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2016-2017

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Sponsorship and Appreciation

The AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice would like to thank AASA, The School Superintendents Association, in particular the AASA Leadership Development Office, for its ongoing sponsorship of the Journal.

We also offer special thanks to Kenneth Mitchell, Manhattanville College, for his efforts in selecting the articles that comprise this professional education journal.

The unique relationship between research and practice is appreciated, recognizing the mutual benefit to those educators who conduct the research and seek out evidence-based practice and those educators whose responsibility it is to carry out the mission of school districts in the education of children.

Without the support of AASA and Kenneth Mitchell, the AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice would not be possible.
Special Recognition and Thanks
to
Christopher Tienken

AASA, The School Superintendents Association would like to assume editorial privilege in this volume to thank Dr. Christopher Tienken for the time and effort he has given to the AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice. Chris took on the challenge of editing the Journal in spite of a full class load as assistant professor in Seton Hall University’s Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy in the College of Education and Human Services.

He had a vision in January 2009 for what the Journal could be and undertook that mission with thirty-one volumes published under his leadership.

We are indebted to his contributions. In addition to reviewing hundreds of manuscripts, always with an eye on those that met the criteria he and his editorial review board set forth, he then assigned the manuscript to one of his editorial board of review members through a blind peer review for input. From that input he assigned it to whoever was working as his teacher assistant at the time to fine-tune the article. He did a final review before sending off to us for formatting and final editing. Where there were missing pieces or uncertainty, he was able to achieve a quick turnaround with writers so that we could meet publication deadlines.

The time he gave to the Journal and AASA is incalculable and so we simply say, “Thank you Chris for all you’ve done as editor to make this publication a meaningful dialogue connecting scholars and practitioners.”

Daniel A. Domenech, PhD
Executive Director
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Editor’s Note

For the past two years, as an associate and then co-editor, I have had the opportunity to learn from Chris Tienken. As noted in the recognition, in this voluntary role, Chris has made exceptional contributions to the field of education by ensuring that the ideas and research of scholar-practitioners find their way to school leaders who are responsible for implementing policy that is often not well-informed by research. Some of the issues have included provocative pieces to stimulate debate while others have provided discussion about the extent or quality of evidence to support or challenge pedagogical, curricular, or institutional initiatives, many of which are being mandated by changes in law or regulation. The selection of the literature has been done with the purpose to make the journal useful to its readership.

These goals will continue. We lead, teach, research, and debate in a time of great uncertainty about the future of schools and how we deliver learning experiences to our children and support those working with them. As a veteran superintendent, principal, and teacher, I have seen much change, and now an associate professor of educational leadership, I am witnessing an emerging generation of school leaders who more than perhaps ever need to be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to recognize the reforms that are grounded in research and experience rather than rhetoric and ideology.

While there are many publications that can provide such information to current and future leaders, we are positioned through AASA to have immediate access to district-level school leaders. Knowing the potential impact, it is my intent to continue in the spirit that has been established by Chris Tienken. I also want to invite the readership to participate by making suggestions for topics and for the scholars and practitioners out there to continue to send their work our way.

Ken Mitchell, Editor
AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice
Principal Selection: A National Study of Selection Criteria and Procedures

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Abstract

Despite empirical evidence correlating the role of the principal with student achievement, researchers have seldom scrutinized principal selection methods over the past 60 years. This mixed methods study investigated the processes by which school principals are selected. A national sample of top-level school district administrators was used to investigate their practices when selecting principals. Results of this study indicated top-level school district administrators are inclined to select principals who possess four attributes: communication skills, student-centered orientation, people skills, and curriculum and instruction knowledge. Top-level school district administrators attempt to identify these attributes primarily through subjective methods. However, if student achievement is a primary objective of K-12 education, the methods of selecting school principals should be commensurate with that objective.

Key Words

principal selection, administrator selection, student achievement, human resources
Over 60 years ago Greene (1954) believed principal selection would improve in the future as the role of the principal expanded bringing new and improved methods of selection. Subsequently, researchers have reported little to no change in principal selection methods since the 1950s (e.g., Flesher, 1956; McIntyre, 1974; Palmer, 2014; Wendell & Breed, 1988).

With public schools demonstrating an inclination toward status quo processes and cultures (Frias, 2014) and empirical evidence that a principal has an effect on student achievement, researchers have questioned why many school districts still rely on methods that are unsystematic.

As stated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (1971) “Much is known about the effective procedures that may be followed by a school district embarking upon a course of action designed to aid in the selection of a principal. Unfortunately, too frequently, little of what is known is put to use” (p. 22).

