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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

SUPERINTENDENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

LaFaye McFarland Platter

May, 2010

Ron Stephens, Ed. D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Steve, whose constant love and support makes it possible for me to *climb mountains!* God smiled on me the day we were married.

To my grandfather, Will “Bud” Tucker, whose quiet wisdom and gentle love showed me what true strength of character is all about.

To my father, L.B. McFarland, who demonstrated the power that comes with Servant Leadership.

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I am grateful to Bob Wells and the eighteen superintendents who represented ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council for their time and their willingness to share their expert opinions about the Superintendency.

Special thanks to my good friend, Sharon Raffiee, who *walked me home* from Pepperdine every Tuesday night for two years and who helped me collect my thoughts when the information got a bit overwhelming.

I would like to especially acknowledge the patience and kindness that my family and friends have shown throughout my journey. Their love has been my strength.

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Apple Valley Unified School District 2000-2003
Principal, Apple Valley Middle School
Oversaw all aspects of a successful middle school

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Abstract

The Superintendency is one of the most important jobs in America. The future of countless families depends on how successful superintendents are in their positions. Research shows that student academic achievement increases when superintendents remain in one district for as few as three years; however, there are many threats to long-term superintendent tenure.

Superintendents are hired by Boards of Education and are expected to respond to the diverse desires of these elected individuals. The Boards decide whether superintendents will remain in the district long enough to bring about positive change or if they will be released from employment. While working with the Board, the superintendent must also ensure student academic achievement, district fiscal solvency, and positive community relations. The skills necessary to accomplish these tasks and gain a long tenure in one district are represented by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Professional Standards for the Superintendency. These eight standards describe the scope of the superintendents' work and they may be a useful guide for hiring entities, superintendent prospects, and professional developers.

This study collected the informed opinions of the members of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Executive Superintendent's Council about the AASA standards and their relationship to work of superintendents. The Council members were first asked to rank the AASA standards by order of importance to superintendence success. They were then asked their opinions about risks superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA standards as well as methods of mitigating risk. Lastly, the Council members were asked to share their

experiences with professional development strategies that they feel are effective at helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards.

The Council members ranked the AASA standards related to ethics, vision, and culture as the most important to superintendent success. They stated that dismissal from the Superintendency is one of the risks of not having proficiency in the standards. They described the professional development strategies they had experienced, and their conversations highlighted the fact that most of the training provided for superintendents is focused on the least important standards for superintendent success.

Chapter 1. The Problem

Significance of the Superintendent's Role

Superintendents are important to the success of students in the communities they serve. The superintendent is the only employee in a public school system hired by the local school board and who has the task of implementing the desires of board members while ensuring that students are achieving at high levels. The superintendent has the responsibility to inspire employees to carry out the district vision, manage the operations and resources, and meet the unique needs of every student. As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a school district, the superintendent's role has a far-reaching impact on the lives of others (Stupski, 2007).

Superintendents interact with Boards of Education (BOE), and their ability to exert influence in that arena has an affect on the lives of families within the district and the public's perception of the BOE. BOEs are elected by the citizens of a community to represent the values and beliefs of that community. The superintendent must be aware of these values and beliefs in order to work with and influence the Board in such a way that community values are upheld while students receive a quality education.

The superintendent's leadership has a tremendous impact on the academic achievement of students. There is a positive correlation between student academic achievement and superintendent tenure. When superintendents stay in the same district for as brief a period as two years student academic achievement increases (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The largest quantitative study ever to be done on superintendent leadership revealed that above average achievement for students occurs when superintendents exhibit leadership and (a) include community members, parents,

teachers, and students in establishing district goals, (b) establish non-negotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction, (c) ensure that the Board's goals are aligned for student achievement and that these goals are a priority, (d) monitor student progress toward achievement and the district's instructional goals, and (e) align resources to achievement and instructional goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The role of the superintendent is currently viewed as crucial to the success of students and the community, although that role has changed over the years to keep pace with the changing needs of our nation.

Changes in the Superintendent's Role

The superintendent's role has changed over time to keep pace with the changing purpose of public education. The first state superintendent took office in New York in 1812. His job was largely managing fiscal resources and overseeing the schools (Andero, 2000). From 1837 to 1850, thirteen urban school districts created superintendent positions. By 1890 many cities had superintendents leading their school districts and the need for superintendent positions was increasing. Rural districts were consolidating, curriculum was expanded, compulsory attendance laws were put in place, and the demand for accountability was growing (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005).

Between 1900 and 1954, the economic growth in the country pushed the superintendent's role into that of a business leader or chief operating officer. Superintendents were viewed as executives with an emphasis on the behind-the-scenes technical operations of the district such as budgeting, maintenance and operations, and staffing (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). After 1954, the superintendents were expected to communicate more publicly and with all stakeholders; therefore, the superintendent's role

changed to include that of district spokesperson or community advisor on educational issues (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005).

Citizens of our nation were dissatisfied with education in the 1970s and this spawned the emergence of the superintendent as a political leader. Superintendents were required to have a keen political sense and the ability to be responsive to diverse groups. Johnson and Uline, (n.d.), emphasized the fact that requirements for superintendents have changed. They acknowledged that in the past, management was the most critical skill. They went on to say that political acumen, knowledge of curriculum, and the ability to have influence in the community are the new skills that superintendents need to be successful. The superintendent had to be able to communicate with an increasingly diverse community about academic achievement. The superintendent had to have a clear understanding of academic standards to meet this charge (Bjork & Kowalski, 2000).

The superintendent's role had to adjust again in the 1980s in response to the political trend toward decentralization and site-based management (SBM) – the shifting of power from a central location to the place closest to where the policies are instituted. Superintendents had to quickly transition from top-down leadership to shared decision making. A different set of skills were necessary to ensure that curriculum delivery at the sites was effective.

In 1989, SBM began to wane and the importance of superintendent leadership was emphasized as the key to student success. This trend continued for over a decade. According to Lashway (2002), the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 2001 increased the superintendent's responsibility for student achievement. The law created a dilemma for superintendents however, because the

legislature did not give superintendents new or increased authority to support the actions necessary in the mandate for increased student performance.

Current Roles and Responsibilities of the Superintendent

The current roles and responsibilities of the superintendent have been shaped most drastically by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In 2002, President Bush signed NCLB into law and this shifted much of the focus of superintendents' work from managing to leading their districts toward higher academic achievement for all students. Bennis and Nanus (1985) contrasts the difference between managing and leading by emphasizing that managers focus on the accuracy and efficiency of operations such as budgeting, maintenance and operations, and staffing while leaders ensure that the organization is taking the proper actions by engaging in strategic planning and systems analysis.

NCLB has been the catalyst for dramatic changes in the role of the superintendent. The superintendent's role has become increasingly complex and demanding due to the requirement to increase student achievement and be accountable for all students. Superintendents in the past were expected to manage the resources and keep order when public schools were first created. Today, however, superintendents must also be politicians, instructional leaders, and effective change agents. Thus superintendents must now fulfill all previous expectations of the job, but, she or he must lead with a focus on instructional leadership (Rinehart, 2005).

One set of standards has been created to represent the skills that superintendents need to be successful – the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Professional Standards for the Superintendency. The AASA standards acknowledge that

the superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a school district and must have the requisite skills. The AASA standards also recognize that the superintendent must be an educational leader first and foremost. There could be a tendency to lose sight of this focus without it being stated explicitly. The AASA standards address proficiency in the areas of leadership and district culture, the politics of school governance, communications and community relations, organizational management, curriculum planning and development, instructional management, human resource management, and values and ethics (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Even though other educational leadership standards exist, the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency is the only set of standards specifically designed to portray the scope of the job of the superintendent.

Statement of the Problem

Professional development opportunities for superintendents in California are scarce. Superintendents have an enormous responsibility to ensure that students are achieving at high levels. To ensure academic achievement for the diverse population that California's public schools serve, superintendents must have different leadership skills than those required before NCLB. This focus on academic achievement, though it could be all-encompassing, does not relieve the superintendents of the responsibility to be visionaries, manage the operations and resources, hire and retain the best employees, communicate effectively with all stakeholders, and maintain the highest ethical standards. In order to ensure that superintendents fulfill these goals, they need to master various skills, ideally acquired through professional development.

Professional development is the tool that will enable superintendents to acquire and master the various skills they need to be successful in California's public schools. However, Professional development programs for superintendents in California are few and little data exists about their effectiveness.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine how members of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Executive Superintendent's Council prioritize the importance of the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency. Further, the purpose of this study is to determine what risks ACSA members believe superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency. This study will gather information from the ACSA members about their recommended methods for mitigating the identified risks. Finally, the purpose of this study is to ascertain which instructional strategies ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council identifies as being most effective for helping superintendents develop mastery over the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency.

The steps taken to fulfill the purpose of this study, along with a thorough literature and document review will help the researcher determine whether there are adequate professional development opportunities for superintendents in California.

Research Questions

The research questions that were the basis of the questions asked of ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council members are as follows:

1. How do ACSA Executive Council members prioritize the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency?

2. What risks do ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council members believe superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA standards?
3. Do ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council members believe these risks be mitigated?
4. What instructional strategies do ACSA members feel are most effective for helping superintendents develop mastery over the AASA standards?
5. Why do ACSA Executive Superintendent's members believe these stated methods are most effective?

Importance of the Study

The literature on the role of the superintendent shows that his/her leadership affects all district stakeholders. The importance of the role of the superintendent requires that she or he be competent in the skills required to lead a district. Waters and Marzano (2006) noted that when superintendents are successful, they have a profound positive impact on all stakeholders-including students. However, many superintendents enter their jobs less than proficient in the skills that lead to superintendent success.

Many superintendents need assistance in acquiring the skills to be successful and research suggests that leadership skills can be taught. One does not have to be a "born leader." Safferstone (2005) points out that many texts break the topic of leadership down into a specific set of skills which can then be analyzed and taught. Likewise, Northouse (2004) states that "...leadership is a process that can be learned and that is available to everyone" (p. 11). Since leadership can be taught, professional development is the key to success where there is a clear vision that focuses on the discrete set of leadership skills

that are pertinent to the profession (Knowles, Horton, and Swanson, 2005). Enhancing the superintendent's ability to lead through professional development will have a tremendous impact on the success of the district and its students.

The purpose of this study is to determine how members of ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council prioritize the importance of the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency. Further, the purpose of this study is to determine what risks ACSA members believe superintendents face when they do not have mastery over each of the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency. This study will gather information from the ACSA members about their recommended methods for mitigating the identified risks. Finally, the purpose of this study is to ascertain which instructional strategies ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council identifies as being most effective for helping superintendents develop mastery over the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency.

Interviewing a purposeful and diverse group of veteran superintendents will give an indication of the most important skills required to be a successful superintendent, as well as the possible consequences for superintendents who do not acquire the essential skills. Further, the veteran superintendents will be able to help share from their experiences whether any superintendent professional development courses in California have an effective course content, design and implementation strategies to help fill the identified skill gaps of superintendents that are manifest by short tenures and lack of student achievement.

Limitations/Delimitations

The limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size. The target sample for research question one is the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council, a peer-selected group of veteran superintendent representatives from 18 of California's 19 regions. For research questions two through five, the sample is 14 of the 18 superintendents from within the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council.

It was estimated that approximately 90% of the members would return the survey for research question one. It was anticipated that all of the purposefully selected superintendents would agree to be interviewed. The research assumed that all participants would respond honestly to all inquiries.

Another limitation is the diversity of the participants. The participants come from different types and sizes of districts – rural, urban, and suburban. They have different years of experience as well as different types of experience. Additionally, they have different experiences with professional development programs for superintendents.

The researcher recognizes that her bias on the subject of professional development programs is a limitation of this study. Creswell (2003) points out, “the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment. One cannot escape the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis” (p.182). The researcher was open to the data as it emerged and recognized when her personal bias was affecting her judgment. This self-awareness helped the data to be analyzed more accurately.

This study has been delimited to the state of California. The sample group was delimited to a representative from each region of California as represented in the ACSA

Executive Superintendent's Council. The interview phase of the study was further delimited to a purposeful group of eight to ten superintendents from within the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council.

Summary

Chapter one contained a discussion of the significance of the superintendent's role, changes in the superintendent's role, current roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, a statement of the problem, purpose, and importance of the study, and finally, limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter two explores the following topics: (a) role of the superintendent, (b) superintendent leadership as defined by education leadership standards, (c) the role of leadership in district culture, (d) the role of leadership in the politics of school governance, (e) the role of leadership in communications and community relations, (f) the role of leadership in organizational management, (g) the role of leadership in curriculum planning and development, (h) the role of leadership in instructional management, (i) the role of leadership in human resources management, (j) the role of leadership in ethics and values, and (k) professional development. Chapter three outlines the methodology that will be used to conduct this research.

Chapter 2. Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter examines the evidence on the need for superintendent professional development. The purpose of this literature review is to (a) examine the role of the superintendent and how it has changed over time, (b) review the superintendent's leadership with respect to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Professional Standards for the Superintendency, and (c) provide a thorough review of superintendent professional development programs in California.

