The Fit between Female Superintendents and Search Firms: A Phenomenological Study of Their Relationship in Urban School Districts

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Abstract
Despite recent gains, women continue to be underrepresented in the position of school superintendent. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of female superintendents as they proceeded through the recruitment and selection process for a superintendency in an urban school district. This was accomplished through interviews of four women that served as superintendents in Council of Greater City Schools member districts. Person Organization Fit Theory (POF) (Cable & Judge, 1997) was used as a frame to study the ways in which women participants determined their fit for a superintendency. Findings indicated that POF theory did not adequately explain how female superintendents determined their fit for a superintendent vacancy in a particular school district. Findings also suggested internal and external candidates for the superintendency determine fit for the position differently. Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1951) was used as a frame to examine the participant’s perceptions about their recruiters and the recruitment and selection process. Findings indicate that while the selection process is standard amongst the national recruiters and recruiters are still the gatekeepers of the process, the recruitment process has changed significantly. Both theories provided insight to help explain why there are a disproportionately low number of female superintendents in comparison to male superintendents in American school districts.

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The Fit between Female Superintendents and Search Firms: A Phenomenological Study of Their Relationship in Urban School Districts

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

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Biographical Sketch

Shelley Jallow is currently a Regional Vice President at Mosaica Education. Ms. Jallow attended Howard University from 1980 to 1983 and graduated with a Bachelor of Sciences degree in 1983. She attended The City College of New York from 1991 to 1996 and graduated with a Masters of Arts degree in 1996. She came to St. John Fisher College in the spring of 2009 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Jallow pursued her research in female superintendents and urban school district leadership under the direction of Dr. Ronald D. Valenti and Dr. Betty Rosa and received the Ed.D. degree in 2012.
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Person Organization Fit Theory (POF) (Cable & Judge, 1997) was used as a frame to study the ways in which women participants determined their fit for a superintendency. Findings indicated that POF theory did not adequately explain how female superintendents determined their fit for a superintendent vacancy in a particular school district. Findings also suggested internal and external candidates for the superintendency determine fit for the position differently.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Urban school districts are faced with significant challenges: overcrowded classrooms, achievement gaps, low graduation rates, low student achievement, shortages of highly-qualified teachers, declining tax bases, aging facilities, limited access to early childhood education, increased safety and security concerns, and a growing demand for English language learner and special education services. Urban school districts often serve more students than many states. According to a study conducted by the Council of Greater City Schools (CGCS, 2008), the levels of academic achievement in urban school districts are below state averages for mathematics and reading. Urban school districts serve a demographically different student population. Racial minorities settle most in the city, lured by cheap housing and potential employment opportunities. Urban school districts face challenges that are more complex than those of most suburban and rural areas, and on a much larger scale. The movement by politicians, policy makers, business leaders, parents, school boards and tax payers to reform education in the United States is grounded in concerns for improving public education in the nation’s cities. Americans rely on public schools to educate and prepare over 45 million students to become productive members of society.

One of the biggest challenges facing the nation is how to improve student achievement in urban public schools. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation enacted in 2001 by President George Bush calls for increased accountability
standards for all public schools. NCLB legislation stipulates that all high school students will demonstrate competency in core subjects by spring 2014. Elementary and middle school students will be proficient in math and reading by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. More than 8 million students attend public schools in the nation’s cities. The level of student achievement, as well as the student achievement gap demonstrated by the majority of school-aged children in urban school districts, makes it highly unlikely that the goals of NCLB will be met without a national focus on urban education.

A school district is defined as a geographic area within a state whereby a public school system operates as a government entity. It is responsible for operating the public schools in that geographic area. School districts may consist of one county or parts of many counties. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, an urban school district consists of 70% or greater urban population. The Council of Greater City Schools (CGCS) is one of a few national organizations dedicated to public education in urban school districts, and the organization represents 65 of the largest city school districts in the U.S. CGCS defines urban school districts as those located in the largest city of any state, in cities with a population over 250,000 or a student population over 35,000. According to the CGCS publication, “Beating the Odds”, during the 2007 – 2008 school year 7.2 million school-aged children attended CGCS member school districts. During that same school year CGCS school districts enrolled approximately one third of the nation’s black and limited English proficient students. Over 61% of the students attending CGCS member school districts were eligible for free and reduced lunches.

During the 2007- 2008 school year urban school achievement was below state averages on state assessment in mathematics and reading. Some 81% of the CGCS
districts had 4th grade proficiency rates for mathematics below other school districts in their respective states. Eighty-nine percent of CGCS districts had 8th grade proficiency rates in mathematics that were below other districts in their respective states. Only 10% of the CGCS districts had 8th grade proficiency rates in reading that were at or above other school districts in their respective state. Seventeen of the nation's 50 largest cities had high school graduation rates during the 2006-2007 school year that were lower than 50 percent. During the 2006-2007 school year, three CGCS member districts reported the lowest high school graduation rates: Detroit, Indianapolis and Cleveland. According to a report issued by the Schott Foundation in 2010, entitled The 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males, in cities such as New York, Buffalo, Baltimore City, Cleveland, and Philadelphia, fewer than 30% of black male students graduate within four years.

Public school districts are led by school boards. Membership on a school board is accomplished by election or appointment. Local school boards have been an integral component of the U.S. public education system for nearly 100 years and today they have the additional responsibility of operating within the mandates of NCLB. By state statute, school boards consist of elected or appointed citizens of a community delegated the power to develop policies, rules and regulations to control the operation of the schools within a designated school district. School boards have responsibilities that include overseeing district organization, school finance, equipment purchase, staffing, attendance, curriculum, extracurricular activities and any other functions related to the day to day operations of the schools located within the district boundaries. Boards may also be authorized by the state legislature to levy taxes, invest resources, and assume bond
indebtedness. According to Glass and Franceschini (2007), the most important decision a school board makes is its choice of a superintendent.

Women have not been equally represented at the highest level of public school education: the superintendency. Traditionally, this position has been held by white, married, Protestant males. Women are employed as teachers in over 75% of the classrooms across America (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), yet a man is 40 times more likely than a woman to progress from teaching to the superintendency (Skrla, 2000). According to Grady (2000), more women than men are enrolled in graduate programs that prepare students for executive leadership positions in public education, but women serve as superintendents in only 21.7% of the public school districts throughout the country (Glass and Franceschini, 2007). In a study conducted by the National School Board Association (2001) the research revealed that 14.5% of the school board members were members of a minority group and 40% were female. Conventional wisdom might lead one to believe that this would result in an increase in the number of minorities and women selected to be superintendents. Corresponding data related to the demographic profile of sitting superintendents during the time of the study did not support such wisdom. In the 2006 mid-decade study conducted by Glass and Franceschini (2007), for the American Association of School Administrators, twice as many female superintendents than male superintendents responded that gender discrimination by school boards and the presence of a glass ceiling were barriers for women pursuing the superintendency as compared to their male counterparts.

Blount (1998) writes, “In the early decades of the twentieth century, women succeeded in attaining school leadership positions. This time period is referred to as the
‘Golden Age’ for women school administrators by Hansot and Tyack (1981). In 1909, Ella Flagg Young became the first female superintendent of the Chicago Public School System, the first female superintendent of an urban school system. She predicted great advancement for women in educational leadership:

> Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of vast educational systems. It is a woman’s natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied the leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show critics and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man.” (Ella Flagg Young as cited in Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 18)

During this time in U.S. history women held nine percent of all superintendent positions. From World War II until 1970, the percentage of women serving as superintendents dropped from nine percent to three percent. It was not until 1980 before the next female, Ruth B. Love, served as superintendent of Chicago public schools (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Women continue to be underrepresented in the position of the American public school superintendent (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989). The Urban School Superintendent: Characteristics, Tenure and Salary report released by the CGCS for (2008-2009), shows that the greatest decline in the number of urban school
superintendents since 1998 was amongst African American and Hispanic males. Black females show a marginal gain while white females show the greatest gain during the same time period. Sixty six percent of the largest public urban school districts were led by men during the 2008 – 2009 school year (CGCS, 2009). Although there has been some progress, Young’s prediction that women would dominate as urban school superintendents has yet to materialize.

Why have the demographics of the nation’s school superintendents remained virtually unchanged for nearly a century? There is much research about the multiple barriers that female superintendent candidates must overcome to be successful (Miller, 2009; Wickham, 2007). However, research that examines the recruitment and selection process experienced by female superintendents is limited. A participatory advocacy position will be used as a lens through which to examine the factors that limit the number of women who complete the journey from teacher to urban school superintendent. Urban education is facing significant challenges that could have a negative impact on future generations living within and beyond the boundaries of this country’s urban centers. Research that examines how the process was experienced by women who successfully became urban superintendents could shape education reform discussions and subsequent actions.

Problem Statement

In the 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass, 2000), the researchers reported that the U.S. Census Bureau has characterized the superintendent as being “the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States” (p.17). The superintendent is typically the most powerful person in a school
district, and it is a position dominated by men (Sharpe, Malone, Walter & Supley, 2004, Introduction, p.1). Why, then, are women not ascending to the superintendency? The demands of urban school districts and the diverse populations that they serve requires an applicant pool of superintendent candidates that have the willingness, skills and experience to be successful educational leaders. This qualitative research study examines the experiences of female superintendent candidates while participating in the recruitment and selection process for an urban superintendency.

The underrepresentation of women in the superintendency has led many researchers to investigate the reasons why more women have been unable to access the superintendency (Bjork, 2000; Brunner, 1998; Glass et al., 2000; Grogan, 1996; Sharp et al., 2004; Tallerico, 1999). Studies have attributed the underrepresentation of women at the superintendency level to societal norms and beliefs about leadership (Shakeshaft, 1989); school board expectations (Tallerico, 2000a); and factors in the search and selection process (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Though all superintendent candidates experience barriers, women often experience “unique and more “complex obstacles” as they ascend to the top ranks of educational leadership (Kowalski, 2006, p. 370).

The small increase in the percentage of women in the superintendency has resulted in an increase in the number of research studies examining the factors related to women superintendents (Bjork, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Grogan & Brunner, 2005, Sharp et al., 2004, Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). These studies did not examine the political environment, belief systems or societal norms involved in the superintendent recruitment and selection process. Their focus was centered on the beliefs, career paths, leadership
styles, strategies for success and challenges faced by sitting and aspiring female superintendents.

School boards and superintendent search firms are the primary decision makers in the superintendent recruitment and selection process. These gatekeepers make determinations about which candidates proceed from the initial screening through the final hiring selection (Glass, 2001; Hayes, 2001; Olsen, 2003; Tallerico, 2000a; Tallerico, 2000b). There are only a few studies examining the role of school boards and superintendent search firms in hiring female superintendents. This study will contribute to the scholarly research by examining the experiences of superintendent search firms and female superintendents after they progressed through the recruitment and selection process for an urban superintendency.

Theoretical Rationale

Two theoretical frames were used to examine the three components of this study: Gatekeeping (Lewin, 1951) and Person Organizational Fit Theory (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Kristoff, 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman & Coldwell 1991).

Gatekeeping Theory. Kurt Lewin was a psychologist who focused on the areas of field theory and group dynamics. Lewin’s Gatekeeping theory was based on a study he conducted to better understand why people “eat what they eat” (Lewin, 1951, p.174). Lewin concluded that housewives were the key “gatekeepers” who controlled what food entered the “channels” and ultimately ended up on the dining room table. Lewin concluded that in order to understand why people ate what they ate, one must understand the psychology of the gatekeepers.
Lewin expanded his theory to other environments that have the characteristics of a channel, a gate and a gatekeeper, such as communications, media and education. He noted:

Discrimination against minorities will not be changed as long as the forces are not changed which determine the decisions of the gatekeepers. Their decisions depend partly on their ideology – that is, their system of values and beliefs that determine what they consider to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ . . . .we then see that there are executives or boards who decide who is taken into the organization or who is kept out of it, who is promoted, and so on.

(p. 186).

In relation to the superintendent recruitment and selection process, the values, beliefs and actions of school boards, search committees and search consultants control the channels that determine who will be allowed to proceed through the screening and interviewing process and who will be selected to serve as superintendent.

Shoemaker (1991) further developed Lewin’s gatekeeper theory, stating “Although individuals and routine practices generally determine what gets past the gate and how it is presented, organizations hire gatekeepers and make the rules” (p. 53). School boards hire the consultants and establish the qualifications for the “ideal” superintendent candidate. Search firms, in turn, represent the best interest of the school board that hired them through the gatekeeping process. Search firms make decisions based on formal and informal criteria of fit about who will advance through the channels to the superintendency.
Person Organization Fit Theory

Person Organizational Fit theory is the congruence between the values of individuals and organizations. This theory will be used to help clarify how the search consultants determine if there is a "fit" or "match" between the aspirations of the organization posting the superintendent vacancy and the skills, attributes and aspirations of the individual seeking to fill the superintendent vacancy. Researchers define Person Organization Fit (POF) theory as the compatibility between individuals and organizations (Cable & Judge, 1997). A person’s compatibility with an organization can be determined by supplementary fit or complementary fit. According to Muchinsky and Monahan (1987), supplementary fit occurs when a person supplements or possesses characteristics that are similar to other individuals in the organization. Complementary fit occurs when a person’s characteristics provide skills or traits that the organization lacked previously. Examples of these types of fit can be observed in the context of a school district’s search for a superintendent. Sometimes a school board may seek a superintendent who has the same characteristics or leadership style as the outgoing superintendent. This would be an example of a supplementary fit. In other instances a school district may be looking for a new direction from an incoming superintendent and may be seeking candidates who have attributes, vision or a leadership style that are very different from those of the outgoing superintendent. In this case the district may be looking to fill a void in leadership. This would be a case of complimentary fit. Kristoff (1996) defines POF as the compatibility between people and an organization that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs, or they share similar fundamental characteristics, or both. POF theory will
also be used to examine women’s perceptions of the fit between the female superintendent candidate and the search firm.

**Significance of the Study**

The aim of this study was to contribute to the limited body of research on women and educational leadership. In an era when our society needs people of high ability, motivation and commitment in educational administration, the contributions of women are minimized and few advance to leadership positions (Hackney, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1999; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

The use of superintendent search firms is on the rise in many urban school districts. The consultants from these firms assist in all areas of the search and selection process (Chion-Kenney, 1994). Little research has been done on how school boards conduct this process (Grogan, 1996; Tallerico, 2000). This study explored the process by examining four urban superintendencies presently or formerly held by women sometime between January 1, 2007 and February 28, 2011. This research will allow stakeholders such as school boards, schools of education, leadership development providers and search firms to gain a better understanding of how the process can more effectively tap into an underutilized talent pool for the superintendency.

This study could help gatekeepers examine how their values, beliefs, and biases could have a specific impact on women during the superintendent recruitment and selection process. This study could encourage gatekeepers to examine their treatment of female candidates pursuing the superintendency and successfully becoming superintendents.
University graduate programs prepare students for educational leadership positions. Such programs could use the information from this study to consider modifications to the instructional design of their programs to better prepare superintendent aspirants in general, and female superintendent applicants in particular. Female educators and administrators could use the experiences described in this study to prepare for the recruitment and selection process. This is particularly important for aspiring superintendents in urban school districts with diverse student populations, limited resources and demanding communities. Strategies need to be developed that will help create access for a diverse pool of qualified applicants ready to serve in the capacity of an urban superintendent. Studies such as this will hopefully provide information to facilitate the creation of effective pathways to the most powerful position in K-12 education.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of female superintendent candidates as they proceeded through the recruitment and selection process for a superintendency in an urban school district. The superintendent search firms can generally be defined as firms hired by the school board of a district to conduct a search for a new school superintendent. The primary purpose of this research was to examine how the search process influences prospective female superintendents. The researcher reported the realities of women who had experienced the superintendent search process with a search firm.

Advocacy/Participatory served as the lens through which this study was conducted. This study examined the superintendent search experience of sitting and former female superintendents from CGCS member school districts. The researcher
inquired about what these women experienced and how they experienced it. By studying
the essence of said experience, aspiring female superintendents, search firms, school
boards, institutions of higher learning and policymakers should gain knowledge which
could facilitate more women accessing the superintendency in the future.

Research Questions

Two essential research questions were used to guide this study:

Research Question (1): Which factors influenced the female superintendent
candidate’s perception of organization fit with the school district during the
recruitment and selection process?

Research Question (2): What were the perceptions of female superintendent about
the recruiter and the recruiter’s role during the recruitment and selection process?

Definition of Terms

AASA: American Association of School Administrators. “A
national organization of professional school administrators
and other professional educators dedicated to the highest
quality public education for all children” (Zemlicka, 2001,
p. 8).

Advocacy/Participatory: A researcher’s worldview that contains an action agenda
for reform that may change the lives of research
participants and the institutions in which they live or work
(Creswell, 2007, p. 21).

Central Office
Administrator: “A professional employee who serves the entire district rather than a particular campus” (Zemlicka, 2001, p. 8)

Gatekeepers: “An individual or group that has the power to make decisions between what is in or out” (Lewin, 1951, p.186).

Glass Ceiling: The invisible barriers that prevent women from advancing to senior leadership positions in organizations, regardless of their achievement and merits (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986).

K – 12: School grades kindergarten through grade twelve in high school.

Person Organization Fit Theory (POF): The congruence between individuals’ and organizations’ values (Cable & Judge, 1997).

School Board: The governing body of a school district, consisting of citizens who are either appointed or elected. The School Board is charged with developing a vision for the district’s schools, formulating policies, maintaining an effective and efficient governing structure for the school district and ensuring that those who are responsible are held accountable to the community (Hayes, 2001).

Search Firms: “Individuals or firms that help school boards find, attract and select the district’s new school superintendent” (Tallerico, 2000b, p. 18)
Search Procedures: The recruitment and selection procedures used by a search firm to hire a new school superintendent.

Superintendent: The chief administrator for a Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade public school district.

Urban District: Status based on the number of students enrolled in a district and the number of residents in a community. Any district with 5,000 or more students enrolled and more than 25,000 residents (CGCS, 2008).

Summary of Remaining Chapters

The dissertation is divided into five chapters, a bibliography and appendixes. The review of the literature is in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 contains the research methodology section of the study and includes an introduction, research context, research participants, instruments for data collection and the procedures used for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 contains a descriptive analysis and comparison of the data collected during this qualitative study. The study concludes with the researcher’s summary, conclusions and recommendations.
Introduction and Purpose

Urban superintendents affect the lives of almost 8 million students and their families in this country. They are chief executive officers for multi-million dollar operating budgets that are larger than many corporations. Persons occupying these positions have authority over a vast number of operations including security, food service, transportation, personnel, legal, curriculum and instruction, financial management, health services, renovation and construction, equipment procurement and professional development. As urban communities and their school districts become more demanding and diverse, the demand for diversity amongst superintendents serving those communities is called into question. The Census Bureau has characterized the position of superintendent of schools in the U.S. as the most male-dominated position of any profession (Sharp, Malone, Walter & Supley, 2000). Repeatedly seeking superintendents from the same dominant pool of male candidates means that the best talent may not be considered for the job.

Although women have shown that they can be effective educational leaders, their numbers lag behind the number of men holding leadership positions in the nation’s public school districts (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989). Despite their capacity and willingness to do the job, women have not been hired to serve as
superintendents at the same rate as men. Thus the role of the gatekeepers in the hiring
process—school boards, search consultants and members of search committees—must be
examined.

In the last 20 years, much of the research on the superintendency has focused on
two issues: gender and urban education. The research has displayed a general interest in
women’s experiences with barriers that hindered their ability to access the
superintendency (Bell & Chase, 1994; Chion & Kenny, 1994; Grogan, 1996; Grogan &
Henry, 1995; Miller, 2009; Wickham, 2007). The research also focused on what life was
like for female superintendents (Bell & Chase, 1994; Brunnner, 1995; Grogan, 1996).
Studies on urban superintendency have focused on the political, social and economic
factors that affect the urban superintendency in contrast to rural and suburban
superintendencies (McCloud & McKenzie, 1994; Tallerico, 1994; Yee and Cuban, 1996).

This literature review examined the stages of research on women in educational leadership, a historical perspective of female superintendents, how women are affected by the division of labor by gender, theories of oppression and how they affect the career aspirations of women, and the barriers and challenges that impact a woman’s pursuit of the superintendency. The second part of the literature review describes Person – Organization Fit theory (Cable & Judge, 1997) and Gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1951) and how they will be utilized to answer the two research questions.

History of Women Superintendents

Historically, women in this country represent the majority of the workforce in the teaching profession. In studying the history of female school superintendents, research shows that in 1910, women held approximately 9% of the school superintendent positions
Hansot and Tyack (1981) refer to the years 1900–1930 as the golden age for women in school administration. The increasing number of female superintendents between 1910 and 1930 was mostly due to the women's suffrage movement and the fact that most superintendencies were elected—not appointed—positions (Shakeshaft, 1989, Tyack & Hasnot, 1982). Suffrage advocates launched aggressive campaigns for female superintendent candidates because it was one of few elected positions available for women. In reality, although there were more women in administrative positions, they primarily occupied the less desirable elementary school principalships and county and state superintendencies (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 188). By 1930 the percentage of female superintendents had increased to 11% (cited in Bjork, 2000).

The number of women in superintendencies increased slightly through 1930 and then went into decline until 1970 (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.34). Female superintendents declined to 9% by 1950 and 1.3% in 1971 (cited in Bjork, 2000). Multiple factors contributed to the decline of women serving as superintendents. Soon after winning elections through the efforts of the suffrage movement, many women’s groups that had supported female superintendent candidates were disbanded or became interested in supporting other issues (Blount, 1998). Policies from the state and the legislature eliminated elected superintendencies and replaced them with appointed superintendencies in an effort to separate politics from public education (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Another factor contributing to the decreased number of female superintendents during this period was the states' enactment of special training and credentials for school administrators that differed from the teaching certificates held by many women (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).
These new requirements occurred during a time period when low college admissions for women were the norm (Blount, 1998). States were also responsible for the decline during the 1950s when various policies resulted in the consolidation of school districts. Many women were displaced in an effort to gain greater efficiencies of scale through the creation of larger districts (Blount, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999). Policies from the state and federal government as well as institutions of higher learning contributed to a division of labor at the superintendent level that resulted in a gender-stratified position that favored men. Female superintendents declined to an all time low of 1.3% in 1971 (cited in Bjork, 2000).