The focus of this mixed methods study was to investigate how top-level district administrators select principals and, more specifically, to answer the research question: Which selection criteria and procedures are used to evaluate school principal candidates during selection?

The research question was developed based on a review of principal selection research spanning over 60 years. While results of this study indicated top-level school administrators use several selection criteria that may be helpful in selecting school principals, the primary procedures used to select school principals are the least predictive and least reliable of methods available to assess candidates during selection processes.

Top-level school district administrators should review, and possibly change principal selection processes within their districts to ensure the most capable leaders are hired, as these principals will certainly have an impact on student achievement.

Review of Literature
The principalship and student achievement
Since the 1970s, education researchers have sought to determine if a correlation exits between the principal and school success and student achievement.

Despite the complexity of researching antecedents and consequents of student achievement (Heck, 1992), researchers have provided empirical evidence that school leadership has an effect on student achievement (e.g., Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Gullatt & Lofton, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck, 1992; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Gullatt and Lofton (1996) found a principal’s ability to govern, collaborate, and organize instruction was critical to student achievement.

A study by Waters et al. (2004) suggested that an increase in the ability of school leadership directly translated to empirical student achievement gains within schools. Conversely, they also reported a “differential impact” where leadership shortcomings translated to missed student achievement gains.

The role of the principal is a critical component of student achievement; therefore, the selection criteria and assessment methods used to select principals is a salient issue in the student achievement discussion.

Selection criteria, then and now
The purpose of selection criteria has been described both in early and more recent
principal selection literature as a function to differentiate candidates (e.g., The American Association of School Administrators, 1967; Kwan & Walker, 2009).

The American Association of School Administrators (1967) provided a strongly worded statement regarding the use of criteria in separating “outstanding” candidates from “incompetent” and “ordinary” ones (p. 34). The criteria purportedly used to assess principal candidates have changed dramatically over time and appear to focus more on educational leadership and less on ascriptive characteristics (e.g., race, age, gender).

Since the 1950s, selection criteria have ranged from gender, age, race, religion, marital status, and trivial personal habits to quantifiable attributes that affect student achievement (e.g., Waters et al., 2004).

In recent years, the ability to build relationships and leadership were among the top traits sought in school principals (Alkire, 1995; Palmer, 2014). Rammer (2007) studied principal selection in Wisconsin and found superintendents believed the 21 leadership responsibilities developed by Waters et al. (2004) were important for assessing candidates.

Despite the importance of selection criteria to select principals (Cornett, 1983), Parkay and Armstrong (1987) believed districts ignore criteria in the principal selection process.

“Fit”
The term “fit” as a principal selection criterion appears to have been first used by Baltzell and Dentler (1983), although Kahl (1980) described the same phenomena as “local tailoring” a few years earlier. Baltzell and Dentler (1983) defined “fit” as “interpersonal perceptions of a candidate’s physical presence, projection of a certain self-confidence and assertiveness, and embodiment of community values and methods of operation” (p.7).

The use of “fit” appears to have endured throughout principal selection literature as it has been mentioned numerous times (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Baron, 1990; Blackmore, Thomson, & Barty, 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Grummell, Devine, & Lynch, 2009; Kwan & Walker, 2009; Palmer 2014; Walker & Kwan, 2011). The use of “fit” by principal selection researchers often invoked the proliferation of homosocial reproduction in school districts (Blackmore et al., 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Grummell et al., 2009); however, some researchers have deemed “fit” as a logical necessity (Baron, 1990; Kahl, 1980).

Selection procedures
Interviews are the most commonly used method within the principal selection process (Anderson, 1991; Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Kwan, 2012; Palmer, 2014; Rammer, 2007; Schmitt & Schechtman, 1990; Walker & Kwan, 2012; Wendel & Breed, 1988). However, the shortcomings of interviews within principal selection are well known (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Blackmore et al., 2006; Hogan & Zenke, 1986; Kwan & Walker, 2009; The American Association of School Administrators, 1967).

According to Levine and Flory (1975), interviews serve the purpose of allowing selectors to gather and interpret relevant information from candidates. Yet, despite their ubiquity, interviews have minimal predictability of success and validity (Hogan & Zenke, 1986), even when highly structured (Ash, Hodge, & Connell, 2013). Baltzell and Dentler (1983) concluded the majority of interview questions they encountered throughout their study were unanswerable in terms of providing any type of
candidate appraisal. Furthermore, in research conducted by Rammer (2007) regarding 21 leadership responsibilities, superintendents had almost no specific procedures for eliciting information about any of the 21 leadership responsibilities they felt were important to consider when selecting principals.