Role of the Superintendent

Past. The role of school district superintendents in the United States has evolved over the years in response to community and societal needs. Prior to 1980, the superintendent was expected to act as a Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the district. She or he had to maintain the budget, generally oversee programs, and develop positive public relations. The goal was to build and sustain successful school structures and systems. School districts ran on the "business" model (Brunner & Bjork (2002). These skills are still important, but the public pressure for increased educational accountability has made it necessary for the superintendent today to master a vast array of diverse skills.

Present. Superintendents today face the major challenge of using limited resources to create an equitable educational system that meets the needs of a diverse student population (Rinehart, 2005). Federal legislation entitled the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) set forth national educational goals for all children. The 2001 version of the act is called the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This legislation set targets for student achievement that mandated 100% student proficiency in the core subject areas by the year 2014.

The major component of NCLB is standardized testing. The results of the tests play an important role in how the district is perceived by the community as well as how much control the district is allowed to retain for the implementation of curriculum. There is increased pressure for school districts to show proficiency and student academic success as measured by this standardized testing even in schools where there are limited funds. The role of the superintendent is caught in a balancing act that is difficult to manage as noted by Bjork and Kowalski, (2005). They stated that, “High stakes testing has brought greater local, state, and national accountability to school districts in a time of greater social problems and inadequate resources to meet growing needs of a more diverse America.” (p. ix). The superintendent must be able to quickly assess situations and lead necessary change. She or he must be comfortable with accountability and visibility in all aspects of the district, as well as be a masterful instructional leader. McGhee & Nelson (2005) stated, “At a press conference following the signing of NCLB in January 2002, Secretary of Education Paige declared, ‘With the stroke of his pen, President Bush changed the culture of education in America,’” (p. 367). The superintendent’s role was changed because the expectations for superintendents were elevated and intensified. But the law did not give the district, or the superintendent, increased power or authority to affect the change needed to accomplish the new goals. It created a dilemma for superintendents. They had to become more conversant with the curricular dialogue, influence site decisions and directions, and develop a new working relationship with the school board.

This shift of emphasis for the role of the superintendent mirrors the changes in educational reform. Superintendents began to see an increase in accountability and

visibility in the early 1980s. From 1982-86, *A Nation at Risk*, a landmark report that examined the purpose and performance of our schools, prompted legislation to move toward more regulation, a focus on teacher licensing, and centralized, bureaucratic control of schools. From 1986-89 the focus was on addressing student diversity and site-based management (SBM). The latest reforms have focused on academic success for all children. (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Future. The superintendent who is prepared for the future will be focused on projecting future work force needs, predicting the effects of globalization on the requirements for public education, and having the skills to create an organization that is flexible enough to keep pace with new information.

Sherman & Grogan (2003) suggest that superintendents of the future must also have a strong moral sense. They state that “superintendents with the moral convictions embedded in the ethics of justice, care, and critique will be most successful at meeting the needs of a diverse population of students,” (p. 236). Superintendents who are forward-thinking and have concern for the future of the children in his/her district have a strong moral base for action.

The leadership skills required for the superintendent of the future will be foreshadowed by the demands that are placed on and fulfilled by superintendents today.

The changing dynamics of the superintendent’s role and the increased complexity of the tasks have contributed to a shortage of superintendents in the United States. According to Bjork and Kowalski (2005), “the number of superintendents leaving the profession is increasing, while the number of the best and brightest educators seeking to become superintendents is decreasing,” (p. ix). Because the superintendency is arguably

one of the most important CEO positions in our nation, it is probable that the success or failure of the person holding this position has the potential to affect the lives of countless families.

Superintendent Leadership as Defined by the Education Leadership Standards

The preceding section on the changing role and leadership requirements of the superintendency provides the background to understanding the concepts presented in the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Professional Standards for the Superintendency. This is the set of educational standards that guide and evaluate superintendents. Standards have been developed to address the topic of educational leadership in part because our nation is deeply concerned with public education and interested in the credentials of those who work within the system. The standards for educational leaders represent a beneficial blend of educational and business principles. There is a realization in education today that all organizations must follow the principles of good leadership to accomplish goals.

The AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency are the only set of standards specifically designed for the position of superintendent. Because of this, they are the best measure of performance for superintendents (Hoyle et al., 2005). The following sections will examine the role of the superintendent in the key indicators of success identified in the AASA Professional Standards for Superintendents. The standards are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency

Standard 1	CEO Leadership and District Culture
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students and shapes district culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school community.
Standard 2	CEO Leadership and the Politics of School Governance
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context by working with the board of trustees to define mutual expectations, policies, and standards.
Standard 3	CEO Leadership and Communications and Community Relations
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with the families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
Standard 4	CEO Leadership and Organizational Management
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by leadership and management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Standard 5	CEO Leadership and The Technical Core of Curriculum Planning and Development
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning; alignment of curriculum, curriculum resources, and assessment; and the use of various forms of assessment to measure student performance.
Standard 6	CEO Leadership and Instructional Management
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a district culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Standard 7	CEO Leadership and Human Resource Management
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by implementing a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members, selects appropriate models for supervision and staff development, and applies legal requirements for personnel management.
Standard 8	CEO Leadership and Values and Ethics
	A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner.

The Role of Leadership in District Culture

Vision. A superintendent, first and foremost, must be able to foresee the possibilities for the organization and develop a cohesive, clearly-articulated vision. Zander & Zander (2000) in defining vision state, “A *vision* becomes a framework for possibility...,” (p. 169). A superintendent does not create the district vision alone – all stakeholders must have an opportunity to have input. Since people support what they help create, the more people involved in the process, the better the chance of success at achieving the vision. Zander and Zander (2000) point out the importance of vision when they state, “It becomes the source of responsible, on-track participation,” (p. 172). It is likely that some stakeholder groups will be better represented in the vision-developing process than others. The effective superintendents will ensure that the vision represents the needs of all.

The superintendent must lead the work of developing a vision. The responsibility will rest with him/her to discover the views and beliefs of the many stakeholder groups and find common ground from which to begin. Additionally, the superintendent will take responsibility for knowing what the research advocates for student success and keeping that information in the forefront of discussions. Lastly, the superintendent has a unique, top-side view of the entire organization and all its needs. She or he has the responsibility to “make sure all campuses and units are empowered and facilitated to meet their own goals, which should be mutually aligned with the district vision and goals” (Wilmore, 2008, p. 16).

Culture and Climate. The ability to shape the culture and climate of a district is essential to a superintendent’s success. Districts, like all organizations, have a culture

that is based on historical events over a period of time. Wilmore (2008) stated, “Within all organizations, including school districts, the *culture* is the way we do things, while the *climate* is the way any organization actually feels when you walk in the door or stay a while” (p. 33). The new superintendent will inherit the existing culture; however, one of the first tasks will be to determine if that culture is conducive to student success. Based on standardized tests scores across California, it is highly probable that many districts have cultures that are not responsive to the needs of all stakeholders. The superintendent will not only have to quickly assess the culture but will have to devise a strategic plan to positively influence that culture.

Stakeholders who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in organizations often question the necessity for changing culture and climate. Sherman & Grogan stated the following regarding the role of the superintendent: “they are expected to create cultures and enlighten the community...they are expected to create cultures and climates enabling schools to redefine their purposes” (as cited in Kowalski and Bjork, 1999, p. 50). The most obvious rationale for a superintendent to initiate a cultural change is that we live in an ever-changing environment. The external environment, clients, and employees are changing at a rapid pace and the organization serves these entities out of the context of its culture and climate. The organization must be able to adapt, to change, and to meet the new needs of the stakeholders. This is a process that demands careful consideration and analysis of the interactions between the organization and the community. The organization has to keep pace to maintain credibility and effectiveness.

The ability to first learn and later shape the culture and climate of any existing organization is a difficult task. Superintendents are expected to quickly gain a global

view of the organization in order to lead effectively. Superintendents must be able to be a part of the culture and climate and analyze the culture and climate at the same time.

Several tools have been created to assess the culture and climate of organizations. One tool to assess the culture and climate of an organization is the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ). The OCDQ measures whether a school climate is open and caring or closed based on teachers' and administrators' assessments of interactions among teachers and between teachers and administrators.

Another measure of culture and climate is the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) which measures the perceptions of staff regarding the leader's ability to effectively communicate tasks, responsibilities, and rules as well as his/her friendliness, trustworthiness, and caring.

Yet another tool to measure climate is the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) which collects the perceptions of staff on institutional integrity, behavior-initiating structure, consideration, principal's influence, resource support, morale, and academic emphasis. The Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) is a 360-degree leadership assessment tool that measures a leader's and an organization's ability to provide a positive and proactive culture and climate (Hoyle et al., 2005).

The successful superintendent will be acutely aware of the power of the organizational climate and will work to create an environment where exceptional performance occurs. Zander & Zander (2000) stated the power of climate eloquently:

The person who rigorously maintains the clarity to stand confidently in the abundant universe of possibility creates an environment around him generative of certain kinds of conversations. We come to trust that these

places are dedicated to the notion that no one will be made wrong, people will not be talked about behind their backs, and there will be no division between “us” and “them.” These environments produce astonishing results that can take people in wholly unexpected directions, perhaps because all their gates are open – inviting us to play in the meadows of the cooperative universe (pp. 174-175).

The ability to create an environment where creativity and experimentation blossom is more likely to produce excitement and learning for all those involved. Rather than remaining static, this type of organization is more likely to successfully adapt to the needs of its constituents and the external environment. The superintendent who leads this district will be in a positive position to handle the many obstacles that emerge and allow the culture and climate to provide the context for solving problems.

The Role of Leadership in the Politics of School Governance

Boards of Education. Lunenburg & Ornstein noted that Boards of Education (BOE) consist of elected or appointed officials who are responsible for policy-making in school districts. “Most board members are older than the general population (79% over 40 years of age), white (93%), male (60%), and college educated (68%); are professionals (50%) or own their own businesses (12%); and have incomes over \$70,000 (46%)” (as cited in Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 46). BOE are not required to be formally trained in education or business; therefore, the superintendent will have the responsibility to provide research-based information to help guide their policy decisions. The ability of a superintendent to manage the BOE will often determine his/her tenure in a district.

Unfortunately, some BOE have gained the reputation of being uninformed, unmanageable, and self-serving. In districts with this type of BOE, superintendents typically do not stay long and the district is rarely able to move toward a united vision. McCarty & Ramsey (1971) (as cited in Hoyle et al., 2005), describe four types of community power structures and explain how they relate to superintendent roles: (a) In an elite-dominated power structure the economic elite and leaders of the most powerful factions will choose a superintendent who will follow their directives as opposed to developing district policy based on meeting the needs of all. (b) In a factional community power structure the superintendent must be a skillful politician and align him/herself with the faction in power at the time. She or he must be careful not to alienate any faction because this group could be in power after the next board election. Like the elite-dominated power structure, decisions are based on the desires of special interests. (c) The pluralistic community power structure can be identified by dispersed power and decisions being made objectively through vigorous discussion. The superintendent in such a structure can give professional opinions and provide options for the board to consider. Special interests do not control decisions made in a pluralistic community power structure. (d) Inert community power structures are not open to change. Even though they allow the superintendent to make decisions, the expectation is that the values of the community will be upheld. It will be essential for superintendents to be aware of the kind of power structure the board represents and know how to effectively operate within that structure.

A particular governance model defines the roles of boards and superintendents in terms of relationship, self-assessment, and evaluation of superintendents. This proper

execution of the governance model helps create improved student learning and more accountability to the public (Nमित, 2008). The Traditional Governance model and the Policy Governance model are the two most popular governance structures. These models are based on fundamentally different views of the work of boards and superintendents and are executed differently.

The Traditional Governance model is the most common and allows the superintendent to control regulations, operations, as well as receive process reports that inform him/her whether operations are functioning effectively. The BOE is responsible for the district goals and policies and receives evaluations and product reports that indicate whether goals are being met (Nमित, 2008).

The Policy Governance model is an alternate structure created by John Carver, a scholar in organizational governance. This model has only 30 to 40 policies that define how the board will govern, the relationship between the board members and the superintendent, the means and the boundaries for the superintendent to achieve the district's goals, and what students should know and be able to do. Because the model is focused and structured, it is popular among all type of organizations and is used by many school districts (Nमित, 2008).

Viewing the BOE as part of an executive planning team with the best interest of the students in mind is the most beneficial way to view board/superintendent relations. When the superintendent is hired by the BOE, she or he has a responsibility to lead that group toward effective implementation of a common vision. Like most people, BOE look for someone who will unite them and lead them to success for their district. The challenge for the superintendent is to provide training for the BOE, recognize their

individual intellectual and emotional needs, and never underestimate the power that the voting public has on these elected officials.

The successful superintendent will be knowledgeable about the governance structure of her/his district. Within the chosen structure, the superintendent will be able to move toward the district vision by leading the efforts of staff members and board members.

