College Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research published a document to help define and clarify what it means for students to be college and career ready. Anne Mishkind (2014) crafted this determination, “college and career ready means that students graduate from high school prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary opportunities—whether college or career—without need for remediation. To be college and career ready, students must graduate with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to
succeed” (p. 5). There appears to be agreement within the United States Department of Education (DOE) that all states are to have policy that addresses how students are prepared for college and career. I searched the literature to determine how this is accomplished for teachers.

For students to be prepared for college and career rigor, it would follow that teachers would have the understanding of and capacity to do so within the curriculum they teach. Given the assessments that are provided to determine a student’s readiness for college and career, it would also follow that teachers would have the understanding, capacity and ability to design a curriculum with learning activities and projects that continuously helps students acquire the skills and abilities to attain college and career readiness by the time they graduate high school.

ISBE has identified Priority Learning Standards for Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grades. With regard to grades 9-12, ISBE specifically details the priority standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. ISBE has identified a suggested quarterly lesson planning timeline to teach these priority standards for ELA and maintains that the state assessments in ELA, Mathematics and Science align to proposed learning standards. ISBE has established requirements for potential high school graduates as well. CPS has instituted a comprehensive district-wide course catalog. The express purpose for this catalog is “to guide students in making the appropriate course selections that will ensure readiness for college and career, . . . decisions that . . . will lead to strong academic preparation in high school, resulting in postsecondary success in college and career” (pg. 1).

With the learning standards established for the state, ISBE leaves the selection of the curriculum to the individual school districts to determine, based on the needs within their school communities. School districts seek to determine, adapt and select the best course curricula for their student populations. For CPS, they have established the Curriculum Equity Initiative (CEI) for its students. This initiative is “a comprehensive plan for resources, programs, policies, structures, and technologies…that every child… can benefit from high-quality curriculum and instructional resources” (pg. 1). The CEI resources “include a curriculum development guidebook covering educational standards; process documents; rubrics; evidence guides; and a growing library of
current research and best practices around curriculum and teaching and learning with technology” (pg. 1).

High school teachers in Illinois understand their responsibility to provide high quality instruction to their students. They also are aware of the Illinois Learning Standards and the assessments that determine whether students are college and career ready upon graduation. In reviewing the literature regarding teacher preparation, ISBE states that the Department of Career Technical Education and Innovations (CTEI) is a “dedicated team of education professionals working to provide high-quality educational programs, resources, and training for all Illinois students, teachers, and administrators. . . to support and enhance the development of college and career ready students . . .” (pg. 1).

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ, 2017) issued a ranking of all teacher colleges. NCTQ found none of Illinois’ teacher colleges ranked in the top tier nationally.) Olivet Nazarene University, Augustana College and Southern Illinois University Carbondale were rated 86, 81 and 81 percent respectively for Undergraduate Secondary programs. NCTQ also shows that, with the exception English Language Arts and Mathematics, high school teachers do not have to have the certification to teach any other course at the general level.

Roderick, Nagaoka and Coca (2009) considered the importance of college access and readiness of low-income and minority students in urban high schools. In the study, the authors identified four essential sets of skills that address what they called the “aspirations-attainment gap” of U.S. high school students. The four skills are:

1. Content knowledge and Basic Skills
2. Core Academic Skills
3. Non-cognitive (Behavioral) Skills
4. “College Knowledge”

Roderick, Nagaoka and Coca also believe the best parameters to gauge college readiness are:

“. . .coursework required for college admission, achievement test scores, and grade point averages. Student performance on all of these indicators of readiness reveal significant
racial and ethnic disparities. To turn college aspirations into college attainment, high schools and teachers need clear indicators of college readiness and clear performance standards for those indicators. These standards, say the authors, must be set at the performance level necessary for high school students to have a high probability of gaining access to four-year colleges. The standards must allow schools and districts to assess where their students currently stand and to measure their progress. The standards must also give clear guidance about what students need to do to improve” (p. 185).

CPS supports the curricula that are selected by the diverse high schools within the district. CPS has several designations of high schools within their district:

- Career Academies
- Charter
- Contract
- Selective Enrollment
- Magnet
- Military Academies
- Neighborhood
- Small
- Special Education

Within these schools, CPS expects a rigorous curriculum that prepares all students to be ready for college and career. The schools have regular intervals of staff and professional development throughout the school year. These professional development sessions are collaboratively planned among staff and administration to continuously improve student academic achievement. What is undiscoverable is to what degree teachers actually understand how to teach and create learning activities that are aligned with getting them ready for college rigor.

Drago-Severson (2009) believes supporting adult development in schools as a way of helping teachers improve their understanding of creating learning activities to prepare high school students for college rigor. Drago-Severson supports school leaders who believe in creating staff development opportunities to engage in what she calls “collegial inquiry”, or meaningful dialogue, to grow and increase their knowledge in generating college and career ready lessons and
opportunities for students (p. 170). Some suggested collegial inquiries for developing college and career readiness development with teachers are taking learning walks across grade levels, analyzing student performance data and providing time for teachers to engage in real conversations about students’ work and their teaching (p. 170).

Conclusion

The discoveries within this literature review provides additional contexts to my program evaluation and research. Any conversation that includes the opportunity or achievement gap, preparing for college rigor will always be a developmental theme in that conversation. The initial look at the college and career readiness policies currently in place for ISBE and CPS has provided a prerequisite look at what students are receiving during their high school career. The capacity of teachers to know what the college and career standards are for the courses they teach is also a potential place to pivot how students prepared with the tools, skills and abilities to handle postsecondary rigor. Teacher teams that developing instructional strategies and learning activities that give students opportunities to be engaged in during instructional time also provides the readiness for students. I discuss my research methodology in the next chapter that I believe will give me relevant findings as I seek to evaluate this program.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

In this research study, I investigated how the Illinois State Board of Education monitors and supports the preparation of high school graduates for college/career readiness. By including the research conducted by Glancy, et al (October, 2014), this study included multiple dimensions of qualitative and quantitative research and data. Multiple methods of data collection, such as state board of education, district, school and assessment data was utilized. Furthermore, I evaluated the state’s curricular structures, policies and instructional supports and strategies in place to prepare all students for college readiness.

Included in this evaluation will be reflective entries of my leadership experiences, conversations and actions to address college and career readiness. I want to clarify what is meant by a graduating high school student being college ready. As I stated previously, there may be students who have gone into the work force or enlisted in the military. It is plausible, for this evaluation, to believe that a student who is college ready could also be considered work force and military “ready” as well. I also considered the Exploratory Case Study as described by Baxter and Jack (December, 2008).

I also considered the evaluative purpose for my program evaluation, following the descriptive template created by Patton (2008), to be Formative Improvement and Learning. I will recommend major enhancements to improve the intended outcomes of the program. The primary anticipated users of this evaluation will be high school district superintendents/Chief Executive Officers and assistant superintendents overseeing Curriculum and Instruction and/or Secondary Education, current high school principals are supporting, monitoring and developing supports to improve the college/career readiness for their graduating students. The primary use
for my evaluation is to improve the supports and constructs that positively impact the college/career readiness data, state and district-wide.

Referencing Patton’s (2008) “Evaluative Thinking”, I have examined key points in my evaluation regarding college and career readiness. I have clarified what college readiness means in my assessment. I have been clear in my study as to what has been and is occurring in the state of Illinois and in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) where, for every 1000 students graduating, only about 270 students are ready for college. I have been accountable in my study, as well as being focused and purposeful. I have carefully examined the academic preparation and any other directly related factors as the current practices for preparing students to be college ready. I have referenced the American College Test’s (ACT) and Scholastic Assessment Test’s (SAT) definitions and determinations of college readiness, as well as investigated the CPS’s alignment to this college readiness construct. Also, I have been systematic in my approach to this study and make factual data-supported statements when drawing conclusions.

Participants

Due to the expanse of publically accessible data concerning this educational topic, there is no need to include participants in my study. I will investigate and examine the collected data regarding this study. I will be as transparent as possible so that my study has the opportunity to be authentic, and the outcome of my program evaluation will lead to recommendations for improving the program and having a positive impact on the college readiness data for the district.

Data Gathering Techniques

The data collected for this program evaluation will shed light on the effectiveness of the process of transforming the theoretical experiences into practical actions. The methods I use for this study will be quantitative data collection. The techniques I seek to employ are as follows:
**Publicly Available Achievement Data**

There was a considerable amount of college and career readiness data that was acquired on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) websites. There was also publicly accessible data created by credible third-party organizations regarding the college and career readiness within ISBE and CPS. These data have helped to inform me as I considered these sources in my evaluation.

**District and State Policy Frameworks**

I investigated how the existing policy frameworks of CPS and ISBE give direction and focus on their consideration of how students are prepared to be ready for college rigor upon graduation from high school. I evaluated whether these policy frameworks are utilized and monitored to inform them as to the students’ progress as they go through their high school career.

**Reflective Memos**

I informed my evaluation by using reflective memos to share my personal experience in supporting efforts to reinforce college and career readiness for the student populations I served as the principal. As I evaluated this topic, I included how I was able to support the efforts of college and career readiness for these students, as well as how I supported teachers and their instructional strategies to prepare students for college and career.

**Best Practice Research Addressing Effective Support Systems for College and Career Readiness**

I investigated whether the support systems found in the policy frameworks of CPS and ISBE align with research-based best practices for college and career readiness. I inquired about the practices in other states, how they supported college and career readiness for the high school graduates and reviewed the data that supports the effectiveness of that support.

My focus for this evaluation has been to investigate these data and inquire why the data is what it is. I investigated the practices and supportive data for which college and career readiness
supports and systems are stated to be in place. This data is derived from the varied assessments of students for college and career readiness and the supports and structures currently in place.

Data Analysis Techniques

Once I determined the appropriate research paradigm, I analyzed the data to determine the findings. I will utilize data collected from: 1. Document Analysis of Publicly Available Achievement Data, 2. District and State Policy Frameworks, 3. Reflective memos of my professional experiences, and 4. Best Practice Research Addressing Effective Support Systems for College and Career Readiness.

The primary research data of this program will be collected from the publicly accessible data. I will also conduct a crosswalk literature review between Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) College and Career standards, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) 5-Year Vision, 2019 that speaks to college and career readiness, and the 21st century job and work-related skills that are considered critical by today’s leading corporations and companies.

To better understand how to support college and career readiness, I examined literature around the following topical areas:

The Achievement vs. The Opportunity Gap

According to Glossary of Education Reform (2013), the achievement gap refers to outputs of education: the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits. The opportunity gap refers to inputs of education: the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. While there may be those who identify a third gap, the learning gap, that could be considered a contributory element, for the purpose of this literature review, I focus on the first two gaps.

Support Systems and State and District Policies Required for College and Career Readiness

State and school districts have benchmark learning standards that students are to achieve to determine the readiness of students to be prepared to handle increased rigor as they continue through school. I investigate how the support systems are utilized to help the state support the
school district, and the school district supports the students’ preparation for college and career readiness.

**Building Teacher Capacity through Curricular and Professional Development Supports.**

With teachers being one of the major conduits for all learning at the student level, professional development for these teachers play an important role for college and career readiness. I evaluate how Illinois State Board of Education and Chicago Public Schools support the efforts of building capacity of teachers to help support and prepare college and career readiness efforts at the high school level.

**Conclusion**

The research methodology I have chosen will provide the necessary data to examine and investigate this program. I will get an authentic sense of what ISBE and CPS has structured to provide and ensure college and career readiness. I will also gain insight on how teachers are supported in this evaluation and how students know they engaging in a college and career readiness curriculum.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

“Our education system was never designed to deliver the kind of results we now need to equip students for today’s world – and tomorrow’s . . . we need to rethink and redesign.” – Wagner, et al (2006).

In this chapter, I will review my research through the lens of the As-Is framework shared in the book Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools (Wagner, et al, 2006). The purpose for this framework is to identify what is occurring with regard to the data I have gathered in my research. The As-Is framework for this study considers four components: Context, Competencies, Conditions, and Culture. Using this framework, I will analyze the data gathered from publicly accessible data, state and district policy supports, best practices in college, career readiness practices and strategies, as well as notes from my reflective memos as a principal from my experience in promoting high school students for college and career rigor.