Between 1970 and 1998 female superintendents began resurgence to the golden age of the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1990s the percentage of women serving as superintendents had increased to 13.2% (Glass, 2000). This new rise in the number of female superintendents paralleled the growth of the modern women’s movement. The movement addressed the underrepresentation of women in leadership by using the political and legal systems to build on progress made during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Blount (1998) contends that the Title IX Educational Amendment of 1972 led to the abolishment of low quotas on the number of women who could enroll in colleges and universities. This, in turn, increased the number of women who could attend college and receive the education necessary to fulfill the new state requirements for school administration certification. The enactment of the Women’s Educational Equity Act of 1974 released federal funding for projects designed to eliminate gender inequality in education. This act resulted in a significant increase in research and support programs focused on women in education and administration.
Female representation has fluctuated in the past 90 years. The number of female superintendents has never been equitable to the number of male superintendents. Over seventy percent of women teaching in American classrooms has never correlated to the percentage of women leading school districts. Market Data Retrieval (2009) released school district data on 14,023 school districts nationwide during the 2008–2009 school year. The most current research indicates that 24.1% of those school districts are led by female superintendents (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010).

**Stages of Research on Women in Educational Leadership**

Many frameworks have been used to study women leaders in education administration. Shakeshaft’s Stages of Research on Women in Education (1987) is a model for understanding the focus of researchers in this area of educational leadership. There are six stages: The first stage documents the lack of women serving as school and district administrators. Most of the research during the 1970s and 1980s is related to stage one. Research questions for this stage might include, “How many women are serving as school administrators?” (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 13). The second stage cited by Shakeshaft examines the work and lives of successful female educational administrators. Studies about Ella Flagg Young, the first female superintendent of Chicago public schools, would fall into this category. The third stage includes studies that inquire, “Why there are so few women administrators? Studies in this category traditionally address attitudes towards women, women’s experiences and the barriers that hinder women’s ability to access positions of leadership. The fourth stage of research on women in educational
leadership typically utilizes surveys, interviews and observations to focus on the perceptions and experiences of women in leadership positions.

The fifth stage marks a significant change from the previous research frameworks. During this stage researchers question the validity of previous theories and their applicability for studying female leaders. There is a new wave of research that considers the need for new theories of leadership that are less male-dominated and more inclusive of the female perspective. The sixth and final stage considers theories that will allow researchers to study the experiences of men and women leaders together. This stage of research attempts to embrace the power of diversity that men and women can and do bring to educational leadership. Only in the past two decades have gender issues related to the superintendency emerged as a focus of research (Tallerico, 1999; Grogan, 2000). Tallerico studied the career paths, profiles and practices of female superintendents. She also made recommendations for further research. She found through her research that there was an increase in the amount of research focused on women and the superintendency conducted by women and persons of color. Understanding the disproportionate low number of women serving as superintendents was the primary focus of the research between 1973 and 1998.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) commissioned one of the most comprehensive studies completed on the superintendency. Entitled The Study of the American School Superintendency 2000 (Glass, et al., 2000), this ten-year inquiry included participation from 2,262 superintendents, of whom 297 were women. The study revealed that 13.2% of American superintendents were female. The population of female superintendents was more diverse and older than the population of male superintendents.
Glass also found that more women worked in rural and suburban school districts than their male counterparts. This study examined topics such as the career paths, ages, education, qualifications, marital status, salary and district size but did not examine the reasons why female superintendent candidates were not being hired at the same rate as male candidates.

In 2003, AASA commissioned another comprehensive study to examine the state of women in the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Surveys were forwarded to female superintendents and central office administrators. Grogan and Brunner reported that 18% of the school districts in the US were led by women. The surveys included questions about career advancement, family life, career pathways, career aspirations, tenure, salary and barriers. In addition, some gender comparisons were made in this study. Unfortunately, the study failed to examine the hiring process or the role of gatekeepers.

**Gender Division of Labor**

The division of labor along gender lines has endured and remained universal. This phenomenon is also true in other fields (Burstyn, 1980; Kanter, 1977; Schwartz, 1992). Labor became increasingly divided as society grows in density and the struggle for existence becomes more strenuous. Men differentiate their specialties in order to decrease competition and coexist. The clear delineation of women’s work and men’s work represents a division of labor that takes on many forms (Reskin, 1984). One form exemplifies a separation between private and public environments, with women predominant in household domains and domestic roles and men found more frequently in work roles outside the home (Block, 1978). A second form of the division of labor
consists of either gender dominating an entire population of paid employees in a particular industry or profession. An example would be women representing the majority of elementary teachers and elementary school principals. A third form of gender division of labor is stratification by gender within the same work setting. Examples would include the hospital setting where nurses are often female and doctors are predominately male. In education settings high school principals and superintendents are predominately male and classroom teachers are predominately female.

Historically, gender divisions of labor have not remained static. There are numerous examples where there were shifts in the division of labor. Researchers have noted that between the 19th and the 20th centuries, work like bank-telling and teaching were professions held by men that shifted to women (Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Matthaei, 1982). There has also been a trend towards women entering previously all-male professions, such as law and medicine. Once in these occupational fields, the internal division of labor between men and women reappears. Women entering the legal profession opted for family and divorce law while men continued to dominate corporate law. In the medical profession women gravitated to family practice while men outnumbered women in the surgical fields. The number of female school principals has also increased, but this has taken place predominately at the lower-salary elementary level rather than at the secondary level (Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Hodgkinson, 1999).

Theories of Oppression

Researchers have utilized a variety of frameworks in their studies of women in educational leadership, such as feminism, feminist post modernism, critical race theory, and human resource theory. A structure well suited for studying the under-representation
of women in the superintendency is Marilyn Frye's Birdcage Model of Oppression (Bailey, 1998). Oppression is the institutionalized dominance of one part of humanity by another (Roberts, 1997). Frye argues that one of the reasons people fail to see oppression is because they focus on particular events, attitudes and actions that strike them as harmful, but they do not situate these incidents in the proper context of historical, social and political systems. Researchers have focused on a limited number of barriers facing aspiring female superintendent. They study each individual barrier in isolation and provide recommendations that are limited in scope; as a result, these recommendations have not resulted in any significant change in the percentage of female superintendents in this country since the turn of the century. Researcher Suzanne Pharr proposes that "isms" like sexism, racism, classism, and ageism all come from an oppression base. Lani (1997) contends that oppression is a single phenomenon that is manifested differently according to particular targeted groups.

Frye states that members of oppressed groups commonly experience “double-binds.” They are regularly faced with situations in which their options are extremely limited. These binds are created and shaped by forces and barriers that are neither accidental nor avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in ways that confine the movement of individuals. Frye uses the metaphor of a birdcage.

[Oppression is] the experience of being caged in…Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would
not just fly around the wire. It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. (1983, p. 5-6)

The researcher has not uncovered any studies at present that refute the basic tenets of this model of oppression. Researchers like Lani (1997), Pharr (1988), Bailey (1998), Buber (1958), and Hallie (1997) have expanded on various aspects of oppression but all align with Frye's notion of oppression. Lani examines whether there is one form of oppression or many. Like Frye, she contends there is one. The only difference is the intended target of that oppression. Pharr (1988) describes the common elements of oppression which align to the multiple and interconnected wires of the cage. Bailey expands the birdcage theory by focusing on the builders of the cage (1998). Buber expands on the theory by explaining how the builder of the cage rationalizes the marginalization of the group confined within the cage (1958). Hallie attempts to explain the sentiment of denial demonstrated and supported by both the caged and the cage creators (1997).

In a study conducted by Kowalski and Stouder (1999) surveys and interviews were conducted with 15 female superintendents. When asked about gender discrimination, 38% of participants said it had been a barrier, while 38% responded that they were not sure if it had been a barrier. During follow-up interviews, participants were reluctant to confirm experiencing gender discrimination due to a lack of conclusive evidence. In the 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass, et al.), the
superintendents were asked to rate the barriers that limit administrative opportunities for women as being an important factor, a somewhat important factor, not a factor, or don’t know. The majority of the male superintendents believed that most of the barriers listed on the survey did not limit opportunities for women. In contrast, the women reported all of the barriers listed to be either important or somewhat important factors. Brunner noted this difference in perceptions as disturbing, especially the evidence that men believed discriminatory practices and barriers were not a factor. This is particularly troubling since male superintendents often serve as mentors to aspiring superintendents and new female superintendents. Another disconcerting factor that may provide insight as to why there is a disproportionately small number of females being hired for school superintendent positions is that it is a general practice of superintendent search firms to hire former male superintendents.

The most compelling argument to validate this theory as a framework for studying the disproportionately low number of female superintendents is the fact that despite all the studies that identify barriers and provide recommendations for overcoming the barriers, men still occupy the majority of school superintendent positions held throughout this country. Barriers can be divided into a variety of subgroups: family life, career planning, internal and external barriers and gender discrimination. Similar to the birdcage analogy, the barriers hindering women’s access to the superintendency are complex and intertwined.

**Barriers**

Internal barriers are considered psychological in nature. Researchers Estler (1975), Schmuck (1980), and Hancocot and Tyack (cited in Shakeshaft, 1989) share an
understanding that an individual’s abilities, decisions and attitudes impact their rate of success for obtaining a superintendency. Researchers contend that internal barriers that hinder women’s rise to positions of power in education include low self-confidence, low self-image and a lack of aspiration and motivation (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989; Papa-Lewis & Leonard, 1987). Two more recent studies question these internal barriers to the superintendency for women. A 2007 study by Winter, Rinehart Keedy and Bjork used human resource theories to examine a cohort of aspiring superintendents and principals to determine if a) recruitment theory (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Schwab, 1982; Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987) b) job satisfaction theory (Cranny, Smith & Stone, 1992; Holin, Roznawski, & Hachiya, 1985; Locke, 1976); and c) self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986, 1993, 1995), had an impact upon the pursuit and attainment of a superintendent position.

The results of the study indicate that male and female aspirants possess the personal characteristics needed to successfully pursue the superintendency. In another study conducted for The American Association of School Administrators entitled The State of the American School Superintendency: A Mid-Decade Study, by Glass and Franceschini, 2007, researchers surveyed 1,338 superintendents. When superintendents were questioned about the main barriers hindering access to the superintendency for women, none of the responses were internal. The participants reported the primary barriers as being unappealing working conditions, family concerns and gender discrimination by school boards.

External barriers are those that require societal or institutional change (Shakeshaft, 1989). Requirements necessary to gain positions in an organization include
family life that is related to family support; community criticisms (Hergenrother Seyfried & Diamantes, 2005; Loder, 2005; Sherman, 2000); mentoring (Angulo, 1995; Hergenrother Seyfried & Diamantes, 2005; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2000; Young & McLeod, 2001); informal job contacts (Hudson, 1994; Ortiz, 2000); educational administration programs (Grogan & Brunner, 2005b; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000); boards of education and hiring practices (Angulo, 1995; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2000; Tallerico, 2000); and general discrimination and stereotyping (Beekley, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1989).

According to Glass and Franceschini (2007), one of the biggest barriers women encounter when deciding to pursue educational leadership positions is family life, a category that can be either internal or external. Grogan and Brunner (2005a) claimed, "Raising a family has been considered at odds with effectively performing the duties of the superintendency" (p. 48). In her study of 31 women administrators and aspiring administrators, Loder (2005) found that the overwhelming responsibility for managing work-family conflicts fell largely on women administrators. Loder (2005) added that in addition to childcare, as the baby boom generation ages, caring for aging parents has become a family life concern for women. This may be seen as another barrier that poses problems for women aspiring to the superintendency. Archer (2003) noted that work and home (specifically childrearing) frequently represent personal conflicts for women entering or sustaining careers in educational leadership. For these multitalented and qualified women, the responsibilities of children and home often hold a higher priority (Eckman, 2004; Hill & Ragland, 1995; Keller, 1999; Loder, 2005; Silverman, 2004; Young & McLeod, 2001). According to research by Glass (2000), superintendents spend
an average of 50 hours per week at work, including attending sporting events, meetings, and social functions. In addition to the responsibilities involved with caring for a family, women are further challenged by the possibility of relocation in order to secure a position as a superintendent. According to Grogan (1999), the notion of relocating is acceptable for many women. It only becomes risky if a partner withdraws his support instead of resigning from his job or seeking employment elsewhere. Women must also contend with the impact of job relocation on their school-aged children, who may be less inclined to sever ties with family, friends and schoolmates to support the career choices of the matriarch of the family.

An example of Frye’s Birdcage model may explain how different circumstances can intertwine to simulate a cage for women attempting to access the superintendency. Eckman (2004) and Keller (1999) speculated that raising families may be directly related to the reason why women start their first jobs as superintendents or principals at an older average age than men—after having raised a family. In a 2004 study, Texas superintendents were asked to identify inhibiting factors for the superintendency (Harris, Lowery, Hopson, and Marshall). The majority of responses were related to organizational structures, bureaucracies, community politics and working with the school boards. One organizational structure that inhibits access to the superintendency for women is the difference between men and women in the number of years spent in the classroom. Women spend an average of 15 years in the classroom. Their male counterparts spend an average of 5 years in the classroom. According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), 40% of male superintendents reported spending five or fewer years as classroom teachers; however, according to Brunner and Grogan (2007), 41% of female superintendents
reported spending 11 or more years as classroom teachers. Consequently, women were appointed to their first administrative positions generally between the ages of 31 and 40 (Glass, 2000). School boards are usually looking for candidates who have had several administrative positions. The time women spend in the classroom combined with the time spent gaining experience in various administrative positions makes them less attractive candidates in the opinion of superintendent search firms and school boards.

Two studies conducted by the same researchers over a 14-year interval revealed significant changes in the perceptions of women regarding the barriers they face while attempting to become superintendents. In 1993, Sharratt & Derrington studied females aspiring to the superintendency and identified gender role stereotyping, gender discrimination, and a lack of role models and mentors as the top three barriers for women seeking the superintendency. When these researchers replicated their study in 2007, they found that the barriers had changed. The top three barriers were listed as the existence of a “Good Old Boys” network that assisted men, not women; school board and hiring practices that are inequitable to women and minorities; and barriers to securing the position that were self-imposed by women. It appears that over time, women have redefined the societal expectations placed upon them, to be mothers and wives, and address work norms that are more feminine in nature, to be self-imposed decisions. Was Hallie (1997) correct about the sense of denial between the oppressed and the oppressor, when women internalize societal expectations, as self-imposed? [MC10]

This study focuses on stages 3 and 4 of Shakeshaft’s (1987) Stages of Research on Women in Education. The third stage examines the underrepresentation of women serving as superintendents. The fourth stage focuses on the perceptions and experiences
This study will use Gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1951) and Person-Organization Fit (Adkins ed., 1994; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Kristoff, 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman & Coldwell 1991) as a frame to examine the recruitment and selection experiences of female urban superintendents. School boards consistently adopt hiring practices that are identified as barriers for women accessing the superintendency (Sharratt & Derrington, 2007; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Montz, 2004, Tallerico, 2000). Brunner (2005) states that 46% of large urban districts hire private search firms to conduct superintendent searches. In her work with women superintendents, Miller (2006) found that gender bias in board members, search committees and search firms caused problems for women because they usually favored male candidates for the superintendency. This study will examine how a select group of female superintendents broke free of the birdcage and navigated beyond the gatekeeper to become urban superintendents.

**Person – Organization Fit Theory**

Research indicates that applicant’s job choices are affected by the attractiveness of the job attributes (Cable & Judge, 1996; Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987); the reputation of the organization (Garwood, Gowan & Lauten, Schlager, 1993; Highhouse, Beadle, Gallo & Miller, 1998); and the perceptions of person – organization fit (Cable & Judge, 1996, Judge & Cable, 1997). Research question 1 will be explored through the framework of Person Organization Fit theory (Cable & Judge, 1997). Research question 1 asks about the factors that influenced the female candidate’s perception of fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process. Person – Organization Fit (POF) theory will be used as a framework to examine the applicant’s perception of fit.
Some researchers define POF as the compatibility between individuals and organizations (Cable & Judge, 1997). Compatibility is determined by supplementary fit or complementary fit. According to Muchinsky & Monahan (1987), supplementary fit occurs when a person supplements or possesses characteristics that are similar to other individuals in the organization. Complementary fit occurs when a person’s characteristics add what is missing to an organization. Examples of these types of fit can occur in the context of a school district’s search for a superintendent. Sometimes a school board may want a new superintendent who has the same characteristics or leadership style as the outgoing superintendent. This would be an example of a supplementary fit.

In other instances a school district may be looking for a new direction from an incoming superintendent and thus may seek candidates who have a vision, attributes, or leadership style that is very different from the outgoing superintendent. In this case the school district may be looking to fill a void in leadership. This would be a case of complimentary fit. Kristoff (1996) defines POF as the compatibility between people and an organization that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both. According to Susan Moore-Johnson’s work (Johnson, 1996), school boards and search firms begin their search for a superintendent by reaching broad understanding about the direction they want the new superintendent to take. The direction could be for the new superintendent to introduce change, provide continuity, or to stabilize the school district.

According to Nolan and Harold (2010) the definition POF should be broadened to include congruence between the organization’s corporate image and an individual's ideal concept of self. People have two self-images: the actual self and the ideal self. The actual
self is a collection of attributes an individual believes he or she currently possesses. The ideal self represents a set of attributes that an individual would like to possess. Research indicates that POF and attraction to a particular employer are based on perceptions of congruence with the applicant's actual and ideal self-concept images. This evolution of the POF theory is important to the recruitment process because research suggests that people ascribe personalities to organizational images in a similar way as they do to product brand images (Nolan & Harold, 2010).

There is much debate and confusion about POF. First, POF is often used interchangeably with other types of fit like person – environment fit, person – job fit, person – group fit and person – vocation fit. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on person – organization fit. Secondly, the tools and strategies for measuring fit are debated by researchers because fit can be actual or perceived. Some researchers have elected to use direct measurement that involves asking people explicitly whether they believe that a good fit exists. This measurement is only beneficial when determining perceived fit or a fit based on judgments. Researchers like Edwards (1991) and Salanick and Pfeifer (1977) argue against the subjective nature and accuracy of this strategy as a measurement of fit. Other researchers prefer indirect measures of fit (Cable & Judge, 1995; French et al., 1974). Indirect measures rely on explicit comparisons of fit between separately-rated individual and organizational characteristics. This model measures actual fit and allows for a verifiable assessment of similarity without the subjective judgments of fit. This study will use direct measurement to determine perceived fit.

In a 1991 study by Rynes, Bretz and Gerhart, job applicants reported that they formed assessments of fit with potential employers based on interactions with formal
organizational representatives (i.e., recruiters) and informal contacts with others in the organization. Applicants reported that the organization’s general reputation, attitude towards the industry, product, or service, status of particular function areas within the organization, training and advancement opportunities, and geographic location were specific influences on their perception of fit with the employer. Findings from Kristoff’s 1996 study supported the hypothesis that people are attracted to organizations with which they anticipate a supplementary fit.

**Gatekeeping Theory**

Based on previous research, contact with a recruiter would strongly influence women pursuing an urban superintendency through the services of a superintendent search firm. Employment decisions are made by jobseekers through a process of evaluating the sources from which information is acquired and by the intensity with which the information is being pursued (Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987). According to Rynes (1991), signaling theory helps explain how jobseekers make decisions in the early stages of the search. In the early stages of the recruitment and job selection process, job seekers have limited information about the attributes of the job and the organization. Thus, early decisions are based on perceptions regarding the organization’s attractiveness. With regards to this study, women aspiring to a particular superintendency might have had limited information about the school district, the school board of trustees, or the expected duties and responsibilities of the superintendent position. Similar to the findings in job choice theory, the appearance, personality, communication style and knowledge level of the recruiter have an impact on a female candidate’s decision to
pursue the superintendent vacancy in a particular district and may also influence the candidate’s notion of a fit with a particular school district.

Olsen (2005) conducted a study of female superintendents in Iowa school districts and surveyed 63 superintendents. The findings of this study highlight the need for further research concerning the influence and impact of superintendent search firms. In the study, search consultants indicated that they were aware of the fact that there were more male superintendents than women. None of the respondents indicated any efforts to increase the number of female candidates. The search firms claimed their primary allegiance to the party by whom they had been hired: the school board.

Through her interviews with search consultants, Olsen (2005) concluded that the search consultant was key to whether the candidate were successful in securing the position. The female superintendents indicated that support from the search consultant was critical to attaining the superintendent’s position. Olsen found that 48% of the female superintendents surveyed rated support from the search firm as low or very low. Olsen documents the following ways in which the search firms serve as gatekeepers:

1. They choose which candidates from their pool will be presented to the board.
2. They coach candidates to help them be more successful.
3. They guide the school board toward selecting the sort of candidate who will be an effective leader for the school district.

In order to answer the second research question, this study will utilize Gatekeeping theory to examine how superintendent search firms influence the recruitment and selection process in a way that may hinder women’s ability to access the superintendency. According to Glass (2001), the superintendent search process is a
critical event for both the school district and the community at large. Only limited research exists on the superintendent selection process. School boards are responsible for choosing a superintendent, and studies have found that urban school districts utilize the services of private search firms much more frequently than smaller districts (Wallace, 2003; Patrick, 2006). The fees charged by the search firms are determined by the size of the district, the degree of involvement desired by the district stakeholders, and the degree to which the search is restricted to local candidates (Glass, 2001). As described by Kinsella (2004), an ideal superintendent selection process would evolve as follows: timelines are established, the position is advertised, applications are screened, semi-finalists are identified, several sets of interviews are scheduled, site visits are planned and conducted, and finally, consensus is reached in selecting a new superintendent. The hired search firm acts as an agent of the school board and must facilitate a successful search for the school district. Search firms assist in all areas of the search and selection process that the school board has previously established (Chion-Kenney, 1994). With the continued underrepresentation of women serving as superintendents, the practices and influence of search firms, also known as gatekeepers, has been called into question.

Superintendent searches usually take between three to five months. According to discussions with representatives from Hazard, Young & Attea and Ray & Associates, searches can cost a district between $10,000 and $100,000 depending on the services provided by the search firm. The first stage of the process usually involves selecting a search firm and holding initial planning meetings with the school board, parent groups and other district and community stakeholders. During this initial stage, the job description is created and information about the superintendent vacancy is disseminated.
Activities normally included during the second stage of the process are the acceptance of applications, recruitment, and the completion of initial screenings. During the third stage the application period closes, semi-finalists from the initial screenings are presented to the school board, semi-finalists are interviewed and finalists for the position are determined. The fourth and final stage includes interviews of the finalists, formal and informal activities with the finalists, district visits, deliberations on the finalists, making the decision to offer the position to one of the finalist, announcement of superintendent selection and, finally, negotiation and ratification of a contract for employment.