State and Federal Requirements. The superintendent's job has always been inextricably tied to the outcome of state and federal policies. This connection has been felt most heavily since the inception of the federal NCLB Act. Wilmore (2008) states, "Federal and state laws and regulations change rapidly, so a superintendent's learning curve never flattens out as the leader strives to keep up with them and how they impact the district" (p. 104). The superintendent must constantly keep abreast of legislation in order to explain the impact to stakeholders, align district policies to new laws, and garner political support to influence legislation.

The sage superintendent will take the time to fully understand the reasons for policies and prepare a proper presentation of these policies to district personnel. Balancing the state and federal requirements with the state of readiness in the district requires wisdom and judgment on the part of the superintendent.

Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political context is complicated work. "To go from "understanding" the larger context to "responding" is taking a step up Bloom's taxonomy into midlevel thinking skills," purports Wilmore (2008, p. 106). Those midlevel thinking skills will involve the ability to be socially and emotionally aware of the needs of stakeholders and their desires and gain their support

for whatever change is being recommended. Simply put, to be able to influence the political environment requires the ability to influence others for the purpose of creating a better education for children.

Legal Compliance. Educators and board members are often lacking in knowledge about the laws that affect school districts. In this age of educational accountability and in our litigious society, the superintendent has the responsibility to provide extensive professional development at all levels of the organization to limit the distraction of lawsuits. One of the most common areas of legal liability related to superintendents and boards is the Ralph M. Brown Act, which was enacted to give the citizens of California access to government agencies and to prohibit governmental decisions from being made in secret (Government code section 54950). According to Margaret Chidester of the Law Offices of Margeret A. Chidester & Associates, the Brown Act requires public legislative bodies to deliberate in public unless the information is about student discipline, personnel matters, pending litigation, negotiations on salary and fringe benefits or real property negotiations. The superintendent must be an expert on Brown Act legislation in order to prevent board members or staff members from violating its provisions.

Conflict of interest is another area where board members and superintendents must be especially careful. According to Chidester (2009), the very perception of a conflict of interest is enough to cause a considerable distraction to education. She cautions board members and superintendents to think not only from a legal perspective but from the perspective of the public who has entrusted them with their most precious possessions – their children and their money in the form of taxes. The common law

doctrine against conflicts of interest “prohibits public officials from placing themselves in a position where their private, personal interests may conflict with their official duties” (Chidester, 2009, p. 2). As superintendents conduct the work of educating students, maintaining transparency and erring on the side of caution is recommended with respect to conflict of interest issues (Chidester, February, 2009).

The Role of Leadership in Communications and Community Relations

The superintendent is the chief spokesperson for the district. His/her ability to communicate will have a direct effect on relations with the community. Wilmore (2008) stated, “Articulation of the mission, vision, and priorities of the district is a team endeavor with the superintendent as the lead person. The superintendent is responsible to ensure that this important task is done properly,” (p. 67). Determining when, where, and how to communicate are important decisions that will have a direct impact on the success of the superintendent’s overall communication plan. Recognizing and being able to communicate with diverse publics is a necessary skill for superintendents. Wilmore (2008) stated, “The environment for this communication is generally not in the schools but in the community. Each group has its dreams and aspirations for its participation in society. Importantly, each group has set expectations for the education of its children,” (p. 69). Proper communication will ensure that everyone has the information to participate in the education of their children.

Several factors require that superintendents maintain frequent, clear communications with the community. The superintendent must have a well thought out and consistently executed plan for informing the community about changes and policies. This is particularly important in an era where information is available in many formats

outside of the formal district channels. By executing a communication plan that relays the vision, intent, and major activities of the district, the superintendent can proactively lead the community toward consensus on the strategies that lead to increased student achievement.

Communication is essential to all stakeholders. It occurs internally to board members, employees, and students and it occurs to external publics such as parents, community members, and business owners. It is not uncommon for organizations to share facts with their stakeholders; however, the broadcasting of facts should not be confused with communication which implies an interchange of thoughts and opinions (Hughes & Hooper, 2000). When considering how most organizations broadcast information as opposed to actually communicating, Hughes & Hooper (2000) had this to say:

That most schools and school districts desire to help the community understand what is going on in the schools, and ultimately to gain support for these activities, is unquestioned. But, it is possible that a lot of effort and money can be spent in an ineffective way, with the results, positive or negative, oftentimes uncertain. We believe that effective communication practices must be identified and become an integral part of the complete communication system (p. 142).

A feedback loop is essential to determine whether efforts to communicate with the public and gain support are having the desired effect. Superintendents should ask the following questions to determine whether the communication plan is really working:

1. Was the message received?

2. If the message was received, was it read?
3. If it was read, was it understood?
4. If it was understood, was it understood as intended?
5. If it was understood as intended, will it be acted on in a positive way?
6. How do you know? (Hughes & Hooper, 2000)

Making sure the communication plan is successful is often a function of the medium chosen and the clarity of the message. Thoughtful consideration should be given to these issues in light of the characteristics of the intended audience to increase the potential for favorable public input into the education process.

Moreover, superintendents must be able to communicate the district's vision orally with confidence and conviction. Hughes & Hooper (2000) stated, "Effective leaders rise to the position of leadership in both informal and formal ways. However, the common ability they all seem to possess is that of being effective oral communicators" (p. 146). Taking the opportunity to communicate orally with stakeholders at every opportunity increases a superintendent's influence and effectiveness in the district because it connects him/her to the staff in a personal way. It enhances the "connected" feeling among members of the organization.

When preparing to deliver an oral message the superintendent must always know the agenda – the most important message to impart. She or he must also consider the audience members and tailor the message to them. It is recommended that the superintendent select the message that would be most meaningful to the intended audience, prepare a one-sentence overview with a few key sentences, prepare any necessary visuals, internalize the message, and then destroy the script. Once the message

is internalized, it can be communicated within any venue (Hughes & Hooper, 2000).

Thoughtful, deliberate practice and preparation are tools that a superintendent must use to prepare for oral communications.

Sometimes a superintendent has the opportunity to share his/her message without conflict. However, often the superintendent has to communicate with confrontation from one or more groups. Hughes & Hooper (2000) give the following advice to improve likeability during confrontational times:

... a speaker must use the mind, the face, the body, and the voice. The mind is used for preparation in the ways mentioned earlier, but it also is used to control the attitude in hostile situations. Knowing in advance what can and cannot be said is only part of the necessary preparation. The effective communicator develops a positive attitude and frame of mind, and maintains them regardless of what occurs...it is extremely important to eliminate negative buzzwords and to make positive statements. Always have an agenda and repeat it rather than the negative allegation...make sure to look pleasant, likeable, and in control. To do otherwise gives credibility to the hostile questioner, not the respondents. Preparation, poise, persistence, patience, and practice will provide the successful school leader with the opportunity to prevail in hostile and confrontational situations (p. 148).

Since the nature of public education has become more and more political over the decades and education is one of the top items on most politicians' campaign lists and a major area of concern to most voters, the power of effective written and oral

communications is essential to garnering political support in school districts. Bond elections, real estate deals, and tax levies are all highly political activities that superintendents are expected to navigate on behalf of the district. Operating in a vacuum and without the proper political support can hamper a district's ability to serve constituents in the most effective manner.

The Role of Leadership in Organizational Management

Operations and Resources. The management of the district operations and resources is the backbone of a school district. The district's fiscal operations, bus services, nutrition services, maintenance and custodial services and the purchasing department all fall under the title of operations and resources. These facilities and other resources make possible the goal of ensuring the academic, physical, and emotional growth of all students.

In recent years, a new dimension of resource management has arisen. One of the new areas of interest in public education is the preserving of resources. With increasing utility costs and a severe budget crisis, superintendents are insisting upon more effective and efficient management of resources. The wise superintendent understands that even when she or he is not directly managing the operations of the district, she or he is directly responsible for the activities therein. According to Hoyle et al. (2005), "Although the board may hire the superintendent to "raise test scores and improve the academic program," the same board will dismiss that superintendent if test scores go up, but so do taxes, public resentment toward the schools, and negative publicity," (p. 82). It is important that superintendents must have plans in place to deal with the issues that arise in the realm of district operations.

Planning for effective utilization of a district's operations can be one of three kinds: (a) visioning, (b) contingency planning, or (c) strategic planning. With site-based management, well-thought-out plans are necessary to involve stakeholders and to be true to the district vision. Contingency planning takes into account that we cannot always predict the future; yet, we are responsible for having a plan of attack when unfortunate events occur. Lastly, strategic planning is a long-range planning approach that takes into account monitoring the environment to get widespread participation into the vision of the district (Hoyle et al., 2005).

The wise superintendent will have a plan to hire and retain the best managers in the operations departments. He will help devise systems to monitor effectiveness and ensure that these systems have a feedback loop that includes him/her as part of the monitoring system. The superintendent will be able to communicate the real dollar value of saving money that could be wasted and the benefit of putting that money back into the direct education of children. The effective superintendent manages resources so that the main focus is student learning. When the leader is able to show concrete contributions to that goal, he/she is able to enlist support from all stakeholders.

The Budget Process. Managing the budget process is precarious work during the best of times and can seem impossible in these times of decreasing revenues and economic uncertainty. No matter what the state financial situation is, the superintendent has the obligation of providing a system within which all stakeholders can give input to the board about their priorities for funds.

Effective leaders involve all stakeholders in decision-making, but there may be a reluctance to share financial information with them. However, allowing stakeholders to

actively participate in the financial process builds goodwill and confidence. Ted Alejandro, assistant superintendent for the San Bernardino County Office of Education, describes one approach to budget making that involves input from all stakeholder groups. According to Alejandro (2009), “It is critical to include all stakeholders in the budget process when identifying key priorities for our district, especially at a time when funds are tight” (p. 12). Table 2 identifies the steps that Alejandro recommends.

Table 2

Budget Calendar

Month	Activities
September	District invites members of every stakeholder group to be on the Budget Advisory Committee. The Committee usually has around 40 members.
November	First meeting held. Agenda explains the purpose and function of the committee and timelines. Norms are developed. Budget explanation occurs with assumptions, past priorities, and overview of restricted programs.
November/December/January	Each stakeholder meets with his/her constituents to discuss the budget information and receive input on their priorities.
Late January	Second meeting held. Governor’s budget presented. New information from the district’s First Interim report provided. Group broken up into heterogeneous smaller groups to discuss priorities. Information shared and charted. Members to return to their constituents to share the information from this meeting.
January Board Meeting	Groups present their priorities. Board gives further direction to superintendent, if necessary
June	Budget workshop. Final planning for budget for the following year.

Note. Adapted from “Collaborating on District Budget Priorities” by T. Alejandro, 2009, *Leadership*, 38 (3), 12-13.

The process above outlines the steps superintendents should take to give the board assurance that all stakeholders have had input into the budget process. “The board can then effectively communicate its budget decisions, knowing it had an opportunity to

consider priorities from all who participated,” stated Alejandre (2009, p. 12).

Superintendents with the leadership ability and foresight to facilitate such a structured, all-inclusive process for the benefit of the board will be considered an invaluable asset.

The Role of Leadership in Curriculum Planning and Development

The days are gone when a superintendent could simply manage a district’s operations and resources. Curriculum planning for every child has become the technical core of the superintendency. Understanding what the research dictates in an academic program and being able to institute systems that insure delivery of the program with fidelity is crucial to superintendent success.

Curriculum planning has become increasingly controversial with the numbers of minority and special needs students in public education today. As a society we strive for the oppositional goals of having a unified curriculum and at the same time meeting the diverse needs of all students. To meet the needs of diverse students, Superintendents must be competent multiculturally. Ramsey, as cited in Hoyle et al., (2005), listed eight goals for creating inclusive curriculum for all learners:

1. Help children develop positive identities and become effective members of diverse groups.
2. Enable children to see themselves as part of the larger society that involves equal membership in a variety of groups.
3. Respect diversity in how people live.
4. Encourage cooperation among diverse student groups.
5. Help students develop a sense of social responsibility beyond their own group.

6. Empower students to be critical social activists.
7. Promote the development of educational and social skills needed to effectively live in the larger society.
8. Develop positive school-family relationships. (p. 114).

Superintendents have the responsibility to make sure that the curriculum is the best for all involved, that it is aligned with what is taught and tested, and that the proper technologies are in place to allow the teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The Role of Leadership in Instructional Management

The superintendent has the responsibility to ensure that instruction is delivered in such a way that all students achieve at high levels. The quality of instruction is directly tied to teacher quality. During the past few decades, much of the teacher evaluation process was based on the activities that teachers engaged in during a lesson. At present the entire public education system, including teachers, is evaluated based on whether students are achieving. In the end, the instructional materials, instructional activities and motivational strategies that teachers use will ultimately have an effect on whether students learn or not. However, with the new focus on the student achievement results, teachers are expected to adapt to the needs of their students.

Superintendents will be most successful at managing instruction when they are in classrooms regularly. When walking through classrooms, Pitler (2009) reports that the observer should be asking the following questions:

1. Are teachers using standards-based teaching strategies?
2. Do student grouping patterns support learning?
3. Are teachers and students using technology to support student learning?

4. Do students understand their goals for learning?
5. Are students learning at both basic and higher-order levels of knowledge?
6. Do student achievement data correlate with walkthrough data? (p. 5).