To discuss the changes that would bring about better college and career readiness for high school students, I have analyzed this preparation using Wagner’s 4 C As-Is and To-Be frameworks. I will discuss the To-Be framework regarding the change necessary in having a more focused approach to college and career readiness discussed in Chapter 5. The accompanying figure portrays a summary of the framework to be further explained in this chapter.
Figure #1: As-Is Framework

4C’s: As-Is Analysis

**CONTEXT**
- School Choice for College and Career Readiness
- (11 Selective Enrollment High Schools)
- 83% Low Income
- 84% Students of Color
- 75% Do Not Meet ELA – SAT
- 75% Do Not Meet Math – SAT
- 34% College Readiness

**CULTURE**
- Adult-Centered
- AP Students Perceived College Ready
- Improve Graduation Rate-focused
- Low College and Career Rigor
- Low Student Engagement in College and Career Readiness Activities
- Inconsistent Instructional Delivery

**CONDITIONS**
- Outdated Teaching Methods
- Ineffective College and Career Readiness Instructional Strategies
- Inconsistent College and Career Readiness Learning Objectives
- No Real Time Data Collection and Analysis at the School/District Levels

**COMPETENCES**
- Low Percentage of Teaching Staff Engaged in College and Career Readiness Development
- No to Minimal Use of Student Data to Inform Instruction for College and Career Readiness
- No to Minimal Access to Real Time Student College and Career Readiness Achievement Data
- No to Minimal Access to Student Growth Data

Problem statement:
High school graduates are not ready for college level rigor in English Language Arts and Math
Context

Both ISBE and CPS have policies in place for college and career readiness. CPS has established the Office of College and Career Success to assist students in preparation for college selection, admission and career. ISBE has adopted the Illinois Learning Standards for K-12 Curriculum and has given the expectation that all curricula be aligned to these standards in student instruction. These standards are supported, but there is no monitoring structure of the application, use and implementation of these standards. While ISBE has policy in place for college and career readiness, there is no system of monitoring college and career readiness efforts in the high school districts of the state. However, CPS has identified structures and support for college and career readiness. Within their School Quality Performance Rating (SQPR), CPS has one of twenty-one components that is monitored annually for college readiness.

ISBE allows its school districts to determine how they engage students in a college and career readiness curriculum. CPS has Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in many of their high schools that help students acquire college-level coursework for potential college credit. There is no monitoring of, or visible systems, that collect data showing students are engaged in a college and career readiness curricula on an on-going basis. Students have knowledge of how many credits are needed to graduate from high school in CPS, as do students attending high schools throughout Illinois. CPS does have Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculums in many of their high schools designed to prepare students for college and career for that curriculum. However, non-CTE students are not fully knowledgeable as to if they are receiving college and career readiness preparation. Parents have the perception
that their student is being prepared for college and career during the four years of high school education.

Competencies

ISBE provides support for a quality education for all high school students. ISBE has a structure in place that ensures all teachers are certified to teach the various core and ancillary courses at the high school level. While both ISBE and CPS have college and career readiness standards in place, there is no evidence of a component where teachers receive any college and career readiness training or professional development.

There is no evidence of a system or structure that shows ISBE or CPS monitors teachers receiving any college and career readiness training or professional development. There is no evidence that ISBE has a system or structure in place to monitor and access how and whether teachers are engaging students in a college and career readiness curriculum. On the other hand, CPS does show evidence of ways of monitoring how and if teachers engage students in a college and career readiness curriculum. However, CPS has put most of the resources for college and career readiness in particular selective enrollment high schools in the city. While ISBE and CPS share college and career readiness data with school administrations, teachers, students and parents, there is no evidence of a system or structure in place where real time college and readiness achievement data is available for teachers to access to inform them of the progress students are making in their college and career readiness preparation.

There is evidence that CPS uses different sources of student achievement data to inform instruction; however, there is no evidence that college and career readiness data is available to teachers other than data received from annual SAT assessment data. Parents receive regular information regarding their students’ progress during high school that parents believe informs
them on the progress of preparing their students for college and career readiness upon graduation.

Conditions

There is no evidence that neither ISBE nor CPS has policy in place that monitors the current teaching methods other than ensuring teachers are certified to teach the required coursework to acquire the number of high school credits necessary for graduation. While both ISBE and CPS have systems that detail the college and career readiness strategies from the state level, there is no monitoring and analysis of the effectiveness of instruction regarding college and career readiness. Any college and career readiness data that ISBE and CPS receive is normally data that is approximately one-year-old. Parents receive progress reports and quarter grades regarding the students’ academic achievement; however, this is little to no data regarding their students’ readiness for college and career.

Culture

Both ISBE and CPS make reference in their districts that are student-centered in their approach to education. There is evidence that both ISBE and CPS promote and believe in a student-centered educational system; however, there is no data found in my research that supports that promotion and belief. Students who qualify to take college level courses offered in the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs must receive teacher recommendations to gain entry into those programs. While there is evidence that ISBE and CPS promote student engagement in a college and career readiness curriculum, there is also evidence of little to no implementation of college rigor, as well as low student engagement in college and career readiness learning activities based on research data.
There is evidence that ISBE and CPS promote student engagement in a college and career readiness curriculum. However, except for the AP and IB courses, it is unclear and undetermined whether the college level rigor is occurring in the core courses during instructional delivery. Parents believe that their student will be ready for college and career based on the information and data they receive from the teachers, school administration and officials in the various high school districts. Currently, the high schools in CPS that have data to support they have evidence of college and career readiness are the selective enrollment schools that draw the more academically capable students. Most of these selective enrollment schools have 50% or more graduates considered college ready, with six schools having 78% or more graduates prepared for college rigor.

While conducting my research, I can say that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have identifiable supports for college and career readiness for students. However, my research also informs me that in order for ISBE and CPS to adequately prepare high school students for college, career and beyond, some additional measures need to be considered and implemented to equip students for today and the future. Having conducted my research, analyzed the available public data and reviewed the information discovered during my research, I have some additional recommendations ISBE and CPS could employ to better prepare their high school students for college and career readiness. Both ISBE and CPS identify college and career readiness within their organizational structures. And as CPS has established an office dedicated to college and career readiness of students, there remain challenges for ensuring students actually receive college and career readiness strategies throughout their high school careers.
Interpretation

My research shows that ISBE and CPS have a purposed commitment to helping high school graduates prepare for college and career. It is something both districts have thought about: having systems of support to help students prepare for the postsecondary level of education or their career of choice. There is data that speaks to the percentage of graduates who gain admission to the college/university they have selected. However, the focus of these systems are solely geared toward the student being enrolled in college. Data also suggests there is a considerable percentage of students needing to be enrolled into non-credit bearing remedial courses because they are not prepared academically for the rigor necessary to gain entry into college-level English and Mathematics courses. Therefore, although both districts do a credible job of getting students into college, both districts have fallen short in adequately preparing students for the educational rigor of college, be it 2-year or 4-year institution.

The significance of these findings is this. ISBE and CPS can get students into college, but they have not provided what students academically need to persist to the point of graduating from college. I present the following information via the research methods I utilized during this evaluation.

Publicly Available Achievement Data

The following themes arose utilizing this data gathering technique. For the 2017-18 school year:

- 19 of 169 public high schools in CPS had 50% or more of their graduates prepared for college and career rigor

- The high school graduation percentage steadily increased to 82.5% of CPS students
• The college remediation rate for high school graduates averaged 60.7% from 2015 to 2018.

As stated previously, CPS currently has 169 high schools which consist of public, charter, magnet, specialty and selective enrollment schools. Most neighborhoods have a public high school, while charter, magnet and selective enrollment schools may also be in the neighborhood as well. Both ISBE and CPS agree to the mission that there is a need to equip students for college, career and the future. While both ISBE and CPS identify college and career readiness within their organizational structures and policies, there are challenges to ensuring students actually receiving college and career readiness strategies throughout their high school careers.

CPS has a collective of selective enrollment high schools that seem to attract the “best and brightest” students to competitively seek enrollment and attend these schools. At the time this research was conducted, there were eleven high schools identified as selective enrollment schools, with nine schools having the term “college preparatory” in the name of their school. Also, at the time this research was conducted, there were nine high schools identified as having selective enrollment elements in their admission process for incoming freshmen. Many of these schools also had seventh and eighth grade academies as a part of their high school. A cursory look at the data for these selective enrollment schools show that they perform very well academically.

In researching the schools that are geographically located near some of the selective enrollment high schools, the academic data is not as favorable as that of the nearby selective enrollment school. However, the same college and career readiness goals apply to the non-selective enrollment or neighborhood high school. It appears the families of students with academic abilities have the opportunity to enrollment into selective enrollment schools, while
other students have their neighborhood high school as the only option. ISBE has 1,018 public high schools, which includes the schools in CPS. Data shows that of the top ranked high schools in Illinois, seven of the eleven CPS selective enrollment schools are in the top ten, with five schools holding the top five places in the ranking. However, only one high school, representing Chicago and Illinois, is ranked in the top twenty-five in the nation.

ISBE reported that 36.9% and 34.3% of its high school students met or exceeded academic expectations in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, respectively in 2018. CPS reported that 25% of its high school students met or exceeded academic expectations in both ELA and Mathematics (ISBE Report Card, 2018). 24,637 students were administered the SAT; 6,159 students (25%) met or exceeded; 18,478 (75%) did not. A total of 15,123 students (10th and 11th grades combined) were enrolled in early college courses. Also, for the same year, CPS had 61% of its graduated students who required remedial courses in ELA and Math.

District and State Policy Frameworks

The following themes arose utilizing this research method:

- Districts and states with key college and career readiness policy frameworks in place have more high school graduates prepared for college and career rigor
- A need for requiring college and career readiness preparation in all high school courses
- A need for a minimum percentage of 50% or higher of a graduating class academically prepared for college and career rigor.

College readiness is one of three components that contribute to a high school’s ranking nationally, along with graduation rate and student enrollment. The top thirty-seven schools listed a college readiness of 90 to 100% for its graduating students (https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/national-rankings). Within the top fifty
high schools, Arizona (7), New York (7) and Texas (6) had multiple schools ranked. In a review of the *Blueprint for College Readiness* (2014), the following high school policies (Anchor 1) referenced were: College and Career Standards, College and Career Assessments, K-12 Graduation Requirements Aligned and K-12 Accountability. In Anchor 3 of the *Blueprint*, a State-wide College and Career Readiness (CCR) Definition. Arizona has four of the five (missing K-12 Accountability), while New York and Texas also have four of five (missing K-12 Graduation Requirements Aligned). Illinois has three of the five; ISBE does not require K-12 accountability or K-12 Graduation Requirements Alignment.

In researching how ISBE policy framework supports college and career readiness, I found that Illinois has three of five. ISBE does not consider K-12 Graduation Requirements Aligned or K-12 Accountability for high school graduates. It appears that ISBE has no identified systems of support or structure(s) to require or monitor the use of CCRS to support the preparation for high school students to go to college and be ready for college rigor, but the SAT data speaks to their assessment process for CCRS. In a review of the state’s high school districts, there appears to be no designated number of required high school credits needed for a student to graduate, but there are required courses all students must take to graduate. Nor is there a minimum requirement for a defined percentage of students that should be college and career ready prior to graduation. The high school district determines the graduation requirements. The requirements for CPS is 24 credits, along with two Service Learning Projects – one of which must be in Civics. In the surrounding suburbs of Chicago, Thornton Fractional District 215 requires 23 credits; Consolidated High School District 230 requires 21.5 credits; Evanston Township District 202 requires 48 credits (one earned per semester); Lincoln Way Consolidated High School District 210 requires 22, along with twenty hours of Community Service.
above high school districts require specific core courses (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Science) other courses for graduation requirement vary from district to district.

With ISBE permitting high school districts across the state to determine the number of credits a student needs to graduate, the state does require a specific number of core courses. The composition of courses needed to graduate high school in CPS are as follows:

- 4 Credits – English Language Arts (I-IV)
- 3 Credits – Mathematics (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra/Trigonometry)
- 3 Credits – Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
- 3 Credits – Social Science (World Studies, US History, 0.5 in Civics, 0.5 in one other course)
- 2 Credits – World Language (I-II)
- 2 Credits – Physical Education/JROTC
- 3 Credits – Academic Courses of Choice
- 2 Credits – Fine Arts
- 1 Credit – Computer Science
- 1 Credit – Career Education

There is a statement made regarding the purpose for the graduation requirements on the CPS go.cps.edu portion of its website. The district says its graduation requirements are intended to prepare students for success in a variety of experiences after high school, and that these requirements align to the entrance requirements for the state universities of Illinois, as well as written to prepare students for various careers right out of high school. I argue that here belies the problem of students potentially being unprepared for college and career rigor.

CPS has aligned their graduation requirements “to meet entrance requirements” into state colleges and universities. This would suggest that students are successful in acquiring the necessary twenty-four credits to graduate high school, but this only guarantees they have completed what is needed to 1) apply for college and; 2) be considered initially qualified to enter into the state universities of Illinois. I argue that CPS’ alignment to meet college entrance
requirements to state universities/colleges does not mean high school graduates are “college ready”.

Like other high school districts across the US, CPS offers Advancement Placement (AP) courses and/or International Baccalaureate courses (IB) in some of their high schools. Both offerings are college-level courses, allowing students to prepare themselves for college rigor by taking and successfully completing the various curricula offered. There are requirements that students must possess, and the acceptance is usually based on teachers’ recommendations and decisions. My research found that there are robust AP and IB programs within the top ranked high schools in CPS, but a minimal offering in other high schools. One could argue where there are students with academic capabilities the AP and IB programs are robust. I would suggest that there are students with academic capabilities who choose to stay at their neighborhood high school and should have access to the same programs. However, I would also argue that all high school students desire the opportunity and should receive an education that adequately prepares them for college and career rigor.