In this process, superintendent search firms are often referred to as gatekeepers. Gatekeeping theory was developed by Lewin (1947) and expanded upon by Shoemaker (1991). Lewin (1951) developed his theory in the context of how foods are selected for home consumption and how this phenomenon influenced social changes in diet. He emphasized how the Gatekeeping model could be applied to other phenomenon such as “the social locomotion of individuals in many organizations” (p. 187). According to Tallerico (2000),

Applying Lewin’s (1947) “theory of channels and gatekeepers” to accessing the superintendency means viewing superintendent selection as a flow process involving the passage of applicants through a variety of “channels,” most of which are composed of multiple subdivisions or “sections” (p. 146). Channels may have different starting points. In the case of the superintendency, for example, some channels begin with the applicant self-nomination, others with recruitment by a headhunter. These channels ultimately
converge to an end point where only one candidate emerges successfully through the final section.

Lewin (1951) considered each section of channels as decision points or gates. In the case of the superintendent selection process, gates are controlled by a set of rules or by persons that wield various levels of power throughout the search process.

Shoemaker’s (1991) interpretation of Gatekeeping theory includes four levels of influence that affect the opening and closing of gates during the superintendent selection process. He first postulates that gatekeeping decisions based on the personal criteria of the gatekeeper impacts the process for the potential candidate. Secondly, routine procedures utilized by search firms (gatekeepers) during the search and selection stages of the process impacts the operation of the gates for potential candidates. Thirdly, norms embedded in public education, like female domination of the elementary principalship versus the secondary principalship impacts the operations of the gates. Finally, the movement of the gates leading to the superintendency is affected by factors such as the division of labor by gender in this country, which is an example of social and cultural norms that are part of American society.

During the recruitment and selection process for a superintendent, the search firm or recruiter is responsible for all aspects of the process. This includes responsibility for conducting, facilitating and controlling the interviewing and selection activities at each stage of the process. According to Cable and Judge (1997), when the interviewer perceives value congruence between themselves and the candidate during the interview, the recruiter believes there is a fit between the organization and the candidate. Additionally, when the interviewer likes the applicant and thinks the applicant has a level
of attractiveness, the interviewer believes there is a fit between what the organization is looking for and the candidate. In the study conducted by Cable and Judge (1997), the recruiter’s perception of the candidate’s fit results in a gate opening, in the form of a recommendation to be a semi-finalist or finalist. In addition, the study revealed that a recommendation from the recruiter was the most critical determining factor in an organization’s final decision to make a job offer to a candidate (Dipboye, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997; Higgins and Judge, 2004). A 2008 study conducted by Glenn and Hickey discovered that 44% of the superintendent search consultants in the state of Texas were former superintendents, 91% were male, 87% were white and over 88% were over the age of fifty. If perceived similarities between the recruiter and the candidate contribute to the recruiter’s perception of fit, women and minorities may find it difficult to portray a state of chemistry between themselves and a population of older white male recruiters.

Routine recruitment practices are another gatekeeping strategy that may have an impact on a woman’s ability to access the superintendency. Search firms routinely depend on the “Good Ole Boys” network to find candidates and gather information about them. Many studies have noted how women are isolated from this network (Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Kinsella, 2004). Consultants also determine which candidates will be forwarded to the school board as semi-finalists. Often times women are not forwarded or one or two female candidates are forwarded to adhere to legal fair employment practices. Recruiters have also been reported to control access to different types of information about the candidates. According to Newton (2006), recruiters design recruitment messages that emphasize the knowledge, skills and experiences historically associated with men, like prior experience as a superintendent or experience managing large
budgets and major union contracts. Women trying to enter the ranks of the superintendency may only have comparable experience and therefore may be viewed as a less qualified candidate.

The third and fourth gatekeeping strategies center on prevailing beliefs about women and social norms. The division of labor along gender lines in many industries, including education, hinders the ability of women to open the gates to an urban superintendency. Today, most women who become superintendents are generally relegated to suburban and rural school districts. Lack of male sponsors and stereotypical assumptions were identified factors that contributed to fewer women succeeding in becoming superintendent (Coleman, 2003, Kanter, 1976 as cited in Wickham, 2007). In her study of aspiring female superintendents, Grogan (1996) found that female aspirants were asked to demonstrate that they matched the male-defined conceptualization of the superintendency and that they possessed stereotypical male characteristics, such as decisiveness; they were also asked to prove that they were tough enough to manage the job of superintendent, something male aspirants, by definition, did not have to do.

Chase and Bell (1990) examined how gatekeepers talk about women in the superintendency, often reflecting a belief system that contributes to the dearth of women in the highest levels of leadership. They discovered that although gatekeepers were generally supportive of women in positions of power, they were ignorant of the existing structures that perpetuate male dominance (Chase & Bell, 1990). Unwritten rules by decision makers, such as a) defining quality in terms of hierarchies of particular job titles; b) stereotyping by gender; c) complacency about affirmative action; and d) feelings of
comfort and interpersonal chemistry with a successful superintendent candidate, effectively disadvantage female and minority candidates.

Tallerico (2000) also notes in her study evidence of a current ideological sense of satisfaction that women have already been successful at opening many gates to the superintendency. This belief in the progress of women has resulted in a lack of urgency among consultants and the school boards that hire them regarding the need for more women to access the superintendency. Like Frye’s birdcage metaphor, the demographics of key gatekeepers (i.e., primarily nonminority and male); what is known about POF from the recruiter’s perspective (i.e., the propensity to favor those candidates that are most similar to the recruiter); the over-reliance on gut feelings and chemistry to determine fit; the complacency about affirmative action; and the propensity to define value based on male-dominated divisions of labor (i.e., belief that the best preparation for a superintendency is the male-dominated high school principalship) symbolize a more restrictive birdcage for women trying to access the superintendency.

**Chapter Summary**

Key findings from previous studies indicate that the selection process favors male candidates for the position of school superintendent. Factors such as job description and selection criteria favor high school principalships over elementary principalships, which benefit men more than women. Stereotypes about gender held by school boards and search firms also influence the process. A gatekeeper’s perception of fit is often based on uncertainties about a woman’s ability to handle discipline, budgeting and finance, and balancing the demands of family and work. These same concerns regarding fit seem to be nonexistent for male candidates. Search consultants are authorized through the school
boards that hire them to control the selection process from beginning to end. They narrow the pool of candidates, coach favored candidates, and guide the board to select the candidate they think best fits the job. The gatekeepers play a key role in determining fit and ultimate selection in the superintendent recruitment and selection process; therefore they play a critical role in women’s ascension to the superintendency.

More current studies of female superintendents highlight current myths and realities. In a study conducted by Christie, Jackson, Babo (2007), 433 female superintendents responded to a survey about the state of the female superintendency. To determine the climate for women aspiring to the superintendency, the superintendents were asked who their district might choose when given the choice of two equal candidates, one male and one female. The study found that 77% believed their school district would choose a male. Only 25% responded that their district would select a female. The women stated that “Males are still perceived as the ideal CEO” and that “males seem to fit the role according to the public.”

The same study examined the role of the school board. Women in the study commented, “It is still a man’s world,” and “school board members are uneasy accepting a female superintendent.” Contrary to the comments from participants in Tallerico’s study (2000), gender discrimination against female superintendent candidates and female superintendents is still evident. Gender stereotypes serve as cages or gates that inhibit the ascent of women to the superintendency. Women face prejudice as a result of the decisions made by gatekeepers throughout the recruitment and selection process. According to Hoyt (2007), women become victims because when male leaders search for a replacement, the preference for “similar others” can place women at a disadvantage
This study also dispelled some commonly held beliefs about the barriers that hinder a woman’s ability to become a school superintendent. First, search firms (gatekeepers) interviewing women for the position have cited that the advanced age of female superintendent aspirants made them less desirable candidates for the superintendency (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Their claims that time spent in the classroom or time spent raising children was detrimental to the career advancement of women is refuted by the findings of this study. The results from this study indicate that women are actually entering the field at earlier ages and are therefore more comparable to the ages of their male competitors for superintendent positions.

Another commonly held belief about the barriers inhibiting the advancement of women to the superintendency was the inability or unwillingness to relocate. In the 2000 ASA study, 41% of the women cited a lack of mobility due to family commitments as an important factor, and another 41% said it was a somewhat important factor. In a replica study conducted in 2007 by Christie, Jackson & Babo, 63% of the women reported that they would consider relocation and another 12% reported that they would move to another state to become a superintendent. It seems female superintendent aspirants are becoming more flexible in their willingness to relocate to obtain a superintendency.

The landscape has changed over the last 10 to 20 years for women pursuing the position of school superintendent. Unfortunately, it appears that women have had to make the adjustments to gain the experience and credentials for the superintendency. They have altered their home lives and career paths so that they present themselves as younger candidates willing and able to relocate for the position. Yet there still exists a gender gap at the superintendency level in school districts across the country. The one area that is
most often cited and, to date, has no evidence to suggest that any significant changes have been made, involves the hiring practices of school boards and search firms. Many studies have been conducted that examine the barriers female superintendent aspirants face as they try to obtain a position. Some may argue that efforts and research should examine how to eliminate barriers instead of how to overcome them. Women have done their part; they have not waited for the barriers, cages, or gates to be eliminated. Instead, they have chosen to try to overcome them. This study examined the phenomena of the school superintendent recruitment and selection process from the perspective of the female aspirants.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

The public school superintendent is the lead authority in a school district. Effective superintendents must be well versed in the financial, political, managerial, and instructional skills needed to lead a school system. In addition to juggling the various components necessary to run a school system, the superintendent must strike a balance between the educational needs of students and the needs of community members, politicians, labor unions, school boards, administrative teams and family members to be a successful school district leader. In urban settings, the superintendent has the additional responsibilities associated with leading one of the largest employers in the community. The enactment of No Child Left Behind legislation has similarly added to the responsibilities commonly associated with the job by increasing the number of federal and state mandates with which a superintendent must comply. More than ever before, school superintendents work in an increasingly high stakes and diverse community.

As previously stated, the superintendent’s position has traditionally been occupied by white, married, protestant males. Women are employed as teachers in over 75% of the classrooms across America (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), but a man is 40 times more likely than a woman to progress from teaching to the superintendency (Skrla, 2000). According to Glass and Franceschini (2007), the most important decision a school board makes is its choice of a superintendent. In their 2006 mid-decade study conducted for the
American Association of School Administrators, twice as many female superintendents than male superintendents selected gender discrimination by school boards and the perception of a glass ceiling as barriers for women pursuing the superintendency.

As new realities like No Child Left Behind mandates and Race to the Top funding descend upon urban school districts, it is relevant to study why the demographics of the nation’s school superintendents have remained virtually unchanged for nearly a century. Public education stakeholders, such as parents, business leaders and the military, are demanding reform, especially in urban school systems. Questions about leadership often arise during discussions and debates about education reform. There is substantial research on the multiple barriers aspiring female superintendents contend with during their quest for the position. An opportunity to examine the recruitment experience of female urban superintendents could provide meaningful contributions to education reform discussions.

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of female superintendents as they advanced through the recruitment and selection process for a superintendency in an urban school district. Two theoretical frames were used in this study: Gatekeeping (Lewin, 1947) and Person Organizational Fit theory (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Kristoff, 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman & Coldwell 1991). Qualitative methods are utilized when a researcher seeks to understand the process by which events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996). A qualitative method was chosen for this study because the researcher wanted to gain an in-depth personal perspective regarding the beliefs and actions of female superintendent candidates during the search process.
This chapter outlines (a) research questions, (b) research context, (c) research participants, (d) instruments used for data collection, (e) procedures used for data collection, and (f) analysis.

**Research Questions**

Two essential research questions were used to guide this study. They are as follows:

Research Question 1: Which factors influenced the female superintendent candidate’s perception of organization fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of female superintendent about the recruiter and the recruiter’s role during the recruitment and selection process?

**Research Context**

The Council of Greater City Schools (CGCS) represents 65 of the largest city school districts in the United States. These districts represent a student enrollment of over 7.2 million. The CGCS is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. The study was conducted at four conveniently-selected CGCS member school districts based on availability, eligibility and distance from the researcher. See Appendix A for a list of CGCS member districts, including identification of the districts led by female superintendents.

**Research Participants**

The participants included female superintendents that became or served as superintendents in a CGCS member district between January 1, 2007 and February 28, 2011. Only CGCS school districts with female superintendents who were hired through
the services of a search firm were eligible to participate in this study. If the participant became a CGCS superintendent during the specified time period, but vacated the position for any reason, that individual was still be considered an eligible candidate. Each recruitment was studied independently to accommodate for instances where a single recruiter may have facilitated the recruitment and selection of multiple participants.

The researcher engaged with prospective participants through introductions from mentors, former supervisors, former professors and other colleagues. The researcher believed that introductions and support from respected and trusted individuals in the participants’ professional life would result in opportunities to have honest guided discourse about their experiences during the recruitment and selection process.

**Data Collection Instruments**

In-depth interviews were conducted with female superintendents. According to Patton (1990), interviews are the most basic form of qualitative inquiry in that subjects' responses are unconstrained by "writing skills of the respondents, the impossibility of probing or extending responses, and the effort required of the person completing a (written) questionnaire." Although findings from this method are "longer, more detailed, and more variable in content" and "analysis is difficult because responses are neither systematic nor standardized," the method is regarded as valuable because it "enables the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (Patton, 1990). In-depth interviews were used to uncover feelings and attitudes of women who experienced the superintendent search and selection process. According to Cottrell and McKenzie (2005), in-depth interviews are appropriate when there is a need to
understand individual experiences and decision-making regarding a complex subject matter.

Unstructured, open-ended interview questions were developed by the researcher, aligned to core concepts that emerged from the research on Person – Organization Fit theory (et al) and Gatekeeping theory (et al). Interview questions two through five, ten and eleven were based on the literature about Person – Organization Fit theory. The researcher wanted to elicit responses about fit from the perspective of the female superintendents. Interview questions six through eleven were based on literature about Gatekeeping theory. The researcher hoped to gain an understanding from the female superintendents of their search experiences and their recruiters. An interview protocol was developed and reviewed by a panel of experts including a recruiter, two former superintendents, two sitting superintendents, the dissertation chair and one dissertation committee member to establish face and content validity. See Appendix B for a copy of the interview guide. These individuals were convened to review and edit the document to help ensure the questions asked would provoke responses that constituted relevant data related to the two theories. Two interviews were conducted in person at the workplace of the participant. The other two interviews were conducted by telephone. The researcher informed the female superintendents that their participation in the study was completely confidential and voluntary, and that they could decline to participate at any time during the study. Research participants were not compensated for their participation in the study. See Appendix C for the letter sent to superintendents requesting their participation in the study. See Appendix D for the confidentiality statement.
Data Analysis

The researcher combined two methods of data analysis for this study: Constant Comparative Analysis (CCA) (Glaser BG, & Strauss, AL, 1967) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1999). CCA is a data analysis strategy that involves taking one piece of data, such as an interview or statement, and comparing it with other data that may be similar or different in order to develop an understanding of the possible correlations between various pieces of data. The researcher used this method of analysis to compare the responses from the interviews that were conducted with the four participants. CCA served as the first method of analysis.

Over a period of four months (February through May of 2011), the researcher read and reread notes and transcripts from each interview to make sense of the data from the participants. The researcher then began the process of identifying themes and noting paradoxes found in the recorded data. The researcher wrote notes and continuously compared responses from each interview. Themes and patterns were listed for the purpose of discovering connections and establishing meaning. This process was repeated for each question and interview. According to CCA literature, the final step in the process would have been a narrative depiction of the emergent themes.

The researcher decided more analysis was needed to understand the experiences of the women in the study. The researcher wanted to learn more about the perceptions of the participants from the data collected. The themes alone provided a minimal explanation of the search and selection experience of the participants. In addition, the researcher had difficulty bracketing out her past experiences as a central office executive leader, an urban educator and a former superintendent candidate recruited by a national search firm. The
researcher had also worked with search firms as a member of a district superintendent search committee. The researcher subsequently utilized a relatively new method of data analysis called Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) developed by Smith (1995, 1997, 1999).

IPA is a framework for analyzing qualitative research data. According to Smith, IPA is a method of data analysis that aims to understand how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon. In the case of this study the phenomenon was the search and selection process for an urban superintendent position. One of the cornerstones of IPA is phenomenology, or understanding the lived experiences of one participant or a small group of participants. The other cornerstone is interpretation. Smith contends that IPA is dependent upon the researcher’s own perceptions, which are required to make sense of a participant’s world. This process of understanding another’s world is done through interpretative activity. Fade (2004) writes “the researcher’s beliefs are not seen as biases to be eliminated but rather as being necessary for making sense of the experiences of other individuals. Reflexivity is viewed as an optional tool, enabling the researcher to formally acknowledge his or her interpretative role, rather than as an essential technique for removing biases.”

CCA was the method used by the researcher to organize the data collected from the interviews. The researcher identified themes and patterns for each research question amongst the participants for a final analysis. The results were then compared to Person Organization Fit Theory (Cable & Judge, 1997) and Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1951) (Shoemaker, 1991). IPA was the method subsequently used to interpret the data. The researcher agreed with Fade (2004) and selected IPA because the model allowed the
researcher to provide an insider’s perspective on the lived experiences of the participants in the study. The researcher acknowledged IPA as the perfect fit for the goals of the study and the standpoint of the researcher to the experience of the participants. As a method of data analysis, IPA acknowledges the researcher’s personal belief and standpoint and embraces the view that understanding requires the interpretation of the researcher. Appendices E and F show examples of how the two methods were used to analyze data.

To ensure reliability, the researcher enlisted the services of an external researcher with expertise in statistics, econometrics and program evaluation to review and analyze the data from the interviews. According to Patton (1990), the process of multiple analyses reduces the potential bias of a single researcher collecting and analyzing data. To ensure qualitative validity and data integrity, the researcher shared a draft copy of the final report with members of the participant group to confirm that the findings represented an accurate description of the participants’ experiences. The researcher conducted the follow-up interviews by telephone and email correspondence. The participants agreed with the rendering of their answers to the interview questions.

Chapter Summary of Methodology

Phases of the study. The study was conducted in three phases: negotiating entry, data collection and data analysis before final reporting.

Phase one – negotiating entry. The researcher initially used the internet to find the email addresses, mailing addresses and phone numbers of each eligible superintendent participant and their executive assistants. Current and former female superintendents were deemed eligible to participate in the study if they met the criteria. The researcher attended numerous professional conferences, like those sponsored by the Council of Greater City...
Schools (CGCS) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), to rebuild professional relationships with female superintendents and other colleagues. The researcher depended heavily on introductions from colleagues to eligible participants.

Letters were sent to female participants and their executive assistants. The letters outlined the purpose of the study, confidentiality of the study and a request for them to participate in the study by granting the researcher an interview. (See Appendix E.) Seven women were determined to be eligible for the study. After a review of all female CGCS superintendents, women were determined to be ineligible for mostly two reasons: they entered the superintendency before January 2007, or a search firm was not a part of their recruitment and selection to the superintendent position.

The researcher, who is female, has experience as a deputy superintendent and as an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in a few urban school districts. She believes that the similarity between the professional backgrounds of the potential participants and her own helped to facilitate a level of camaraderie that allowed her to better access the female superintendents.

**Phase Two – Data Collection.** The researcher was seeking three female participants and their recruiters. Fortunately, the researcher was able to get four women to agree to participate in the study. Other potential participants were eliminated because they did not participate in the recruitment and selection process with a private search firm. Two candidates refused to participate due to other commitments. These two candidates expressed an inability to find the time in their schedules to participate. Originally the researcher wanted to interview the recruiter responsible for the search process for each female participant. A limitation of this study was that the superintendents, recruiters and
board members had all signed confidentiality statements that prevented them from revealing any details about the search process for the particular superintendency. The female superintendents were willing to be interviewed since most of the interview questions were about their perceptions about the recruiter and the selection process.

Two of the four participants were interviewed in person at their place of employment and two participants were interviewed by telephone. The researcher followed the protocols outlined and previously approved for the study. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder, while the researcher took copious notes. To ensure validity, the researcher forwarded the interview guides, with the notes, to the participants to confirm that the essence of the interview was captured. The researcher collected documents from job advertisements, district surveys, newspaper articles and conference session notes for further analysis. This data was used to cross-reference and verify the data collected from the interviews and to answer questions that emerged as a result of the superintendent interviews.

Recruiters that were contacted were unwilling to be interviewed about specific searches. The researcher located documents related to the searches, had informal discussions with leading recruiters about urban superintendent searches, and attended sessions presented by recruiters at the 2011 National Conference on Education, held in Denver, Colorado. The four leading superintendent search firms were in attendance at the 2011 National Conference on Education sponsored by the AASA: Ray and Associates, Proact Search, Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates and McPherson & Jacobson Executives Search. These firms presented at six sessions and conducted additional interview sessions for conference participants. The researcher attended 3 of the sessions
designed for superintendent aspirants and two private sessions with one of the firms. See Appendix E for the AASA National Conference Program. See Appendix G for a copy of the program at the 2010 National Conference of AASA held in Denver, Colorado. See Appendix H for a copy of the session notes from a Ray & Associates presentation entitled, “Interviewing at Your Best.”

**Phase Three – Data Analysis.** Data analysis was ongoing from the time of collection to the presentation of the results of the study after conducting the interviews; the researcher completed a contact summary form to collect notes and reflections from each interview. The researcher placed the answers to each question by each participant on colored index cards to compare different answers to the same questions in order to identify common themes. All notes and documents were placed in an accordion file for each participant and each recruiter. See Appendix F for interview notes.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In the 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass, 2000), researchers reported that the U.S. Census Bureau has characterized the superintendent as being “the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States.” The same study was replicated in 2010, when commissioned by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010). In the more recent study about the State of the Superintendency, the number of female superintendents was on the rise. The percentage of female superintendents reported in the 2000 study was 13.2%; in the 2010 study the percentage increased to 24.1%. While the number and percentage of women have increased during the ten years between each AASA study, the number and percentage in comparison to men holding superintendent positions shows only a nominal gain. Some progress has been made by women, but men still represent 3 out of 4 superintendents in this country. The gains are also minimal when compared to the number of female teachers in American classrooms.

The Council of Greater City Schools, a coalition of 65 of the nation’s largest urban public school districts, reported that in 2008, 34% of its member superintendents were women. Since February of 2011, women have become superintendents in three additional CGCS member districts: Newark, New York and Washington, D.C. Despite these gains,
women have not been equally represented in comparison to men at the highest level of public school education, the superintendency.

In the 2010 AASA Study of the American Superintendency (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010), researchers reported that 36% of the school districts with student enrollments above 25,000 used the services of private search firms to recruit and select school superintendents for their districts. Thirty four percent of school districts with student populations between 3,000 and 24,999 used private search firms to find their leaders. According to the 2010 study, larger districts are increasingly using private search firms to recruit and select superintendents to lead their districts. Similar to findings from the 2000 AASA study, when participants were asked to identify factors restricting access to the superintendency for women, the responses differed by gender. Male respondents most frequently selected “no perceived factors” as their response. Female respondents reported “gender discrimination” as their number one response to this question.