Superintendents must be in classrooms not only to evaluate the work that teachers do to instruct students but to be aware of the support that teachers need to serve students. When district office personnel regularly walk through classrooms, “it has helped them change the culture of their school from one of distrust and isolation to one of collaboration and openness” (Cudiero & Nelson, 2009, p. 21). In cooperation with the school principal, the superintendent can support student learning by removing any barriers that impede the ability of teachers to meet the needs of students. Often this information will not reach the superintendent who leads from her or his office until it is too late. The successful superintendent leads by walking around and observing the factors that effect student achievement.

Equity in student achievement is an issue that superintendents must be willing to face boldly and with the proper tools. Student achievement data is disaggregated by the ethnicity of students. The achievement gap refers to the difference in scores between students of different ethnicities. To close this gap, superintendents and their principals must be Courageous Equity Leaders (CEL), a phrase used by the Santa Clara County Office of Education in conjunction with EDEquity, Inc. They have developed a professional development module that helps leaders “move race-based knowledge and conversations to instructional practice and leadership” (Javius, 2009, p. 32).

Javius (2009) goes on to point out that CEL’s understand instruction, know how to coach a proficient teacher to levels of mastery for all students, as well as possess the

knowledge, skills, and courage to provide quality of instruction in the district. The successful superintendent will become proficient in his or her instructional knowledge and be bold about expectations for instruction. The superintendent will set the tone and model the proper attitude about providing educational equity for all students. Javius (2009) stated that “there are far too many districts and schools struggling with their teachers about equity. It is not about saying to teachers, “Because of your racial make-up you can or cannot reach students of color. Equity is about being purposeful, intentional and deliberate in what we do to reach all students,” (p. 31). The successful superintendent will review the research on high-achieving, high-poverty, high-minority schools and be prepared to use that information to inspire his teachers and provide instructional guidance. As Ron Edmunds said in a 1978 speech, “We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far,” (Javius, 2009, p. 31). Superintendents must have the will to make a difference in the lives of minority children.

The Role of Leadership in Human Resource Management

To make a difference in the lives of all stakeholders in a district, quality employees are the sustaining force. Superintendent success is dependent upon his/her ability to hire people with the right match of technical knowledge, leadership skill, and ethics. Because the scope of the superintendent’s job is broad, she or he has to be able to rely on other leaders to help develop, institute, and evaluate the district vision. Collins (2001) writes about getting the right people on the bus and making sure they are in the right seats. When Collins (2001) comments on taking organizations from good to great,

he is adamant that every other leadership process follows having the right employees in the organization. Recruiting the proper employees requires thoughtfulness, a recruitment plan, and judgment.

Recruitment. Superintendents must first take an assessment of the skills needed in the various departments and schools of the district to reach the district goals.

Recruitment efforts should be in alignment with both the goals of the district and the policies set forth by the BOE. “Policy established by the board of trustees should provide guidance for long- and short-range recruitment plans,” (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 162). The superintendent must be aware of whether his/her district has policies that promote hiring from within, seeking diversity from without, or hiring Spanish-speaking candidates, to list a few restrictions. If the hiring policies hinder the superintendent’s ability to recruit the best candidate, a revision of the policy should occur.

Before recruiting begins, the district goal for the recruitment effort should be clear and must influence each stage of the recruitment process. No matter what the district goal is in recruiting, the following questions should be answered:

1. What will the recruitment message be?
2. Who will be the recruiter?
3. Where will the recruitment be done?
4. How will the search be coordinated? (Hoyle et al., 2005)

When the above stated questions are answered thoughtfully and accurately the chances of hiring a candidate who is a match for the position is increased. Also, the chances of finding a suitable candidate are greater when the recruitment effort is focused and purposeful.

Evaluation. Evaluation systems in public education have been labeled as a school system's most serious problem (Hoyle et al., 2005). Evaluations are often viewed as disconnected from the actual work that occurs and uninformative with regards to needed improvement and change.

Effective evaluations are essential in an organization because "plans and goals are pointless without an appraisal system to determine their success or failure," (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 171). Evaluations can either be ranking systems which are norm-referenced, rating systems which are criterion-referenced, or narrative systems which focus on a broad range of information. The type of system used should match the type of organization and the goals of the evaluation system.

The superintendent should examine the evaluation system of each branch in the district to determine how useful the information provided is to the employee and the supervisor. Hoyle et al. (2005) stated, "A well-designed evaluation system for employees recognizes and allows for the wealth of information that the superintendent can gain from carrying out administrative duties," (p. 173). The ultimate goal of an evaluation system is for the superintendent to be confident that the evaluation system is aligned with the goals of the district and that it provides important feedback to both the employee and supervisor for reaching those goals.

Retention. Once qualified employees are working successfully in the district, it is important to retain the best and the brightest. Some of the ways that organizations keep their good employees around are by showing appreciation, compensating them fairly, giving them opportunities for advancement, and allowing them to contribute to major decisions.

The Role of Leadership in Ethics and Values

Ethical leadership should be the foundation of the superintendency. Ethics must be an integral part of the superintendent's thought process starting with the vision and continuing with every decision made. Leading ethically becomes convoluted when disparate stakeholder groups compete for limited time, resources, and choice. The seasoned leader will become more focused on ethical decision making in the midst of conflicting messages from the various groups.

The desire to serve others is an excellent stepping stone to becoming an ethical leader. Cashman (1998) stated, "Ultimately, a leader is not judged so much by how well he or she leads, but by how well he or she serves. All value and contribution are achieved through service," (p. 126). Superintendents today and in the future will likely serve in districts that are filled largely with minority students. To serve ethically, the superintendents must exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding and sensitivity and ensure that district employees have the skills to do the same (Hoyle et al., 2005).

The ethical superintendent will also make sure the principles of a democratic society are modeled and upheld in the school district. The superintendent works for the school board members who were elected in a democratic process. Therefore, most view the superintendent as working for the people of the community and expect to have a say in the decisions made in the district.

The strategic planning process is an excellent way to allow constituents to participate in the governance of the district and become involved in a meaningful way. In like manner, schools that give their students the ability to participate in the operations of

the school have higher test scores than students from schools led by more top-down administrators (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Superintendents are also expected to act with integrity. By acting with integrity the superintendent will be honest and protect the rights of others. She or he will obey all laws and board policies. She or he will not use the position for personal gain, but will honor all contracts and obligations into which she or he enters (Hoyle et al., 2005). The superintendent must be the moral compass for the community she or he serves and help model the way to a better society for all.

Professional Development

Adult Learning Theory. Superintendents need ongoing professional development opportunities throughout their careers because the field of education is constantly changing. New superintendents are most in need of professional development because they are not only trying to keep abreast of changes; they are learning a very complex, new job. However, some veteran superintendents still have not mastered some of the basic skills required to be successful or have not kept up with changing requirements of the job. Professional development for superintendents will be successful when the tenets of adult learning theory are followed. By using strategies such as the case method and Socratic dialogue, the adult learner is allowed to draw on his/her life experiences to solve problems and think critically about a topic. Critical inquiry as opposed to the passive reception of information is a key component of adult learning theory (Knowles, et al., 2005).

Planning for professional development should include the four phases of the adult learning process. The four phases are as follows:

1. **Need.** Determine what learning is needed so as to achieve goals. Engaging the learners in this phase will result in higher motivation. It is helpful to note that adults are not always accurate in identifying their professional development needs without assistance; therefore professional developers must begin with an agenda that includes the skills represented in the AASA standards.
2. **Create.** Create a strategy and resources to achieve the learning goals. Engaging the learner in this phase will produce higher validity in the selected learning strategies because adult learners respond more positively when they have had a choice in the professional development strategy.
3. **Implement.** Implement the learning strategy and use the learning resources. Engaging the learners in this phase will help guarantee actual learning.
4. **Evaluate.** Assess the attainment of the learning goal and the process of reaching it. Engaging the learners in this phase will result in higher self-reflection and integration of the knowledge and expertise being sought (Knowles et al., 2005).

Developers of superintendent professional development programs will benefit by using the tenets of adult learning theory in each phase of the planning process. Further, as the theory suggests, the more involved the adult learner is in each phase, the higher the likelihood of success.

Teacher and Principal Professional Development. Professional development for teachers and principals has the goal of changing adult behavior in a manner that has a positive impact on children. Professional development efforts have advanced

significantly over the past fifteen years. In the early 1990s, it was common for teachers and principals to attend a professional development opportunity for one day and return to work the following day with a large binder that promptly got placed on a shelf and forgotten. This scenario is no longer a reality in many of California's public schools because research has shown this to be ineffective and many professional development opportunities have been created that promote ongoing practice of skills learned in training.

Much of the training for teachers and principals today represents the best of what the research indicates is effective in bringing about a change in adult behavior. The professional development organization *Action Learning Systems* provides many professional development opportunities for teachers and principals that include (a) pre-planning, (b) research/theory, (c) co-planning, (d) co-teaching, (e) mentoring, and (f) evaluation. In the pre-planning stage, professional development providers review data with teachers and principals to help identify key areas in need of improvement. Together, the principal, teachers, and professional developers agree on priorities, strategies, and timelines. The professional developer provides group instruction about the research or theory involved when appropriate. One of the most effective strategies the professional developers use is co-planning with the teacher and co-teaching while providing correctives to the teacher in the class with students (actionlearningsystems.com).

This method of providing professional development in context has tremendous power to change adult behavior. The professional developer serves as a mentor to guide and consult with the teacher or principal when needed. Lastly, the professional developer

reviews the student achievement data with the teacher and principal as an authentic form of evaluation.

The role of the superintendency is much broader and complex than the job of teacher or principal. Nonetheless, the basic premise of sound professional development applies to the skills required to be a superintendent.

Superintendent Professional Development. Providing superintendent professional development is a difficult, yet rewarding undertaking. Currently, two organizations in California provide comprehensive superintendent professional development – ACSA and the Broad Institute. The California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA) offers a Summer Institute and mentoring opportunities for superintendents. This section will examine the course content, design, and implementation strategies for each program.

Association of California School Administrators. ACSA offers a New Superintendent Support Package. The package includes a program titled *Leading the Leaders*, fifteen hours of Executive Leadership Coaching, the New Superintendent’s Workshop, and the Superintendent’s Symposium.

Leading the leaders is an opportunity for first and second year superintendents to meet four times a year for two days to examine issues such as learning and teaching, curriculum evaluation, instruction and student achievement data, evaluating and developing employee performance, building positive productive superintendent-board relations, visioning and planning, as well as finance, negotiations, and facilities. The sessions are facilitated by successful veteran superintendents.

The Executive Leadership Coaching focuses on achievement of the Board's goals for the superintendent as well as other needs and desires of the superintendent. It is designed to deliver highly individualized leadership development through consultation, collaboration, reflection, and building of capacity. The coaches for this program are recently retired superintendents whose strengths are matched to the needs of the person being coached. The coaches have been trained and certified in blended coaching strategies and resources.

The Executive Leadership Coaching program includes on-site coaching approximately once every two weeks, e-mail or telephone availability between sessions, information searches and contracts upon request, and individualized goal orientation achieved in collaboration. Coaching tools used include collaborative logs, reflective self-assessments, 360-degree instruments, and observations in appropriate settings.

The New Superintendent's Workshop is a day-and-a-half preconference before the Superintendent's Symposium. The course is presented by veteran and recently hired superintendents who can relate to the challenges of new superintendents. This workshop provides a time for networking and building supportive relationships. The Superintendent's Symposium is held in Monterey, California for three days in January each year. Superintendents come together to share ideas, network, and engage in professional learning. The program is a balance of workshops and interactive sessions focusing on the most important topics facing the superintendency, including leadership, legislation, legal issues, budget, diversity, and accountability (Association of California School Administrators).

The Broad Institute. Eli Broad is a billionaire who has contributed more than \$280 million dollars to educational causes. He uses a business approach to guide his philanthropic efforts. The Broad Superintendent's Academy is a 10-month executive management program designed to prepare CEOs and senior executives from business, nonprofit, military, government, and education backgrounds to lead urban public school systems," stated Quinn (2007). Broad's belief is that leading a large urban district is in many ways more difficult and complex than leading a Fortune 500 company. Broad is aware that non-educators are rarely specialists in curriculum; however, he believes that enough people in education are experts in that arena. His academy focuses on the leadership skills necessary to run a large enterprise.

Academy Fellows keep their current jobs while they attend the seven extended weekend sessions which cover CEO-level skills in the best practices in education reform and leadership. The fellows participate in analyzing case studies, visiting major urban districts, and discussing observations with the best minds in the field.

California Association of Latino School Administrators. CALSA is an organization focusing on Latino student achievement and school leadership. "CALSA's Summer Institute accentuates an integral part of its mission statement. The building of a strong leadership base with common vision and exceptional skill sets is critical to serving the needs of Latino students," stated Robert Salinas on the CALSA website (2008). The three-day institute covers topics of interest to superintendents and offers a time for mentors and protégés to meet. The mentoring relationship is established when one applies and is matched with a mentor with the desired background and experience (California Association of Latino School Administrators).