It is commendable that CPS’ high school graduation rate has steadily increased from 57 percent in 2006 to 82.5 percent in 2019. CPS has established the Office of College and Career Success to assist students in the preparation for successfully graduating high school. High school administrations across the city have contributed to this accomplishment. However, as of 2016, the percentage of CPS high school graduates completing college in six years is 44 percent compared to about 60 percent nationally. Jay Schalin, director of policy analysis for the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, believes there is “. . . great cause for skepticism when a district’s graduation rates improve . . . without equivalent increases in independent measures, such as college completion rates or standardized test scores.”
Schalin contends this may be due to changes in standards needed to pass courses and meet graduation requirements rather than a rising through better performance.

Reflective Memos

The following themes arose utilizing this research method while serving as principal of a suburban high school:

- School data shows 12% of the 2015 graduating class was considered college and career ready
- Teachers were unfamiliar with the school data for college and career readiness of its students
- Professional development was needed to help teachers prepare learning activities to meet college and career readiness objectives.

Having been privileged to serve as a high school principal during my administrative career, I was very aware of the importance of my students being prepared for college and career rigor. I believed this to be one of the most important things that I could do for the young people under my leadership. I was fortunate to support students who applied for the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship; four of my graduates were awarded this scholarship. I supported my counseling departments by bringing in colleges to speak to my students, as seminars on preparing for entering college and college and career fairs. I had my content departments focus on college and career readiness strategies into the existing curriculums being used. I spoke with many students about their future after high school and with parents about supporting their children as they prepare to enter college or career after graduating. In spite of all these efforts, I was brought down by one particular piece of data.
During this time, my students were taking the American College Test (ACT). ACT had determined that only a student who attained the composite score of 21 points would be considered “college ready”. One school year, that data stated that 12 percent of my graduating seniors were deemed ready to enter their college or career. In that same year, the data reported that 86 percent of my graduates had to enter remedial classes after taking college entrance exams. I was staggered by this data. I was upset about this data. I was disappointed in this data. And this data is what led me to investigate further about how students are prepared for college and career rigor prior to graduating high school.

One of the things I did to lead to change in this data was to have my administrative and instructional leadership teams review the data to understand why the data was what it was. Both teams worked separately and jointly to development a plan of action for the next school year. At the opening day of the next school year, I addressed the staff regarding the data. We celebrated what we could celebrate in the data, but the eventual review of the academic data was the main topic of the session. The staff collectively agreed we needed the make changes in practice, instruction and delivery in order to affect measurable change in the data.

The data also revealed something else to me: 12% of my students closely represented the percentage of students who were enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. I began to consider how college and career readiness strategies could reach the 88% of my student body who were not taking AP courses. One of the first initiatives I brought to my school was a program called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID was designed to identify students who were “under the radar”; students with grade point averages (GPA) of 2.25 to 3.50. Students who did well enough to be academically successful in school. AVID had a system called WICOR®, a collection of foundational strategies. WICOR® is an acronym for
Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization and Reading. WICOR© was a system to help students develop the skills to be college and career ready by graduation.

The second initiative I proposed was a whole school conversation on what it takes to prepare all students for college and career rigor. I encouraged every department in my building to review their curriculum and determine whether college and career readiness standards were being addressed and included in the learning activities and assessments throughout the school year. I initiated the conversation about the difference between the district’s graduation requirements and actual preparation for college and career rigor that was going on in our school. I sought to influence my staff that if we were truly the “bridge” to college, career and beyond for the students we were privileged to serve, then we should provide the kind of academic development for all students to be ready for college upon graduation. The biggest challenge that needed to be overcome was for the teaching staff to come to the conclusion that the current curriculum was lacking when it came to providing our students sufficient college and career readiness learning activities and opportunities to be ready for college rigor.

Once the teaching staff collectively arrived at that unified conclusion, I, along with my administrative and instructional leadership teams, began a search for the best researched-based strategies and professional developments that would help our teachers acquire the skills and strategies to embed college and career readiness strategies into the existing curricula being used at the time. The majority of all department meetings, common planning times, staff and professional developments were based on college and career readiness initiatives that were course specific. I also asked that the departments seek to find ways to link their course(s) with college readiness opportunities that would combine the efforts of two different disciplines that
focused on similar readiness standards to provide a level of connectivity that their students could see ways in which the two courses could help them get college ready.

Another critical component to preparing high school students for college and career readiness was to actually understand what activities helped to build the skill development of the students to improve their ability to handle college rigor. During this time period, the American College Test (ACT) was the assessment that high school Juniors would take that would give them a composite score that determined their academic readiness for college. The ACT assessment asked questions in the following disciplines:

- English
- Reading
- Mathematics
- Science

If a student achieved a composite score of 21 points or higher, she/he would be considered “college ready”. The ACT would also show what the student scored in each sub test of which the composite score was comprised.

ACT created a chart that defined the different score ranges, what I came to know as “rigor bands,” that students may find themselves in after taking the assessment. This was a way to quickly determine how well the high school student was doing with regard to preparing for college and career rigor, as well as show the growth opportunities to which the student should aspire during his/her high school career. The highest attainable composite score is 36. The score ranges equate to the skills and abilities a student has demonstrated as it relates to the ACT. The score ranges are as follows:

- 13-15
- 16-19
- 20-23
- 24-27
- 28-32
Since the composite score of 21 equated to a student being “college and career ready” by ACT standards, I challenged the teaching staff with achieving the composite ACT score of 21 or higher as the 3-year goal for our school. The current ACT composite was 16.6. While the goal was ambitious, I believed in my staff’s ability to develop a strategic plan to achieve this goal.

To support the effort in achieving this goal, I purchased charts that displayed the “rigor bands” determined by the ACT. I had the chart displayed in every classroom and throughout the school building for all to see. I wanted teachers and students to see what the scores represented and what they could do to move from one score range to the next. I wanted teachers to have a visual of what learning activities they could create that would give students opportunities to develop and acquire the rigor to continuously improve their academic abilities.

Best Practice Research Addressing Effective Preparation for College and Career Readiness

The following themes arose utilizing this research method:

- Academic frameworks that promote college and career readiness
- A need for high school districts to monitor the college and career readiness of its high school student population
- A need for an internal assessment system to determine student progress in their college and career readiness preparation.

In my research, I discovered significant ways in establishing systems that can prepare students for college and career readiness upon graduation. David Conley (2014) suggests a four-part framework in his model that are key for a student’s preparation: Cognitive Strategies (Problem Solving and Interpretation, Communication), Content Knowledge (Terminology, Factual
Information, Organizing Concepts), Learning Skills and Techniques (Time Management, Goal Setting, Collaborative Learning/Teams, Technological Proficiency) and Transition Knowledge and Skills (Admissions Requirements, Career Pathways, Postsecondary Culture and Program Selection).

Another framework that addresses effective post-secondary preparation comes from the UChicago Consortium on School Research. Borsato, Nagaoka, & Foley (2013) call it the College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS), which includes: Academic Preparation, Academic Tenacity and College Knowledge. Both of these frameworks suggest that Wagner’s (2014) Seven Survival Skills, created after his interviews with college professors and CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, are critical to the preparing for college and career today.

As previously mentioned, CPS has established the Office of College and Career Readiness and has devoted staffing and resources at both school and district-wide to support students and their preparation for college and career readiness during their high school career. While this is very helpful to all of its students, I argue that the academic preparation of high school students needs closer inspection as to how that is occurring currently in the district. The Common Core Standards are understood with regard to the curriculums being used in the core courses within the district. The use and appropriate rigor of the common core seems to not be a consideration for all students throughout their high school career.

After analyzing the data as a result of my research, and considering the information regarding how students in ISBE and CPS are prepared for college and career rigor, I have determined some important themes that, currently occurring, I offer as interpretations.
Theme 1: There is an inconsistent effort to prepare students for college and career readiness.

While this is something that CPS has invested considerable resources toward and has consistently messaged throughout CPS, only 11.2% of high school graduates in 2018 had a college and career readiness percentage of 50% or higher. All of what CPS has in place may help students gain admission into the college or university of their choice. However, the continual rise in the percentage of high school students needing college remediation courses, a non-credit earning course, in English Language Arts and Mathematics speaks to the lack of academic preparation for college rigor.

In order for the district’s data to improve in this area, the district will need to review its own data to thoughtfully, then intentionally re-imagine and possibly re-vision their efforts in improving how they improve their students’ ability to take on postsecondary level rigor.

Theme 2: High school graduation rates have increased while college remediation percentage has worsened.

The disconnect that exists in this theme is a credible cause for concern when it comes to high school students being capable of graduating high school but not being academically prepared to pass college entry exams for English Language Arts, Reading and Mathematics. How is it that a student can acquire the necessary credits required to graduate and not be able to handle college rigor? In my research, I identified what was needed to graduate high school in CPS and some surrounding high school districts. There remains a question of how prepared a student is to graduate versus how equipped that same student is ready for college rigor.

Even with ISBE defining for CPS and other high school districts the minimum academic requirement for graduation, identifying the core courses in which every student must receive a
passing grade, there is no complimentary requirement for postsecondary preparation. The most visible evidence found for whether a student is prepared for college are:

- The combined PSAT and SAT assessment score a student attains in their Sophomore and Juniors
- Students that qualify to take Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate courses
- Students that attend certain selective enrollment high schools

**Theme 3: There is no minimum requirement for college and career readiness district-wide.**

This theme arises from what ISBE and CPS already requires. In order to graduate from a CPS high school, these are the following requirements:

- Minimum credit hour requirement for core coursework over four years for ELA, Science Mathematics and Social Science
- Minimum credit requirement elective requirement
- Minimum hours of required community service
- Passing Illinois, US Constitution and Driver’s License exams

In all of these requirements there is no mention of a minimum percentage requirement for college and career readiness for graduating high school students.

**Theme 4: Teachers do not have access to real-time college and career readiness data.**

My interpretation, based on my experience, is that high school administration and teachers wholly believe that they are aware of, supportive of and very influential in the helping students acquire academic success for their students’ preparation for college and career. However, it is difficult to continuously help improve a student’s academic achievement without
data on the progress of those students. What is equally difficult is teachers not being familiar with the college and career readiness standards to effectively help students prepare.

Theme 5: There is a need for a system to monitor college and career readiness achievement data over time for teachers, parent and students.

Data kept by ISBE and CPS show that students’ perseverance in postsecondary education is far below the current graduation percentage rate of 82.5. Both ISBE and CPS say their goal is to prepare students to handle college rigor, but the UChicago Consortium shows that, for CPS, there is not the case for the graduating students. Furthermore, if one factors in the ethnic disparity for under-prepared graduates who are not prepared, the current interpretation is that CPS is not doing an adequate job for several years. If real change to help students be ready for college is to occur, CPS will need to re-examine its efforts in this regard.

Judgements

My primary research question was to determine how the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) ensures that all high school graduates are prepared for college and career. My secondary research questions were to determine how this was to be done by ISBE with respect to the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and its efforts to get high school graduates ready for college and careers, as well as whether the district’s efforts meet with success for those graduates. In trying to determine whether ISBE and CPS has structures in place to support their students in preparing for college and career readiness, I am challenged by what the research indicates.

Both ISBE and CPS have identifiable policy and support for college and career rigor; however, the data portrays what CPS and ISBE are currently doing to prepare their students is not wholly successful for all high school students. I presented data that determined in 2018, of
the 169 high schools in CPS, only 19 of these schools produced graduates that had students who received a score of 50% or higher on the college and career readiness assessment administered with the SAT. Additionally, to have increasing graduation rates along with an increasing rate of college remediation speaks to a disconnect in the efforts to have students ready for postsecondary success.

ISBE permits the various high school districts determine their own graduation requirements, as well as encouraging that they have policies in place regarding the preparation of college and career readiness for all students. CPS is a robust system of support for helping students prepare for college life, as well as assisting students in important items such as “college match” and acquiring scholarships. along with an understanding of college financial concerns. In my reflections, I sought to re-establish the “mission and vision” of my school to be more purposed in helping students get what they needed to be ready for college rigor.

However, the current structures, policies and systems in place for ISBE and CPS have not brought about what Wagner (2014) discovered in his research regarding the lack of people ready for the work force, as well as the unprepared students entering college and university from high school. Therefore, my judgment is borne out in the research data, and those results are not complimentary. ISBE and CPS are not doing enough to ensure their high school graduates are prepared for college and career rigor. The focus of attaining a high school diploma is more driven by the acquisition of the required high school credits, rather than being prepared for postsecondary and career success.

Recommendations

Based on my dissertation research, there can be a strengthening of college and career readiness within what ISBE and CPS have established to support their students. To change and
continuously improve the percentage of having high school graduates ready for college, career and beyond, there needs to be a collaborative focus and a “deep dive” into the data I have presented to help determine the key levers that will help to redesign and monitor the current structures in place to have students as ready as they possibly can be for postsecondary and career success. One key lever is to organize around establishing an effective way of monitoring the continuous development of college and career readiness as students prepare to matriculate to college, university or career. Not only a collaborative focus of the data, but an effective, measurable and monitored process to improve a students’ readiness for college and career.