**Purpose of the Study**

Why have the demographics of school superintendents remained virtually unchanged for nearly a century? Ten years after the 2000 AASA Study on the State of the Superintendency (Glass, 2000), female superintendents continue to report gender discrimination as a barrier to becoming a superintendent (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of female superintendent candidates as they proceed through the recruitment and selection process for a superintendency in an urban school district. The primary purpose of this research was to examine how the search process influences female superintendent aspirants. The study was designed to report the reality of women who had
experienced the superintendent search process with a search firm. The results presented are based on in-depth interviews from four female superintendents of urban school districts.

**Research Questions**

Two essential research questions were used to guide the study:

Research Question 1: Which factors influenced the female superintendent’s perception of organization fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the female superintendents about the recruiter and the recruiter’s role during the recruitment and selection process?

An analysis of the data collected from unstructured in-depth interviews with female superintendents, informal conversations with search firm recruiters and a review of documents related to the search process were conducted by the researcher. Interview questions were developed to examine the search process as well as perceptions of the search process. Person-Organization Fit Theory (Cable & Judge, 1997) and Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1951) were used to frame the design of the interview questions and the design of the study.

**The Context**

The study focused on the perceptions of female superintendents representing four CGCS member school districts. According to CGCS, member districts educate one-third of the nation’s low-income students, students of color and English Language Limited students. School districts must be located in cities with populations over 250,000; have a student enrollment over 35,000; or be a school district located in the largest city of that state. The four CGCS member districts included in this study serve between 24,000 and
154,000 students in urban school districts. Table 4.1 summarizes the district profile for
the superintendents that participated in this study.

Table 4.1

*District Profiles, Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Location</th>
<th>Alpha District</th>
<th>Kappa District</th>
<th>Omega District</th>
<th>Sigma District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Southern State</td>
<td>Pacific NW State</td>
<td>Southern State</td>
<td>North Eastern State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrollment</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>154,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of African American and Latino Students</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Schools</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Employees Rounded to the nearest hundred</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>4200</td>
<td>23,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Budget Rounded to the nearest million</td>
<td>974 million</td>
<td>90 million</td>
<td>18 million</td>
<td>2.3 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Participants**

The participants included female superintendents that became or served as
superintendents in a CGCS member district between January 1, 2007 and February 28,
2011. Only CGCS member districts with female superintendents that were hired through a
search firm were eligible to participate in the study. If the participant became a CGCS superintendent during the specified time frame, but vacated the position for any reason, that individual was still considered an eligible candidate for the study. Table 4.2 outlines the personal profile of each participant. In the 2010 AASA study on the State of the Superintendency (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010), researchers determined that the average age of female superintendent respondents was 51 or older. The average age of female superintendent participants in this study was slightly higher, at 55. Unlike the 2010 AASA study, in which over 81% of the female respondents reported that they were married, all the participants in this study were single or divorced.

Table 4.2

Superintendent Personal Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Alpha Superintendent</th>
<th>Kappa Superintendent</th>
<th>Omega Superintendent</th>
<th>Sigma Superintendent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Sally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes (Adult Age)</td>
<td>Yes (Adult Age)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kelly and Olivia were internal candidates for the superintendent vacancy. Internal superintendent candidates are individuals who were already employees of the district posting the vacancy. External candidates are individuals who were not currently employed by the district during their candidacy for the superintendent position. External candidates, like Ali and Sally, are individuals that are applying for the superintendent
vacancy but reside and or work outside of the school district posting the superintendent vacancy. One of the criteria for participation in the study was that the participant had to secure their superintendency through the use of a search firm. A growing number of female superintendents in CGCS member districts and beyond are being appointed from an internal candidate pool or are internal candidates selected after a national search using a search firm. Findings from the 2010 AASA study revealed districts with more than 25,000 students were more likely than smaller school districts to promote from within. The researchers from the 2010 AASA study contend that, in particular, school boards interested in maintaining the status quo will hire from within. Larger districts have traditionally sought external candidates with prior superintendent experience, but more recent data from the 2010 AASA study indicates a trend towards hiring candidates from inside the district. It is suggested that the declining mobility rates and a shrinking pool of qualified and willing candidates may explain this growing trend (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010).

Table 4.3 depicting Superintendent Professional Profiles shows that in this study half the participants were internal candidates without prior superintendent experience and the other two participants were external candidates with prior experience as urban superintendents. Three of the four participants have over 30 years of experience as public school educators. The fourth participant, Kelly, previously worked for a nonprofit organization in the field of public education. Three of the participants had earned their doctorate degrees. The fourth was about to defend her dissertation for her doctorate during the data collection phase of this study.
Table 4.3

*Superintendent Professional Profiles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ali</th>
<th>Kelly</th>
<th>Olivia</th>
<th>Sally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Education</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior experience as an urban educator</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous position held before current superintendency</strong></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Executive Leadership, Central Office</td>
<td>Executive Leadership, Central Office</td>
<td>College Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as a superintendent</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First superintendency</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest degree earned</strong></td>
<td>Doctorate, Ivy League University</td>
<td>Masters, Ivy League University</td>
<td>Doctorate, Non-Ivy League University</td>
<td>Doctorate, Ivy League University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remainder of this chapter is organized by the two theoretical frames, Person Organization Fit theory (POF) and Gatekeeping theory. Research question one was based on the literature about POF theory. There are eleven interview questions; questions two through five, ten and eleven were developed to help answer research question one.

Research question two was based on the literature about Gatekeeping theory. Interview questions six through eleven were developed to help answer research question two. The chapter four section entitled Responses from Participants is divided in two parts. Part I will include a brief review of POF theory followed by participant responses to interview questions two through five, ten and eleven, followed by the researcher’s findings for research question one. Part II of this chapter will include a brief review of Gatekeeping...
theory and participant responses to interview questions six through eleven, followed by the researcher’s findings for research question two.

**Responses from Participants**

**Person Organization Fit Theory.** Research question 1: What factors influenced the female superintendent’s perception of fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process? Interview question one was developed as an icebreaker to help the researcher and the participant engage in dialogue prior to beginning the official interview. Fortunately, each participant was eager to begin the interview, therefore question one was not consistently asked to each participant. The researcher designed interview questions two through five based on research about Person-Organization Fit Theory (POF) (Cable & Judge, 1997). The questions were written to elicit the participant’s perception about their fit with the school district. Questions ten and eleven were designed to gain additional insights about POF Theory by asking the participants to offer advice to women participating in a superintendent search. Some of the questions included probing questions to help participants respond to the interview question. The POF research examines different factors that influence an individual’s perception of fit with an organization. In the case of this study the researcher wanted to examine how the perception of fit by a female superintendent candidate was congruent with the school district posting the superintendent vacancy.

Newer POF literature describes the way individuals seek organizations that satisfy the actual self and the ideal self (Nolan & Harold, 2010). According POF Theory individuals may also seek a complementary or supplementary fit with the organization posting the vacancy. The literature also examines how the reputation of an organization
and its recruitment practices influence a candidate’s perception of fit with the organization. The personality, appearance and professionalism of the recruiter have an impact on the perception of fit according to POF theory. POF research documents a strong correlation between the quality, quantity and timeliness of a recruiter’s communication to an applicant and the perception of fit by the candidate.

**Interview questions two through five, ten and eleven.**

2. What motivated you to pursue the superintendent position within an urban school district?

3. Can you describe your journey to becoming the superintendent of CGCS school district?
   a. What information did you know about the school district prior to applying for the position?
   b. What were your impressions of the school district prior to applying for the position?
   c. Were you applying for other superintendent positions at the same time?
   d. If so, were they urban, suburban or rural school districts?

4. What were the major issues facing the district at the time of the search?

5. What qualifications and personal attributes did you believe you possessed that made you a viable candidate for the superintendent position?
   a. Personal characteristics, change agent, status quo, instructional leader, fiscal manager, statesman, non-educator, uncertain
11. What advice would you give to other female superintendent aspirants about search firms and the recruitment and selection process?
   a. What have you learned from the experience?

12. If you could offer a single suggestion to search firms about how to improve the search process for female superintendent aspirants, what would it be?

**Interview question 2.** Interview question 2 asked female participants to describe what motivated them to pursue the superintendent position within an urban school district. All four participants responded they initially did not have intentions of becoming a superintendent or an urban superintendent. Ali, Sally and Olivia had been teachers and administrators in urban school districts. The participants expressed that their successful completion of programs like the Harvard Urban Superintendents’ Program and the Broad Urban Superintendent Program prepared them and motivated them to alter their career aspirations and seek urban superintendent positions. Ali stated, “I did not start thinking about being an urban superintendent until I almost finished HUSP.” The two internal candidates, Kelly and Olivia, stated that unfinished business in their district was a motivating factor. Sally captured the sentiment of all four women when she described the urban superintendent position as an opportunity to positively impact more children than a rural or suburban superintendence. She stated: “When I was a teacher, they said I was a great teacher and I should become a principal, then they said I was a great principal and I should become a superintendent. I believed as a superintendent I would have the greatest sphere of influence.”

Ali shared that it was a very personal decision that emanated from her experiences as a student in public school. She was thankful for the education she had received as a young
black girl. She was reflective about how her public school education served her because it allowed her to attend and graduate from Harvard. She stated that her solid public education allowed her to be in a position of power that her family could never have imagined.

**Interview question 3.** Interview question 3 asked female participants to describe their journey to becoming the superintendent of a CGCS school district. Probing questions asked participants to describe what they knew about the district prior to applying for the position as well as their impressions of the district prior to applying. These questions were developed by the researcher to ascertain whether prior knowledge about the district or participants’ previous perceptions of the district had any effect on the perceived fit with the district.

Superintendents Kelly, Olivia and Sally had over 30 years of experience in public education. Olivia and Sally had over 20 years of experience at the teacher and principal levels. Ali had fewer years of experience but also served as a teacher and a principal. All four participants had executive leadership positions as central office administrators in urban school districts. Kelly had worked for a nonprofit educational organization prior to serving as an assistant superintendent for her present district. Kelly, Olivia and Sally worked in an assistant superintendent capacity in the areas of accountability and curriculum and instruction.

Ali stated that being an assistant superintendent was her dream job because it allowed her to focus on curriculum and instruction. Unlike the other participants, she was applying for other superintendent positions at the same time. She contends this was the result of being courted by recruiters from national search firms while finishing her studies with the HUSP. Based on POF theory this might explain why she found the search
process to be a positive experience. POF theory suggests that when an individual perceives similarities between themselves and the recruiter and when the recruiter perceives those same similarities, the perception of fit and the likelihood of final selection increases.

Olivia had spent most of her 30 year career in education, in the same district that she now leads. Similar to the other participants, she was not deterred by the challenges of the district when she decided to apply. Olivia had applied for other superintendent positions, but none simultaneously. She was an internal candidate that was being recruited by search firms to lead other school districts. She belonged to the Broad network of urban scholars and had the support of that organization for recruitment, coaching and placement in an urban superintendency. Upon being named the new leader of OCSD, Olivia stated in her press release: “I have learned from experience and colleagues around the nation to take risks, to have high expectations and to view adversity as motivation.” She commented on having the advantage of knowing the district and the nature of the work needed to drive student achievement. She stated she was well-trained for the challenge.

Although Olivia was successful in becoming an urban superintendent, her recollections about how she felt during the experience were not as positive as those described by Kelly. Olivia was an internal candidate who also had a long career in the district prior to becoming superintendent. She had three unsuccessful attempts to become a superintendent. She credits these attempts as the motivation to apply for a specialized urban superintendent program. She possessed the knowledge about the board and district and had also demonstrated that she possessed the necessary skills. Similar to Kelly, she served in an executive leadership position for the previous superintendent. Olivia’s
challenge became her association with a superintendent that had lost the confidence and support of the school board. Olivia stated, “the board assumed the previous superintendency was a failure of gender, not leadership.” The same school board, with only two new members, was responsible for selecting the next superintendent. Olivia felt her doctoral degree and the special training and support would overcome any negativity surrounding her association with the previous administration and make her a better fit for the superintendent position.

**Interview question 4.** Interview question 4 asked participants to describe major issues facing the district at the time of the search. Ali stated earlier during the interview that all urban school districts are the same. The commonality of responses from the study participants suggests her assessment was correct. Olivia described how earlier in her career in urban education, district leadership worried about the flight of the middle class from the cities and how this could negatively impact the school district. Now her concerns as an urban leader have shifted to the impact of regentrification in her city and the return of the middle class. The demands of this changing clientele, along with competition from charter schools for students, are newer challenges voiced by each of the participants. Each participant expressed declining enrollment as a challenge in her district. More students are leaving than returning, and when they return, public schools must compete with charter schools for students. Declining enrollments in public schools has caused some schools to be closed. Three of the superintendents were faced with the difficult task of determining the number and location of schools to be closed within their districts. All of the superintendents spoke about decreased funding from the state and the impending decline
in funds from the federal government. Each superintendent expressed concern about not having the proper resources to repair or replace aging infrastructure in their districts.

When the researcher asked each participant if they could identify the most pressing issue in their district during their candidacy for the superintendent, all cited student achievement, which was perceived by district stakeholders to be stagnant, improving at too slow a rate or declining. Participants agreed that, student achievement gaps existed in their districts for minority students, students with low incomes and students who were English language learners. All participants except Sally mentioned declining community trust and engagement as a significant challenge facing their districts. Ali and Sally spoke about significant budget deficits when they arrived in the district. Olivia spoke about friction between stakeholders and the former superintendent, but declined to elaborate. Kelly cited public concern about major curriculum adoptions. None of the participants described the challenges facing the district as a deterrent to applying for their superintendent positions.

Responses from participants indicated that prior experience working in urban school districts tempered any negative information about the condition of the school district. The recruitment messages and vacancy notices provided minimal information about the challenges facing the districts. This is contrary to POF theory as it relates to recruitment of new employees. POF theory states that dissonance between the recruitment message of an organization and the reality of that organization’s existence can have a negative impact on recruitment outcomes. Those applying to an organization depend on recruitment messages and the representatives of that organization to form an understanding of the organization and measure their interest in working for the
organization. In other words, they use those messages to help determine their fit with the organization. The prior experiences of the participants in this study provided them with the foresight to look beyond the recruitment or vacancy message. The participants utilized resources to determine their fit based on actual information about the district and information from the school board members and the school district community. See Appendix I for a copy of the vacancy notice for one of the participants.

**Interview question 5.** Interview question 5 asked participants about the qualifications and personal attributes they possessed that made them viable candidates for the superintendent position. Each of the participants was confident that they met or surpassed the qualifications for the job. (See Appendices J and K for sample superintendent profiles.) Ali stated, “Most applicants at this level possess the education and the skills, and know the appropriate answers to share during the search process. It comes down to fit.” The participants shared three common answers to this question: they were instructional leaders, they could be change agents for the district, and they had the capacity to be personable and collaborative.

The two internal participants, Kelly and Olivia shared that their school boards wanted superintendents who would maintain the things in the district that were successful, but be able to make necessary changes based on their knowledge of the district. Sally replaced a white male superintendent who was well-liked. The majority of the board members felt that the district was progressing. Sally felt that board agreed on one issue in particular, “They believed they were going to get this sweet old lady that could be controlled. They did not do their homework.”
Ali was very adamant that urban school districts want the same things from a new superintendent. She stated,

“It is impossible for these school boards to believe what they put out there. Do they honestly believe any single person could possibly have all those attributes and skills? Do I have a doctorate degree? Check. Am I an instructional leader? Check. Have I worked with large budgets? Check. We all have the qualifications at this level; it comes down to personality and fit. For me, I need to determine if my personality and educational philosophy is something the board will like enough to allow me to do the necessary work to educate children in the time frame specified in the contract for the superintendent.”

**Interview question 10.** Question 10 asked participants to offer advice to female superintendent aspirants interested in an urban superintendent position. The participants responded about the importance of learning as much as possible about the school board members, school district and community powerbrokers. As stated earlier, Sally lamented that she wished she knew more about the district prior to assuming the position. The participants felt this would help women make wise choices regarding potential fit with the district.

Sally was in her third urban superintendency and she advised female aspirants to ask more—and tougher—questions of the recruiters. She felt it was important to get answers to questions, especially questions about what they really want from a superintendent. She also stated, “Don’t waste your time pursuing a position where the board has explicitly stated they want a man or they want a Latino and you are not, nor
will ever be, a man or Latino.” Ali concurred, stating “Be very leery of applying to school districts that send limiting messages about what they want their next superintendent to be.” Olivia also agreed with this advice when she stated, “the applicant should find out whether the board wants diversity in leadership or a diverse pool of candidates. There is a difference.”

Sally also advised female aspirants to withdraw from the process if at any time it becomes evident that you will not get the position. She stated, “This will help protect your professional reputation by avoiding the stigma of defeat.” She also cautioned against accepting any position with a split vote from the board. She contends that you must have the unanimous vote of the board as a show of confidence. A unanimous vote of confidence from the board is critical during times when the superintendent has to make difficult decisions. A final area of agreement amongst the participants was the need for female superintendent aspirants to have mentors and critical friends. These individuals can be extremely valuable for any successful superintendent aspirant. They are also important during the search process because they can provide honest feedback about the candidate’s performance and offer objective suggestions for areas needing improvement. Critical friends can also provide information about the school district, the position, other candidates and key stakeholders in the district.

**Interview question 11.** Interview question 11 asked the participants to share their advice for recruiters who may be interested in increasing the number of female superintendent applicants in urban school districts. All the participants agreed recruiters should be more honest and open with female applicants about what the board really wants in terms of the skills and personal attributes of their next superintendent. Recruiters
should be willing and able to share relevant information about issues that will have an impact on the effectiveness or popularity of the next superintendent.

**Findings for research question 1.** Responses from participants revealed four key findings related to female superintendent’s perception of fit with urban school districts posting superintendent vacancies. First, the educational and professional experiences of these women enhanced their confidence and motivation to pursue an urban superintendency. Each participant stated that their post-graduate studies motivated them and prepared them for the superintendency. Ali stated, “I did not start thinking about being an urban superintendent until I almost finished HUSP.” Olivia shared that, “I had my doctorate, but my experience at Broad is what made me really believe I could be a superintendent in a major city. I did not have to limit myself to small districts. I had options.”

The second finding was that women enter the field of education without aspiring to become a superintendent. Three of the four participants started their careers as teachers. The fourth participant entered education as a second career. Encouragement and support from colleagues, peers and recruiters convinced the participants to actively pursue the superintendency.

The third finding was that women did not pursue the superintendent positions seeking congruence of values, beliefs or self-concept with a school district. This finding evolved from a belief shared by each participant that urban districts share common attributes and challenges. Ali stated, “All urban districts are the same; it is an impossible job. All job announcements are the same, all say they want the same things, but all are paralyzed by the contextual drama. No single person could possibly address all the issues
or possess all those attributes”. The participants also stated that the search process varied only slightly between districts. These common beliefs about urban districts and the search process were also voiced and documented by search firms at the 2011 AASA National Conference.

The fourth finding revealed that perceptions of fit can differ between internal and external candidates. Each participant believed they fit based on the skills and attributes needed to do the job. According to POF theory they each believed they had a complementary fit with the school district. Participants that were internal candidates had to convince search firms and board members that they had the enough skill to be promoted above other external candidates. External candidates based fit on whether or not their personality would be endearing enough to board members for a long enough period of time to improve district results. Olivia stated, “It comes down to fit; do you fit what they want. Many districts already know what they want regarding gender, background, personality, etc.”

**Gatekeeping Theory**

**The search firms.** Search firms are private businesses hired by school boards to assist with the recruitment and selection process for a school district superintendent. The number of commercial search firms is growing. In the 2010 AASA Study entitled The State of the American Superintendency, respondents indicated that unlike suburban and rural school districts that mostly use the services of school board associations to fill superintendent vacancies, large and urban school districts more often use commercial search firms. Search firms help school boards identify a district’s needs while simultaneously serving as a buffer between board members, the public and candidates.
Recruiters and school board members report that searches can cost districts from $20,000 to more than $100,000 depending on the search services requested from the board. Most urban school boards rely on commercial search firms because they value the experience of the consultants, who are usually former school and district administrators with valuable professional networks at their disposal.

Research question 2: What were the perceptions of the female superintendent about the recruiter and the recruiter’s role during the recruitment and selection process? The researcher designed interview questions six through nine based on research about Gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1951). The interview questions were structured to elicit how participants felt about the recruiter, the search and selection process and the recruiter’s role in the process. Questions ten and eleven were also designed to elicit additional insights about Gatekeeping Theory by asking participants to provide advice for recruiters conducting superintendent searches.

In the Olsen (2005) study, the researcher found that the recruiter was key to whether the candidate would be successful securing a superintendent position. The same study documented that 48% of the 63 female superintendents in the study rated the support they received from the search firm as low to very low. Olsen contends search firms are gatekeepers in three significant ways during the recruitment and selection process. First, they select the few candidates that will be presented to the board for consideration. Second, they coach candidates to help them be more successful during the process. Third, they are very influential in guiding the board’s final selection for the position.
Interview questions 6 through 11.

6. How did you first learn about the superintendent vacancy?
   a. Describe what you remember about the vacancy announcement?
   b. Were you asked to apply by the recruiter? If yes, how did they learn about you?

7. Can you please describe the recruiter that was assigned to the district for the superintendent search?
   a. Age, gender, race, personality, professional experience
   b. What were your impressions of the recruiter?

8. Can you please describe the superintendent selection process that you experienced?
   a. How long was the process?
   b. How many interviews did you participate in?
   c. Who conducted the interviews?
   d. What types of questions were asked?
   e. What feelings did you experience during the process?

9. Can you please describe the work relationship between you and the recruiter during the search process?
   a. How often did the recruiter communicate with you?
   b. Did you feel well informed throughout the search process?
   c. Did you feel you were treated fairly throughout the search process?

10. What advice would you give to other female superintendent aspirants about search firms and the recruitment and selection process?
    a. What have you learned from the experience?
11. If you could offer a single suggestion to search firms about how to improve the search process for female superintendent aspirants, what would it be?