The importance of superintendent professional development cannot be overstated. Johnson & Uline (n.d.) stated, “Our children’s future should not depend on their family’s luck in finding a neighborhood that has the right school leaders. We must work to create pre-service and in-service systems that prepare every school leader...,” (p. 51). The responsibility to improve America’s public schools rests squarely with the leaders – the superintendents. Providing the professional development for the leaders will help to ensure they have the tools to accomplish the task.

Current professional development programs are adequate at helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The superintendents who participated in the study were able to name specific professional development programs they felt were successful. The document review chart in Table 3 shows the professional development programs for superintendents and their areas of focus. The professional development is targeted largely on the technical aspects of the job, yet, superintendents in this study said it is the “soft” areas that lead to success or failure.

Interviews with veteran superintendents revealed that training in the standards they identified as most important is not easily available to superintendents in California, nor is it pervasive in the existing professional development programs. A thorough document review showed that there is a disproportionate amount of attention given to the technical aspects of the role of superintendent (see Table 4). The most important skills

Table 3

Document Review Chart

PROGRAM	INSTRUCTIONAL	FREQUENCY OF
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	STRATEGIES USED	OFFERING/CONTENT
Leading the Leaders	15 hrs executive leadership coaching New supt. workshop Superintendent's Symposium	4 times/year @2 days 360 degree assessment Self-assessment Observations in real-life settings CPSELS (school-based standards) Vision, instruction, operations, community, ethics, and politics
New Superintendent's Workshop	Collegial support group Networking workshop	1.5 days/year Current topics
Superintendent's Symposium	Workshops Collegial support groups Networking Interactive sessions	3 days/year Current topics
The Superintendent's Academy	mentoring	7 weekends/year Understanding yourself and others Politics Budget and Facilities Collective Bargaining Ethics Diversity Law Instruction and Curriculum Board of Education Human Resources Public Relations Planning Personal Advancement
CALSA Summer Institute	Workshops Mentors	3 days/year Throughout the year
Broad Superintendent's Academy	10 months/year mentoring	Curriculum Instructional alignment Operations Stakeholder engagement Organizational Leadership Interpersonal leadership Management

for superintendent success are considered 'soft skills' and are not adequately addressed in current professional development programs.

Summary

This review has captured the major themes in the literature regarding the need for superintendent professional development in California. An analysis of the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency with respect to the leader's role was presented. Further, the methods that are effective at helping adults learn and the progress that has been made in professional development for teachers and principals was highlighted. Finally, the professional development programs in California for superintendents were examined in relation to the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency.

Little research is available about the skills superintendents need for success. Nothing was found in the literature to indicate which skills are most important for superintendent success and the best methods of acquiring those skills. Lastly, few professional development opportunities exist in California for superintendents.

This study will seek to provide information about superintendent professional development in California. More specifically, this study will seek to determine the most important skills for superintendents to acquire, how those skills are best taught and which, if any, professional development programs in California provide the proper course content, design, and implementation strategies to help superintendents acquire the skills.

Chapter 3. Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

This chapter contains the following major sections: (a) research design, (b) Phase I: survey, (c) Phase II: interview, (d) survey questions, (e) data collection, (f) analysis of data, (g) research population, and (h) summary. Also included is a description of the field test of the instrument and the sampling procedures.

Research Design

Researching the need for superintendent professional development was best accomplished with a qualitative study. Denzin & Lincoln (2003) stated, “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry,” (p. 13). The social context that superintendents work within is constantly changing and the qualitative nature of this study allowed the participants to present their answers in relation to their current situations and circumstances. The researcher recognized that there was value in choosing a method that provided the ability to delve deeply into the backgrounds and reasons for the participants’ answers. The first phase of this study was best answered by a survey. The ACSA Executive Superintendent’s Council members were sent an online survey using a tool called SurveyMonkey and asked to rank the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency in order of importance.

The second phase of the study consisted of a four-question, structured interview with the superintendents. The researcher sought to capture the deep understanding of the

topics in a way that is only accessible through dialogue (Wolcott, 2001). The interview questions were derived from the research questions.

The interview questions are as follows:

1. What risks do superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA standards?
2. How can these risks be mitigated?
3. Which instructional strategies do you feel are best for helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards?
4. Why do you feel these methods are most effective?

The researcher has worked within various California public school systems over the past 18 years and currently serves as an Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources in a school district in California. Past experiences allowed the researcher to capture the “essence” of the experiences of the participating superintendents because of familiarity with the culture of the public school system in California. Interviewing the superintendents gave the researcher an opportunity to capture the life experiences of a small number of carefully chosen, veteran superintendents through a process that produced patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 2003). The interview process allowed the researcher to delve into the richness of the information that could only be gleaned through that method.

Phase I: Survey

The first instrument used to collect data in this study was an online survey. The survey consists of a table of the eight AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency with instructions for the participants to prioritize the standards by order

of importance for superintendent success. The survey was sent by email to all 18 members of the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council.

SurveyMonkey is an online tool that allows the development of surveys that are easy to create and easy to respond to. The researcher was able to use the web browser to create the survey, collect responses, and analyze the results with this tool.

Phase II: The Interview

Fourteen of the 18 superintendents agreed to participate in the interview phase of the study. The researcher began the interview by sharing the results of the survey with the participants. The participants were then asked the four interview questions. Data sheets containing basic information on each superintendent were used to take notes as the participants answered the questions. All 14 interviews were conducted by telephone and the interviews were recorded with the participants' permission. Each participant was assured of confidentiality in the study. The interviews lasted for varied lengths of time. The shortest interview was 14 minutes and the longest was 32 minutes. The participants were assured they would receive a summary of the findings of the study when completed.

Field Test of Instruments

The two instruments used in this study were a survey and a structured interview. Both instruments were field-tested prior to the beginning of the study to ensure that the questions were clear and unambiguous. The survey was field tested with a small group of non-participating superintendents. The researcher's superintendent was one of the field test participants. His feedback was especially useful because he is a member of the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council – the group selected to participate in this research study.

The researcher contacted the small group of non-participating superintendents by telephone, gave them a brief summary of the study, and asked their assistance in filling out an online survey. The researcher then sent an email of the survey to the group and contacted them by telephone after they completed the survey. The researcher asked the field test participants to comment on the clarity of the instructions and the questions. Information gathered during this field test process was used to refine the survey before the actual study began. The question was rephrased until the researcher was convinced that the information collected was the information sought.

The second instrument used in this study is a set of structured interview questions. The researcher used the same small group of non-participating superintendents who assisted with the survey to field test the interview questions. The researcher, while gathering feedback on the survey, asked the superintendents the interview questions and got their feedback on the clarity of the questions. She also asked whether any researcher bias was evident in the tone of voice. The researcher was able to gauge by the responses whether the questions were worded properly to obtain the information sought. Adjustments were made to the interview questions based on this process.

The interview questions were revised slightly to accomplish two goals. The first goal in revising the questions was to provide more clarity to the participants about what information the researcher was seeking. The questions were reworded and tested several times to accomplish this goal. Ambiguous words and phrases were removed and more accurate language was inserted. The second goal of revising the interview questions was to help the researcher establish the validity of the answers. This second goal was accomplished by asking the participants *why* they believed an instructional method was

the most effective for helping superintendents develop mastery over the AASA standards. Answers were considered most valid if the participant stated that she or he had personally experienced the instructional method being recommended. When all necessary revisions were made, the survey and the interview questions were finalized and administered to the participants.

Research Study Questions

The online survey question from Phase I which asked the superintendents to rank the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency was formulated based on the research found in Chapter II. The literature revealed that the AASA standards are the only set of standards that define the scope of the superintendent's job. Hoyle et al. (2005) stated, "AASA standards are the best guide for the preparation of superintendents because they focus on strategic elements of superintendents' work" (p. 12). The literature also revealed that the AASA standards have a broad scope and are probably not always equally important. The researcher knew that in order to determine whether effective professional development for superintendents existed, she had to first determine which skills were most vital to superintendent success. The online survey question was the instrument that provided this critical information that was foundational to the remainder of the study.

The interview questions for Phase II of the study were created based on information found in the literature, also. The researcher presented the results of the ranking of the AASA standards at the beginning of the interview. The four interview questions were then asked of the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected for this study in two ways. The first research question was collected with an online survey. Data for the last four questions were collected by telephone interviews. The researcher activated the speaker portion of the telephone and recorded each interview to ensure accuracy and clarity.

The researcher's superintendent, who is a member of ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council, requested the participation of his peers at a regularly scheduled meeting. Within a week of this meeting, the researcher emailed an introductory statement to prospective participants letting them know they would receive a package in the mail within the week. Packages were mailed to all members of the council containing an Informed Consent Form and a Starbucks gift card to thank them in advance for their participation in the study. When all Informed Consent Forms were returned, the survey was emailed to the council members. Included with the survey was a cover sheet asking for demographic information and a box for them to check indicating whether they would agree to participate in a telephone interview. After the responses to the surveys were returned, the researcher analyzed the data and prepared to contact the superintendents who agreed to participate in the interview.

The researcher contacted the administrative assistant of each superintendent who agreed to be interviewed to schedule a time for the telephone interview at the convenience of the superintendent. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The participants were all promised a summary of the results of the study when completed.

Analysis of Data

The first research question was analyzed by inspection. Survey Monkey, the online survey tool, provided the data in a format that made the results easy to analyze. The researcher looked at the data and identified which standards received the highest percentage of first, second, or third priority rankings by the participants.

After the first research question was analyzed by inspection, the researcher continued the process of data collection and analysis during the interview stage. Morse and Richards (2002) proclaim, “In qualitative research, collecting data is not a process separate from analyzing data. The strength of qualitative inquiry is in the integration of the research question, the data, and data analysis” (p. 1). The researcher began the interview process by sharing the purpose of the study and the results of the survey question. The researcher used an audiotape and took minimal field notes while the participants were talking so that she could fully attend to the answers given, assess the tone of voice of the participants, and further analyze the essence of the message being conveyed at the time. The audiotape and the field notes were filed in a notebook and separated by the last name of the participant. A data sheet containing the researcher’s notes and impressions was filled in after the interviews were complete and these sheets were also filed.

The researcher transcribed the recorded interview information after the interviews were complete. The transcription process involved writing the participants’ words in a notebook. This required the researcher to continually stop and start the audiotape as well as rewind the audiotape on many occasions. The researcher wanted to be sure the proper context of the comments was captured.

After the transcription process was complete, the information was coded to highlight important themes that emerged from the data. The researcher coded each question for all participants independent of the other questions. Full attention was given to ensuring that question one was coded properly before engaging with the data for question two. The coding process began with the researcher reading the question and the participants' responses. A highlighter was used to identify common or similar key words and phrases. Once the key words and phrases were identified, the researcher decided on the theme or overall meaning of the key words and phrases. These themes were recorded. The researcher allowed at least 24 hours to pass and reviewed the themes while rereading the transcribed responses. This second review gave the researcher an opportunity to ensure that the true essence of the participants' messages was revealed in the themes. The researcher then began to think about the themes to determine if any could be reduced to broader statements or eliminated because they were redundant. This process allowed the researcher to clearly articulate the participants' information in the most accurate manner. This process was for each interview question.

Matrices were created for each interview question to organize the key themes and phrases as well as to track their frequency. A third thorough reading of the transcribed interviews was conducted and the information was reviewed to ensure that the matrices were accurate and complete. The final step, which was the researcher's synthesis and interpretation of the data was based on the researcher's experiences, a review of the literature, as well as the actual research interviews (Creswell, 2003).

Validating the Findings

Triangulation was used to validate the findings. According to Morse & Richards (2002), “*Triangulation* refers to the gaining of multiple perspectives through completed studies that have been conducted on the same topic and that directly address each other’s findings” (p. 76). In this study, data collected from the participants was examined in coordination with a thorough document review of information about professional development courses for superintendents in California and a thorough review of the literature. Looking at the information from three perspectives helped the researcher validate the research findings and answer the question of whether there is adequate professional development for superintendents in California.

Rich descriptive language was used in the narrative to create a sense of the setting for the reader. Additionally, the researcher shared her biases in order to create trust and authenticity. The researcher reported any discrepant information to add credibility to the findings (Creswell, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher sought to minimize or disclose the effect of her personal values, assumptions and biases during the study (Creswell, 2003). The researcher has worked in public schools systems for the past 17 years. During that time the researcher has had the opportunity to witness the increased importance of professional development at all levels of the public school organization. Additionally, the researcher recognizes how the job of the superintendent has become increasing more complex over the years. The researcher’s Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction also frames her bias regarding the

content, course design and implementation strategies of professional development programs.

The researcher's relationship with the participants was considered before the study began. The researcher's superintendent is a member of ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council and was excluded from the study. The researcher participated in a college-level class where one of the other superintendents was the instructor approximately ten years ago. The other superintendents are not familiar to the researcher.