**Decisions and merit**
Selection decisions are a source of consternation for researchers as they have found the “best” candidate often is not selected. Baltzell and Dentler (1983) reviewed the hiring practices of numerous school districts during their study and found selectors frequently disregarded the most-qualified candidate due to spurious reasons.

Blackmore et al., (2006) and Gronn and Lacey (2006) reported that merit within principal selection had been minimized in favor of reproducing a prototypical administrator who would maintain the status quo. In addition, Palmer (2014) reported relationships between selectors and candidates, “in-house” hiring, gender, and “fit” are factors that often override merit in selection. However, Baltzell and Dentler (1983) and Palmer (2014) also found evidence of merit-based hiring and exemplary practices in their studies.

**Methodology**
A mixed method design was used to investigate criteria and procedures used by top-level school district administrators to select school principals. Mixed method studies strengthen research by using both qualitative and quantitative methods in lieu of either method separately (Creswell, 2009).

A mixed method approach was used to triangulate the level of importance top-level school administrators placed on specific procedures used to select school principals.

**Data analysis**
Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data analysis was done using coding techniques associated with constant comparative method.

Two coders analyzed the qualitative data and, by comparing results at several different intervals during data analysis, an inter-coder reliability of at least .80 was established.

According to Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007), the use of multiple coders allows reliability of the data to be tested. Furthermore Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2002) assert the use of multiple coders is an essential component of establishing validity in qualitative studies.

**Participants**
The criterion for selection of participants was to be either a superintendent or a school district human resource manager. State education school directories along with county and district school websites across the United States were used to obtain 12,229 superintendent email addresses that included superintendents from each of the 50 states.

E-mail addresses were incorporated into a spreadsheet, assigned a unique numerical value and selected for this study using a random number generator. Superintendents were asked to forward the survey to their chief human resource officer if they were not able to complete the survey. The survey was sent to 4,031 participants with 114 surveys being returned for a 2.8% response rate. Participant demographic data are displayed in Table 1.
Table 1

Participant Demographics by Percentage of the Sample (n=114)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Age range</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>55 years and older</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.R. Asst. Supt.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>46-54 years</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.R. Director</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>35-45 years</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>&lt; 35 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Years as top-level administrator</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race-ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>21 or more</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instrument**

The researcher, in conjunction with an expert panel consisting of two top-level district administrators having doctoral degrees and familiarity with principal selection, developed the instrument used in this study.

The instrument was reviewed for face and content validity by another panel consisting of three top-level district administrators and two university professors of education familiar with human resource practices.

Revisions were made based upon feedback from the review panel. The instrument consisted of one checklist question, four open-ended response questions, and 13 Likert-scale questions. Participants were asked Likert-scale questions such as “How important is a candidate's résumé in making a hiring decision for principal,” and open-ended questions such as “How do you define educational leadership as an attribute you look for in a school principal?”

**Results**

**Selection criteria and procedures**

Participants listed nearly 150 desired attributes for school principals. The most common attributes were communicator (56 responses), student-centered (40 responses), people skills (34 responses), curriculum and instruction knowledge (32 responses), and integrity (22 responses). The top 12 responses are displayed in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Attributes top-level school district administrators seek in school principals. This figure illustrates the top 12 attributes study participants sought in school principals during selection.

Participants chose procedure(s) they use to select school principals from a checklist that included nine of the most common procedures noted in the literature. Results of the procedures participants use to select principals are displayed in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Procedures top-level school district administrators use to select school principals. This figure illustrates how many participants indicated they used each respective method listed.

An open-ended response question following the procedure survey item allowed participants to describe any other procedure(s) they use that were not on the checklist. Most of the participants indicated they used interviews (113, 98.3%), résumés (111, 96.5%), and reference checks (108, 93.9%) to select school principals.

The use of an essay or written statement was noted by a large number of participants (78, 67.8%). Participants noted 18 other procedures used to select principals such as meetings with stakeholders, site visits, one-on-one conversations, and the use of the Gallup Principal Insight Assessment.

Within the survey, participants were also asked to indicate on a four-point Likert-scale the importance of seven of the nine most commonly used procedures to select principals. Most participants indicated interviews (111, 97.3%) and reference checks (108, 94.7%) were important or very important procedures.