Currently, there is no accountable structure or monitoring system that provides ISBE or CPS any college readiness data other than the PSAT and SAT assessment given to 10th and 11th graders, respectively, during high school. It would be important to the success of students developing college and career readiness skills and abilities if there was an assessment instrument that would give real time data to administrative, instructional and teacher teams regarding a student’s level of readiness. To rely on data that is always one year behind, that is provided in the SAT currently and the ACT previously, makes it challenging to utilize efforts created to continuously improve that data.

Conclusion

It has been my professional experience that when one identifies the data points that lead to why the data is what it is, one can be clear about the actions to take to impact the data positively. For example, the data shows that only 25% of all students taking the SAT in 2018 met and/or exceeded expectations in English Language Arts (Reading) and Mathematics. Then organizational changes, some of which may lead to instructional changes, can be developed to address this data and provide support that would produce positive results for this data.
Additionally, organizational change regarding graduation requirements can also be taken for students as they go through their high school, with regard to assessing their college and career readiness at pre-determined intervals. These strategies will be more fully discussed in my To-Be Framework and Policy Recommendations.
CHAPTER FIVE: TO-BE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

As a high school principal, one mission that I dedicated myself to each and every academic school year was to do everything possible to help all students continuously prepare for their future after graduation, be it college/university or career. From freshman to senior, my focus and chief objective to my administrative, instructional, academic and department teams was to continuously develop core curriculums, learning objectives and instructional activities that had the college readiness standards and appropriate rigor to assist all students to be ready for postsecondary and career possibilities. With data showing that a small percentage of graduating students were deemed prepared for college and career in comparison to a graduation rate of over 80% of all graduates, it became clear to me that graduation did not truly equate to being college and career ready.

The achievement gap versus the opportunity gap was a part of my literature review in Chapter 2 of my dissertation. The achievement gap refers to the outputs of education: the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational **results** and **benefits**. The opportunity gap refers to the inputs of education: the unequal or inequitable distribution of **resources** and **opportunities**. Either “gap” may shed light on the college and career readiness data for both the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The data shows that both districts display a continual majority of graduating high school students are more ready for college remediation than ready for college level rigor. Even with evidence that ISBE has policy regarding college and career readiness (definition and learning standards), and CPS having increasing percentages of high school graduates and a dedicated Office of College and
Career Success to support students preparing for life after high school, the research data points to students failing at the postsecondary level rather than succeeding.

If the question posed to ISBE and CPS is “Are students being prepared for college and career?”, both entities would answer in the affirmative. If the question was “How do you know?”, both entities would answer by referencing their current policy, systems, structures and resources allocated to support college and career readiness. If the question was “Do students have access to high quality and rigorous curricula?”, ISBE and CPS would be able to reference their data and provide information regarding the Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate programs, Career and Technical Education and the numerous internship opportunities they offer. Furthermore, if the question is, “Do ISBE and CPS believe their educational efforts would align with Wagner’s Seven Survival Skills for their students?”, both districts would say that they allow for students to experience all of the “Skills” in some way or context. However, the research data shows that, despite the efforts of ISBE and CPS, a significant number of students are not adequately prepared for the postsecondary level or career readiness upon graduation.

I am not here to discredit all of the work ISBE and CPS have done to ensure all students are college and career ready. What I am saying is that my research shows that there is considerable room for improvement and growth in getting students prepared for college rigor and career readiness. Using Wagner’s 4 C’s framework, I have created what I believe will be a viable means of improving how students are prepared for postsecondary and career success based on the findings in my study of this topic. The four lenses I consider will provide a holistic effort of continuous, positive and sustainable impact for the future generations of high school students. I consider the following framework to be one that is manageable and would begin to have
appropriate monitoring systems, I see this as the way forward to a high successfully mode of operation for ISBE and, specifically, CPS and similar school districts like it.

Figure #2: To-Be Framework

4 C’s: TO-BE ANALYSIS

**CONTEXT**
- School Choice for College and Career Readiness (All High Schools)
- 83% Low Income
- 84% Students of Color
- Minimum 50% Meet/Exceed ELA – SAT
- Minimum 50% Meet/Exceed Math – SAT
- 70% College Readiness

**CULTURE**
- Student-Centered
- All Students Prepared for College and Career Rigor
- High Student Engagement in College and Career Readiness Activities
- Consistent Instructional Delivery for College and Career Readiness
- Relevant College and Career Learning Activities

**CONDITIONS**
- College and Career Readiness Research-based Teaching Methods
- Effective College and Career Readiness Instructional Strategies
- Consistent, Cohesive College Readiness Learning Objectives
- Real Time College and Career Readiness Data Collection and Analysis

**COMPETENCIES**
- ELA and Math Teaching Staffs Engaged in College and Career Readiness Curriculum Development
- In Depth Use of College and Career Readiness Data to Inform Instruction
- Unfettered Access to Real Time Student Achievement and Growth Data

To-Be Statement:
High school graduates are ready for college level rigor in English Language Arts and Math.
Context

CPS has established the option of School Choice for students and parents to select the high school they believe is best to attend. CPS designates these schools to be identified as selective enrollment or magnet schools. The process to seek enrollment requires that an assessment is administered to determine whether the student meets the minimum academic ability benchmark of 24% on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test in Math and Reading. Selective enrollment schools open up 30% of their incoming freshmen population to enroll the highest performing students, with no boundary regarding where the student lives. The other 70% are selected in a definitive tiered process by the school. CPS has established the Office of Access and Enrollment to manage and oversee the process for district-wide school enrollment. Magnet schools have a similar enrollment process for students.

I have not spoken of equity or access with regard to college and career readiness preparation. I mention it here in this segment of my analysis to say that the process of school choice and selection may need to be re-imagined. There will continue to be a high percentage of low income students and students of color in CPS that will need to be afforded the equitable opportunity to attend a high school that adequately prepares them for college rigor. In addition, creating and implementing a continuous academic improvement plan that sets goals to strategically assist 50% of a collective class (Freshmen to Senior) to meet college ready benchmark established by SAT is an attainable goal. In meeting this goal, having 70% or more graduates prepared for postsecondary rigor also becomes attainable.

Competencies

In order to bring the above-mentioned context into fruition, it is important that the teachers are as well versed not only in their content. Teachers should also have knowledge and
understanding of the college and career readiness standards. In this way, teachers help students develop the skills and abilities to handle increasingly rigorous activities that prepare them to have postsecondary and/or career success. This is a pivotal component of the competencies that has to be fully actualized for effective teacher practice. Over the course of my administrative career I have heard teachers say that they teach the content as they were taught. I understand the love of teaching content in the way(s) teachers have been taught. However, if that same teacher is saying that it is acceptable to continue teaching content the same way(s) s/he learned in the 1980’s or 1990’s, then the instructional implementation of the current college and career readiness strategies needed for students to adequately prepare are not being taught. Therefore, taking a look at how college and career readiness standards are addressed, embedded and presented in core curriculum becomes a needed area of consideration.

Once the core curricula have addressed how students are receiving the appropriate rigor to be ready for the postsecondary level, having access to the data that informs teachers of progress and gives them the opportunity to assess how students are doing and make changes in ensuring students are actually improving as designed. Having a means of monitoring the process is important to meet the diverse learners where they are: their strengths and their growth opportunities. Giving access to real time student achievement and growth data will support teachers in understanding how students are doing.

Conditions

Once the competencies addressed have been honed and developed, research-based teaching methodologies and practices should be implemented at every grade level. Of course, the by-products of any meaningful curriculum development are the instructional strategies and learning activities that are authentically based on college and career preparation. Having a
reliable system of real time student data collection and analysis of that data will continue to inform administrative, instructional and teacher teams of the continual progress in ensuring students are on track in their preparation as they approach graduation.

Culture

I mentioned earlier that while ISBE and CPS believe they are student-centered districts; both are more adult-centered than they would want to recognize. My To-Be Context speaks to the objective being . . . to give students the choice to choose a high school that will prepare them for college or career regardless of their neighborhood or academic status. I stated the characteristics of the students who would benefit from my analysis. The competencies have student learning at the center concerning what teaching staff need to develop a viable and sustainable college and career preparation framework. The conditions have student learning as the focus for how teachers develop instructional strategies and learning activities for students to be ready for college rigor. Therefore, I see a culture that is wholly student-centered, that provides the appropriate academic rigor for all years of high school and that is engaging, relevant and produces students prepared to be confident, capable and contributory to our global society.

Conclusion

To some, my vision for what the data should show for ISBE and CPS, regarding establishing a minimum benchmark of 70% of high school graduates being adequately prepared for college rigor or to be career ready, to be very ambitious. I would argue that it may not be ambitious enough. We have entered the twenty-first year of the 21st century. The job market continues to look for employees for the “skill set” that Wagner has identified in his research in interviewing Fortune 500 chief executive officers. University and college professors continue to
look for students entering the postsecondary level with the skills and abilities to handle college rigor and not need remediation in English and/or Mathematics.

Therefore, if the over-arching mission of high school education in Illinois and CPS is to prepare students for “life” after high school, the vision I see will give future generations of students a real opportunity to pursue their hopes and dreams with the adequate college and career preparation to be successful. The path forward will need to be strategic, intentional and purposefully crafted to change the current paradigm of what is currently the result of students prepared for postsecondary rigor.
CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

A new administration has been elected in the 2020 presidential election, and President Biden has given tremendous thought to the persons he has selected in the composition of his Cabinet posts. His choice for Secretary of Education is Miguel Cardona. In reviewing some of Cardona’s educational platforms, his work as the nation’s education leader will have considerable impact regarding some key factors for preparing students for college and career readiness.

In his nomination acceptance speech, Cardona said, “For far too long, we’ve let college become inaccessible to too many Americans for reasons that have nothing to do with their aptitude or their aspirations … and, unfortunately, an internalized culture of low expectations.”

When asked about school choice during his confirmation hearing, Cardona responded:

I recognize there are excellent examples of charter schools . . . I also know there are phenomenal examples of neighborhood schools that are also doing great work. My passion is to ensure quality schools, period — making sure that we’re not supporting a system of winners and losers, where if you get into a school you have an opportunity for success but if you don’t get into a school your options lead to a belief that you can’t make it. So for me, I’m a strong proponent of making sure that all schools are quality, where parents want to send their children. Most parents want to send their children to their neighborhood school. It is important to support all schools, including the neighborhood schools that are usually the first choice for families in that community. (Pehal News Team, 2021)

Mike Magee, CEO of Chiefs for Change, an education organization that represents state and district superintendents with more than 7 million children, offered, “[Cardona] will be, as he well
knows, walking into a situation where many millions of students are significantly more behind than where they were a year ago in terms of their path to college and career …” (p. 2).

With Secretary Cardona leading the Department of Education (DOE), his platforms of improving public school systems holistically, and focusing on college and career readiness through an equity lens, the As-Is analysis I detailed locally could emulate what Cardona sees nationally. The To-Be Framework I envision would align with Cardona’s initial, and long-term, efforts of improving public high school districts to provide rigorous, high quality curricula that strengthens neighborhood high schools and, thereby, improve the opportunity for students to be college and career ready by graduation.

As a guide to this change framework, I consider it possible to achieve my To-Be Framework using the Whole System Change Framework (Fullan, Quinn, Adams 2013). This framework seeks to address and improve the issue(s) needing to change. The eight-step process is designed to produce three components for “Deep Learning”: Learning and Teaching, Change Knowledge, Culture of Learning.

### Strategies and Actions

To bring the change needed to improve the percentage of high school graduates prepared for college and career, I will describe the use of this eight-step process:

**Figure #3: Whole System Change Framework (Fullan, Quinn, Adams 2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Change Leadership Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Foster Deep Commitment to Moral Imperative</td>
<td>At the beginning of any change process, there must be a collective commitment to the desired change(s). However, commitment can only go so far in the change process. Fullan explains that for “the moral imperative to be realized must combine deep commitment and the means of acting on it” (p. 10).  To realize a significant change in the percentage of high school graduates ready for postsecondary work or career, this “moral imperative” must be...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
realized at the state, district and high school levels if two-thirds of graduates are not able to enter college level courses without remediation or unable to qualify for entry-level positions in the work force.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Develop a Small Number of Ambitious Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the As-Is Analysis and To-Be Framework, the three goals are already identified:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Seventy-five percent of graduates do not meet the English Language Arts (ELA) College Career Readiness benchmark for the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Seventy-five percent of graduates do not meet the Mathematics College Career Readiness benchmark for the SAT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thirty-four percent of high school graduates are considered college and career ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing consensus around these three areas as the correct focus to work toward impacting could be considered SMART goals to achieve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is also critical to the beginning of this change process is:
- Strategy 1: Create a real time process of student college and career readiness data

In order to determine if the change process is effective, there needs to be a reliable means of getting real-time data that informs where students are in developing their college and career readiness and how they are progressing throughout the process. There needs to be consensus in creating, developing and implementing a means of acquiring real-time student data that informs the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Invest in Capacity Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With the deep commitment to the identified goals for the change process, investing in capacity building becomes the logical next step:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strategy 2: Professionally develop core content teaching staffs in full understanding of college and career readiness standards and the appropriate levels of rigors for those standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With college and career readiness and improving public schools as a part of Cardona’s educational platform, school districts will receive federal funding to help support efforts to accomplish both issues. In order to have positive impact on the articulated goals, investing in capacity building becomes important. Therefore, it becomes crucial that high school staffs acquire a full, authentic and working knowledge of the college and career standards that apply to their content.