The researcher was sensitive to the need to conduct the interviews when both the interviewer and the participants were able to attend fully to the interview without distraction or fatigue becoming a factor. According to Morse & Richards (2002), "Making data is not a passive process; rather, it is a cognitive process that requires tremendous investment on the part of the researcher," (p. 89). With that in mind, the researcher did not conduct any interviews at a time when the task could not be adequately attended.

Population and Sample

The study was comprised of 18 superintendents in California who are members of the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council. The 19 regions of California are each represented by a member on ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Committee. The researcher's superintendent is a member of the committee and was therefore excluded because he has agreed to be one of her dissertation committee members. The remaining 18 superintendents are all veterans and recognized as successful in the field.

The first research question was answered by the 18 members of the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council. Fourteen of the 18 superintendents agreed to

participate in the interview. The participant group is purposeful and diverse, therefore, the researcher was able to gain a broad range of opinions on the topic. Creswell (2003) supports the notion that a small group of carefully selected participants is sufficient to provide rich information related to their field of expertise.

The research population included men, women, and minorities, as well as superintendents from urban, suburban, and rural districts. Additionally, the population contained diversity in the socioeconomic level, size, and student achievement scores the superintendents' districts represent.

Sampling Procedures

This study included a purposeful sample of veteran superintendents from all but one of the regions of California. In order to gain access to this population, the researcher met with the Executive Director of ACSA, Bob Wells, to get assurance that the research project is worthwhile to organizations like ACSA. Additionally, the researcher's superintendent is a member of the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council and introduced the topic to the group at a regularly scheduled meeting. He solicited their participation in the study and sent follow-up emails when necessary.

Most of the ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council members stated that they participated because they believe the topic is important and timely. Some stated that they enjoyed sharing their knowledge and contributing to a project that will ultimately enhance the field of education beyond their tenure. The researcher discovered that members of the Executive Superintendent's Council have already begun informal conversations about the changing role of the superintendent, the changing characteristics of incoming superintendents, and the need for more professional development

opportunities. This study represented a structured forum for these conversations to continue with the added benefit of providing recommendations that will emerge in Chapter Five. Since the superintendents are already interested in this topic and are having conversations, encouraging them to participate was not a difficult task.

Summary

This chapter highlighted the purpose statement, research questions, research design, population and sample, data collection procedures, analysis of data, and the role of the researcher. Chapter Four will present the findings of this study.

Chapter 4. Results

Introduction

This chapter will describe the findings for the research questions in this study. The researcher discovered through a literature review that the AASA Standards for the Superintendency are the only standards that specifically address the scope of work for the public school system superintendent (Bjork and Kowalski, 2005). The literature also suggested that the AASA standards are broad and are not all be of equal importance in every context. The researcher decided that before studying the need for superintendent professional development, the most critical standards or skills would first have to be identified. Phase I of this study was accomplished with a survey where the participants prioritized the AASA Standards for the Superintendency by order of importance to superintendent success. In Phase II, the study further sought to determine whether there is sufficient superintendent professional development in California. The participants were presented with the results of the data from the survey at the beginning of the interviews. The participants were then asked the following four interview questions:

1. What risks do superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA standards?
2. How can these risks be mitigated?
3. Which instructional strategies do you feel are best for helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards?
4. Why do you feel these methods are most effective?

Process

Participants were first asked to participate in the study on the topic of superintendent professional development when they were presented with a summary of the study proposal at one of the regularly scheduled meetings of the ACSA Superintendent's Council. A fellow member of the council asked the superintendents to participate in the study and the attendees agreed that they would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the study. The researcher sent the survey by email to each participant. After all surveys were returned and the data analyzed, the researcher contacted each superintendent's assistant to set up a time for the telephone interview. All 18 members completed the survey and 14 of them agreed to be interviewed. The participants were given the results of the data analysis from the survey before the interviews began.

The interviews were all conducted by telephone and were recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews varied in length depending on the thoroughness of the superintendent. The interviews ranged from 14 minutes to 32 minutes in length. Participants were assured of confidentiality with regard to their responses to the survey question and the interview questions. They were also promised a copy of the summary of findings when the study is complete.

Phase I

The first research question was analyzed by inspection. The relatively small population size enabled the researcher to quickly assess which priority the superintendents assigned to each of the AASA standards. Table 1 described the AASA standards.

Research Question One. ACSA Superintendent’s Council members were asked to respond to the following survey question: “Please prioritize in order of importance for Superintendents from 1) Most Important; to 8) Least Important.” (See Table 4.)

Table 4

Members’ Prioritization of Standards

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 7	Priority 8
Standard 8	38.9%	5.6%	16.7%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	5.6%	11.1%
	(7)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(2)	(0)	(1)	(2)
Standard 1	22.2%	33.3%	22.2%	0.0%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	11.1%
	(4)	(6)	(4)	(0)	(0)	(1)	(1)	(2)
Standard 2	16.7%	27.8%	5.6%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	5.6%	11.1%
	(3)	(5)	(1)	(0)	(3)	(3)	(1)	(2)
Standard 3	0.0%	5.9%	17.6%	17.6%	5.9%	0.0%	29.4%	23.5%
	(0)	(1)	(3)	(3)	(1)	(0)	(5)	(4)
Standard 4	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	33.3%	0.0%	22.2%	16.7%	11.1%
	(1)	(1)	(1)	(6)	(0)	(4)	(3)	(2)
Standard 5	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	27.8%	11.1%	22.2%	16.7%
	(0)	(0)	(2)	(2)	(5)	(2)	(4)	(3)
Standard 6	11.1%	5.6%	11.1%	16.7%	16.7%	27.8%	0.0%	11.1%
	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(0)	(2)
Standard 7	0.0%	11.1%	5.6%	5.6%	16.7%	5.6%	22.2%	33.3%
	(0)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(1)	(4)	(6)

Note. Below are the responses of the ACSA Superintendent’s Council Members to research question 1: “Please prioritize in order of importance for Superintendents from 1) Most Important; to 8) Least Important.” The results are shown in order of frequency.

Seven of the 18 participants (38.9%) ranked standard 8 as most important for superintendent success. Eleven of the 18 participants (61 %) ranked standard 8 as one of the three most important standards. Four of the 18 participants (22.2%) ranked

standard 1 as most important for superintendent success. Fourteen of the 18 participants (78 %) ranked standard 1 as one of the three most important standards. Standard 2 was ranked third most important to superintendent success by three of the 18 participants (16.7%). Nine of the 18 participants (50 %) ranked standard 2 as one of the three most important standards.

The data presented above point out that the participants in this study, all of whom are veteran superintendents, believe that acting with integrity, fairness and ethics (standard 8); being able to shape a district culture and articulate a vision (standard 1); and being able to navigate the politics of the superintendency (standard 2) are the most important skills for superintendent success. This information was confirmed during the interview process where superintendents continued to express the importance of these particular skills.

Phase II

ACSA Superintendent's Council members were asked the following question during a one-on-one interview: "What risks do superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA standards?" To determine whether there is a need for superintendent professional development, the researcher had to find out whether there were any risks or consequences for superintendents being ill-prepared in the skills identified for their jobs – the AASA standards.

Research Question Two. Question two, which sought to determine what risks superintendents face when they do not have mastery of the AASA Standards, prompted a variety of answers. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Members' Assessment of Risk for Lack of Standards Mastery

COMMENTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	TOTAL
Mastering the standards is essential to gaining the Board's confidence and trust		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	10
Being able to read and navigate the political terrain is a prerequisite to the successful execution of the other standards		x			x	x	x		x	x	x			x	8
Being broadly prepared for the entire scope of the job is essential	x	x	x		x		x		x	x			x		8
Understanding the culture of the district is essential before changes are made		x			x	x	x		x				x	x	7
It is essential to collaborate and resist isolation and emotional overload				x	x	x		x			x				5
Mastery of the standards is essential for a long tenure								x			x				2
Mastery of the standards is essential for student success	x					x									2
Mastery of the standards is essential for employee satisfaction											x				1

Note. Comments in order of frequency. "S" = superintendent.

The superintendents described most often the peril of not being able to understand the culture of the district and community and the political terrain of the district. One superintendent stated, “It is a risk to be unaware of what your community wants from a superintendent and what the board hired you for.” They stated that the effects of not understanding these risks will be evidenced by emotional overload, students not achieving to their potential, low employee satisfaction, as well as a myriad of problems for the district and board which eventually leads to a short tenure for the superintendent. The comment of a superintendent was that “if you are not fully experienced and if you are not a centered person, emotionally, the rigor of the job can be overwhelming.”

Ten of the 14 superintendents stated that having mastery of the AASA standards is a prerequisite to gaining the board’s trust and confidence. They went on to emphasize that having the ability to operate and make decisions ethically and with integrity is a prerequisite for the role of superintendent. A superintendent voiced his opinion that “if you don’t have integrity, you should get out of the job. Culture is tied to integrity and you can’t create a positive culture without integrity.” Mastery of the other seven skills (standards 1 – 7) will not help a superintendent become successful without ethics and integrity. The superintendent talked about the board’s need to be able to rely on the superintendent to accomplish tasks, communicate accurately and clearly, and be able to raise test scores and keep the district fiscally solvent. The superintendents stated that demonstrating mastery of the AASA standards is necessary for board’s to trust and have confidence in the superintendent so that she or he is granted a long and successful tenure. The superintendents pointed out that they would not have been given the opportunity to serve as superintendents for such long periods of time without mastery of these AASA

standards. Table 6 is a chart showing the experience level of the superintendents who participated in the study. The first column shows the number of years each of the 18 participants has served as superintendent. The second column shows the number of years each participant has served in his/her current district.

Table 6

Superintendent Tenure

Total Years as a Superintendent	Total Years Served as a Superintendent in Current District
18	18
7	7
16	3
11	2
15	15
10	1
6	3
11	5
10	10
11	5
8	4
17	3
8	8
8	3
17	3
12	12
9	4
3	3

Note. Information derived from superintendents via online survey.

Eight of the 14 superintendents stated that the ability to read and navigate the political terrain within a district is necessary for success. As one superintendent proclaimed, “If you don’t pay attention to the ethics, politics, and culture and build trust with your board and administrators and understand the culture of the district to know the internal politics, you’re not going to be real successful doing the other stuff.” They stated that in almost all cases where a superintendent’s contract is not renewed, the cause is related to an inability to manage politics – not an inability to carry out the technical aspects of the job. These superintendents pointed out that the risk to a new superintendent when she or he first enters a district is in not listening to enough constituents to learn the political landscape. They stated that there is also risk when new superintendents enter a district and try to institute change without attending to politics first. The superintendents pointed out that even when a superintendent is hired from within his current district, there is risk in not recognizing that a different political terrain exists for the different kind of decisions she or he will make as a superintendent compared to the kind of decisions she or he made in the former position.

Eight of the 14 superintendents stated that it is important to be broadly prepared. A superintendent stated, “The breadth of knowledge required to be a successful superintendent is incredible.” Many of them stated that superintendents entering the field today do not have as much experience as veteran superintendents had when they entered the job. They stated that while experience in curriculum and human resources is most common in education, it is essential to have experience in business in the role of superintendent. They spoke about the need to move from a specialist in a particular field to a generalist with the ability to monitor and lead all aspects of the school district.

Seven of the 14 superintendents stated that understanding the culture of the district and community is expected of superintendents. In many areas of California, the school district is one of the largest employers in the area which creates a symbiotic relationship between the community and the district. The fact that board members are also local citizens further entangles the district with the community. The superintendents stated that culture is pervasive and will overwhelm any efforts by the superintendent if that culture is not recognized and shaped over time.

The superintendents also talked about some of the reasons for superintendents not mastering the standards. Five of the 14 superintendents pointed out that there is significant risk when newcomers to the position allow themselves to become isolated from peers. They stated that collaboration is essential for all superintendents to prevent the feeling of isolation and emotional overload. They went on to say that the job can be daunting and having someone to talk to helps one keep perspective, vet ideas, and remain emotionally strong. A superintendent stated, “You need someone with hands-on experience who you can talk it up with.” The superintendents stated that without successful superintendents the students do not reach their potential, employees are not satisfied, and consequently, the superintendent will not have a long tenure.

Research Question Three. The researcher sought to determine whether the risks identified in the previous question could be mitigated. There was an expectation that depending on the size of the district and the number of cabinet-level members the superintendent employed with diversified skills, some of the responsibility for the standards could be transferred to other employees. The participants answered the

following question as a follow-up to the previous question: “How can these risks be mitigated?”

ACSA Superintendent’s Council members’ answers to the question, “How Can These Risks Be Mitigated?” are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Members’ Comments on How Risk Can Be Mitigated

COMMENTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	TOTAL
Professional Development Programs		x	x					x	x	x	x	x		x	8
Having good mentors or coaches			x						x		x		x	x	5
By understanding the role in relation to the district and to the Board – shift from specialist to generalist	x		x			x	x					x			5
By being broadly prepared		x			x						x	x			4
By collaborating, communicating, and networking					x				x		x				3
By tending to ethics, politics, relationships, and culture before making any changes			x	x		x									3
By instituting policy that provides protection from unions and Boards							x								1

Note. Comments in order of frequency. “S” = superintendent.