**Interview question 6.** Interview questions 6 through 9 focused on Gatekeeping Theory. The questions were developed to examine the participant’s perceptions of the process, the recruiter and the recruiter’s role in the process. Questions 10 and 11 were designed to elicit additional information from the participants by asking them to offer advice to female superintendent aspirants and recruiters that might help facilitate attainment of a superintendent position. The researcher wanted to explore the recruiter’s role as a gatekeeper for aspirants seeking a superintendent position in an urban school district. Interview question 6 asked participants to describe how they learned about the superintendent vacancy and what they remembered about the vacancy notice. The two internal candidates were aware of the vacancy when their predecessors announced their departures from the district. Olivia and Kelly had knowledge of the district and access to the school board proceedings during preparations for the recruitment and selection process. Thus they were very aware of the vacancy. Neither participant specifically mentioned their predecessors as a source of support or encouragement for their candidacy.

Olivia expressed the concern about the views of some district staff regarding the tenure of the former superintendent and her predominately female executive staff. She states, “They used to call us Petticoat Junction behind our backs.” Kelly remembered she was initially skeptical about the possibility of seriously pursuing the position. She believes her decision to pursue the position was bolstered by the encouragement of colleagues who believed her personality, work ethic, and temperament were closely matched to the attributes sought by the school board. When she did apply, it was just
before the deadline and she considered the process a worthy exercise in preparing her to ultimately become a superintendent.

The two external participants, Ali and Sally, were heavily recruited by search firms. They became known entities to the national search firms during their enrollment in the Harvard Urban Superintendents Program (HUSP). Sally was vaguely aware of the vacancy from newspaper articles about the departure of the former superintendent. Her interest level was very low. She stated,

“I was a happy, well-paid college professor; I had just purchased my dream home and was looking forward to spending more time with my grandchildren. I wondered who would be the next superintendent for Sigma City. They were going to need someone strong. Never thought I would do it again.”

Ali did not remember the specific announcement for her position but said it was typical. She claims, “They (city districts) all have the same challenges and they all ask for the same things. It is an impossible job. It is impossible for a single person to address all those issues or possess all those attributes, especially within the time frame given to most urban superintendents.”

The researcher posed a question to the three national search firms present at the 2010 National AASA Conference. The question asked recruiters about strategies they utilized to recruit more women. The general theme among the recruiters was two-fold, first they shared that they had female recruiters in their organization and second they mentioned that they actively encouraged women and minorities to apply. When the
researcher asked the recruiters to elaborate on the term “actively encouraged,” they were unable to articulate specific details.

According to an April 2011 document submitted by Ray and Associates, during their application to be the search firm for a state education commissioner search, “It is important, however, for our clients to know that we are not a placement service that owes favors to potential candidates, and that we actively recruit women and minority candidates. Ray and Associates, Inc. is a very diverse firm; 40% of our associates are women and/or minorities. Our firm has placed more women and minorities in the country in the last ten years than any other firm.”

Inclusive language is very evident on the website of Ray and Associates. Women are prominently featured on their website. Statements encouraging women to apply were missing from the Proact website, but the images of candidates displayed on the site were diverse. Images encouraging women and minorities to apply for leadership positions were missing from both the HYA and The Hollins Group websites. Three of the female participants reported The Hollins Group and Proact Search actively recruited them for their superintendent positions. This question is significant to POF Theory and Gatekeeping Theory. A candidate’s reaction and perception regarding a potential organization for employment is influenced by the recruiter representing that organization. According to POF Theory, the communication from the recruiter will influence the candidate’s perception of the organization. This perception will then help the aspirant determine whether or not this is an organization they want to pursue for employment. The recruiter’s website, the district’s website and the vacancy announcement help potential candidates determine POF. Since the recruiter ultimately creates the superintendent
vacancy announcement, they become the gatekeeper by controlling the content and distribution of the superintendent vacancy message.

**Interview question 7.** Interview question 7 asked the participants to describe the recruiter that facilitated the search for their superintendent vacancy. This question was developed to determine how the recruiter affected the participant’s perception of the organization and the search process. All four participants had female recruiters. Two participants, Ali and Kelly, described the same recruiter. In total three female recruiters were involved with the selection of the four female superintendent participants. Two of the recruiters were white and the other recruiter was African-American. Proact Search facilitated the search of two participants. One of the top three national firms recruited another participant and a small minority search firm conducted the search for one participant. Each of the participants had signed confidentiality agreements which prevented them from speaking publicly or providing details about the search. The recruiters also signed these agreements. All four searches were closed searches.

The recruiters ranged in age from the late 50’s to mid-60’s. Three of the participants described their recruiter as professional and friendly in a guarded way. Kelly stated the recruiter was so friendly she began sharing confidential information about other candidates and board members during the search. Ali had the same recruiter and described her as a professional who was careful about not showing any favoritism. She credited the recruiter with making a great effort to know the personalities of each board member and each candidate. She felt the recruiter was looking for a personality match between the candidate and the board. Ali stated, “She seemed like she knew who would be chosen all
along.” All participants agreed that their recruiters were experienced and politically savvy.

Olivia described a recruiter who was not very attentive or hands-on. She shared that she had worked with other recruiters and they provided more communication and feedback on a regular basis. She lamented how she missed that with this recruiter. Since Olivia continues to work closely with most of the major search firms, she was unwilling to disclose the firm or recruiter responsible for the search. She requested that any information that might link her to her district or recruiter not be included in this study.

**Interview question 8.** Interview question 8 asked the participants to describe the superintendent selection process. All the participants described a similar process. The procedural details may vary from firm to firm but most follow a similar path as follows (See Appendices J and K for descriptions of the search process from Proact Search and Hazaard, Attea & Young.):

1. Recruiter holds an initial meeting with the school board, parents, teachers, community groups, students, business leaders and civic leaders to formulate a description of what the district wants in its next superintendent. (Appendix)
2. Recruiter solicits superintendent candidates by placing ads in education journals, asking for recommendations from associates in the field and approaching current superintendents in other school districts.
3. Recruiter narrows the field of selected candidates by conducting in-person interviews.
4. Recruiter identifies the semi-finalists to be presented to the school board.
5. Board members interview the semi-finalists. At a session presented by Ray and Associates at the 2010 AASA National Conference, entitled “Interviewing at Your Best,” first round questions focus on the candidate’s experience, consensus-building, management style, board-superintendent relations, conflict resolution, delegation and accountability, promotion of trust and confidence, visibility, evaluation, communication and integrity.

6. School board conducts a second round of interviews with two or three finalists. The second round of interviews focuses on topics such as critical education issues, management style, visibility, past and current education programs, relationship with the community, budget and student achievement.

7. Board members tour the school districts of the finalists.

8. Recruiter conducts background checks.

9. Recruiter reports the results of the background checks to the board.

10. School board makes an offer to the final candidate.

Three of the four participants described the process as rigorous and fair. Olivia felt the process was not totally fair, but was unable to specifically identify what might have been unfair about the process. The duration for each of the four searches ranged from six to twelve weeks. All the participants thought the interviews were very typical. All had interviewed multiple times with various stakeholders. According to work sessions at the 2011 National Conference on Education, presented by two national search firms, Ray and Associates and Hazard, Young & Attea, round one interview questions are usually focused on professional experiences, consensus building, management style, board-superintendent relations, conflict resolution, promotion of trust, confidence and integrity,
visibility, evaluation, delegation and accountability and assessment of the district. Round two interview questions are usually assess critical education issues, management style, visibility, education programs, and relationship with the community, budget, capital projects and student achievement.

Olivia said she felt confident and knowledgeable because she was an internal candidate for the job. She felt she understood the real issues facing the district and used this knowledge to her advantage during the interview process. She stated that she tried to control the interview process so that she could highlight her strengths. Kelly felt the process was rigorous, fair and extensive. She approached the process as a fun learning experience. She answered the questions freely because she still wasn’t convinced that she was a real contender for the job. Sally felt the process was typical and fair. She shared that the recruiter coached her throughout the process, therefore she felt very supported. She confided that she had crafted and delivered a letter to the recruiter removing herself from the process, but was convinced by the recruiter not to leave because her chances were very good and the district needed her leadership. Ali had experience as a superintendent and was applying for other superintendent positions. She concurred with the other participants that the search process was typical.

**Interview question 9.** Interview question 9 asked the participants about their working relationship with the recruiter. According to research about POF Theory (Cable & Judge, 1997) and Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1951), the relationship between the applicant and the recruiter has a significant outcome for the final selection of a candidate for a job. As stated earlier, the participants agreed that their recruiters were professional, experienced and politically savvy. They felt the recruiters gave an impression of
impartiality. All except Olivia felt it was a totally fair process and there was ample communication. In Kelly’s case there seemed to be too much communication. Ali shared, “The process wasn’t positive or negative. She was careful about giving everyone equal time. She was not like other recruiters trying to get flesh in the pot. She worked hard to find a candidate that had what the board wanted, but would also be able to deliver what the board needed.”

Sally stated, “She stayed in constant contact with me. She went above and beyond. She knew I was what they needed despite what they said they wanted.” Olivia described a strained relationship with the recruiter that began when she felt she had to interview harder with the search firm than with the school board. She found this frustrating and demeaning, especially since she was an internal candidate responsible for many of the district’s current successes. The participant’s responses indicate that, in addition to similarities in age and sex between the aspirant and the recruiter, open communication between the aspirant and the recruiter also contribute to positive outcomes for the aspirant seeking a superintendency.

**Interview question 10.** Interview question 10 asked participants to offer advice to female superintendent aspirants interested in an urban superintendent position. The participants were in consensus; women seeking the position should have a solid sense of self. They should possess some core beliefs about why they are in the profession and why they want to be a superintendent. Sally stated, “The most important thing to remember during the process is to stay focused.” Ali shared, “Take the time to know who you are and what you stand for, because it will be tested in many ways.” The second piece of advice was to never forget that the recruiter was hired to serve the board, not the
candidates for the job. Ali and Olivia both stated, “The recruiter is not your mama or your friend.” Sally believes recruiters try to find out everything they can about you. She states, “They know you have the skills; they are looking at personality traits to determine how you will fit in the district. Any weak moments with a recruiter will be counted against you during the search process. Search firms are only as good as their next search. Their job is to find the best candidate for the job. This helps ensure future business for them. They are always looking for the next contract. The search business has become very competitive.”

Similar to the second recommendation, the third suggestion for female aspirants was to never underestimate the power and influence of the recruiters before and during the search process. According to Olsten (2005), recruiters work with the district stakeholders and the school board throughout the search and selection process. They control how potential candidates learn about the position. They determine which applicants become semifinalists and finalists. They conduct most of the preliminary interviews. Most importantly, they coach the board members throughout the process. In some instances they coach the applicants they favor for the job. Their actions regarding how they interact with candidates has an impact on the perceptions of the applicants before, during and after the search process.

Sally advised women to consider only participating in closed searches, and thought this was good advice for all superintendent aspirants. Similar to the above advice, she thought it was important to remain focused and grounded. She suggested that, "This (the search process) is not a personal experience, but a professional one and should be considered an opportunity for personal growth.”
The researcher asked recruiters attending the 2011 AASA National Conference what advice they would offer to female superintendent aspirants about working with search firms during the recruitment and selection process. A common theme shared by the recruiters was the need for female aspirants to invest the time to get to know the recruiters. They believed it was vital for female applicants to query the recruiters about their impression of the school district and the school board. Recruiters also communicated that all applicants should use the recruiter to gather information about the effectiveness and the cohesiveness of the board. In summary the recruiters suggested female applicants use the recruiter and all other resources at their disposal to conduct comprehensive research about the district. Recruiters want the applicants to determine if they believe a productive working relationship could exist between themselves and the school board.

During separate presentations at the 2011 AASA National Conference, search firms, Ray and Associates, HYA, Proact Search and McPherson & Jacobson Executive Search instructed participants in attendance to remember that personality was key to getting the superintendent position. Gary Ray of Ray and Associates stated, “How the candidate makes the board members, teachers and parents feel is important because leadership is about relationships.” At another session the recruiter offered detailed advice focused on appropriate grooming and dress, jewelry, perfume and tone of voice to female aspirants. He explained that attention to these details and the signals they send to various stakeholders should not be overlooked by women with serious interest in obtaining superintendency.

Two recruiters from Hazard and Proact recommended that women, in particular, needed to become more politically savvy. During a mini-session, they shared that in urban
school districts aspirants must know where they stand with internal and external
powerbrokers in the district. The female recruiter stated, “Women have to determine if
they fit amongst the internal and external forces. They must determine if they can
successfully navigate between and among these forces to produce outcomes for students
within the timeframe of the superintendent’s contract.” This was very similar to a
responses from the two external superintendent candidates.

**Interview question 11.** Interview question 11 asked the participants to share their
advice for recruiters who may be interested in increasing the number of female
superintendent applicants in urban school districts. All the participants agreed recruiters
should utilize programs like Broad and HUSP to find qualified female candidates. Kelly
was an internal candidate with extensive experience in nonprofit organizations. Her
advice to recruiters was to do more outreach to women in leadership roles from other
professions.

The participants who were external candidates wanted recruiters to be more open
and honest about what board members wanted regarding their next superintendent.
Specifically, they wanted honest discourse regarding how the board felt about culturally
sensitive topics related to gender, race, age, religion and sexual orientation. In addition
they wanted recruiters to be more forthcoming about challenges facing the district. Both
participants thought this would be a significant step for women interested in pursuing the
superintendency.

The researcher asked recruiters attending the 2010 AASA National Conference for
recommendations they would share with search firms regarding strategies for increasing
the number of female superintendents. The recruiters described a market that had become
more competitive, with an increase in the number of firms and a decrease in the number of attractive superintendent applicants willing and able to apply for an urban superintendency.

Recruiters described two significant changes that have taken place in the superintendent search industry: First, search firms can no longer rely on mass mailings to potential candidates as a viable recruitment strategy. The tradition of depending on a network of dated professional contacts has proven ineffective in today’s market. Search firms are driven to rely on the more labor intensive strategy of individual recruitment. The second change has been the emergence of two highly competitive programs for aspiring superintendents: The Harvard Urban Superintendency Program and the Broad Urban Superintendents Academy. The Harvard Urban Superintendents Program was established in 1990 and is a twenty four month program designed to prepare educators for the urban superintendency. The Broad Superintendents Academy is a ten month training program that was founded in 2001. Upon completion participants are placed in executive leadership positions in urban school districts. According to an article written in The School Administrator, since 2007 more than 40 Broad graduates have been placed in urban districts, as superintendents and approximately 45 graduates have been accepted into senior school district executive positions. Broad applicants come from diverse fields, such as education, the military, government and private industry.

These two changes in the search industry help to explain the common responses from recruiters regarding strategies search firms might utilize to increase the number of females in the candidate pool. Search firms should make a greater effort to collaborate with women’s professional organizations. Second, search firms should partner with
superintendent preparation programs, like Broad and HUSP. Third, search firms should be more open and honest with female superintendent applicants about what the board is looking for in their next superintendent. Finally, search firms should make a greater effort to keep their applicants well-informed throughout the search process.

According to Lawrence Hollins of The Hollins Group, “The larger, more established search firms struggle with diversity within their own ranks. They therefore can fall subject to the same biases as the organizations that hire them.” His advice to search firms seeking more women and minorities is to establish sustaining relationships with organizations that have access to the hidden talent pool.

**Findings for research question 2.** There were four key findings from the data collected from the participants of this study. First, the superintendent selection process is basically the same among urban school districts, but the recruitment process has changed in two ways. More internal candidates are successfully applying and securing superintendent positions, and there is a growing presence of urban superintendent programs that provide job placement and coaching.

Secondly, there was a correlation between the participant’s perception of a positive search and selection experience and their personal similarities to the recruiter. One participant reported the experience was a guarded and professional experience. This participant claimed it was a neutral experience, neither positive nor negative. There was a significant difference in age between this participant and the recruiter. In addition the participant and the recruiter were different of a different race. The second participant reported a strained experience. This participant was close in age but of a different race.
The two participants reporting a positive experience were the same race and were close in age to their recruiter.

Third, there was a relationship between the participant’s perception of a positive search and selection experience and the recruitment of the aspirant for the superintendency. The three participants that expressed the experience was positive or neutral were all candidates that were recruited for their superintendent positions. The participant with the strained relationship was not recruited by a search firm.

The final finding was the neutral impact of minimal and negative information about the district upon the female superintendent. There appeared to be little effect on the perception of fit for the position. The participants were unable to remember the vacancy notice for their superintendent position. Each participant felt the superintendent vacancy notices were standard and could apply to any urban school district.

**Summary**

Findings indicated that female superintendents selected to participate in this study shared common characteristics related to career paths, education attainment and urban education experiences. Participants revealed that the selection process was standard regardless of the firm conducting the search or the school district paying for the search. Participants also indicated that the recruitment portion of the search process has changed. There is an emergence of urban superintendent preparation programs that have impacted the recruitment stage of the process. Results from this study and the 2010 AASA Study highlight a growing trend among urban districts to hire internal candidates that have participated in the search process. Another finding suggests there are different perceptions of fit between internal and external female candidates for the superintendency.
Findings indicated participants respected their recruiters for being experienced and politically savvy. One participant sensed unfairness about the process and another participant expressed an observation that the recruiter was very guarded. Regardless of the description of the recruiter’s professional attributes, each participant agreed that the recruiter was a very important orchestrator in the process. There was consistency in the advice offered by the participants cautioning other female superintendent aspirants to be mindful of the recruiter’s responsibility to the school board. The findings from the participants also indicated a more positive experience for the study participants in relation to the personal characteristics shared between the candidate and the recruiter. Another finding that emerged from the responses of participants was the relationship between a candidate and their perception of the search experience. Participants expressed a correlation between being recruited and having a positive search and selection experience.

This chapter provided information garnered through interviews with four female participants that served or currently serve as superintendents in urban public school districts. Interview questions were developed to understand the essence of their search and selection experiences for the superintendency. Their perceptions of the process, including their fit for the position and experience with the recruiter, could provide insight to the low number of female superintendents in comparison to male superintendents currently serving in urban school districts. A discussion of the research, further conclusions, limitations and implications are presented in chapter five, as well as recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of female superintendent candidates as they proceeded through the recruitment and selection process in an urban school district. Many studies have been conducted examining the barriers women confront during their quest for the superintendency. Although the barriers have shifted in importance over the years, discrimination in hiring practices is one recurring barrier that continues to be identified by women in the American Association of School Administrators’ (AASA) studies on the State of the American Superintendents (2000, 2007, 2010) discrimination and hiring practices. This barrier is intriguing because it continues to be identified by female superintendents, but remains unrecognized by male superintendents, as a barrier for women. The participants of the study were a select group of women who served as superintendents in the Council of Greater City Schools (CGCS) member school districts.

The researcher wanted to examine factors affecting the disproportionate number of female superintendents in urban school districts in comparison to male superintendents. According to a CGCS study of their membership, approximately 30% of the districts are led by female superintendents. The researcher designed a phenomenological study to discover the perceptions of the recruitment and selection process of female superintendents. The study was framed by two theories: Person - Organization Fit Theory
(POF) (Cable & Judge, 1997) and Gatekeeping Theory (Shoemaker, 1991). POF theory was used to ascertain the perceptions of four females who became superintendents of a CGCS member school district between January 1, 2007 and February 28, 2011. The researcher used POF theory to examine how these women determined their fit with their school districts. Gatekeeping theory was used by the researcher to understand how these women felt about the search process and the recruiter that facilitated the process.

Interviews were conducted by phone and in person with the four participants. A total of ten questions were developed to gather information related to POF and Gatekeeping literature. The researcher designed this phenomenological qualitative study to determine how the perceptions of fit and the experience of a search and selection process may have an effect on the disproportionate low number of women, serving at the highest level of leadership in the nation’s system of public education, the superintendency.

**Implications for Research Question 1**

Research question 1 focused on the factors influencing the female superintendent’s perception of fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process. There were four key findings for this question. First, education and professional experiences boosted the participant’s confidence and motivation to pursue a superintendent position in an urban school district. This finding suggests that the perception of fit amongst female candidates is enhanced by education and professional experience. This would suggest that career and academic planning is essential to the female superintendent aspirant. All the participants had earned doctorates by the conclusion of this study. This would imply that this is a necessary credential for women
seeking the position. Most telling is that each participant had graduated from a program specifically designed to prepare aspiring urban superintendents. This included two participants that sought the additional credentials after earning a doctoral degree.

The experiences and responses from the participants indicated a need for women aspiring to the superintendency to participate in educational and professional experiences focused on leadership in urban school districts. The experiences of the participants would also suggest that the type of education needed for an urban superintendency is limited to one earned at an Ivy League institution of higher learning. The other alternative for women interested in this leadership position is a specialized private superintendent preparation program such as the Broad Urban Superintendency Academy. Since its inception in 2002, Broad has placed 21 superintendents in urban and large school districts across the country.

The highly competitive and selective nature of Ivy League schools and the Broad program may not favor efforts to increase the number of women becoming urban superintendents. The last Broad cohort had eight openings and 758 applications, literally a 1% acceptance rate. The Harvard Urban Superintendents Program just celebrated 20 years by revamping its program to shift from a specific focus on urban superintendent preparation to a broader focus on educational leadership. This shift by Harvard positions the Broad program to become the leading urban superintendent preparation program in the country. One of the recommendations of this study is to increase the number and accessibility of urban superintendent programs for individuals, especially women, interested in this leadership position.
Another implication of the findings concerns the last position held prior to becoming a superintendent. Each of the participants held an executive leadership position in an urban school district. Two of the participants were internal candidates, another growing trend in urban school districts. It could be suggested that women can improve their chances of becoming an urban superintendent by serving as deputy or assistant superintendents, chief academic officers or chief accountability officers for urban school districts. The Broad Program has capitalized on this phenomenon by expanding their placement activities for their graduates to include these executive leadership positions in urban school districts across the country. It appears that these positions are as beneficial for female superintendent candidates as high school principal positions have been for male superintendent candidates.

The next finding of this study was the way participants defined fit. The POF literature defined fit as the congruence of values between an applicant and the organization. The participants believed urban school districts had the same challenges, demographics and needs. It was no surprise to participants that vacancy notices from urban districts were very similar and very limited in the information that was presented about the district. The paucity of information provided on the vacancy notices made it more difficult for female candidates to establish their fit by comparing their beliefs and values with those belonging to the district. Responses from participants of this study indicated that limited, accurate information about the district, the desires of the school board and the nuances of the position make it difficult for women to assess fit.

The implications of this finding relate to the advice that was unanimously offered by the participants to female superintendent aspirants, namely, find out as much as
possible about the district and its stakeholders. They believed this would help superintendent candidates determine their fit for a position. Recruiters and participants agreed the final selection of a superintendent is ultimately based on relationships. Assuming all candidates meet the minimum qualifications for the position, candidates deemed likable by the recruiter and the school board will be offered the superintendent position. Women are successful candidates for the superintendency when they possess the interpersonal skills that win them favor with the gatekeepers. Women should use their personal interactions with school boards and influential community members, instead of vacancy notice information, to help them determine their fit for the superintendent position. This is especially true for external candidates.