Core course teams would work together to review their current instructional curricula to determine how students are receiving college and career readiness; then look at ways of embedding additional college and career standards to ensure the appropriate rigor is included at all levels of instruction. Then, the teams’ next focus is to determine, create and develop the learning activities that will provide the appropriate rigor to help students become college and career ready.
There is one thing to note here. The goals in this change process are focused on English Language and Mathematics. However, if done with fidelity and purpose, teachers of other content areas can benefit from this change process to improve the preparation of their students through their content as well.

4 Build Leadership at ALL Levels
Within every change process, the development of shared accountability and responsibility is important to sustaining the process. Equally important is the development of leadership for your teachers, department chairs, administrative and instructional teams.

- Strategy 3: Develop effective building leadership to help carry the vision of college and career readiness at all levels.

During this process, it can be determined what staff is seriously committed and shows true passion for preparing students to be ready for college and career rigor. Allowing these staff members the opportunity to develop their leadership abilities does two things: 1. Establishes the trust in the staff person to achieve the targeted goals and; 2. Deepens the work for the colleagues in the core course.

5 Cultivate District-wide/School-wide Engagement
While this change process is occurring for two core contents, there is always the opportunity to engage the entire faculty and staff with the work being done to improve college and career readiness for students. During the regularly scheduled staff meeting, the teacher leaders can share their work with everyone. This sharing could help teachers not directly engaged in the change process become more familiar with work being done, and take a more informed step closer to ensuring college and career standards are embedded into their instruction and learning activities for their students.

6 Learn from the Work
To understand if the change process is moving in the desired direction, it is necessary to learn from the work during the process. There will be some things that work and things that do not work. What ensures that work will continue in a positive way is communication between all engaged parties. If the level of trust has been firmly established, the climate for openness, transparency and critical feedback helps the change process remain authentic.

Fullan (2011) states, “. . . if you want transparency, [the change process] climate is crucial. Norms that encourage and value critical feedback from all team members, especially from those with less status, are essential” (p. 138). Therefore, it is not about any one team member being right; it is about the team getting it right. Disagreements are certain during the change process. But if the overarching goal is to get students ready for the future, the disagreements can work toward a unified consensus that will benefit all students in the end.

7 Use Data to Improve Practice
I spoke about having access to real-time student data in the second step of this process. My research has also discovered that every successful system of improving college and career readiness of students was having
access to that type of data.

In most cases, most high schools have only one annual source of data that speaks to college and career readiness. This data comes from the assessments to freshmen, sophomore and junior students during their high school career. SAT gives a suite of assessments for those grades: PSAT8/9, PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT), PSAT10, SAT. These assessments are given during the school year, with results not being made known until the end of that school year or the summer following the school year. This data is still valuable, but it is months old data and not really as actionable as schools would like for it to be.

Teams need a way of receiving real-time data that speaks to how students are developing the college and career readiness at acceptable rates of improvement. The need for an interim assessment, administered at a regular interval, that gives specific data on how students are doing is the best solution to this data need. The creation of this interim assessment, whether teacher team created or research, can be conducted to find one that meets the needs of the core content team. Once this has been determined, and the interim assessment is given to students, the real-time data can be accessed and provide accurate information on the students’ progress.

### 8
**Monitor for Improvement and Innovation**

Monitoring the change process from a data perspective affords the best opportunities to improve and be innovative when the data demonstrates the need to do so. Monitoring the teams’ progress in implementation of the change process deepens the teacher leadership development and preserves the climate discussed in Step 6.

Creating peer monitoring teams will help continue to deepen the relationships of staff, as well as keep the critical feedback loops going among staff. Instructional walk-throughs and informal classroom visits are also ways of monitoring the college and career readiness work and look for ways to improve and innovate the process. A very useful tool in all of the monitoring efforts would be a rubric designed to collect information directly related to college and career-ready activities, instruction and student engagement in the classroom.

In using the Whole System Change Framework designed by Fullan, Quinn and Adams (2013), teams can be effective in their goals of improving how students are prepared for college and career. The potential for intentionally embedding the appropriate college and career rigor into the initial core content of ELA and Mathematics also helps to align that rigor to Wagner’s
Seven Survival Skills that college professors expect entering college freshmen to have, as well as business and corporate CEOs hope for from college graduates.

Conclusion

The data from my research shows that Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) could make a significant and measurable improvement in three important data if this change process was to be incorporated into the policy. High school graduation would continue to improve its percentage of graduations, college remediation would decline and students would be ready for college rigor in their freshman year, which would have positive effects on data regarding students graduating from college within four to six years.

A quote from poet Maya Angelou states, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better . . . do better.” This quote can be applied to the efforts of ISBE and CPS in their efforts to prepare students for postsecondary and career success. Both districts have done the best they can with their policies, resources and supports for students in high school. With my research, I have shed light on what is occurring and the causative factors for students’ college and career readiness data. I offer this research to help both districts know better . . . so both districts can do better.
CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As I reflect on my years as a high school principal, I believe I accomplished many successes with the students and school communities I have served. I led the work as we celebrated measurable growth in district and state assessment tests. I was able to establish student-centered climates and cultures to improve the learning environment in the building. I led the work to establish positive teacher-student relationships. I implemented structures for students, such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) for my school and became the first school in the district to be certified as an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, to grow as individuals and continuously improve the academic achievements. However, with all of the successes I have experienced as a high school principal, there was the one set of data that would humble me and cause me to reflect on my practice as a school administrator. That data was the percentage of my graduating seniors being considered ready for college and career rigor.

As I have said previously, I was offended at the low percentage of students who were considered ready for college reflected in the assessment given at the time, the American College Test (ACT). The data stating that only twelve percent of the graduating class was prepared for college coursework was devastating to me. The data stating that eighty-one percent of the graduating class needed to enter non-credit postsecondary remediation courses was equally demoralizing.

It is this unfortunate revelation that has energized me to determine what was causing these data and, more importantly, what I could do in my leadership capacity to have a significant and measurable impact on these data. I argue for the policy recommendations in my statement
that I consider significant with regard to college and career readiness for high school students. Within my analysis of needs, I will detail the impact I believe my recommendations will support through my research. Then, I will address the implications of my policy recommendations for high school teaching staff and community relationships.

Policy Statement

I advocate for this policy based on my dissertation research with regard to the readiness of high school graduates for college, career and beyond. During my inquiry and investigation on this topic, in the state of Illinois, 649 of 674 high schools had less than 50% of its high school graduates ready for college and career. For Chicago Public Schools (CPS), it was 150 of 169 having less than 50% of its graduates ready for college and career. I also discovered, during my evaluation, data suggesting that approximately 49% of high school graduates were enrolled in remedial coursework the first semester of their collegiate freshmen year because of not being ready for college level rigor.

Wagner’s *The Global Achievement Gap* (2014) determined that corporations found fewer potential hires actually possessed the skills and abilities that complimented their organizations’ workforce needs. Wagner also discovered that university professors voiced concerns about the level of preparedness of high school graduates attending their universities. Having served in the position of a high school principal, I have felt a sense of urgency, accountability and responsibility to provide and ensure that students receive the instruction, curricular engagement and academic experiences to be adequately prepared for college rigor. This is the overarching reason that I advocate for two policy recommendations to be adopted and implemented for ISBE and Chicago Public Schools. The first policy recommendation is for ISBE to establish a graduation requirement for a college and career readiness benchmark percentage for high school
graduates. The second policy recommendation for both districts is to create a system that monitors the college and career readiness of students during their high school career to ensure students reach the required readiness benchmark prior to graduation.

To ensure these policy recommendations have the desired effectiveness in producing college and career ready graduates, I make the following supportive recommendations:

Supportive Recommendation 1: ISBE should establish an alignment where the statewide minimum high school graduation requirements meet with statewide minimum higher education admission standards.

Supportive Recommendation 2: Establish a collaborative transparency between high schools and higher education institutions regarding college and career readiness standards.

Supportive Recommendation 3: Provide multiple options for meeting the minimum course requirements in both high school and higher education.

Supportive Recommendation 4: Provide multiple options for determining a student’s level of college readiness in areas other than course requirements, GPA or class rank.

In researching the educational status of the state of Illinois, Education Week’s “Quality Counts 2018” has Illinois ranked 16th and receiving a “C-” in K-12 Achievement, which is just 2.2% from a “D”. The US News and Business Report’s “Best States for Pre-K-12” (2015) rankings, Illinois is 22nd in High School Graduation Rate and 26th in College Readiness. WalletHub (2018) conducted a national education research process that determined the educational ranking order of the United States. Illinois was ranked 21st in their findings. For CPS, the findings of my research indicates that 19 of 169 high schools had 50% or more of their graduates considered college and career ready.
I advocate for these policy recommendations because generations of school-aged children would significantly benefit from an educational system that has established benchmarks of academic success with the appropriate monitoring systems to ensure all students are afforded the opportunity to maximize their potential. I argue that the value of education is still respected, and a quality education is expected by the parents/guardians who send their children to school receive the educational foundation for which they can realize and secure their future. I argue that the needs, values and preferences that will potentially be represented can cover the high expectations of any person living in Illinois. A quality education that adequately prepares one to be ready and able to grow, develop and be a contributing member of our competitive global society is still considered a high-level desire and a validated necessity. Noted South African Statesman Nelson Mandela (2012) declared, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (p. 101). Former United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan also contends, “Education is the key to eliminating gender inequality [and] to reducing poverty . . . education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity . . . education is an investment, . . . one of the most critical investments we can make” (USAID from the American People Impact Blog, April, 2013, p. 1).

Within these two quotes, the values of this advocated policy are represented. Specifically, to the state of Illinois, the quotes by Mandela and Duncan should be considered, given the current educational ranking in this country. To Duncan’s thought, to be economically competitive and globally prosper, the education rendered to the all persons in the academic arena in Illinois is an investment worthy of standards and benchmarks that provide its citizens educational preparation to compete and to prosper. Illinois’ consideration is to create an organizational structure with synergistic systems that authentically and consistently provide its
school districts with the moral imperative, mandate and, above all, support and resources to help realize the best educational and academic experiences possible for every student to be capable, confident and adequately prepared and ready for college rigor, career and beyond. I recommend that the state’s overarching mission should be to ensure it is producing the next generations of students who will be able to engage in the emerging global society.

Several segments of society, varied and comprehensive, would be affected with regard to the needs, values and preferences of this advocated policy. As I have argued consistently, the delivery of a quality education to the current and future generations of students who enter Illinois school systems state-wide is a critical need, a time-appreciated value and a projected preference that represents everything that is honored and revered in our society. However, research data suggests that Illinois is not succeeding in producing high school graduates who can persist and handle college rigor.

As displayed in Table 6, the rankings of Illinois and the surrounding states of Wisconsin, Indiana and Iowa are shown. The comparable data shows the following:

1. Illinois is ranked 2nd of the four states for Pre-K to 12 education.
2. Illinois is ranked 3rd of the four states for College Readiness; Iowa ranks lower.
3. Illinois is ranked 4th of the four states for High School Graduation Rate.
4. Illinois is ranked 4th of the four states for National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for Math and Reading.
5. Illinois is ranked 1st of the four states for Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Quality and Pre-School Enrollment
6. Iowa is ranked 8th over-all to Illinois’ 14th ranking.
Two things can be noted in this data. First, NAEP Math and Reading rankings of Wisconsin, Indiana and Iowa are higher than those of Illinois. Secondly, those ranks would suggest why those states have a higher High School Graduation Rate than Illinois. It is also notable that while Iowa is ranked 1st in their high school graduation rate, the state is 4th in College Readiness (33rd nationally).