The superintendents stated that the risks to a successful superintendency can be mitigated in many ways. Eight of the 14 superintendents stated that professional development is one way to mitigate the risks. They named specifically the following professional development programs: (a) ACSA's Superintendent's Academy, (b) ACSA's Leading the Leaders, (c) Doctoral Programs, (d) Joint ACSA/ California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) CBO training, (e) School Employers Association of California CBO training, (f) ACSA's Executive Learning Center (ELC's), (g) ACSA's New Superintendent's Workshop, and (h) The Broad Academy.

Five of the 14 superintendents stated that having a mentor or coach is a positive step toward mitigating risk for superintendents. One superintendent stated that "by getting out and networking with other superintendents, risk is mitigated." They pointed out that all successful superintendents have either a formal or informal mentors for the purpose of vetting ideas and preventing the feeling of isolation. The superintendents stated that districts should provide funding for mentors/coaches for their superintendents when they are hired as an investment in the person and an investment in the district.

Five of the 14 superintendents mentioned the need for superintendents to stop operating as specialists in one area of the job and shift to operating as generalists whose primary responsibility is to work successfully with the board and the community. The superintendents stated that understanding the culture and politics of the job was the first step to making any positive change in the district.

Four of the 14 superintendents stated that being broadly prepared before entering the job mitigates risk. They stated that serving varied positions in preparation for the superintendency is valuable. Serving at the high school level was specifically mentioned

as good preparation. The superintendents stated that those who want to be superintendents must seek out opportunities to gain experience, even as a volunteer, in areas that are unfamiliar to them.

Collaboration, communication, and networking were mentioned by three of the 14 superintendents as activities that can help superintendents mitigate risk. The conversations with the superintendents revealed that by talking to peers frequently, many problems can be averted. One stated, “In most cases it’s not a matter of what you technically know, it’s a matter of how you communicate it and how you interact with individuals.” The superintendents stated that they had witnessed the result of a peer’s poor choice and wished that she or he had talked to someone before making that decision. The consensus was that there is enough collective knowledge and past experience in the field of the superintendency to help with making wise decisions. The superintendents pointed out that the ability to network and be humble enough to ask others for advice is a valuable mitigation tool.

Three of the 14 superintendents stated that to mitigate risk superintendents must tend to the ethics, politics, relationships and culture before making changes. They stated that acting with integrity, delivering results, and being connected to the board and community is groundwork for all other work in the district.

One superintendent stated that mitigating the risks would be accomplished if a policy were passed that provided protection for superintendents from unions and boards. The superintendent said, “We really need policy that protects superintendents from political decision.” The superintendent stated that unfair pressure is placed, especially on young superintendents, for them to make political decisions instead of the right decision.

The superintendent stated that this activity will continue until superintendents feel safe to make the best research-based decision in the district without the risk of losing his/her job.

Research Question Four. The third interview question was stated as follows: “Which instructional strategies do you feel are best for helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards? This question served the purpose of focusing the discussion on professional development. Professional development takes many forms and the study sought to discover how superintendent’s best acquired the skills that are most important to their success.

ACSA Superintendent’s Council members answers to the question, “Which instructional strategies do you feel are best for helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards?” are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Members’ Responses to Best Instructional Strategies for Standards Mastery

COMMENTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	TOTAL
Collegial support group		x		x	x	x	x	x	x				x		8
Group and panel discussions	x			x	x	x	x	x	x						7
Pertinent lectures	x		x	x	x	x	x								6
Informal mentoring	x	x	x					x						x	5

(table continues)

COMMENTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	TOTAL
Case studies				x			x			x		x		x	5
Rigorous and relevant reading and writing				x	x	x	x	x							5
Formal mentoring	x	x					x							x	4
Doctoral Programs			x										x	x	3
Experience							x		x						2
Self-assessment				x	x										2
Storytelling					x										1

Note. Comments in order of frequency. “S” = superintendent.

Eight of the 14 superintendents stated that having a collegial support group is an effective instructional strategy for helping superintendents gain mastery of the AASA standards. They pointed out that even when superintendents have all the technical knowledge related to the position, having conversations with peers about relevant topics is an important form of instruction. The superintendents named several professional development academies that provide collegial support groups to include: (a) ACSA’s New Superintendent’s Orientation, (b) Doctoral Programs, (c) ACSA’s Curriculum-Based Academies, (d) ACSA’s Superintendent’s Academy, (e) ACSA’s New

Superintendent's Symposium, (f) ACSA's Leading the Leaders, (g) Broad Associates Superintendent's Academy, and, (h) ACSA's ELC's.

Seven of the 14 superintendents stated that group and panel discussions are powerful forms of instruction "when they are based on real life case studies." The superintendents pointed out that many superintendents are uneasy about asking for help. The panel discussion was described as a way for superintendents to see other superintendents asking questions, learn from the answers, and possibly lose some of their inhibitions about not knowing everything there is to know about the job.

Six of the 14 superintendents stated that pertinent lectures are a successful form of instruction. The superintendents cautioned that the topic of the lecture must be timely and relevant because of the limited time that superintendents have to devote to this activity.

Five of the 14 superintendents stated that informal mentoring is a positive form of instruction. The superintendents pointed out that they all have at least one person they can call when they are making critical decisions. They stressed that informal mentors already have a built in trust and appreciation for each other that helps to make the instructional process flow smoothly.

Five of the 14 superintendents state that discussing case studies is a successful for of instruction. They stated that the power of case studies lies in the fact that much can be learned about how others have processed and responded to problems. The opinion of the superintendents was that case studies help with the ability to reason and think broadly about issues.

Five of the 14 superintendents stated that rigorous and relevant reading is a positive form of instruction. They stated the need to keep current with research and trends. The caution was given to ensure the material was timely and relevant because of the superintendents' tight time schedules.

Four of the 14 superintendents recommended formal mentoring as a positive form of instruction. The opinion of the superintendents was that all superintendents need a mentor and not everyone has an informal mentor. The caution was given to ensure that the mentor has no involvement in the evaluation process.

Three of the superintendents recommended doctoral programs as a form of instruction. The superintendents stated that the lessons learned when the professors are veteran superintendents is powerful. Also, the superintendents stated that often life-long collegial relationships are formed within doctoral programs that last an entire career. Lastly, the superintendents stated that within the doctoral program, they could hone in on the classes that addressed areas in which they had the least amount of experience.

Two of the superintendents stated experience or on-the-job training is a good form of instruction. These superintendents stated that there is much to learn about the job that can only be learned while in the position.

Two of the 14 superintendents stated that self-assessment is a powerful tool. They stated that each year superintendents should review their skills in relation the standards and honestly assess what they need to do to become more proficient. The superintendents said that recognizing weakness is a precursor to getting the most out of any form of instruction.

One superintendent stated that storytelling is a powerful form of instruction. This superintendent pointed out that people remember the lesson when a touching story is involved. The superintendent also talked about the power of learning by telling stories that relay current culture and create a passion for changing culture.

Research Question Five. The last interview question was asked as follows: “Why do you feel these methods are most effective?” The researcher sought to add validity to previous question by analyzing the reasons the participants believed in the instructional methods they named. ACSA Superintendent’s Council members’ responses are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Members’ Reasons for Their Preference of Professional Development Strategies

COMMENTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	TOTAL
Past experience with various forms of professional development	x		x	x			x	x	x		x	x			8
Has interacted with a superintendent who failed				x		x									2

Note. Comments in order of frequency. “S” means superintendent.

Eight of the participants had prior experience with the various forms of professional development they were recommending in the previous question. This past experience let them to believe that a particular form of professional development was effective or not. All seven participants who recommended *group and panel discussions* had positive experiences with this form of professional development. The six

participants who recommended *pertinent lectures* had experience lectures that were timely and helpful as well as lectures that were not relevant. The five participants who recommended *informal mentoring* had experienced positive responses both as providing and receiving formal mentoring. The five participants who recommended *case studies* had participated in positive experiences where they read about situations and engaged in the process of problem-solving and decision-making. The advantage of hearing the thought processes of others was emphasized with case studies. *Reading and writing* was praised by five participants as a positive professional development strategy they had all experienced. *Formal mentoring* was a strategy that four of the participants had experienced. They cautioned that formal mentoring to be successful the mentor must not be part of the evaluation process. Three of the participants have participated in *doctoral programs* that they felt were effective for professional development. Two of the participants believe that *experience* is the best form of professional development because of their personal experiences. Two participants highlighted the importance of *self-assessment* as a strategy. These two participants pointed out that without an accurate self-assessment it is difficult for a superintendent to know where to guide his/her professional development efforts. One participant heralded the importance of *storytelling* as a form of professional development that has worked successfully for her.

Two of the participants recommended the need for *formal or informal mentors or coaches* as a form of professional development because they had witnessed failures of other superintendents who did not take advantage of these strategies. One superintendent expressed that ‘there is a real fear of not looking like you know everything.’ These

participants expressed their sadness at hearing that a colleague had failed without soliciting the help of his/her peers in making critical decisions.

Summary of Findings

The specific problem for examination in this study was whether there is adequate professional development for superintendents in California. This study had four major purposes. The first purpose of this study was to conduct a thorough review of the literature to determine a definition of success for superintendents, and to assess whether superintendents were experiencing success in California. The AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency were identified as most relevant to the role of superintendent. The researcher examined superintendent success in relation to the history of the position along with major political and legislative decisions that significantly affected the role. Additionally, a document review was conducted to discover the types of professional development offered in California to superintendents.

The second purpose of this study was to determine which of the AASA standards are most important to superintendent success. An internet-based survey was sent to 18 members of ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council asking them to rank the AASA standards by order of importance for superintendents to be successful. This population was chosen because the members are a peer-selected group of veteran superintendents.

The third purpose of this study was to determine whether there is adequate professional development for superintendents in California specifically focused on the standards that are most important for superintendent success.

The research and design methodology of this qualitative, descriptive study of 18 members of ACSA's Executive Superintendent's Council began with the creation and

dissemination of an internet-based survey. The survey was used to determine which of the AASA standards a representative group of veteran superintendents found to be most important to superintendent success.

Four research questions were developed to be asked after the survey results were analyzed:

1. What risks do ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council members believe superintendents face when they do not have mastery over the AASA standards?
2. Do ACSA Executive Superintendent's Council members believe these risks be mitigated?
3. What instructional strategies do ACSA members feel are most effective for helping superintendents develop mastery over the AASA standards?
4. Why do ACSA Executive Superintendent's members believe these stated methods are most effective?

The participants completed the surveys and returned them via the internet. After all surveys were received and the data analyzed, the researcher began scheduling interviews. Fourteen of the 18 superintendents who completed the survey agreed to participate in the interview. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and all interviews were conducted by telephone. The researcher began each interview by telling the participants the results from the survey. The interviews lasted from fourteen minutes to thirty-two minutes in length. The interviews were tape-recorded, with permission from the participants, and later transcribed.

After the interviews were completed, the data were analyzed and categorized according to their relevance to the research questions. Themes taken from the interview transcripts were placed into a matrix for each interview question. An analysis was made of the quotations from the transcripts and the themes were collapsed and synthesized for further analysis.

The data from the survey revealed that the participants ranked AASA standard 1, CEO Leadership and District Culture as the second most important standard for superintendent success. Standard 1 states: A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students and shapes district culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school community. Twenty-two percent of participants ranked standard 1 as most important to superintendent success. Seventy-eight percent of participants ranked standard 1 as one of the three most important standards.

Standard 2, CEO Leadership and the Politics of School Governance, was ranked as the third most important standard for superintendent success by the participants. Standard 2 states: A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context by working with the board of trustees to define mutual expectations, policies, and standards. Seventeen percent of participants ranked standard 2 as the most important standard for superintendent success. Fifty percent of participants ranked standard 2 as one of the three most important standards.

After coding and analyzing data from the interviews some common themes emerged. The common themes revealed:

1. Mastery of the AASA standards is essential to gaining the trust and confidence of the Board. Ten of the 14 superintendents expressed the importance of being perceived by the board as competent. Two participants stated specifically that a superintendent's tenure would be shortened if she or he failed to gain the confidence and trust of the Board.
2. The ability to navigate the political terrain is more important than mastery of the other standards. Most participants expressed the danger of not being able to operate successfully in a highly political arena. Eight of the 14 superintendents stated that mastering the politics of the position is vital the superintendent's success.
3. Being broadly prepared is essential to superintendent success. Eight of the fourteen participants agreed that those who have held many positions in education are more successful than those who have focused on one specialized area their entire careers.
4. Knowing the culture before making any significant changes is important. Fifty percent of the participants expressed that the ability to understand the existing culture and adapt appropriately is an essential skill for superintendent success.
5. Collaboration, networking, and other forms of communicating with peers are essential to prevent isolation and emotional overload. The participants expressed the danger of making decisions in isolation and the physical toll the job of superintendent can take. They expressed the benefits of collaborating often to prevent poor decision making.