A final finding related to research question 1 involves the different perceptions of fit between internal and external candidates. As noted earlier, external candidates have to determine if their personalities fit with key individuals in the district, including board members and other district stakeholders. Participants, who were external candidates and recruiters commented there was a need for external candidates to determine if their personality and other personal attributes were agreeable to key district stakeholders, to allow them the opportunity to produce positive district results, within a stipulated time frame. This skill requires women to have a good working knowledge of the school district community. They must be sure of their capacity to be successful superintendents in a specified amount of time.

External superintendent candidates may have a more difficult time making that determination. Some urban female superintendents have been unable to accurately consider their skill capacity, human capacity, interpersonal skills and time constraints to
determine if they are a fit for the superintendency in a particular urban district. The result can be a dismissal from the position, a non-renewal of the contract or a challenge to one’s professional reputation. A miscalculation by a female superintendent candidate can also lead to reluctance by school board members to hire future female superintendents. Since urban school districts are usually located in media hubs for state and national news, miscalculations about fit by a female superintendent can result in negative press that extends far beyond a single superintendency or school district.

Internal and external candidates may find it difficult to determine their fit for an urban superintendency because of the complex structure of the urban school district and the city in which it is located. Urban school districts, because of their location and size are very diverse organizations. They represent many different constituents of different ages, races, religions, economic status, culture and sexual orientation. It is difficult for a complex organization, such as an urban school district to communicate and adhere to, a common set of beliefs and values. This in turn makes it difficult for candidates interested in the superintendent position to determine their fit for the position. Recruiters admitted that one of their challenges working with school boards during the recruitment and selection process was the board’s inability to establish a coherent focus on what they wanted in their next superintendent. Participants spoke of recruiters that advised them that they may be the candidate the district needed, but may not be the candidate the district wanted. Participants of this study felt that urban districts were virtually the same. Participants did not refer to the values and beliefs of the urban school district; therefore this researcher contends POF theory does not adequately explain how female superintendents determine their fit for an urban superintendent position.
In summary, data from the interviews indicated the following implications related to research question 1 and POF theory. Internal candidates based fit on their ability to ingratiate themselves with district stakeholders, long enough to produce positive results for the school district. Education and training designed for the urban superintendency is essential for superintendent aspirants. Academic and career planning is lacking for female educators who could be potential leaders. Female educators that aspire to be superintendents should consider executive leadership positions in the central office of urban school districts. Finally, fit is enhanced when female superintendent candidates know as much as possible about themselves and the school districts they are applying for.

**Implications for Research Question 2**

Research question 2 focused on the perceptions of female superintendents about the recruiter and the recruiter’s role during the recruitment and selection process. The researcher identified two key findings for this question. First, the selection process has remained virtually unchanged. Study participants and recruiters, from four national search firms, described a similar superintendent selection process. However, the recruitment process has changed in two ways, one positive and the other with the potential to be negative for women aspiring to the superintendency. One change is the increased competition amongst a growing number of search firms, for superintendent candidates and district contracts. More firms entering the superintendent search industry and more districts seeking the services of search firms will force search firms to look to new sources for candidates. The firms will be unable to stay competitive by relying on dated strategies for finding new talent. Firms that are innovative will expand the old definition of an attractive candidate to include women and other marginalized groups. Newer, less
traditional firms, interested in growing their businesses, could be instrumental in coaching and recruiting female educators who have never considered the superintendency. This will force gatekeepers like school boards and search firms to reconsider old biases regarding ideal candidates to lead their school districts.

The other change to the recruitment portion of the process is the emergence of urban superintendent preparation programs. The shrinking number of programs dedicated to preparation for the urban superintendency is a change which could have a negative impact for women aspiring to the superintendency. Entry into the few remaining programs is very selective. Preparation programs invite male and female educators and non-educators to apply for the limited number of available seats. Women aspiring to the urban superintendency may find it more difficult because there will be fewer specialized programs and there will be more traditional and nontraditional candidates competing for fewer seats in those programs.

The researcher observed that the participants did not express a desire to see a change to the selection process. Each participant was able to articulate some flaws with the process, but all accepted the process as fair and standard for selecting a superintendent. A common concern shared by the participants was the need for more honest information about the districts from the recruiter. The participants wanted more accurate information from the recruiter about what the school board was actually looking for in their next superintendent. Limited or inaccurate information, or information omitted by the recruiter about the district and the position hinders the candidates’ ability to make an informed decision about fit.
The changes to the recruitment process could have a significant impact on the number of women becoming urban superintendents. The increasing number of search firms entering the business has led to more competition for candidates. This should result in more opportunities for women to form relationships with a larger field of search firms that could provide them access to urban superintendent positions. An increasing number of search firms vying for the same candidates will force newer entries into the superintendent search industry and begin to aggressively seek candidates that had been previously overlooked by the veteran search firms. Competition among firms could also result in an increase in the number of women recruited, as well as an increase in the number of search firms headed by women. This may increase the opportunity for women—and other under-represented individuals—to access the superintendency.

The second key finding from the study related to gatekeeping and gatekeepers was the relationship of the personal attributes between a superintendent candidate and a recruiter. Participants of the study that shared similarities with the recruiter such as age, gender and race reported a positive recruitment and selection experience. The diversity of staff within a search firm should be considered when seeking a diverse candidate pool for a superintendent position. In spite of website and print images of the national search firms, white males who were former superintendents continue to dominate the recruiters from the four national search firms. The demographics of search firm recruiters may help explain the disproportionate number of women serving as urban superintendents. Female superintendent aspirants will have limited opportunities to form relationships with recruiters that share similar personal attributes and therefore hinder the possibility of a
successful search process. The participants in this study each had a female recruiter. This may explain their successful selection to the superintendency.

In summary, data from the interviews indicated the following implications related to research question 2 and Gatekeeping theory. Female superintendent aspirants must adjust to the changing environment for recruiting urban superintendents. Competition amongst search firms for candidates and district contracts will increase the demand for qualified female candidates. The decreasing number of post graduate programs designed to prepare students for the urban superintendency may have a negative impact on women aspiring to an urban superintendency. Finally, women will continue to be challenged at securing an urban superintendency, if their chances of securing the position are dependent upon sharing personal attributes with a search firm workforce dominated by men.

Limitations

The researcher originally wanted to interview the recruiters responsible for the search process of each participant. This could not be executed because the superintendents and the recruiters had signed confidentiality statements preventing them from discussing details about their searches.

The researcher limited the participants in the study to female superintendents of CGCS member school districts during a limited time period. Other large school districts, suburban school districts and rural school districts were not considered. Because of the small sample size, findings in this study may not be generalizable.

Interviews were limited to the perceptions of the participants. Their perceptions may have been influenced by their biases and experiences. Interview notes were shared
with participants for confirmation of accuracy. In addition, an external party not familiar with the participants reviewed the data collected to ensure reliability.

**Recommendations for Search Firms**

Search firms should consider diversifying the human capital in their organizations to include more female and minority recruiters. Findings from this study suggest that the recruitment and selection process is potentially more successful when the candidate and the recruiter share similar backgrounds and personal attributes. A preponderance of older white male recruiters in the major search firms conducting urban superintendent searches may explain the disproportionately low number of female superintendents.

Search firms should form partnerships with schools of education for three purposes: to help schools ensure their instructional programs are relevant to leadership and gender issues in urban education; to allow search firms to diversify their superintendent candidate pool by accessing doctoral students in educational leadership programs at colleges (beyond Ivy League schools); and to offer scholarships, fellowships or internships to female students enrolled in post graduate education leadership programs.

**General Recommendations**

Increasing the number and quality of programs designed to prepare aspirants for the urban superintendency will help ensure that more individuals interested in an urban superintendent position have access to programs designed to prepare them for the unique demands of the job.

The instructional programs offered by colleges to prepare students for the urban superintendency should be examined more closely. Programs should include preparation
for the hiring process and determining how candidates can use data to determine fit for a superintendent position.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Search firms play a significant part in the superintendent search and selection process. They help school districts advertise the vacancy, develop criteria for the position, select the candidates to be presented to the school board, interview candidates, conduct background checks and advise school boards, and sometimes candidates, through each step of the process.

This study indicates that search firms and school boards continue to be gatekeepers. It is recommended that further research be conducted about the search and selection process from the perspective of school boards and search firms. Information about the perspective of gatekeepers regarding the process could help inform female superintendent aspirants and proprietors of superintendent preparation programs.

Further research should be conducted on the role of the Broad Urban Superintendent Academy. Special attention should be given to the female graduates of the program serving in urban school districts. An examination of the program and its graduates, male and female, would add to the literature about possible best practices regarding the preparation of urban superintendents.

It is recommended that further research also be conducted on female superintendents of urban school districts who were internal candidates for the position. Both this study and the AASA Study (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, Ellerson, 2010) highlight a growing trend to hire superintendents from within the district. This
trend needs to be further studied to examine the viability of urban superintendency as a career path for women.

Conclusion

At the heart of this study was a desire to uncover factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in the role of superintendent. The researcher was particularly interested in the urban superintendency because of her professional background and the significant number of students, families and communities impacted by public education in our nation’s cities. This was a qualitative study of women’s perception of their experiences during the recruitment and selection process for an urban superintendent position.

Aside from the key findings related to Person Organization Fit (Cable & Judge, 1997) and Gatekeeping (Lewin, 1951), an important lesson was learned. This country still has a way to go before all the wires of the birdcage are destroyed and Ella Flagg’s 1909 prediction of women dominating the ranks of the urban superintendency are realized. The participants in this study made it to the highest echelon of public school education, but their experiences highlight a reality about urban school districts. The challenges for women seeking the highest leadership roles in public education continue to exist. Since the number of female superintendents is on the rise, many have been lulled into believing that barriers like discrimination in hiring practices no longer exist. Women tell a different story: over 75% of the public school superintendents in this country are men.

Gender should not be a barrier for women accessing the superintendency. While research about women in educational leadership is increasing, there is still limited exploration of the role of school boards and search firms. More research is needed about
the role of the gatekeepers before, during and after the recruitment and selection process for a superintendent. It is the one factor consistently described as a barrier by female superintendents in national studies conducted by AASA about the status of the superintendency in this country.

It was very interesting to the researcher that although the search and selection process has not changed, nor have the gatekeepers, women have made many changes. They have made every effort to conform to a system that was not designed for them. Women have demonstrated that previously reported barriers to the superintendency like family obligations, mobility, education, leadership styles and the availability of mentors and role models have been mitigated by their efforts. The researcher wonders why these highly educated women have not demanded change or initiated their own access to district leadership. Why haven’t women taken on leadership roles in search firms, school boards or schools of education? What messages are female superintendents sharing with female superintendent aspirants? Are they offering messages of how to get along or messages of how to blaze a new trail to the superintendency? The researcher was surprised by the complacency concerning the minimal progress for female superintendents over the last century. Perhaps Hallie (1997) was correct about the denial exhibited by the gated and the gatekeepers. After successfully completing the recruitment and selection process, do female superintendents assume the attitude of the cage builder, accepting the cage as a reality of their existence?

The findings from this study can offer aspiring female superintendents insights that can help them progress through the recruitment and selection process with a better understanding of the challenges they will face. There are over 7.2 million students
educated in major cities across this nation. For them to become educated citizens of the future, actions must be taken now. Domination of the superintendency by any single group is counterproductive to the future citizens of a global economy. Given the challenges facing our urban communities and the ripple effect to our states, the time has come for thoughtful examination of the leadership in urban school districts. Hopefully women will be inspired to lead the challenge of the status quo and forge new paths to the most influential position in public education: the superintendent.
References


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Roberts, L. (1997, Spring and Summer). One oppression or many? *Journal of Philosophy in the Contemporary World, 4*(1, 2).


# Appendix A

Council of Greater City Schools

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<th>School District</th>
<th>Female Superintendent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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41. Milwaukee
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46. Norfolk
47. Oakland Unified
48. Oklahoma
49. Omaha
50. Orange County
51. Palm Beach County
52. Philadelphia City Yes
53. Pittsburgh Yes
54. Portland Yes
55. Providence
56. Richmond Yes
57. Rochester
58. Sacramento
59. San Diego Unified
60. San Francisco
61. Seattle
62. St. Louis
63. St. Paul Yes
64. Toledo
65. Wichita

Above data reflects superintendent appointments as of June 1, 2011.
Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions

Title: The Fit Between female Superintendents and Search firms: A Phenomenological Study of their Relationship in Urban School Districts

Purpose: The first purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the experiences of women, as they work with superintendent search firms to gain access to the superintendency in urban school districts. The second purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of the search firm recruiters that were responsible for hiring the female urban superintendent participants.

Research Questions: RQ (1): What factors influenced the female superintendent candidate’s perception of organization fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process? RQ (2): What were the perceptions of female superintendent candidates about the recruiter and the recruiter’s role during the recruitment and selection process?

Research Participants:

Theories: Person Organization Fit Theory (Cable & Judge, 1997), Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1947)
Sample Interview Question

Participant Group #1, female superintendents serving in selected urban school districts

1. **What do you think about the state of the superintendency in urban school districts?**
   a. How do you think it has changed over the last 10 to 15 years?
   b. What do you think about mayoral control?
   c. What kind of leadership do you think is needed?
   d. What do you think the future holds?

2. **What motivated you to pursue the superintendent position within an urban school district?**

3. **Can you describe your journey to becoming the superintendent of CGCS school district?**
   a. What information did you know about the school district prior to applying for the position?
   b. What were your impressions of the school district prior to applying for the position?
   c. Were you applying for other superintendent positions at the same time?
   d. If so, were they urban, suburban or rural school districts?

4. **What were the major issues facing the district at the time of the search?**

5. **What qualifications and personal attributes did you believe you possessed that made you a viable candidate for the superintendent position?**
   a. Personal characteristics, change agent, status quo, instructional leader, fiscal manager, statesman, non-educator, uncertain

6. **How did you first learn about the superintendent vacancy?**
   a. Describe what you remember about the vacancy announcement?
   b. Were you asked to apply by the recruiter? If yes, how did they learn about you?

7. **Can you please describe the recruiter that was assigned to the district for the superintendent search?**
   a. Age, gender, race, personality, professional experience
   b. What were your impressions of the recruiter?
8. Can you please describe the superintendent selection process that you experienced?
   a. How long was the process?
   b. How many interviews did you participate in?
   c. Who conducted the interviews?
   d. What types of questions were asked?
   e. What feelings did you experience during the process?

9. Can you please describe the work relationship between you and the recruiter during the search process?
   a. How often did the recruiter communicate with you?
   b. Did you feel well informed throughout the search process?
   c. Did you feel you were treated fairly throughout the search process?

10. What advice would you give to other female superintendent aspirants about search firms and the recruitment and selection process?
    a. What have you learned from the experience?

11. If you could offer a single suggestion to search firms about how to improve the search process for female superintendent aspirants, what would it be?

Participant Group #2, Superintendent Search Firm Recruiters

1. What do you think about the state of the superintendency in urban school districts?
   a. How do you think it has changed over the last 10 to 15 years?
   b. What do you think about mayoral control?
   c. What kind of leadership do you think is needed?
   d. What do you think the future holds?

2. How has the recruitment and selection process for urban superintendents changed over the past 15 years?
   a. Is the same process utilized in suburban and rural school districts?
   b. Have similar changes to the process occurred in suburban and rural districts?
   c. How has your organization adjusted to the changes related to the urban superintendent recruitment and selection process?
3. Can you please describe your journey to become a recruiter for a superintendent search firm?
   a. How many years in the business?
   b. Previous positions held
   c. Number of searches completed

4. Can you describe the superintendent recruitment and selection process?
   a. What challenges might you encounter during recruitment for an urban superintendent?
   b. Describe what you believe is the profile for a successful urban superintendent candidate.

5. What were the major issues facing this district at the time of the search?
   a. What attributes was the school board seeking in their next superintendent?
   b. Were there any conditions placed upon your organization, by the school board, regarding the type of superintendent candidates preferred by the school board?
   c. Can you elaborate on the strategies utilized by your firm to attract candidates that would fit the attributes specified by the board?
   d. Did your firm implement any strategies specifically designed to recruit women? Can you explain the firm’s decision?

6. Describe the specific recruitment strategies used by your firm for this search process.
   a. How does your firm assign recruiters to client districts?
   b. Why do you believe you were selected to lead this search?

7. Describe your working relationship with the superintendent candidate.
   a. What were your impressions of this candidate?
   b. How often did you communicate with the candidate?
   c. What type of information did you share with the candidate?
   d. Did you provide any coaching to the candidate before or during the search process?
   e. How would you describe her personality?
   f. Was the candidate recruited or recommended?

8. Can you describe what you thought were the strengths and weaknesses of the superintendent candidate during the interviewing process.
   a. How was it determined the candidate matched the attributes that the school board was seeking?
9. What advice would you give to female superintendent aspirants about the recruitment and selection process and working with search firms?

10. If you could offer a single suggestion to search firms about how to improve the search process for female superintendent aspirants, what would it be?
Dear Superintendent:

My name is Shelley Jallow and I would like to invite you to be part of a research study that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for a Doctorate in Executive Leadership at Saint John Fisher College. My affiliation with the college, as a doctoral student can be verified by contacting Dr. Ronald Valenti, Director, School of Education, at (914) 654-5389.

The purpose of my study is to examine the perceptions of female superintendent candidates and superintendent search firms as they proceeded through the process of recruitment and selection for an urban superintendency.

My research study will consist of in-depth, unstructured interviews. The interviews will take no longer than two hours and will be scheduled at a time and place of convenience for the superintendent. The in-depth interviews will examine your perceptions of the recruitment and selection process for an urban superintendency and the role of the recruiter that facilitated your process.

Information will be recorded by way of hand-written notes and audio recordings. Where appropriate, the information will be summarized, in the body of the final report. The audio recordings will be transcribed and then destroyed upon completion of the research study. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be anonymous. All documents collected will be kept for the required period of time as specified by Saint John Fisher College Institutional
Review Board. All documents will be kept in a secured filing cabinet.

I will be submitting this research study to Saint John Fisher College in partial fulfillment for a Doctorate in Executive Leadership. My research findings might also be used in journal articles, presentations, and publications. A copy of the final report will be stored at Saint John Fisher College and available online through Proquest. Access and distribution will be unrestricted.

You are not compelled to participate in this research study. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. If you would like to participate please contact me at: slmcj919@yahoo.com or 301-442-2621.

Sincerely,

Shelley Jallow
Researcher
Slmcj919@yahoo.com
Appendix D

Confidentiality Statement

I understand that as a transcriptionist/ research assistant/ executive mentor/ expert panel member (circle one) for the study conducted by Shelley Jallow as a requirement of the Doctoral Degree in Education in Executive Leadership at Saint John Fisher College at the College of New Rochelle, I am privy to confidential information. I agree to keep all data collected during my participation in this study confidential and will not reveal it to anyone outside the research team.

Name: _____________________________ Signature: ___________________________
Constant Comparative Analysis (CCA)

Research Question 1: Interview Question 10: What advice would you give to other female superintendent aspirants about search firms and the recruitment and selection process?

Research Interview Question 2: What motivated you to pursue the superintendent position within an urban school district?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ali</th>
<th>Kelly</th>
<th>Olivia</th>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>Common</th>
<th>Different</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No intentions to be supt., later in career, maybe a small district supt only</td>
<td>No aspirations to be supt. Started outside public educ.</td>
<td>No thoughts about being supt. Started out as a teacher, interested in being a good teacher, no thoughts about supt.</td>
<td>No aspirations, started as a teacher</td>
<td>Supt. Not a part of career plans, urban or otherwise</td>
<td>Ali thought maybe a supt in a small local school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy League grad education</td>
<td>Ivy League grad education</td>
<td>Non Ivy league grad education and specialized urban supt program.</td>
<td>Ivy league grad education and specialized urban supt program</td>
<td>All highly education, credentialed, experienced</td>
<td>One non-Ivy league</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneously pursuing supt. Positions, looking</td>
<td>Unfinished work in the district, Not looking</td>
<td>Unfinished work in the district, looking</td>
<td>Not looking</td>
<td>2 looking(internal and external)</td>
<td>2 not looking (internal and external)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited</td>
<td>Encouraged by colleagues, bd members</td>
<td>Not recruited</td>
<td>Recruited</td>
<td>3 recruited or encouraged</td>
<td>1 not encouraged or recruited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

- All started with no intentions, but became motivated by education and colleagues to pursue urban superintendency. Why did highly educated and experienced participants still feel the need to acquire more education through specialized supt. preparation programs? Beneficial: entry into search firm network of attractive superintendent candidates. Education facilitated interest and confidence in the possibility of obtaining the position.

- Exposure to critical friends, mentors, perhaps professors had an impact on their motivation to pursue the job.

- Internal or external, being recruited or being known by the search firms makes a difference for women interested in the position. Candidates not looking for the position were swayed by others who thought they would be perfect for the position.

- **Questions**: What if you did not go to an Ivy League university? What is you weren’t selected to participate in one of two urban supt. Prep programs? What will be your entry into an urban superintendency?
Appendix F

Researcher Notes: Data Analysis

Constant Comparative Analysis (CCA)

Research Question 1: What factors influenced the female superintendent candidate’s perception of organization fit with the school district during the recruitment and selection process?
Interview Question 10: What advice would you give to other female superintendent aspirants about search firms and the recruitment and selection process?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Question generated much agreement.

- Seems like a warning, if you are not sure why you want to be a supt. For a given district, wait until you do. Knowledge is power during this process, the more you know yourself, your recruiter and your future district the better prepared you will be for the process. You will be better able to determine your fit.

- Interesting, participants caution about a healthy professional guarded relationship with recruiters, while recruiters advise aspirants to be open and honest with recruiters. Recruiters want candidates to work with them and depend on them as a source of information about the district. Participants seem to advise aspirants to maintain a more independent relationship with the recruiter. If the recruiter forms a positive relationship with you they seem to perceive fit, which is an advantage for candidates.

- Need to know the decision makers when you do your research of the school district. Do not forget to research the board members

- Wasn’t said but it was implied, get your education from the right place.