Reviewing résumés (82, 71.9%) and the use of written statements (79, 69.2%) were seen as important or very important by a large number of participants. Participants viewed performance tasks, written assessments, and presentations as less important. Results for Likert-scale procedure survey items are shown in Table 2.
Table 2

Participant Responses to Procedure Survey Items by Percentage (n=114)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference checks</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Résumé</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written statements</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance tasks</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fairness within principal selection**

Participants answered several wide-ranging questions on a four-point Likert-scale regarding their selection processes. Few participants (26, 23.0%) believed it was important or very important to hire principals from within their districts.

Over one-third of participants (43, 37.7%) indicated they selected principals from outside of district often or very often.

Most participants (109, 95.6%) indicated they were likely or very likely to select the best candidate if the candidate was from a district other than their own. Most of the participants (108, 94.7%) described their overall hiring process for selecting principals as fair or very fair.

Less than one-third of participants (36, 31.6%) described their district-wide administrative teams as having a general prototype. Finally, most of the participants (109, 95.6%) described “fit” as important or very important when making a hiring decision a principal vacancy.

**Definitions of educational leadership**

Participants described 51 different aspects of education leadership within their definitions. The most reported aspects of educational leadership were curriculum and instruction knowledge (23 responses), having the ability to motivate others (19 responses), and a student-centered focus (17 responses).

Figure 3 depicts the 11 most common aspects that define educational leadership according to participants of this study.
In one open-ended question, participants were asked to describe any processes they considered to be innovative when selecting principals. Forty-six participants described procedures they believed to be innovative, and some of these responses included several different procedures. Sixty participants did not respond to the question, and five participants indicated their district did not use innovative procedures.

The most common innovative procedures noted were performance tasks (13 responses), interviews with stakeholders (8 responses), and site visits (4 responses). The participants also provided examples of performance tasks, which included analyzing data and reporting findings or strategies to a mock panel, conducting a mock teacher evaluation and reporting the results to a mock panel, and preparing and delivering a professional development activity to a small group. Some participants mentioned interviews with stakeholders and included panels comprised of students, parents, community members, and teachers.

Site visits were mentioned by several participants and included observing the candidate at their current site, or at the school site where they were applying for the position, and engaging in a range of activities such as meetings, evaluations, or question and answer sessions with stakeholders.
One other practice a participant described as innovative was using Google to find additional information regarding the candidate.

**Conclusions**

**Which principal selection criteria are important?**

Selection criteria top-level school district administrators seek in school principals include attributes that are important for a school principal to possess (e.g., communicator, student-centered, curriculum and instruction expertise).

The large number of attributes noted by participants demonstrates school districts’ diversity of needs and the complexity of the principalship, as the position requires many attributes to be successful. One attribute participants seldom mentioned was the ability to raise student achievement. However, three participants specifically mentioned student achievement in the corresponding survey attribute item.

Also, raising student achievement was mentioned 11 times within the survey item for defining educational leadership. Whether or not school districts specifically seek candidates that can raise or sustain student achievement requires further study.

Principal candidates that may possess the top 12 attributes found in this study (i.e., communicator, student-centered, people skills, curriculum and instruction expertise, and integrity, etc.), along with an ability to raise or sustain student achievement, could be excellent school principals.

However, two obstacles may diminish the chances of these attributes being identifiable in a particular principal candidate: (a) the candidate’s inability to demonstrate the attributes and (b) the school districts’ inability to objectively assess for the attributes.

**Subjective and unreliable methods**

The procedures participants used to select school principals should be of concern not only to top-level school district administrators but also to the public at large. Despite school principals’ empirical and anecdotal importance to a school’s success, school districts appear to persist in the use of the least reliable and least predictive methods to select school principals.

Top-level school district administrators considered interviews, reference checks, and résumés as the most important principal selection procedures in use. Interviews are especially well known within principal selection literature to have major shortcomings (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Blackmore et al., 2006; Hogan & Zenke, 1986; Kwan & Walker, 2009). Even if an interview is highly structured, this minimally increases the reliability (Hogan & Zenke, 1986).

The American Association of School Administrators (1967) considered reading candidate horoscopes to be as valid and reliable as reviewing candidates’ submitted materials (e.g., reviewing resumes and recommendation letters). Using subjective methods creates a reliance on intuition as the primary assessment for evaluating principal candidates.