6. Professional development programs are an important tool to help superintendents mitigate risks to their success.
7. Mentors or coaches are valuable tools to help superintendents mitigate risks.
8. Superintendents who are able to shift from being specialists to generalists in their roles in the district and with the Board will be more successful.
9. Instructional methods that are effective for helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards include: collegial support groups, group and panel discussions, lectures, informal and formal mentoring, case studies, relevant reading and writing, doctoral programs, experience, self-assessments, and storytelling. Each of the participants was able to identify one or more instructional strategies that were responsive to the time constraints of the superintendency, met the social/emotional needs of superintendents, and addressed the curricular needs of superintendents.
10. Veteran superintendents base their conception of what effective professional development is on past experiences with professional development programs and by analyzing their knowledge of and experiences with superintendents who have failed.

The significant elements that emerged from the synthesizing and collapsing of data revealed the keys to superintendent success or failure. Success is earned by:

1. Having a broad background and experience with many aspects of the job.
2. Having the emotional and social intelligence to navigate the political and cultural terrain of a community and district.
3. Having the confidence and competence to manage the board.

4. Having the wisdom and social skills to collaborate frequently with a mentor/coach and peers about the job.

Factors that could lead to failure include:

1. Lack of competence in the AASA standards.
2. Behaving unethically.
3. Lack of emotional/social intelligence.
4. Operating in isolation.
5. Making decisions without considering the political/cultural landscape.
6. Failure to manage the board.

This chapter described the responses participants gave to the survey and the four interview questions. Chapter Five presents the researchers recommendations regarding their responses.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations

After conducting interviews, reading transcripts, coding and analyzing the data, the researcher is left to draw conclusions related to the purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is adequate professional development for superintendents in California. The political focus on education in America supports the notion that education is of vital importance to our democratic society. Superintendents are the CEO's of the educational system and the data strongly evinces factors that lead to superintendent failure and the corresponding forms of professional development that are most effective for superintendents. A review of the literature and a thorough document review show the comparison of the professional development needed for superintendent success and the professional development that is currently available in California.

An analysis of common themes that emerged from the data revealed several conclusions. One conclusion is that the AASA standards are representative of the skills superintendents need to be successful. Superintendent success is often marked by a long tenure in one district. Superintendent tenure has been positively linked with increasing student achievement. This is supported by the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. According to Hoyle et al. (2005), "AASA standards are the best guide for the preparation of superintendents because they focus on strategic elements of superintendents' work," (p. 12). Even though other standards exist for educational leaders, it has been argued that school administration requires a different set of skills than administration at the district level. The AASA standards "describe the most important executive competencies, skills, craft knowledge, and values in the selection, preparation, and professional development

of superintendent CEO's" (Hoyle et al., pp. x-xi). Many of the superintendents interviewed expressed their frustration at having to rank the AASA standards by order of importance to superintendent success. They stated that all of the AASA standards are important to superintendent success.

The AASA standards are the best descriptors of the role of the superintendent. This information has implications for superintendent applicants, hiring entities, and professional developers. The implications for any candidate who is considering becoming a superintendent are that she or he must master the AASA standards. The implications for hiring entities are that they must have a method of accurately assessing the skill-level and character traits of candidates in order to choose candidates who will realize success in the role of superintendent. The implications for professional developers are that their curriculum and instructional design must reflect the skills prescribed in the AASA standards. Superintendent candidates, hiring entities, and professional developers must all be able to understand and deconstruct the standards to identify the discrete set of skills represented by each.

The researcher recommends that those who are considering becoming a superintendent carefully deconstruct the AASA standards to gain a deep understanding of what mastery in each area entails. Time ought to be devoted to self-reflection and gathering the opinions of others, to determine whether the skills and character traits she or he possesses matches the requirements reflected in the AASA standards. The researcher recommends the use of a 360-degree assessment centered on the AASA standards as a method of collecting information from a variety of people to be used in the assessment process.

The researcher recommends that hiring entities advertise their job for superintendent with the AASA standards listed under the section titled, *Essential Skills*. The researcher further recommends using interview questions that focus on assessing the level of skill and experience each candidate has with the AASA standards. Lastly, the researcher recommends that the skills represented in the AASA standards guide the questions asked during reference checks, and that the hiring entity put more credence in the skills that the candidate actually displays on a regular basis than those skills the candidate claims to possess in the interview.

A second conclusion derived from the data is that the three most important skills for superintendent success are: leading with ethics and integrity, having the ability to shape and share a vision, and having the ability to navigate the political terrain, including board management.

The concept of ethics goes far beyond religious practices and philosophies. AASA has an Ethics Statement that suggests all superintendents should include in their practice at all times (a) truthfulness and honesty, (b) fairness, (c) openness, (d) sincerity, and (e) professionalism (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 195). While no superintendent will be perfect at all times, it is important to heed the words of Tyack & Hansot, (1982) (as cited in Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 197): “Superintendents are indeed “Managers of Virtue” charged with ethical and professional behavior.” The community entrusts its most valuable resource to the school and expects the superintendent to be a person who acts with integrity and who has the highest ethical standards.

The ability to shape and share a vision is written about extensively in the literature. Hoyle et al. (2005) expressed the importance of a superintendent being able to

create a vision statement that is inspirational and compelling. They believe a strongly articulated vision is the guiding element for school improvement and character development of students and staff.

The ability to navigate the political terrain and manage the board was referenced by the participants in the study as crucial to superintendent success. The literature supports this assertion. Blumberg, (1986), as cited in Hoyle et al., (2005), p. 47 stated:

Although educators have been socialized throughout their careers to have nothing to do with politics, superintendents work with elected officials, special interest groups, and board of education members who expect them to be responsive to public needs and demands to have political acumen and skills to make wise decisions, to resolve differences, to allocate funds in accordance with educational values, and to generate voter support for school bond issues.

This ability to work within a highly political arena and exert influence is a crucial skill for superintendents.

The information above has several implications for superintendent candidates, hiring entities, and professional developers. Working ethically, building culture and sharing a vision, and managing the political terrain all require exceptional emotional and social intelligence. Goleman (2006), in his book, *Social Intelligence*, wrote about the impact of social intelligence on our relationships. He stated that social intelligence “lets us look beyond ...narrow self-interest to the best interests of others, too.” The ability to behave in this manner is at the core of ethics and integrity. When an ethical foundation is in place, the superintendent will be better prepared to attend to the vision, culture, and

politics of a district. Goleman (2006) coined the phrase, “socially intelligent leadership.” He said that this kind of leadership “starts with being fully present and getting in synch. Once the leader is engaged, then the full panoply of social intelligence can come into play, from sensing how people feel and why, to interacting smoothly enough to move people into a positive state,” (p. 280). The implication for superintendent candidates is that without emotional intelligence (EQ) they will not be successful as superintendent. They will not be able to exert influence over enough stakeholders to effect positive change. The implication for hiring entities is that it is essential to discover whether a candidate has high EQ prior to employment. The implication for professional developers is that training in the ‘soft skills’ is essential to helping superintendents increase their effectiveness.

The researcher recommends that superintendent candidates assess their EQ to determine whether they have the skills to perform well in the above-mentioned areas. The researcher recommends that hiring entities give candidates an EQ assessment as well as gather information from past employers about a candidates EQ. The researcher recommends that professional developers create EQ training for potential superintendents and current superintendents. The researcher further recommends that a disproportionate amount of time and attention be focused on training in the ‘soft skills’.

A third conclusion derived from the data is that superintendents learn to navigate culture and politics through mentors, coaches, and collegial support groups – the learning is largely informal and left to chance. Most superintendents who participated in the study expressed the importance of superintendents communicating with other superintendents about issues and situations that could have detrimental outcomes. One superintendent

stated that once a problem gets to the superintendent's desk, all the easy answers have been given. The participants recognized the complexity of the problems superintendents face and the importance of getting many opinions from others. The training programs that provide mentors, coaches, and collegial support groups include ACSA's Executive Leadership Coaching, Leading the Leaders, New Superintendent's Workshop, Superintendent's Academy, Superintendent's Symposium, The Broad Superintendent's Academy, and CALSA's Summer Institute (see Table 4).

The information above has implications for superintendent candidates, hiring entities, and professional developers. The implication for superintendent candidates is that they must have mentors, coaches, and collegial support groups to be successful. The implication for hiring entities is that their superintendent must have a mentor, coach and/or collegial support group as part of their contractual commitment to the job. The implication for professional developers is that mentoring, coaching and collegial support groups are an essential component to the professional development program.

The researcher recommends that superintendent candidates seek out qualified mentors/coaches early in their careers so that the practice of seeking advice for critical issues becomes an ingrained habit. Additionally, the researcher recommends that superintendent candidates take part in collegial support groups whenever the opportunity exists. The researcher recommends that hiring entities require their superintendent to have a mentor/coach as part of the contract for employment. It is recommended that professional developers infuse every training module with a mentor/coach for the participants and that collegial support groups be formed for additional help.

A fourth conclusion derived from the data is that current professional development programs are adequate at helping superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The superintendents who participated in the study were able to name specific professional development programs they felt were successful at helping them acquire these technical skills. The document review chart in Table 4 shows the professional development programs for superintendents and their areas of focus. The professional development is targeted largely on the technical aspects of the job, yet, superintendents in this study revealed that it is the “soft” areas which include EQ and social intelligence that have the most influence on a superintendent’s success or failure.

Interviews with veteran superintendents revealed that training in the standards they identified as most important is not easily available to superintendents in California, nor is it pervasive in the existing professional development programs. A thorough document review showed that there is a disproportionate amount of attention given to the technical aspects of the role of superintendent. The most important skills for superintendent success are considered ‘soft skills’ and are not adequately addressed in current professional development programs.

The information presented above has implications for superintendent candidates, hiring entities, and professional developers. The implication for superintendent candidates is that they must have a high EQ or seek opportunities to build that capacity. The implication for hiring entities is that they must have a method of assessing a candidate’s EQ before employment. The implication for professional developers is that they are missing an opportunity to provide training in the ‘soft skills’ to superintendents.

The researcher recommends that superintendent candidates seek training in EQ. The researcher recommends that hiring entities hire those who have high EQ. The researcher recommends that professional developers provide EQ training.

Message to the Field

The role of superintendent is one of the most important positions in America. The superintendent has the power to affect the lives of countless families positively or negatively by his/her decisions on a daily basis. By affecting families, the superintendent is ultimately influencing the future of our nation.

Superintendents enter their jobs with a set of skills that is in constant need of refinement. Professional development is needed for superintendents to keep up with the rapid pace of change that our country is experiencing. Superintendents must be lifelong learners to help our students compete in a global market. The power that is inherent in the role of the superintendent necessitates professional development programs which reflect the importance of the job and the urgency to produce competent leaders.

Currently, professional development for superintendents is available and effectively addresses some of the skills superintendents need to be successful. The fact that superintendents have an average tenure of 2.9 years suggests that more is needed. Two factors help contribute to the lack of longevity for many superintendents. First, professional development is optional. Oftentimes, those who need professional development the most fail to recognize this need before it is too late for corrective action. Secondly, the current professional development programs provide too little hands-on training in the most important skills.

Findings from this study suggest that working ethically, building culture and articulating a vision, and navigating the political terrain are the most important skills for a superintendent. More time is used training for the technical aspects of the superintendency than the above-mentioned skills. The fact that more training focused on skills that are less crucial to superintendent success explains one factor that contributes to a lack of longevity in many cases.

Our country is dependent on a qualified workforce and our public school system is the primary producer. Superintendents must be adequately prepared to carry out this charge. Professional development that is required and appropriate for the job is a must.

Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher, based on the findings in Chapter IV and the conclusions in Chapter V, offers the following recommendations for further study:

1. Superintendent candidates ought to consider the following:
 - a. their EQ.
 - b. how often and how effectively they collaborate with peers.
 - c. how many different experiences or positions he/she has worked in to prepare for the superintendency.
 - d. how ethical have his/her decisions and actions been.
2. Hiring entities ought to consider the following:
 - a. the emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) of a potential superintendent.
 - b. how often and how effectively the candidate collaborates with peers in his/her current position.

- c. how many different experiences or positions has the candidate worked in to prepare for the superintendency.
 - d. recommending a provision in the superintendent's contract that requires mandatory professional development in standards 1, 2, and 8.
 - e. how ethical are the candidate's decisions and actions.
3. Professional development providers ought to consider the following:
- a. continue current training programs to help superintendents gain mastery over the AASA standards 2 through 7.
 - b. develop training in the 'soft skills' as represented in standards 1, 2, and 8.
 - c. ensuring that superintendent professional development be relevant, timely, convenient, non-threatening, interactive, and collegial.
 - d. ensuring that professional development be taken to more convenient areas so superintendents do not have to take as much time away from work.
 - e. provide flexible professional development schedules that can be coordinated with superintendent schedules.
 - f. provide professional development that is based on basic, intermediate, and advanced levels so superintendents can partake where they are in the experience progression of a particular topic.
 - g. advertising the professional development more extensively.
 - h. preparing modules that teach politics, culture, and ethics from an emotional/social intelligence frame.

- i. include a mentoring/coaching component to each professional development module.
- j. survey superintendents regularly and provide “just in time” training on a flexible, widespread schedule.

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