- **Questions**: What if you are unable to form that bond with the recruiter? What happens to your chances for the superintendency? All the skills and it comes down to relationships? Do you like me?
## Appendix G

### AASA Conference Program

**FRIDAY • FEBRUARY 18**

**SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30 A.M. –</td>
<td>Hall D Registration Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 P.M.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 – 10:00 A.M.</td>
<td>Hall C General Session Featuring Diane Ravitch Will School Reform Improve the Schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:30 A.M.</td>
<td>Hall D, NCE Marketplace Complimentary Coffee Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 A.M. –</td>
<td>Hall D, NCE Marketplace NCE Marketplace Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15 P.M.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:30 A.M.</td>
<td>Knowledge Exchange Theater, Hall D, NCE Marketplace Capture Every Penny: Supplier Rebates and School Food Service Contracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Sessions Ballroom 1: Thought Leader Alan Blankstein Failure Is Not an Option: Building Sustainable Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room 207</td>
<td>Thought Leader Karen Pittman Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase College and Career Readiness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Four Sessions Ballroom 2-3: Thought Leader Rick Hess The Same Thing Over and Over: How to Avoid Getting Stuck as Yesterday's Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 P.M. –</td>
<td>Room 710-711 Job Central Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 A.M. –</td>
<td>Room 607 Accountability as a Learning System: What School Leaders Can Do Right Now with Doug Reeves</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:45 P.M.</td>
<td>Room 107 Inaction International Schools: The Adventures and the Opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Room 708 Breakthrough Schools: Best Practices and Strategies to Improve Student Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 106 Budget Relief: Cost Recovery for Community Use of Your Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 610 The Chevalry Isn’t Coming: Are You Ready to Lead?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 108 Charter School Systems: Promise of Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 706 Creating a Detailed Master Application Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 604 Crucial Conversations About America’s Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 707 Daunting Questions for Superintendents and Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 612 It Can Happen: Improving Student Achievement Through an Interactive Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 609 Leadership Matters: Advancing an Agenda of Educational Reform During Fiscal Austerity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 703 Learning Environments Matter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 105 The Opportunities and Pitfalls of Difficult Budget Years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 704 New Superintendents: Surviving the First Two Years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 707 Redefining Students for What’s Next: Enhancing College and Career Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 109 Redesigning Schools to Support Struggling Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 111 RockSolid Leadership: Implementing a Districtwide Technical Assistance Process That Delivers RESULTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 104 School Reform With or Without Charters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room 601 Six Ways to Design School Systems So All Children Succeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TAKE YOUR LEADERSHIP TO NEW HEIGHTS*
ROOM 107
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS: THE ADVENTURES AND THE OPPORTUNITIES
Are you reaching retirement age? Interested in a mid-career change of scenery or working in an overseas school? This session explores the possibility of staying in the profession you know and love but doing it in another part of the world. It includes information on recruitment, school directories, employment opportunities and how to get started.

PRESENTERS
Roger Douglas, Director of Administrative Services, International School Services
Bob Green, Regional Education Officer for Western Europe, Office of Overseas Schools, U.S. Department of State

ROOM 705
BREAKTHROUGH SCHOOLS: BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
Gain a greater understanding of how to use the core areas of NASSP’s school improvement documents: Breaking Ranks, including collaborative leadership, personalization, and curriculum/instruction/assessment. Find out how Breakthrough Schools use the strategies and practices aligned with the Breakthrough framework to deliver a rigorous curriculum that engages students; focuses on collaboration among staff, faculty, and community; and makes sure students and adults connect in personal ways to achieve dramatic results.

PRESENTERS
Virginia Mitchel, Principal, Park View High School, VA
John Noll, Director, Program Development, National Association of Secondary School Principals
David Spence, Director, High School Education, Louisiana County Public Schools, VA

ROOM 108
BUDGET RELIEF: COST RECOVERY FOR COMMUNITY USE OF YOUR SCHOOLS
Most school budgets do not include funds to recover the real costs for after-hours use of schools by the community, including additional utility usage and custodial overtime. A case study of the Thompson School District, CO, describes a successful cost recovery program and reinforces new market research from more than 1,000 school districts about recovering costs.

PRESENTERS
Ron Coburn, Superintendent, Thompson School District, Loveland, CO
Brian Erickson, Director of Facilities, Thompson School District, CO
Lee Prevot, President, SchoolDude.com

ROOM 610
THE CAVALRY ISN’T COMING: ARE YOU READY TO LEAD?
The current economic downturn and decreased school funding, along with the confluence of technology, international competition, and changing economic and societal expectations, presents unprecedented challenges and opportunities for educational leaders. This session features ideas and specific ideas and strategies we can pursue in this new era of leadership.

PRESENTERS
Kathleen Cook, Superintendent, Hamilton School District, WA
James Rickabaugh, Superintendent, Whitfield Bay School District, WA

ROOM 106
CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEMS: PROMISE OF INNOVATION
The state of Georgia has a process for public school districts to apply for charter status as a whole. Upon acceptance by a State Charter Advisory Council, each school within a system is granted charter status. This session discusses the charter systems in Georgia, particularly the Charter System model, and gives examples of how the increased flexibility from state requirements is enhancing the learning environment, improving student achievement, and increasing engagement among parents and the community.

PRESENTERS
Jerod Anderson, Director of Learning, Gainesville City School District, GA
Marina Dyer, Superintendent, Gainesville City School District, GA
David Shumate, Associate Superintendent, Gainesville City School District, GA

ROOM 708
CREATING A DETAILED MASTER APPLICATION PACKAGE
Are you ready to get that great new job? This interactive session for entry-level as well as senior school leaders covers self-assessment and effective application material preparation and examines ways to proactively avoid perilous errors candidates often make.

PRESENTER
Gary L. Ray, President, Ray and Associates Inc.

ROOM 604
CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT AMERICA’S SCHOOLS
For decades, elected officials, business leaders, the general public, parents and even school employees have been fed a steady diet of warnings about “declining schools.” In this presentation, ERS Chief Executive Officer John Draper strips back from the rhetoric and looks at the reality of what is happening across America’s schools. He identifies some of the Tails, the Truth and the Crucial Conversations school leaders need to lead and provides tools for reframing the conversation to be more effective with every audience.

PRESENTER
John Draper, Executive Director, Educational Research Service
12:45 – 1:45 P.M.
Room 612
AASA President-Elect Candidate Debate
Room 108
AASA's 2011 Legislative Agenda with Bruce Hunter
Room 109
Addressing and Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Hispanic Community
Room 110
Administrators Are Human Capital Too
Room 117
Long Range Planning for the 21st Century
Room 106
Advocacy Update with Nicole Ellerson
Room 707
Building the Foundation for Successful Change as a New Superintendent
Room 601
Detailed Superintendents: Red Flag Warning Signs
Room 603
District Reform Leveraging Change
Room 108
Effective District Communications During Crisis Situations
Room 708
Electronics Portfolio – What Goes into One
Room 709
Entry Plan 101: Strategies from Rural, Suburban and College-Town Superintendents
Room 708
Establishing the Building Blocks for Student Engagement
Room 704
Getting All Students to Graduate
Room 706
Getting, Keeping and Enjoying Your Superintendency
Room 703
In Your District’s Workforce Start
Room 608
Move from Traditional to a Whole Student Support Model

Room 610
A Network Approach to Building System Level Instructional Leadership
Room 111
Online Teaching and Learning: Cost, Policy and Quality Considerations
Room 102
Opportunities and Challenges to District-Charter Collaboration to Improve Outcomes for Students
Room 602
Response to Instruction: The Administrator’s Role
Room 708
A Successful College and Career-Ready Model: Career Clusters
Room 607
Texas Hold ’Em – Dealing Five Key Cards for Raising Test Scores
Room 104
Using School Data to Make Informed School Choices
Room 605
Using Student Voices to Drive Change

2:00 – 3:00 P.M.
Four Sessions Ballroom 1
THOUGHT LEADERS KATY HUBLEY AND KEN KAY
Education Leaders and 21st Century Education
Four Sessions Ballroom 2-3
THOUGHT LEADER DOUG ROBREES
Getting Accountability Right: A Blueprint for 21st Century Accountability Systems from the Classroom to the Boardroom
Knowledge Exchange Theater, Hall D
NCE Marketplace
Engage, Enrich & Enhance Professional Development with Online Learning

3:15 – 5:15 P.M.
Hall C
GENERAL SESSION FEATURING MICHAEL FULLAN
Visionary Leadership: How to Make All Systems Go

5:30 – 5:50 P.M.
Capital Ballroom, Hyatt Regency
AASA Welcome Reception
ROOM 604
GETTING ALL STUDENTS TO GRADUATE
This interactive session conducted by a high school principal shares methods used in an all-minority, Title I school that resulted in a graduation rate over 90 percent for the past three years. This session includes practical and easily implemented activities applicable to other districts and schools.
PRESENTER
Benjamin Shludin, Principal, New York City Department of Education

ROOM 606
MOVE FROM TRADITIONAL TO A WHOLE STUDENT SUPPORT MODEL
Learn how Minnetonka High School created an embedded health model in 2007 that moves health from the traditional stand-alone seminar course to one that is integrated into the school day throughout all four high school years.
PRESENTER
David Adney, Principal, Minnetonka Schools, MN

ROOM 608
A NETWORK APPROACH TO BUILDING SYSTEM-LEVEL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
Sixteen New Jersey superintendents from urban, suburban and rural districts of varying sizes have joined together in a community of practice powered by focused on instructional improvement through instructional rounds. This session tells the story of the New Jersey Network of Superintendents and engages participants in a thoughtful and practical exploration of its implications and applications for instructionally focused professional learning for superintendents.
PRESENTERS
Victoria Knevel, Superintendent, West Windsor Plainsboro Regional School District, NJ
Pablo Munoz, Superintendent, Elizabeth Public Schools, NJ
Robert Peterkin, Kaye Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Scott Thompson, Assistant Executive Director, Panasonic Foundation

ROOM 610
LOOKING BEYOND THE LABEL: A NETWORK APPROACH TO BUILDING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
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Robert Peterkin, Kaye Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Scott Thompson, Assistant Executive Director, Panasonic Foundation

ROOM 611
ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING: COST, POLICY AND QUALITY CONSIDERATIONS
A growing number of schools across the country are offering online courses for students as part of their academic schedule and experience. Whether the courses are core content, electives or AP, the successful implementation of online courses programs requires clear planning, specific policies and active promotion. This session examines best practice in online program implementation, including policy and cost considerations.
PRESENTERS
Robert Grutz, Superintendent, Hazlehurst School District, NJ
Dana Koch, Director of Global Services, Virtual High School Global Consortium

ROOM 703
IS YOUR DISTRICT A WORKPLACE STAR?
We all know that student achievement for all is the measure of success for every school and district. Many variables contribute to that goal. For one, school leaders must create a workplace of excellence so everyone thrives. This session describes 10 essential factors for creating an excellent workplace using a new organizational assessment tool. Workforce Stars. Participants can opt to take a complimentary confidential online survey to determine how their school or district is currently functioning.
PRESENTERS
Bryce Bird, Superintendent, Riverdale School District, WI
Karen Rees, President, The Change Place

ROOM 706
GETTING, KEEPING AND ENJOYING YOUR SUPERINTENDENCY
Many Francés Callon and Bill Levinson experienced significant success as superintendents prior to retirement. Stimulated by their experiences heading superintendent searches and mentoring aspiring and experienced superintendents, they have written a practical guide to finding the right job, keeping it, and being successful in an increasingly difficult educational atmosphere. In this session, they team up with Bill Attuck, who has also had a highly successful experience as a superintendent and extensive experience in working with school board development and superintendent searches, to provide useful practical tips on how to conduct an effective job search and how to get off to a good start that will point to long-term success once you find the right position. Applicable to novice and veteran superintendents.
PRESENTERS
William Attuck, Chair of the Board, Hazard, Young, Alva & Associates
Mary Francés Callon, Author
William Levinson, Author
Appendix H

Conference Notes

Interviewing at Your Best
Bay and Associates, Inc.
Presented by:
Garry L. Ray
Steve Tippett
Dave Hussard
Cory Black
Viviane Narbone
Jim Wolf

Interview Preparation Form
In preparation for each job interview, you should complete this form.

INTERVIEW INFORMATION:
Name of school district
Date of interview
Phone of interview
Interview address
Sidebar of the interview (Interview committee or board members)
Other person contact information

Interview Preparation Form—Cont.
APPLICATION PROCESSING PROCEDURES
DUE
Latter of application or inquiry and resume
Completed application form with
Teacher interview meeting information
Mailing
Follow-up thank you letter for interview

Who are committee
Date of event
Next step
Your log in with
Preparing for the Interview

- Ask the consultant their view of the district and about the expectations and responsibilities of the position.
- Gather background information about the school system, including website and blogs.
- Read the district's mission statement, especially the section that talks about the position.
- Obtain information on board members or interviewing committees in advance of the interview.
- Identify the interview format and dress assignment.
- Practice your interview.

Preparing for the Interview – Cont.

- Arrange your interview to show your involvement, initiative, and how your current responsibilities align.
- Discuss the position's school executive.
- Be prepared to meet other key administrators, work with teachers, and community members.
- Remember – interviewers look for and value interpersonal skills.
- Have some questions on hand about the position.
- Turn off phone and social media or get the job.
- Google yourself – you need to know what’s out there.

The Interview

- Address interview committees by name.
- Maintain eye contact with interviewers and address the interviewer by name when appropriate.
- Speak clearly before delivering a difficult question.
- Study interview committee members' nonverbal cues.
- Understand the emotional content of what interviewers say—what the words may lack.
- Show your vulnerability.
- Let interviewers know you've done your research on the school system and position. Enough about important but little-known details.
- Don't take notes.
- Get your interviewers to call the pace and structure.

—but not too much writing and from-handwriting.
The Interview - Cont.

Let your personality show.

Audience awareness with individual committee members.

Be positive and confident.

Time opportunity points first, expect questions on your key points or interview areas.

Be prepared to give examples of what you've done instead of planning what you would do for them.

If asked to state or contrast during the interview, always initiate by the interviewing committee.

End by thanking the interviewing committee, add them by name and shake their hands.

Candidate Key Interview Areas - 1st Round Interviews

1. Professional background
2. Professional background
3. Professional background
4. Professional background
5. Professional background

Candidate Key Interview Areas - Cont. 2nd Round Interviews

1. Professional background
2. Professional background
3. Professional background
4. Professional background
5. Professional background

exp. delegate/account
competent/ld
arrogant/du
risky/angry
renovate/communicate
object/restore
power/communicate
visibly
evaluate

critical ed.
ed.
manager/style
visibly
prior/shape
several
relationship with community on budget
students/achievement
Interview Errors
- Lack of enthusiasm – think and practice you must know you really want the job.
- Inappropriate dress – must share the point.
- Know why they asked the question – why do you think they asked.
- Long-winded answers – don’t ramble. Focus.
- Not answering the question.
- Don’t bring anecdotes to the interview.
- Don’t indicate you did a good job of work.
- Don’t lie.

Interview Errors – Cont.
- Don’t be too casual.
- Stating preconceived solutions to tricky problems.
- No irrelevant comments – info compete with your point answer.
- Avoiding eye contact and not presenting your answers to everyone.
- Going outside the established interview process/lying to take over the interviewer.
- Leaving your resume at home for a second round interview.
- Assuming what works in your current position will work for this position.
Appendix I

Sample Vacancy Notice

Superintendent of Schools

[Handwritten name]

School District

Position Profile

The Board of Trustees of the [X] School District seeks a leader with a proven record of successful executive management to guide one of the premier school districts in [X] to achieve recognized world class status. Its mission is to educate every child every day, so all young people realize and maximize their individual potential to become responsible, productive and contributing members of the community and society. This urban district has a wealth of diversity in its student community, which is 58% Hispanic, 30% Anglo/Other, and 12% African-American, and is made up of 62% economically disadvantaged and 25% Limited English Proficient students. The district serves more than 82,000 students on 113 campuses, operating with an annual general fund budget of approximately $830 million and more than 11,000 employees.

The successful candidate must possess exceptional leadership skills to raise the academic bar for all students and eliminate the achievement gap; to continue the implementation of the district’s 2005-2010 strategic plan and current initiatives; to bring innovation and creativity to enhance the district’s operations and academic programs and develop a new strategic plan for the future of the district; to develop and direct an executive team and to serve as the primary ambassador for the district with the school community and broader public. The Board of Trustees will offer a competitive compensation package. Non-traditional candidates will be considered.

Successful candidates must have:

- A strong commitment to the values of public education, to the district’s children and to the [X] community.
- Successful experience leading a large, diverse organization dedicated to ambitious goals, high standards and continuous improvement strategies with high expectations for performance and accountability at all levels.
- A proven ability to increase academic accountability for results at all levels; increasing student achievement, closing gaps, increasing graduation rates and decreasing drop-out rates.
- A proven ability to motivate, develop, support and delegate to a high-performing and caring leadership team of central office staff, teachers, principals and support staff.
- Demonstrated experience in embracing and promoting diversity and working well in diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural and socio-economic communities and environments; demonstrated ability to bring diverse communities together to work for genuine equity of opportunity for all children, and is culturally-sensitive and competent.
- A demonstrated record of fiscal responsibility in challenging times and of data-driven decision-making; building and managing a highly competent team to oversee daily operations and finances.
- Expertise in facilities planning and working with local citizens and groups, city councils, regional and state planning groups, to develop a cost-effective facilities master plan for renovations, technology improvements, as well as determining sites for future new school construction.
- Exceptional analytical, planning and organizational skills to implement and update the district’s strategic plan to make it a “living document,” to maintain a strategic direction with a balance of perspectives and to set priorities in concert with others.
- Experience in using data, with a focus on real-time data, to drive both academic and operational decisions; motivating others to move in the directions to which the data point.
- A proven record of working effectively with employee associations/bargaining units.
Appendix J

Sample Superintendent Profile from CGCS Member School District

St. Paul Public Schools
Leadership Profile Report
September 22, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This report summarizes the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd. (HYA) for the School Board of the St. Paul Public Schools. The data contained herein were obtained from reviewing approximately 240 completed Leadership Profile Assessment forms and interviews with approximately 330 persons identified by the Board in either individual, focus group or community input settings on August 3, 5, 10, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 26, 31 and September 16 and 17, 2009. The questionnaire, interviews and focus groups were structured to gather data to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics it might seek in its next superintendent of schools. Through this process, the consultants identified the personal and professional characteristics desired in the superintendent, as well as the skill sets necessary to maintain what constituent groups valued and to address current and emerging issues which the District might be facing.

Strengths of the St. Paul Public Schools

Information obtained through interviews and completed questionnaires did reflect similar themes from all groups with respect to the multiple strengths of the St. Paul Public Schools. There is pride in the community’s very diverse cultures. This is exemplified by the District's multitude of programs aimed at assisting immigrant students and families. Individuals within and outside of the school district often cited the effective English Language Learner program as one that could be considered as a model for the nation.

Nearly every conversation and a vast majority of the completed questionnaires noted the excellent support that the District enjoys from a wide range of civic, business, volunteer, philanthropic and higher education organizations. A robust volunteer and tutoring program assists students in addition to corporate and philanthropic financial support for program needs. The St. Paul Schools are uniquely situated in the midst of a large number of both private and public colleges and universities which has led to a number of partnership programs with these institutions.

The current strategic plan is viewed as being an excellent map to guide the District’s efforts and focus for the current and future school years. The plan utilizes multiple data points to guide the measurement of success in meeting the goals of the plan. A firm commitment of support for the plan was a common theme with a resolve to continue the work that is framed by the plan. A dedicated and caring staff is focused not only upon providing academic achievement for all

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd.
St. Paul Public Schools Leadership Profile
September 22, 2009
learners but in meeting the affective needs of the wonderful group of young people that compose the student body.

On a national level, the District enjoys a reputation for innovation and is often cited as an urban district that gets things done. Clearly, the management support services, including but not limited to the departments of transportation, food service and facility maintenance, have a long tradition of excellence. Many staff noted the safe environment found within all schools.

**Challenges Confronting the St. Paul Public Schools**

The single most often noted challenge confronting the District is the persistent achievement gap between student racial groups and gender. There is great resolve on all fronts, both within and outside of the District, to address this challenge. The challenge to address the achievement gap is compounded by diminished financial resources that have resulted in fewer programs and larger class sizes. The reduced financial support is primarily due to two factors: an inadequate level of support from the school finance plan of the State of Minnesota and declining student enrollment. Concern and frustration over necessary budget cuts are very palpable across the District and were noted within the student, parent and staff focus groups. This bleak financial picture along with public perceptions of failure, in part due to a fixation on test scores, were often cited as primary reasons for increased employee frustration. Employees and parents often cited the fiscal constraints confronting the School District might be better addressed by “right sizing” in terms of the number of schools to be closed, elimination of programs and a critical review of the Choice program and associated transportation costs.

Frayed relationships between teachers and administrators, buildings and central office, and the school board and administration were consistently reported. It is clear that considerable work needs to be done in order to reconstruct a trusting, healthy working environment and improved relationships between different constituent groups of employees. Frequently noted as a key to establishing a more trusting relationship is improved communication to include more timely communications and a deeper level of listening by all parties. Unclear role definition was often cited in two unrelated areas; School Board governance and Site Council authority and function. School districts, when confronted with fiscal crises, are often accused of having too many administrators and this was noted within the feedback forms and in our conversations.

The nurturing and growth of relationships with the numerous partners noted earlier in this report is of a fragile nature and will need the timely attention of the new superintendent along with all other components of District leadership.

**Desired Characteristics of the Next Superintendent**

The respondent stakeholders are looking for an education leader who is passionately committed to the service of students. Frequently noted was the need to find an authentic leader who is honest, open, visible, genuine and one who can build trusting, healthy working relationships with the many varied constituent groups. The person must have a deep commitment to St. Paul and reflect an understanding of the nuances found within the culture and politics of the State of Minnesota and more specifically, the City of St. Paul. Each of the HVA associates involved in the process was struck with the strong desire of community
participants to find someone who is committed to the area and will become one of us. This commitment to the community is hopefully reflected in a long tenure as superintendent.

The superintendent of schools in the State’s capitol city needs to embrace the leadership role that she/he plays as a leader of education within the State of Minnesota and on the national stage. A visionary leader who has demonstrated ability to reduce the achievement gap is desired. Many difficult decisions await the new superintendent and the individual needs to possess the courage to make decisions that are in the long-term best interest of students and the school district. The St. Paul community expects someone who is culturally competent and understands the unique beliefs, backgrounds and expectations of the varied cultures found within the School District.

