

ABSTRACT

Valle, Fernando. Difficult But Not Impossible: Initiating Comprehensive High School Reform in a South Texas School District. Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), May 2008, 346 pp., references, 97 titles.

This ethnography explored the initiation phase of comprehensive high school reform in South Texas Border ISD and its two comprehensive high schools. This qualitative study documented the secondary school culture of this predominantly Mexican-American south Texas border school district and researched the initiation of effective school improvement as high school reform was initiated and implemented. Michael Fullan's Three I's and his Tri-Level Reform models served as a framework to guide this study. Field notes, participant observations, individual and semi-structured interviews during the academic planning year served as means to document the unique cultural and academic challenges the district, its administration, teachers and the community encountered as reform was initiated and implemented. Training and support through the initiation phase of comprehensive reform was provided through newly developed partnerships between The Texas Education Agency, The Regional Educational Service Center, The Institute for Research and Reform in Education, The Institute for School Excellence, and South Texas Border ISD

Many internal and external influences of school governance influenced the direction of comprehensive district reform and complete high school redesign. Obstacles and supports voiced from redesign stakeholders were chronicled to capture the STB ISD

culture during the initiation of high school redesign. Chapter 4 tells the story of these powerful events, during Phase I, the 2006-2007 academic planning year, which guided district reform efforts. The results in Chapter 5, guided by the two research questions, and analyzed the supports and obstacles which propelled high school redesign through its uncharted course.

The efforts involved in the initiation and implementation of high school redesign were sponsored by multiple levels of school governance. Additionally, the successful initiation of comprehensive high school redesign was dependent on the School Improvement Facilitator position and the role they played in the district. School leadership also played a significant role in informing and encouraging acceptance of the redesign initiative within each of the high schools and throughout the school district. Additional conclusions of the study, implications, and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter 6.

Results of the study have implications for superintendents, school district leaders and high school administrators as they initiate reform conversations and embark on implementing reform in their districts.