A closer inspection of the *US News & World Report* (May, 2018) on the ranking of the best states for education shares additional insight on how the states received their rankings. The focus of this report is to measure “how well states are preparing students for college.” As shown previously, Illinois ranks 14th in the nation. Table 7 shows the top five states in comparison to Illinois:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Rank</th>
<th>College Readiness</th>
<th>HS Grad Rate</th>
<th>NAEP Math</th>
<th>NAEP Reading</th>
<th>Pre-K***</th>
<th>PreSchool Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#14 Illinois</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16 Wisconsin</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17 Indiana</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 Iowa</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
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</tbody>
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* - High School Graduation Rate  
** - National Assessment of Educational Progress  
*** - Pre-Kindergarten
Table 7


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-K-12 Rank</th>
<th>College Readiness</th>
<th>HS Grad Rate</th>
<th>NAEP Math</th>
<th>NAEP Reading</th>
<th>Pre-K Quality</th>
<th>PreSchool Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Massachusetts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 New Hampshire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 New Jersey</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Vermont</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 Connecticut</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14 Illinois</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>26</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

This data provides the following findings as it relates to Illinois. Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Vermont and Connecticut rank in the top ten for at least three of the six categories listed. These states rank in the top five for NAEP Reading, the top five for NAEP Math (save Connecticut), and the top ten in College Readiness. With respect to its educational standing, *US News and Business World Report* (2019) ranks Illinois nineteenth in the nation. Illinois has an 88.6 percent high school graduation rate which places them thirtieth in the nation.

**Analysis of Need**

In order for policy to support the recommendations, my research has proven to be significant. I believe an analysis of needs for these recommendations should be considered. The policy considerations I argue for will call for a definitive paradigm shift with regard to how to fundamentally change, implement, monitor and support college and career readiness for future generations of high school graduates. Therefore, to further support the recommended policy changes for college and career readiness, I have included six specific disciplinary areas that I
believe support the need for my recommendations to truly grasp the challenges before us. The six areas of analysis to be addressed are as follows:

- Educational Analysis
- Economic Analysis
- Social Analysis
- Political Analysis
- Legal Analysis
- Moral and Ethical Analysis

Educational Analysis

There is exhaustive research data on education with regard to college and career readiness. The Department of Education has established policies that encourage states to develop standards for postsecondary readiness. However, as the states have created the required standards “. . . these standards do not reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success after high school, either in further education or in a job” (p. 11). The College Board (2014) issued what it called “Empirical Foundations for College and Career Readiness”. They determined that there are ten “foundational principles” in preparing students for college and career rigor. Of those principles, four speak directing to the academic preparation:

- Foundational Principle 2: “It is important for students to engage in the college preparation process early . . .” (p. 8)
- Foundational Principle 3: . . . “it is beneficial for students to have in-depth knowledge of a few key topics, rather superficial knowledge of many.” (p. 10)
Foundational Principle 6: “Students [taking] more rigorous course work in high school are more likely to be ready for college and career by the time they graduate from high school . . .” (p. 16)

Foundational Principle 8: “Improving college readiness can address the issue of inequality in education . . .” (p. 10)

There is additional research that suggests two additional indicators of students being prepared for postsecondary rigor and career:

1. The quality of instruction is as or more important than the time in a school day. (p. 1)
2. Professional development, well-spent collaboration time, and data analysis are key components when promoting student success. (p. 2)

High School Policies to Increase College Readiness

James Bryant Conant, who served as the president of Harvard University from 1933 to 1953, wrote a book in 1964 entitled Shaping Education Policy. In 1965, John W. Gardner, then president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Terry Stanford, former governor of North Carolina, collaborated to bring Conant's ideas to reality in three major foci for improving and strengthening education policy and policy making:

a. Give voice to the diverse interests, needs and traditions of states;
b. Enable them to cooperate and communicate with one another, and;
c. Promote their working together to focus national attention on the pressing education issues of the day (p. 2).
A Compact for Education (https://www.ecs.org/about-us/history/) was drafted, endorsed by representatives and approved by Congress in 1967. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) became the operating arm of this compact, opening its headquarters in Denver, CO in 1967. Since this Commission, the ECS has issued a 50-State policy analysis that looks at the States through three policy anchors within this framework:

- High school policies to increase college readiness
- Higher education policies to increase college completion
- Bridge policies to ensure alignment between high school and higher education.

This framework sought to unify two forces in state and federal education policy attempting to:

- improve the college and career readiness of graduating high school students and;
- decrease remedial education and improve the rate of students who earn a degree or credential.

For the purpose of this analysis, I consider the high school policies in this framework.

Anchor 1 of this Blueprint analyzes four key points:

Section 1: College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards
Section 2: College and Career Readiness (CCR) Assessments
Section 3: High School Graduation Requirements
Section 4: Accountability

Some of the stated policy goals for CCR Standards Section 1 include:

- Ensuring that exposure to college and career readiness content is not an accident of student location or demographics.
- Helping students achieve college and career readiness before high school graduation.
- Improving student performance on state, national and international assessments.
• Ensuring that mobile students — including students with family in the military — can progress through the K-12 curriculum without repeating or skipping key content.

At the publishing of this Blueprint, 43 states were reported to be currently implementing the Common Core State Standards. The challenges to achieving these goals are teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach the new standards, the lack of public understanding of/support for new standards and the lack of strategy in expanding access to advanced learning opportunities.

For Section 2, CCR Assessments, the stated goals include:
• Put students on a trajectory toward achieving college and career readiness upon high school graduation. Assessments must change to measure students’ progress on that trajectory.
• States must adopt CCR standards and assessments aligned to those standards to receive an NCLB waiver from ESSA mandates.
• Reduce postsecondary remediation rates nationally.
• Satisfy the outcry from business and industry leaders saying high school graduates lack the knowledge and skills they need to successfully enter the workforce.

• Provide clear and consistent messaging to students, parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers and the general public on the college and career readiness of high school students.

At the time of this analysis, 46 states and the District of Columbia have adopted a system of CCR assessments, with the first administration occurring during the 2014-15 school year. The application of these assessments vary from state to state. The challenges needing solutions for these goals are a mismatch between high school assessments and postsecondary admissions and
placement measures, the negative public perceptions of CCR standards and assessments and, the perception of overemphasis of assessing ‘college readiness’ and inadequate emphasis on assessing ‘career readiness’.

The key policy actions recommended by the Blueprint are to identify benchmarks on CCR assessments that will trigger targeted, appropriate interventions in English Language Arts and Math, consider opportunities for students to demonstrate college and career readiness through more than one state-administered assessment, and provide students and parents with the results of CCR assessments, as well as provide clear information on whether the assessment scores are used in college admissions in the state, and how student results align with benchmarks for placing into entry level, credit-bearing English and Math college courses across the state.

The policy goals for Section 3, High School Graduation Requirements are:

- Align statewide minimum high school graduation requirements with statewide minimum higher education admission standards.
- Create transparency between high schools and higher education institutions about college and career readiness standards.
- Increase the number of high school graduates entering postsecondary institutions.
- Provide multiple options for meeting the minimum course requirements in both high school and higher education.
- Provide multiple options for determining a student’s level of college readiness in areas other than course requirements (GPA or class rank).

The Blueprint indicated that of the 47 states having high school graduation requirements in place, 6 states had the same course requirements in both high school graduation policies and higher education admission policies while 12 States had partially aligned course requirements.
There is the potential for considerable economic concern across the United States when high school graduates are not ready for college and/or career. Public universities are spending nearly $1 billion on remediation courses for approximately one-third of incoming freshmen (Bettinger & Long, 2009). Some studies have concluded that about ten percent of eighth graders entering high school are predicted to graduate high school and enter college with no need for remedial coursework. There are also non-academic factors that contribute to high school graduates not being ready for college, such as the inability to succeed in a post-secondary setting. Some may not know how to apply to, finance, and navigate college. Even promising students often fail to see college as an option, complete the paperwork necessary to apply for and finance a postsecondary education, or take courses that would prepare them for college. Many students who enroll in college may struggle personally in a post-secondary setting and eventually drop out (Conley, 2007b; King, 2004; Roderick, 2006; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

There is also research that points to a very interesting conclusion. College and career readiness is more than being eligible for college enrollment or career entry positions. Students can graduate from high school with the required credits to enroll in a college or university but still have deficiencies in academic skills, study habits, and a real grasp and understanding of college to persist and succeed. Yet, while common indicators exist to identify students at-risk of dropping out of high school, studies document few valid and reliable indicators of college and career readiness for these same students.

The data that point to this country’s seeming inability to produce college and career ready students carries significant economic consequences in the United States. For example, a recent
Brookings Institution report used quasi-experimental techniques to show that state investment in higher education caused economic growth (Aghion, Boustan, Hoxby, and Vandenbussche, 2009). Research also suggests that increasing the percentage of Americans completing a postsecondary education will prove important to bolstering and sustaining the middle class, largely because the percentage of jobs requiring a college degree (at the minimum) will rise sharply over the next decade, increasing to 60 percent in some states (Carnevale, Smith, and Strole, 2010). Jobs requiring a postsecondary education are expected to spike due to the nature of jobs created and the increasing importance of technology in the American economy (Carnevale, Smith, and Strole, 2010).

However, and possibly most troubling, is the reality that the United States is currently not on pace to meet the increasing demand for career ready college graduates. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008), only 42 percent of Americans in the workforce at the time of their study possessed a college degree, and that number was not forecast to climb near 60 percent in the following decade. Wagner’s (2014) research supports the Bureau’s findings of college graduates not meeting the workforce needs due to being underprepared for what is being required by businesses and industries. Failing to focus on college readiness carries major implications for the U.S. economy over the long-term.

Research on predicting student outcomes tends to focus on building early warning systems. In its focus on grades and credits, the literature on early warning systems fails to include important indicators of a student’s college and career readiness: (1) the level of rigor of the courses he or she takes, (2) the motivation to succeed in high school and go on to postsecondary education, and (3) the knowledge of how to enroll in, finance, and complete
college. Because of these factors, the predictive power of these early warning systems could be misleading because of the omission of non-academic factors that can prove as important as the standard measures of academic readiness or college eligibility. Research has begun to consider indicators of college and career readiness that include not only academic preparedness, but also academic tenacity (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2011), and college knowledge (Conley, 2008). Implicit in this approach is a shift from focusing on simply completing high school to graduating ready for college academically, attitudinally, and in terms of basic knowledge about how postsecondary education works.

A broad empirical base demonstrates that high-school students differ in their degree of academic preparation for postsecondary education. Academic preparedness refers to academic knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in doing college-level work—that is, to be “college ready.” David Conley’s (2007a; 2007b) well-known framework suggested that such preparedness has three main components: 1) content knowledge; 2) academic skills, whereby students use that specific content knowledge to solve problems; and 3) key cognitive strategies that are not content-specific, such as students’ ability to reason, argue, and interpret. This research highlighted a key distinction: being college eligible is not the same as being college ready.

Studies show that the following K-12 academic indicators at the individual student level can predict college attendance, persistence to graduation, and postsecondary grade point average (GPA): 1) standardized test participation and scores; 2) courses taken; and 3) course performance, including GPA and course failures. (p. 7) Most of these findings come from research on early warning systems and, as a result, focus on determining the relative predictive
power of different indicators such as GPA rather than how these indicators can be used to support students (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2009). Despite this research at the individual, setting, and system levels, the literature that examines measures of academic preparedness has two broad shortcomings.

First, research shows that even if indicators like grades or test scores turn out to be predictive, failing to understand the underlying mechanisms that make them predictive yields unintended consequences. For example, efforts to align high school and college standards by making the former more rigorous can result in students struggling more academically and, in some cases, dropping out altogether (Conley, 2007a). Second, because underlying mechanisms remain murky, little research connects work on model accuracy to supports and interventions that disrupt the cycles predicted by indicator systems. In combination, these shortcomings mean that current research on these systems deals with the issue of college readiness somewhat superficially, explaining what predicts college outcomes, but not why these indicators prove accurate, nor what is to be done with that knowledge.

College entrance exam scores, for example, can predict postsecondary outcomes, including enrollment, GPA, and completion. Avery and Kane’s (2004) analysis of participants in a college outreach program suggested that students who completed major testing milestones by fall of senior year—like taking the PSAT and taking or registering for the SAT—were more likely to attend a four-year college. Roderick’s (2006) comparison study of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students from 2002 to 2003 and 1998 to 1999 revealed similar trends. Up until 2016, in Illinois, all students, including those attending the Chicago Public System, take the ACT as part of their high school exit process. Roderick (2006) used these data to compare all students,
including those who, under other circumstances, would not have taken the exam. She found that students with ACT scores above 18 were more likely to enroll in college than students with lower scores. These results are consistent with Conley’s (2007b) findings that higher ACT and SAT scores had a positive correlation with college enrollment and graduation.

Despite the power of test scores to predict postsecondary outcomes, assessment results have shortcomings. For one, test scores do not necessarily reflect effort. Because of this, assessment results often lose their statistical significance when included in models with measures such as GPA that better capture motivation. Specifically, research on early warning systems in Philadelphia and Chicago indicated that test scores are not nearly as predictive of high school completion as other achievement measures such as grades, course failures, and attendance (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). In postsecondary education, these findings held for both attainment and achievement.