Next Steps

The St. Paul community has a strong desire for the St. Paul Public Schools not only to succeed but to achieve unparalleled success. Finding the ideal person to assume the role of superintendent and lead the School District to this goal is the next challenge. HYA associates will actively reach out to identify the most highly qualified candidates, although it would be unusual to find all the desired qualities in a single individual. The task confronting the St. Paul School Board and HYA is to find that uniquely qualified individual who will successfully address the challenges that the St. Paul Schools currently face and those challenges that lie beyond the horizon. The Board should work collectively to build mutual trust, set clear priorities communicate often and support the District’s incoming administrative leadership in making a difference.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Blaesing
Diana McCauley
Vicki Roy
Bill Attea
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd.
PLEASE SHARE CHARACTERISTICS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

CONSISTENTLY REPORTED

• A creative manager of resources with the courage to make difficult decisions that reflect the long-term best interest of students and the School District.
• A deep appreciation and understanding of the history, culture and politics of the St. Paul Public Schools, the City of St. Paul and the State of Minnesota.
• ADMINISTRATOR = minister to the needs of the students, staff, parents and greater St. Paul community.
• An authentic leader who can build effective and healthy working relationship both within and outside of the organization.
• An individual with demonstrated ability to create high performing teams built upon a relationship of trust.
• A visible, ethical, accessible and calm personal with professional style.
• Commitment to stay the course and current direction found within the strategic plan of the St. Paul Public Schools.
• Culturally competent with an understanding of the role that race plays in education.
• Demonstrated track record of improving student achievement and reducing the achievement gap.
• Excellent communication skills and in particular the ability to genuinely listen to all constituent voices.
• Passion for the work needed to create and sustain a high performing urban school district meeting the needs of all students.
• Recognizes and embraces his/her role as a leader not only of the St. Paul Public Schools but within the City of St. Paul, State of Minnesota and the nation.
• Visionary leader who has the ability to continue the work of defining who we are and where we are headed.
• Willingness to become a genuine and committed member of the community.

SCHOOL BOARD

• Able to anticipate future developments and scenarios.
• Able to work with all facets of the School Board.
• Ability to connect personally with students, families, community and all staff/faculty.
• Effectively continues the work of engaging the business and philanthropic communities.
• Embraces and honors the work that has been accomplished prior to their arrival.
• Intelligent and well versed in the most recent thinking on such subjects as board-superintendent relations, pedagogy, community relations and leadership.
SCHOOL BOARD (Continued)
• Is visible, approachable and can build connections with our diverse constituent communities.
• Passion for the job and duties.
• Politically savvy.
• Recognizes their role of not only leading St. Paul Public Schools but also their role as a leader in the City, State and Nation within and outside of education.
• Skill to build connections and spend time in the community with both informal and formal organizations.
• Understand the need to stay connected to the followers in order to be an effective leader.
• Vision and the courage to pursue the vision.

ADMINISTRATION
• A working understanding of St. Paul, Minnesota and St. Paul Public Schools.
• The culture of “Minnesota Nice” many times leads to conflict avoidance and the new superintendent needs to understand this culture.
• Ability to continue rather than start over.
• An authentic leader and person.
• An expert at creating an effective and healthy Board and superintendent relationship.
• Approachable.
• Calm.
• Collaborative yet has the courage to make difficult decisions.
• Effective supervisor.
• Effective team builder that can build healthy working relationships.
• Inspirational – able to identify a vision for the next 10 years and confident enough to pursue the vision with vigor.
• Involved and visible within the community. Needs to have an understanding and appreciation for the nuances of the culture and politics of St. Paul and Minnesota.
• Master communicator and in particular listening skills with both internal and external audiences.
• Purposeful.
• Seasoned superintendent with teaching and principal experience.
• Visible.
• Willing to stick around for the long run and not just three years. Committed to the St. Paul Public Schools and the community of St. Paul.

CITIZENS, COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS
• A seasoned education leader who has the proper credentials to be licensed as a superintendent.
CITIZENS, COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS (Continued)

- Able to navigate the politics of this region – it can be a political beast.
- Ability to do more with less.
- Build and expand relationships with business, philanthropic and higher education communities.
- Commitment to a long tenure – this is not a three year program and we need someone with the conviction and courage to lead long-term change.
- Culturally competent
- Effective in developing a healthy and functional relationship with the School Board.
- Experience as a superintendent is desired or with a strong understanding of how schools and school boards function particularly in an urban environment.
- Excellent communication and in particular listening skills.
- Focus on fewer priorities – able to distill complexities down to 3 or 4 things and find solutions for them.
- Honor the work of those who have preceded them in this position. Much good has been accomplished and now is not the time to attempt to set course on a completely new set of goals.
- Inclusive and collaborative leadership style while holding people accountable.
- Keep their eye on the prize which is student success first and foremost.
- Non-traditional superintendent such as a CEO from a private business who knows how to do more with less.
- Persistence, commitment, inclusive, vision, drive, passion, courage and visible.
- Proven ability to raise student achievement and close the learning gap.
- Visible in our community and embraces St. Paul as their home.

FACULTY

- Ability to kindle a sense of hope within our students, parents and teachers.
- Ability to make good decisions as opposed to fast decision.
- An authentic genuine leader and administrator rather than a manager.
- An educator with experience in the classroom.
- Governs through wisdom and encouragement rather than fear
- Knowledge of the St. Paul Public Schools past and current situation.
- Innovative and resourceful.
- Invest in us to become better as opposed to the current model of attempting to fix us.
- Record of success in improving student achievement, school finances and developing healthy relationships with stakeholders to include teachers.
- Someone who will become one of us and stay with us for a long tenure of service.
- Student focused.
FACULTY (Continued)

- Visible, supportive, collaborative, honest, trustworthy, genuinely respectful, excellent communication skills and in particular listening.

PARENTS

- A high level of knowledge and understanding of different cultures.
- Ability to unite various interest groups.
- Approachable, honest, sincere.
- Bold and courageous leadership.
- Experience and expertise in the best practices of urban education. Someone who is intentional in addressing the teaching and learning quality that will lead to academic achievement for all students.
- Long-term commitment to St. Paul.
- Someone who understands our community, is one of us, lives here and spends time to get to know us in a genuine fashion. They need to be the best fit for our community and not necessarily the flashiest set of credentials.
- Transparent leadership style.

STUDENTS

- Devoted to our community.
- Experience as an educator in a public school.
- Good communicator with teachers, parents and students.
- Good personality and public relation skills.
- Open minded.
- Someone who will come to our schools, talks to us, gets to know us and looks at things for themselves. Our schools are very unique.
- Understand federal and State laws so that our school district can receive adequate funding.

SUPPORT STAFF

- A bridge builder to the community, staff, parents and students.
- A demonstrated knowledge of dealing with a very diverse city, student body and staff.
- Ability to share a vision and lead without the use of manipulation and deception.
- An effective promoter of our district and the wonderful programs and services available within the St. Paul Public Schools.
- Communicates in a friendly way.
- Committed to our community and understands the challenges and assets that are found within the St. Paul community.
SUPPORT STAFF (Continued)
- Honest, trust worthy, compassionate, courageous and has a large dollop of common sense.
Superintendent of Schools

School District

Position Profile

The Board of Trustees of the School District seeks a leader with a proven record of successful executive management to guide one of the premier school districts in to achieve recognized world class status. Its mission is to educate every child every day, so all young people realize and maximize their individual potential to become responsible, productive and contributing members of the community and society. This urban district has a wealth of diversity in its student community, which is 58% Hispanic, 30% Anglo/Other, and 12% African-American, and is made up of 62% economically disadvantaged and 25% Limited English Proficient students. The district serves more than 82,000 students on 113 campuses, operating with an annual general fund budget of approximately $850 million and more than 11,000 employees.

The successful candidate must possess exceptional leadership skills to raise the academic bar for all students and eliminate the achievement gap; to continue the implementation of the district’s 2005-2010 strategic plan and current initiatives; to bring innovation and creativity to enhance the district’s operations and academic programs and develop a new strategic plan for the future of the district; to develop and direct an executive team and to serve as the primary ambassador for the district with the school community and broader public. The Board of Trustees will offer a competitive compensation package. Non-traditional candidates will be considered.

Successful candidates must have:

- A strong commitment to the values of public education, to the district’s children and to the community.
- Successful experience leading a large, diverse organization dedicated to ambitious goals, high standards and continuous improvement strategies with high expectations for performance and accountability at all levels.
- A proven ability to increase academic accountability for results at all levels; increasing student achievement, closing gaps, increasing graduation rates and decreasing drop-out rates.
- A proven ability to motivate, develop, support and delegate to a high-performing and caring leadership team of central office staff, teachers, principals and support staff.
- Demonstrated experience in embracing and promoting diversity and working well in diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural and socio-economic communities and environments; demonstrated ability to bring diverse communities together to work for genuine equity of opportunity for all children, and is culturally-sensitive and competent.
- A demonstrated record of fiscal responsibility in challenging times and of data-driven decision-making; building and managing a highly competent team to oversee daily operations and finances.
- Expertise in facilities planning and working with local citizens and groups, city councils, regional and state planning groups to develop a cost-effective facilities master plan for renovations, technology improvements, as well as determining sites for future new school construction.
- Exceptional analytical, planning and organizational skills to implement and update the district’s strategic plan to make it a “living document,” to maintain a strategic direction with a balance of perspectives and to set priorities in concert with others.
- Experience in using data, with a focus on real-time data, to drive both academic and operational decisions; motivating others to move in the directions to which the data point.
- A proven record of working effectively with employee associations/bargaining units.
• Experience with reconstituting and transforming low-performing schools; thinking strategically and systematically to address the schools' needs and to increase student achievement.
• Experience with expanding school choice options; magnet programs and schools, charter schools, advance placement and IB programs, school to work initiatives; all adding more rigor and interest to educational opportunities.
• Successful experience in developing and sustaining an ethic of caring and service to schools, children, parents and the school communities served; valuing equity and equality for all students.
• A proven record of successful results for special education students as evidenced by state and federal accountability data; recognition of fair and consistent special education placements and willingness to listen to parents and be responsive to their needs.
• An understanding of the connection between student health and student achievement, and that schools need to educate the whole child, including social, emotional, physical development and academic needs.
• Successful experience in implementing or a thorough understanding of the role of a strong and consistent curriculum to meet the needs of all students at all grade levels.
• A proven collaborative management style for building effective teams and consensus around issues, initiatives and a common agenda; effectively engaging others in problem-solving and decision-making; demonstrating openness and self-confidence, inspiring trust and modeling high standards of integrity.
• Experience with resolving similar types of challenges facing in a setting or district with similar characteristics, shifting demographics, the size of and the growth patterns of.
• Demonstrated high levels of engagement with and support of principals, of visits to schools and classrooms; being highly visible in all parts of the school communities.
• Experience in sparking dialogue and promoting the role of partnerships and collaborations in all sectors of the community, in government, higher education and private enterprise to support continuous academic improvement in the district.
• Excellent communication skills to reach out, listen reflectively and to effectively establish dialogue and open channels of communication with all stakeholder groups; students, parents, employees, education associations, advocacy and community groups, government/elected officials, higher education, the faith community and business and foundations.
• Experience in working effectively with Boards, managing information flow and meetings to facilitate effective use of time and sound decision-making; experience in Board member orientation and development and in fostering positive two-way individual and collective Board-Superintendent relationships.
• Demonstrated experience with state legislative matters; having the political acumen to work effectively with state and locally-elected officials and government entities.
• High energy leadership, displaying vision, being a calculated risk-taker; being articulate, persuasive and highly visible in the schools and throughout the community in order to be the district's chief spokesperson and a relentless and tireless advocate for all students.

Application Criteria:

• At least five years of executive-level experience managing a complex and diverse organization, preferably in an urban setting.
• Practitioner experience as a principal, central office administrator or superintendent in a large, diverse urban district preferred; classroom experience also preferred.
• Master's degree in education, public or business administration or other related fields; earned doctorate preferred.
• Must have or be eligible for certification.
Appendix K

Sample Superintendent profile from CGCS Member School District

Atlanta Public Schools
Leadership Profile Report
May 2, 2011

Introduction

This report represents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attes & Associates (HYA) on April 11 and 12, 2011 for the Board of Education of the Atlanta Public School District (APS). A number of additional conferences were held via telephone subsequent to the two dates the consultants were in Atlanta for the interviews. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews, telephone conferences or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders.

The questionnaire, interviews and focus groups were structured to gather data to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics it might seek in its next school superintendent. Through this process, the consultants sought to identify the personal and professional characteristics desired in the superintendent, as well as the skill sets necessary to maintain what constituent groups value in the District and to address current and emerging issues which the District might be facing.

Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Personal interviews or focus groups</th>
<th>Online Survey</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>Board</td>
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<td>Community</td>
<td>114</td>
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<td>Support Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,624</strong></td>
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The consultants probed participants to ascertain **Strengths of the District**, **Challenges/Concerns/Issues facing the District** and **Desired Characteristics** for the new superintendent. A summary of collective thoughts from the various groups are represented in the following narrative to give a sense of what constituents are thinking about in these areas.
Additional responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in the Consistent Themes section if they were consistent across all or most stakeholders groups interviewed. The Consistent Themes represent the major ideas shared by stakeholders during the interviews. These ideas may help form the basis for the Board’s consideration of the desired characteristics in the next superintendent.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the judgment of the consultants, they warrant the Board’s attention.

The report also features the online survey which serves as additional information to show how constituents rank basic leadership categories. While all leadership categories are important, the results of the survey will assist in giving the board a sense of the level of importance the various leadership categories are to the Atlanta community.

Taken as a whole, this information is intended for the Board’s use as board members discuss the desired characteristics they seek in the new superintendent and as they consider the needs of the school district.

**Strengths of the District**

When probed by the consultants, a number of constituents struggled with readily stating strengths of the school district. However, a sizable number were most willing to discuss the strengths of the district and the pride that they had in the services provided by APS to the community’s children and families. Many feel that the district has a good reputation both regionally and nationally. They attributed the strong reputation to the positive light that has been accorded to the district over the last few years in spite of the recent challenges. They believe that the district will weather its challenges and regain its regional and national profile.

Constituents gave high marks to the unusual support that the school district has received from the business community. Equal pride was expressed in the philanthropic support that the school district has experienced over the past few years. Most believe that APS is unique as an urban school system based on the strong external support shown by many facets of the community. Some believe the school district is the beneficiary of the strong national image that the city of Atlanta enjoys. There is some sense that the schools are supported externally to keep pace with the strength and pride of the city.

Credit was given to the school district for making major strides in improvement over the past decade. Cited were improvement of student achievement and new programs that have assisted in raising the bar for all students.

Most gave credit to the district for maintaining a strong tax base and keeping relative financial stability even in these challenging economic times. Concomitant with financial stewardship is the recognition of the major improvement of the physical infrastructure of the school district over the past few years. Highlighted are the building of new schools and renovations of older
structures throughout the district. It also was stated that the school district is endeavoring to keep pace with technology in all of its buildings.

An academic advancement that brings pride to the district is the transformation of the high schools to smaller learning communities and the positive changes that have accompanied the restructuring. Pride is also expressed in small neighborhood schools with small class sizes as a benefit that many school districts do not enjoy.

Finally, many gave credit to the staff that are committed to the children and often go above and beyond to meet the needs of the students they serve. Most agree that the greatest asset of the Atlanta Public Schools is its potential.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues facing the District

Constituents of the Atlanta Public Schools perceive many challenges and concerns with the school district. Headed the list is the immediate concern of the threat to the district’s accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Many are confused about the issue of possible loss of SACS accreditation and expressed various opinions regarding the reasons. Some believe that the threat is tied directly to the unresolved cheating scandal that has plagued the district for the past several months. Others relate the SACS intervention to school board governance issues. Some observers tie the two issues together, citing the handling of the cheating scandal as an example of the need to improve the political climate within what appears to be a seriously divided school board.

Most generally believe that communication from the district can be vastly improved. It was stated often that communication appears to be selective and tends to conceal some of the serious issues that are occurring with the school district. A better public relations program that is more open was cited as an improvement that is needed by the school system.

Public perception of the school district seems to have waned over the past few years. There are some feelings that certain segments of the school district receive preferential attention. Some noted that the demographic breakdown of the city is not reflected in the school system. It was stated that the city’s racial demographics are approximately 60% White and 40% ethnic minority and the school district has nearly a 90% ethnic minority population. Some indicated that the dip in student achievement is directly related to a demographic shift that reflects more economically distressed families residing in the school district where is was once a more balanced population economically.

Some believe that the current and past shift of demographics is related to public perception, lack of trust and apathy toward the school system. Feelings are that the restoration of trust in the APS will be a long road back, given the many public issues that are facing the school district.

A less than acceptable student achievement and graduation rate were discussed as critical issues that need to be resolved in spite of some reports that would indicate that there are great improvements in these areas. The need for new approaches was discussed such as curriculum
revision and charter schools. Transformation was a theme that seemed to resonate with many constituents.

Many noted that there appears to be a pulling away from the school system by the current supportive business community as well as philanthropic organizations. Most indicated that restoration of faith in the school district by the patrons of the systems as well as influential stakeholders is critical to any possibility for improvement.

**Desired Characteristics**

After consultation with the Atlanta Public Schools community, including its internal and external publics, it is determined that the new superintendent should demonstrate high levels of integrity and honesty, be open to new ideas, be approachable and accessible, seek and value the opinions of others, embrace diversity, and serve as a team builder.

In addition, constituents believe the School Board should seek a student-centered educational leader who can:

- articulate a vision, set high standards, and effectively lead the executions of improvement in the performance of administrators, staff, students, and the entire school system.

- build an effective management team and organization in an environment of mutual trust and respect.

- develop positive working relationships and collaboration with a wide variety of constituent groups including external partnerships.

- establish priorities that center on the needs of students when reduced revenues require difficult budget decisions.

- demonstrate a proven track record for leading a similar school district in the improvement of student achievement.

- demonstrate highly effective communication skills, both written and verbal.

- produce major positive changes by using proven methods as well as innovative ideas.

- provide strong leadership in curriculum and instruction improvement and be knowledgeable of current research and best practices in the design and implementation of programs.

- show courage when it comes to having to make difficult decisions.

- understand and effectively use data to drive decisions that will lead to the improvement of the entire school system.
• work effectively in an environment where professional associations and organized unions are present and active in the school system.

• work with the environment of caring parents and community and seek consensus when possible.

• work with the school board to maintain good relationships and assist the Board in the understanding of and the execution of its respective governance and oversight roles.

There was general agreement that the new superintendent should be a courageous individual capable of making tough decisions when necessary and ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of children. The individual should be politically savvy and capable of dealing with many competing interests and opinions.

The individual selected is expected to be highly visible and a tireless worker who is engaged in the schools and all segments of the school district community. Experience as leader with a proven track record of success in a similar environment and school district size is preferred.

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the APS Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to increase academic expectations and student performance and to meet the unique needs of each of the schools and communities.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings, telephone conferences or completed the online survey. Also, we would like to thank Dr. Howard Grant and his staff who assisted with our meetings and other logistical requirements, as well as their efforts in facilitating our time in the District.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Edwards
William Attea
Consistent Themes

Strengths

- Access to capital funding
- Business community support
- Committed parents
- Diversity
- Facilities and infrastructure improvements
- Financial acuity
- Good structure in place for improvement of the system
- Good tax base
- Great place to live
- High school transformation
- National profile
- Philanthropic support
- Some outstanding teachers throughout the district
- Strong sense of pride in most schools
- Supportive city

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Administrative staffing
- Budget
- Collaboration
- Communication
- CRCT Investigation
- Demographics
- Divided board
- Graduation rate
- Politics and political climate
- Public relations
- SACS accreditation threat
- Student achievement
- Trust

Characteristics

- Ability to work with the school board to help them function as a team
- Accessible
- Collaborative
- Courageous
- Data driven
- Empowers good administrative staff
- Excellent communication skills
- Experiences as a teacher and administrator
• Financial knowledge
• Good listener
• Help community to understand the issues and solutions
• Inspirational
• Instructional leader
• Integrity
• Open and honest
• Politically savvy
• Progressive
• Proven track record for success in similar system
• Responsive to the community
• Strong leader
• Transformational
• Values diversity
• Visible
• Visionary
Atlanta Public Schools
Online Survey Results
April 2011

Overall Results - All Stakeholder Groups

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<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
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<td>Management</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Values</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above chart consolidates and summarizes the responses to the 41 questions for the online survey into six leadership categories. Please note that 1 is the lowest and 6 is the highest ranking that can be given to an item. On the basis of the 1624 responses received, “Vision and Values” is ranked as the most important leadership skill set area. “Instructional Leadership,” while important, was ranked as the lowest category of importance.

The following numbers of respondents completed the survey online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1624</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next two pages illustrate the results for each stakeholder group. The final page of this section lists the 10 questions that received the highest ratings among the 41 questions on the survey.
Results by Stakeholder Group
For Students (n=65)

Results by Stakeholder Group
For Support Staff (n=154)

Results by Stakeholder Group
For Parents with Child currently in school (n=508)

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates
Atlanta Public Schools Leadership Profile Report
## Top Ten Questions
### As Ranked by Overall Stakeholder Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>PageName</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>ADM</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>FAC</th>
<th>216</th>
<th>533</th>
<th>501</th>
<th>64</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VISION AND VALUES</td>
<td>Demonstrate integrity, honesty, and fairness.</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS</td>
<td>Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>VISION AND VALUES</td>
<td>Promote high expectations for all students and personnel.</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>Apply policies and procedures fairly, wisely, and consistently.</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION</td>
<td>Communicate effectively the plans, goals, and progress of the district to the Board, staff, parents, students, and the community.</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel management teams throughout the district and its schools.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VISION AND VALUES</td>
<td>Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the district.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>Identify, confront, and resolve district issues in a timely manner.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>CORE KNOWLEDGE COMPETENCIES</td>
<td>Possess strong understanding of organizational and educational leadership.</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>VISION AND VALUES</td>
<td>Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner.</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L

Sample Search Process, Proact Search Firm
Appendix M

Sample Search Process, Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates

HYA Superintendent Search Flow Chart

BOARD

- Selects Consultant
  - Approve Selection Criteria
  - Approve Ad Content

- Initial Interviews with Recommended Slate (Semifinalists)
- Follow-up Interviews with Preferred Finalists
- Selects One Preferred Finalist

CONSULTANTS

- Planning Meeting with Board
- Interview Board, Staff, Community Representatives
  - Develop Leadership Profile
  - Present Leadership Profile Report to Board

- Prepare Search Publicity and Publish Vacancy Notices
- Recruit Candidates Utilizing National Networks
- Review & Process Applications
- Correspond with Candidates

- Conduct Reference Checks
- Identify Best Qualified Candidates
- Interview Selected Candidates

- Conduct Board Seminar Re: Interview Procedures
- Present Slate of Semifinalists to Board

- Site Visit Finalist
- Extend Contract Offer
- Assistant Appointment
- Superintendent Assumes Position

- Professional Due Diligence Background Report
- Assist Board with Site Visit Planning
- Assist Contract Preparation

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