Beyond failing to measure motivation, state tests used for accountability purposes also may not be well aligned with college standards. According to Brown and Conley (2007), using these tests to predict college outcomes usually involves risky content and criterion validity assumptions, especially the supposition that these tests align with college academic content. For example, a state accountability test might include reading passages used at the postsecondary level, but not require the same level of critical thinking needed to succeed in a college English course. Brown and Conley (2007) analyzed the content of state tests relative to academic standards and skills necessary for entry-level postsecondary courses. They discovered that sixty math and English secondary assessments from twenty states were only marginally aligned with postsecondary standards.
Finally, standardized tests can be biased for certain student subpopulations. Research suggests that academic preparedness indicators, and test scores in particular, do not have the same reliability and validity across different races, languages, and socioeconomic statuses (Abedi, 1999, 2003; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1994; Rumberger, 1995; Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). For example, there were often test reliability and validity concerns for English Language Learners (Abedi, 1999), such as the inclusion of unnecessarily complicated language in a math item that undermined the question’s validity. More broadly, achievement tests often overlook students’ backgrounds, which could include both strengths and deficits related to college readiness (Byrd & Macdonald, 2005). For instance, achievement tests may have been measuring the quality of instruction a student received or what courses a student had access to rather than his or her ability (Byrd & Macdonald, 2005). Resources also matter. Research from Chicago indicated that, while many students studied hard for the ACT and reported aspirations to attend college, they often did not receive the supports needed to succeed on the ACT (Roderick et al., 2008). Finally, these contextual factors have been shown to influence students’ self-perceptions of ability, which in turn influence their test performance (Byrd & Macdonald, 2005).

In the National Center for Educational Statistics (2020) report, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperative and Development (2020) world-wide, the United States ranks 5th, spending $13,900 per full-time student at the elementary/secondary level, and ranks 1st in spending $31,600 for postsecondary education in 2016 (p. 2, 3). In 2014, the Pearson/Economist Intelligence Unit rated US education as 14th best in the world, just behind Russia. In 2015, the Programme for International Student Assessment ranked U.S. high school students 40th globally in Math and 24th in Science and Reading. Marc Tucker, president of
the National Center on Education and the Economy (2016) said of these results . . . "the United States cannot long operate a world-class economy if our workers are, as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) statistics show, among the worst-educated in the world” (p. 2). Former U.S. Education Secretary, John B. King, Jr., acknowledged the results in conceding U.S. students were well behind their peers. According to a report published by the U.S. News & World Report, of the top ten colleges and universities in the world, eight are American.

Social Analysis

There is considerable research that speaks to the social influence with regard to high school students that are college and career ready upon entering the college/university of their choice. The impact of a student’s environment and upbringing is significant social. In the article, “Social Class and College Readiness,” Patrick Sullivan (2009), states “…some of these differences in college readiness can be attributed to social class and some to articulation problems between high schools and colleges…” (p. 1).

College professors have begun to engage in the conversation of the college and career readiness of incoming freshmen. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) recognizes that there is a statistical correlation that the social status of students has impact on their preparation for college and career readiness. Economist Richard Rothstein (2004) also speaks to the impact of social status, saying that “social class characteristics in a stratified society like ours” has significant impact on student learning in subtle and profound ways. Ellwood and Kane (2000) also noted in their article “…children from poorer families believe they are unlikely to go to [college] (because of financial constraints), [and] they do not work as hard in school…” (p. 283).
Political Analysis

This particular analysis of my policy advocacy may probably bare some of the root causes for the systemic issues in our educational landscape. The educational policies that the United States has instituted and acted upon could be considered contributory to the state of high school students being appropriately prepared and actually college and career ready. The political influences over the past 50 – 60 years have had, while these influences may have been well-intentioned and designed to improve the nation’s educational standing in the world, significant effects on the nation’s educational system.

President Joe Biden has selected Miguel Cardona as the next Secretary of Education. Prior to his nomination, Cardona was the Commissioner of Education for the state of Connecticut. Cardona is a believer in developing and improving the public school system rather than increasing charter school creation; his history shows that he is a public school advocate. Another platform Cardona may make as one of his priorities is to seek to improve student achievement in positive ways, regardless of ethnicity or background. He has also championed the fight to stop racial segregation of schools in Connecticut. If Secretary Cardona continues his work toward these platforms, there may be an impact made on how students are prepared for college and career. The possibility exists that Cardona may take an active role in strengthening the nation’s public school systems while seeking to improve the academic achievement and increase the diverse integration across the nation.

If ISBE is to stay true to ensuring that college and career readiness is something that they are intentional about for future high school graduates, they will need to consider how to minimize the political impact of having competing data of increasing graduation rates versus increasing college remediation rates. As of 2020, Illinois is ranked #27 as a state, compared to California (#2) and New York (tied for #12). Illinois has 21.9% of its schools ranked in the top
25% nationally, compared to 40.9% and 30.4% California and New York, respectively (U.S. News and World Report, 2020). Illinois, being ranked in the lower half of the nation, could be considered a state that is not concerned with how students are being educated or academically challenged and prepared for their future. In the Midwest, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana rank higher.

CPS is the third largest school district in the country. However, the student population has been reduced by over 17,000 students since the 2010-11 school year. The optics of being the third largest district in the nation are magnified and scrutinized more readily or often in comparison with New York or Los Angeles. CPS has been partially or totally under the control of its mayor since 1872. Currently, the mayor has the responsibility of appointing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to handle the educational operations and seven-member Chicago Board of Education to handle the governance of CPS.

During this health crisis of COVID-19, the current mayor, Lori Lightfoot, and current CEO, Dr. Janice Jackson, are negotiating with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) regarding to safe resumption of in-school learning. The mayor and CEO are concerned by the inequity and loss of rigorous instruction that students, especially African American and Hispanic students, due to remote learning as the only apparatus available to continue education in the city. The CTU is highly concerned about the safety of the school environment for students and teachers alike. How the social issues stated by either side of this negotiation carry huge political impact as to high school students are preparing in this unprecedented time in history remains to be determined. Both sides of the argument agree that academic achievement will be impacted by COVID-19.
Legal Analysis

The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) went into full effect during the 2017-18 school year. While the actual phrase “college and career readiness” is nowhere to be found in this Act, one could determine that ESSA does not appear to make that a requirement. However, as states continue their processes of rolling out ESSA, college and career readiness may have a stronger focus than its predecessor No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

The reasoning behind this “stronger focus” is what ESSA is requiring states to develop. The Act requires critical performance indicators in five areas:

- Reading and Math
- High School Graduation Rates
- English Language Proficiency
- Student Growth throughout Elementary and Middle Schools
- School Quality/Success (Measures of Safety, Student Engagement or Educator Engagement)

As of this program research, 49 states have at least one strategy for “expanding college and/or career readiness” within their public-school districts. There are states that specify college and career language. For ISBE, their language states a high school graduate will be prepared to enter a state university and/or community college. ESSA does not specify any measure that states should demonstrate in showing how students are deemed college and career ready because it is more implied and stated.

Alyson Klein (2019) has also looked at how states measure college and Career Readiness based on ESSA and has found a lack of clarity. Klein discovered that 44 states have an accountability system for college and career readiness, and state officials can hold high schools accountable for students on a trajectory for college or the work force after graduation. This question “tends to be the number one thing that parents are interested in . . . knowing that [students] leave the system and . . . are ready for what’s next . . . (p. 2)”. With common measures
being used in many states, such as course selection, college entry exams and/or industry-recognized certificates, what college and career readiness means varies from state to state.

There are those who believe this kind of diversity should be considered “a good thing”, but others believe the lack of clarity around what college and career readiness are makes it more challenging to know whether students are adequately prepared. Klein includes the perspective of Phillip Lovell, Vice President for Policy Development and Government Relations at the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) who states that “. . . because there’s not a standard way by which [college and career readiness] is measured, we [can’t] be sure what these data tell us” (p. 3).

Georgia is currently the only state that has identified students being ready for credit-bearing college coursework, for its data informed them of its students being ready for college rigor. The rationale for these measures is provided by Allison Timberlake, Georgia’s Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, who states, “You could have fairly high graduation rates but still pretty high remediation rates when [students] go on to postsecondary . . . and that’s a problem… (p. 3)” That is currently happening in Illinois and Chicago. The legal analysis for ISBE and CPS is that they are in compliance with ESSA, but both districts may want to re-visit and consider what needs to happen to make positive improvements for the college and career readiness for its high school students.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

David Conley (2010) suggests college readiness is “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution” (p. 21). Simply put, a student is deemed college ready when that student can be placed directly into college-level courses based on standard ways of determining the academic readiness of the student. High school students’ readiness for college is often
determined and measured by the intensity of students’ high school courses and their performance on standardized college entrance exams.

As college and career readiness becomes the central theme and goal for high school students, there is a noticeable misalignment between the preparation of secondary context and where the postsecondary context is encouraging more rigor in the high school curricula (Venezia and Voloch, 2012). High school students receive continual messaging from multiple sources that they are being prepared for college or career once they graduate. Students receive guidance and postsecondary counseling to determine the colleges/university and/or career they want to pursue. They receive advice and counseling regarding college choice and match, the requirements for college admissions, applying for scholarships for college and to how to best prepare for their postsecondary level. That student is fully persuaded that she/he will be ready to continue her/his education at the college/university or career of choice with all the support received during high school.

After all the efforts students undergoes to prepare to enter college, along with meeting the graduation requirements to move on to the postsecondary level, many students in Illinois and CPS are unable to qualify for college level English and/or Math courses and are enrolled in non-credit bearing remedial courses to develop to handle the rigor of those entry level courses. This is the challenge from this analytical lens. There is evidence that there is a moral and ethical disconnect with students graduating from high school who are fully persuaded that they are college and career ready, but they often find out they lack the academic rigor for college level courses. I believe every administration and high school faculty and staff are committed to doing everything they can to prepare students for their postsecondary futures, but data shows these efforts are not successful for a majority of students.
Wagner (2014) also discloses the Seven Survival Skills he suggests all students should have in preparing for our global society that underscore the morals and ethics of education. He believes . . . “students who have learned to collaborate, to think critically, and be more confident about their own ideas also tend to make better moral judgments” (p. 268). Here, Wagner speaks of the first two Skills: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving and Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence. I am not suggesting that high schools are not making sure students are continually developing these “skills” currently. There is evidence that critical thinking, problem solving, cooperative learning and teaming and students finding their “voice” is occurring. What is in question is to what degree, or better still, to what level of rigor are students developing these skills in preparing for college and career. I believe more can be done to meet the moral and ethical obligations than what is currently being touted and visibly evident in high school education.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

When I began my educational career, I had one objective at my center…to deliver high quality instruction with the appropriate rigor to my students to develop, grow and achieve academic success. I think all educators would share reasons similar to mine: for high school teachers, delivering the content in ways that students can attain continuous academic improvement and success in the content being taught. The implications for staff would be a “re-commitment” to the professional pride of an educator. To improve their professional practice to equip themselves with the professional development that gives them the appropriate skill set to deliver instruction that authentically prepares students for college and career rigor.

The implications for community relations would to provide a real understanding of how students are being adequately prepared for college and career rigor and the positive impact that
preparation would have in the surrounding school community. The parents of the school community will appreciate “the blood, sweat and tears” of transforming their students into being capable and confident; those who have been prepared for whatever the future holds for their students. Furthermore, the hopes and dreams for their student are being realized. The business community will benefit by having students who have the appropriate skill set to enter the workforce to succeed in their careers in various fields.

Conclusion

When these policy recommendations are implemented, the improvement of data will occur “overnight”. With any change process, time must be invested to see the process through. The normal time frame for meaningful change to show significant measurable transformation in the data is three to five years. Because ISBE has some necessary college and career policies in place, these recommendations will further support the improvement in high school graduates being adequately prepared for college and career rigor. With the personnel, resources and staffing currently in place at CPS, the recommendations will further deepen the work of getting students ready to handle college rigor.

As discussed through the six analyses, the impact of embedding these policy recommendations would have on college and career preparation could be significant even in the beginning stages of implementation. High school districts, school administrations and teacher teams will re-focus their instructional strategies to move the curriculum and learning activities closer to relevance in helping students with the academic progressions to handle increasing rigor in the core courses. Teacher teams receiving real-time student data on college and career readiness standards will be better able to monitor student progress and make informed
improvements in lesson planning to assure students are receiving the appropriate rigor and academic development.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Being a high school principal, I wholly believed that all students graduating from high school would be adequately prepared for the postsecondary level of education or the career/job position of their choosing. However, the data that informed me whether this was actually happening enlightened me to a very different “outcome” for my students. It was this data that led me to investigate and evaluate the state of readiness high school graduates are provided with for college and career rigor. At the beginning of my evaluation, I wanted to get a research-based understanding of what policies, resources and supports the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) currently have in place to help students become college and career ready.

After reading “The Global Achievement Gap” (Wagner, 2014), I was made aware of the concern of Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officers regarding how unprepared recent college graduates were for the work force. They were lacking the skills, abilities and talents needed to continuously improve Fortune 500 companies. Also, college professors were concerned that incoming freshmen were not ready to handle college rigor and needed remediation to become ready. This led Wagner to identify the Seven Survival Skills that students should acquire to begin to close the “global achievement gap.” Wagner reveals this gap:

. . . what remains invisible to most of us [and] is fueled by fundamental economic, social, political and technological changes that have taken place so rapidly…these changes are powerful…[and] we [need to] understand them and rethink what young people need to know in the twenty-first century and how they are best taught… (p. 9).
An additional question Wagner researched was what high school graduates would need to be prepared and successfully enter the work force. (p. 10) Therefore, the issue of how prepared high school graduates are for college and career became the issue and primary theme for my dissertation. Wagner’s research has articulated the credible need to ensure that future generations of high school graduates are adequately for their postsecondary futures and beyond. Consequently, it follows that what students learn, the ways that students learn and the levels of rigor provided as students learn become the critical concerns during high school. With the intended purpose of college and career readiness standards being implemented into high school curriculums across the country, ISBE and CPS have followed suit with this initiative. However, to the degree that these standards are authentically taught with fidelity remains in question.

As I was conducting my research on college and career readiness, one thing was and is certain: the global economy is continuing to evolve. The skills and abilities of students entering college and careers today are not the same as when the twenty-first century began. We are now at the stage of having to prepare students for jobs that have not been created as yet. According to Leo SaLemi (2018), twelve years ago, there were jobs like film projectionist, TV/VCR repair persons and assembly line workers. However, jobs such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Big Data Analyst, Mobile App Developer and Blockchain Engineer did not exist twelve years ago. Furthermore, twelve years from now, people will need to be potentially qualified to hire for jobs such as Quantum Programmer, Autonomous Vehicle Designers and Climate Change Specialists (p. 2). Wagner’s advocacy for students having the Seven Survival Skills is strongly aligned with the ways in which students must be prepared in order to be ready for these fields of study and jobs of the future.
My dissertation is relevant to what needs to occur to provide generations of prospective students the ability for success in the future. College and career readiness is very relevant to student learning. Being adequately prepared for postsecondary and career success will definitively depend on a students’ development of the skill set and ability that is authentically supportive of their successful future.

Discussion

The purpose of my program evaluation was to determine the college and career readiness of high school students in Chicago, IL. The data uncovered in my research methodology point to these findings:

- Twenty-five percent of students met and/or exceeded expectations for ELA on the SAT
- Twenty-five percent of students met and/or exceeded expectations for Mathematics on the SAT
- Thirty-four percent of students met and/or exceeded the benchmark for college and career readiness
- Seventy percent of graduating high school students were enrolled in remedial courses in ELA and Math

The current policies ISBE has in place for college and career readiness, as detailed in the Education Commission of the States’ (ECS) Blueprint for College Readiness (2014), have the following: College and Career Standards (CCS), Assessments with CCS, State-wide CCR Definition. Two components ECS sought that ISBE does not have policy in place that could have positive impact on college and career readiness are Graduation Requirements that include CCR and K-12 Accountability regarding CCR for high school graduates.
With regard to CPS, being a school district in Illinois, they do adhere to the college and career readiness policies ISBE currently has in place. CPS also understands the need for high school graduates being adequately prepared for the postsecondary level and career. CPS has established the Office of College and Career Success, which oversees the students’ preparation for college with the personnel and resources such as School Counseling and Postsecondary Advising, Career and Technical Education and dual credit/dual enrollment. However, CPS does not have any system in place that monitors how students are being prepared for college and career through high school, if college and career standards are actually embedded into the curriculum, or whether a minimum benchmark percentage of students are deemed college and career ready at graduation.

There is cause for concern because both districts say they promote college and career readiness and success, as well as provide resources to the same, yet they do not monitor whether they are successful. At the time of this research, the data shows that only nineteen of one hundred sixty-nine high schools, 11.2 percent overall, had at least fifty percent or more of their graduates who were college and career ready. The majority of those high schools were selective enrollment high schools, some of which are in the top fifty high schools in the nation, while one hundred fifty high schools struggle to produce any college and career ready graduates.

Because of these findings, I have advocated for two policy recommendations: 1. a graduation requirement for a minimum college and career readiness benchmark percentage for high school graduates, and; 2. create a system that monitors the college and career readiness of students during their high school career to ensure students reach the required readiness benchmark prior to graduation. These policy recommendations are a result of my research findings that uncovered no evidence of any academic or instructional initiatives that help support
students develop college and career readiness during their high school career. The findings point to English Language Arts and Mathematics as the two academic areas where students are not ready for college rigor. In 2018, 59.1% of CPS graduates entered remediation courses at the beginning of their college career. If CPS implemented a system of monitoring students’ college and career readiness, measures could be taken to help better prepare students for college and career rigor by the time they reach their senior year and graduate.

The organizational plan I have suggested was informed by the research findings. Implementing a monitoring system that provides real-time data on how well students are college and career ready will provide actionable data to assist students in their preparation. Having an articulated goal for high schools to achieve and surpass will also assist in all high schools in CPS, producing 50% or more graduates ready for college and career rigor. Embedding high school curriculums with instructional strategies that include and are infused with Wagner’s Seven Survival Skills would ensure the appropriate preparation for college and career are accounted for based on his research and conversations with college professors and leaders of the global business community.

In the literary review of my research, the findings spoke to schools that were successful in implementing college and career framework that were successful in preparing students for college and career. My research also informed me of the policy recommendations I have advocated for to improve the existing supports for college and career readiness. ISBE and CPS would benefit from a framework that helps students in high school. As a thought generated from my findings versus a recommendation, ISBE and CPS could also implement policy that they monitor that calls for high school districts to identify and implement a college and career readiness framework of their choosing. This would help ISBE develop a means to have K-12
Accountability measures implemented for school districts that have high schools as well. Therefore, my organizational plan would have considerable impact on improving the way students are prepared for postsecondary and career success. In addition, implementing policies for a minimum benchmark percentage for college and career readiness of graduating classes and K-12 Accountability to monitor the attainment of that benchmark, as I recommend, will also have a positive effect in this data.

Leadership Lessons

I consider myself to be a life-long learner. During my entire career thus far, I have continuously wanted to learn more, understand more, improve my practice more and stay as abreast as possible to the research-based methods, ideas and concepts to help me grow, develop and be useful in my various roles in my career. When I entered my administrative career, I continued my personal professional development in this area. One of the first books I read on leadership was *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Heifetz, Grashow, Linsky 2009). I learned that it is normal and expected that people should continuously develop their leadership in adaptive ways that address the changes they seek to make, calling it a “leadership laboratory” (p. 42). While the word featured in the title was “adaptive”, the actual focus was on change leadership.

I have received professional developments on administrative leadership such as Doug Reeves’ “Leadership in Action” series, and I have read several books on change leadership authored by Wagner, et al (2006), Bambrick-Santoyo (2012), Boyatzis and McKee (2005) and Fullan (2011), to name a few. The one book that has shaped my thoughts on change leadership is *Servant Leadership in Action* by Blanchard and Broadwell (2018). This book identifies the ten characteristics of servant leadership as: Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, Persuasion,
Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Commitment to the growth of people, Building community (p. 15-17). Then, the book describes how servant leadership is also considered conscious leadership. The qualities of conscious leadership are captured in the acronym SELFLESS: Strength, Enthusiasm, Love, Flexibility, Long-Term Orientation, Emotional Intelligence, System Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence (p. 21). These characteristics and qualities truly resonated with me. My leadership path so far has led me to incorporate many of these into my leadership; I believe I am a servant leader . . . a conscious leader.

With this current lens of leadership, I have learned that having policies in place for ensuring high school graduates are college and career ready need to be as authentic and efficacious as possible to achieve the desired outcome. The policies ISBE and CPS currently have in place are not producing enough students ready for postsecondary and career rigor. There is a saying I have heard in education and other business entities, “What does not get monitored does not get done”. In spite of all the supports and personnel both districts have devoted to college and career readiness, there is no policy in place that monitors student preparation. Accountability for these preparations is also lacking. Thus, the servant leader in me sees opportunity to insert characteristics such as Awareness, Conceptualization, Stewardship and Commitment to the growth of people (students, teacher teams, administrative teams) to effect change in that data.

Another lesson learned during this research was the lack of urgency that I was seeing with college and career readiness. ISBE and CPS have this critical component for success on their “radar;” their efforts are visible and evident. However, more importance is being placed on having students meet the current graduation requirements to improve annual graduation rates. Efforts are driven to have students accepted into college upon graduation and to increase the
amount of scholarship dollars that students receive. As a result, the conscious leader in me is unsettled. My Emotional (EQ), Systems (SYQ) and Spiritual (SQ) Intelligences are challenged. My EQ, my self-awareness, says students not being academically prepared adequately for their future college or career is not right. My SYQ says the system is not working as hoped for or desired. My SQ says to graduate students we know who lack the skills and abilities to persist and be capable of succeeding at the next level challenges my moral compass. We can do better for these students because my research says we can “know better;” we can improve preparing students for college and career.

Conclusion

As I come to the close of this informative evaluation and research, I am just as passionate about this topic as I was as principal of a high school in 2009. I wholly accept my role as a conscious servant leader. I began my educational career with the thought that I could make a difference in the lives of children. And while I am cognizant of the challenges outside of every school building, I continue to believe that all students can learn, be successful and reach high academic achievement in their educational pursuit. . . all students.

I am truly passionate about wanting to be a part of the solution of ensuring at least 50% of graduating high school students are ready, capable and confident to handle college and career rigor. I look forward to Secretary Cardona leading the Department of Education the next four years. His platforms and commitment to strengthening the nation’s public school system, achieving a true balance of educational equity and access, as well as college and career readiness preparation, will make a significant impact going forward. I actually envision a higher percentage of students being ready for postsecondary and career success. This is a change process that will not occur “overnight;” most change processes take two to five years to be fully
implemented and see positive improvement on all related data. However, I will continue to be committed to this effort and continue to say this to coming generations of students, “I am excited about your future!”
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: Themes

Theme 1: There is an inconsistent effort to prepare students for college and career readiness.

Theme 2: High school graduation rates have increased while college remediation percentage has worsened.

Theme 3: There is no minimum requirement for college and career readiness district-wide.

Theme 4: Teachers do not have access to real-time college and career readiness data.

Theme 5: There is a need for a system to monitor college and career readiness achievement data over time for teachers, parent and students.
APPENDIX B: AS-IS ANALYSIS

4C’s: As-Is Analysis

CONTENT
- School Choice for College and Career Readiness
- (11 Selective Enrollment High Schools)
- 83% Low Income
- 84% Students of Color
- 75% Do Not Meet ELA – SAT
- 25% Do Not Meet Math – SAT
- 34% College Readiness

CULTURE
- Adult-Centered
- AP Students Perceived College Ready
- Improve Graduation Rate-focused
- Low College and Career Rigor
- Low Student Engagement in College and Career Readiness Activities
- Inconsistent Instructional Delivery

CONDITIONS
- Outdated Teaching Methods
- Ineffective College and Career Readiness Instructional Strategies
- Inconsistent College and Career Readiness Learning Objectives
- No Real Time Data Collection and Analysis at the School/District Levels

COMPETENCIES
- Low Percentage of Teaching Staff Engaged in College and Career Readiness Development
- No to Minimal Use of Student Data to Inform Instruction for College and Career Readiness
- Minimal to No Access to Real Time Student College and Career Readiness Achievement Data
- Minimal to No Access to Student Growth Data

Problem statement:
High school graduates are not ready for college level rigor in English Language Arts and Math

APPENDIX B: AS-IS ANALYSIS
APPENDIX C: TO-BE ANALYSIS

CONTEXT
- School Choice for College and Career Readiness (All High Schools)
- 83% Low Income
- 84% Students of Color
- Minimum 50% Meet/Exceed ELA – SAT
- Minimum 50% Meet/Exceed Math – SAT
- 70% College Readiness

CULTURE
- Student-Centered
- All Students Prepared for College and Career Rigor
- High Student Engagement in College and Career Readiness Activities
- Consistent Instructional Delivery for College and Career Readiness
- Relevant College and Career Learning Activities

CONDITIONS
- College and Career Readiness Research-based Teaching Methods
- Effective College and Career Readiness Instructional Strategies
- Consistent, Cohesive College Readiness Learning Objectives
- Real Time College and Career Readiness Data Collection and Analysis

COMPETENCIES
- ELA and Math Teaching Staffs Engaged in College and Career Readiness Curriculum Development
- In Depth Use of College and Career Readiness Data to Inform Instruction
- Unfettered Access to Real Time Student Achievement and Growth Data

To-Be Statement:
High school graduates are ready for college level rigor in English Language Arts and Math.

4 C’s: TO-BE ANALYSIS
APPENDIX D: Whole System Change Framework – Fullan, Quinn, Adams 2013

Monitor for Improvement and Innovation

Foster Deep Commitment to Moral Imperative

Develop a Small Number of Abitious Goals

Invest in Capacity Building

Build Leadership at ALL LEVELS

Cultivate District-wide/School-wide Engagement

Learn From the Work

Use Data to Improve Practice

Monitor for Improvement and Innovation