The use of selector intuition in the hiring procedure is extensively noted within principal selection literature (e.g., Gronn & Lacey 2006; Morgan, Hall, & Mackay, 1983; Parkay & Armstrong, 1987; Rammer, 2007; Wendell & Breed, 1988). With student achievement at stake, the use of sixth sense assessments should be abated and more objective procedures implemented.
Objective and reliable methods
Assessments, when developed, used, and interpreted appropriately, result in high levels of objectivity and reliability, especially when designed with psychometric rigor.

Organizations have used assessments when making hiring selections since World War I. Acceptance of assessments for hiring in business organizations grew during the 1940s and 1950s, becoming widespread in the 1970s (Guest & Meric, 1989).

That school districts have not adopted assessments in the principal selection processes is curious considering the need for greater objectivity and reliability.

This finding is especially curious considering assessments were used to select principals during the 1950s (Greene, 1954) and were becoming more popular in the late 1960’s (The American Association of School Administrators, 1967).

However, the finding that participants in this study reported at least some use of assessment is cautiously promising, although the psychometric rigor of these assessments is unknown.

The documented use of performance tasks within principal selection spans many decades. While a performance task can be as subjective as other processes (e.g., interviewing and reference checks), school districts could develop objective performance tasks for use in principal selection to increase the rigor of their selection processes.

The use of assessments and performance tasks by top-level school district administrators to select school principals requires further study.

Merit-based selection
Merit-based selection within principal selection research has been noted as an important issue since the 1950s. Results of this study indicate that most participants believed their processes are fair or very fair.

Only a small percentage of participants indicated their selection processes are somewhat fair, a surprising admission from top-level school administrators. Selectors’ perceptions that their processes are fair or that they hire based on merit are not substantiated by principal selection studies that examined the principal candidates’ perceptions (e.g., Blackmore et al., 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Palmer, 2014). Palmer (2014) posited that research on selectors’ perceptions tend to paint selection as fairer than research soliciting the perceptions of candidates, even when soliciting the perceptions of current school principals.

Another interesting finding in this study was that only a small number of participants indicated it was important to select principals from within their districts, and only a small number indicated a general prototype of administrator throughout their districts. Yet, almost all participants described “fit” as an important attribute in selection.

These perspectives appear to be contradictory, as “fit” typically describes congruence between candidates and selectors. Results of this study raise more questions regarding the use of merit-based principal selection practices. Whether or not principal selection is a merit-based process warrants further study.

Educational leadership defined
Baltzell and Dentler (1983) sought to determine how top-level school district administrators defined educational leadership in a national
study; however, a specific definition was not found. Participants in Baltzell and Dentler’s (1983) research defined *educational leadership* as a term that included several characteristics: curriculum and instruction knowledge, motivator, student-centered, communicator, achievement-centered, having and carrying out a vision, collaborator, able to build school culture, results oriented, professional development expertise, and people skills.

Participants in the current study also noted the same attributes in one of the survey items. These attributes may help in identifying what makes a principal successful, thereby contributing to a definition *educational leadership* and helping school districts to narrow their selection criteria.

Also, objective procedures could then be designed to evaluate these criteria. Aligning procedures with objective evaluation of desired selection criteria to improve principal selection should be a high priority for top-level school district administrators.

**Experimenting with objective methods**
Ash et al. (2013) thought one obstacle to implementing research-based practices in principal selection was the variation of contexts. However, this view of principal selection is problematic, as it diminishes the potential for change.

In 2007, Rammer made a long overdue plea for school districts to reform principal selection in ways that were similar to recommendations made by other researchers over the last 30 years (e.g., Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Blackmore et al., 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Palmer, 2014). Results of the current study indicating school districts rely on subjective principal selection practices are consistent with the findings of other research investigating principal selection (e.g., Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Blackmore et al., 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Palmer, 2014).

Experimentation might be the only way to improve school districts’ principal selection processes, as districts may be entrenched in subjective hiring practices.

The most common innovative practices noted by participants in this study are promising for the future of principal selection, although, these practices must be empirically evaluated. Australian researchers, Wildy, Pepper, and Guanzhong (2011), developed a performance task that incorporated fairness, and had good construct validity and robust reliability.

Several performance-based tasks involving “real-world” scenarios were used to assess candidates. Rigorous scoring procedures were developed to ensure fairness, and scorers had to undergo bias reduction training and follow strict procedures during the process. The Wildy et al. (2011) performance task appears to be one of the only empirically tested methods in principal selection literature over the last several decades.

School districts and universities should consider collaborating to design objective methods and assessments, as university faculty would likely possess the knowledge and expertise to develop assessments with psychometric rigor (The American Association of School Administrators, 1967).

While some school districts have been found to have exemplary practices in principal selection (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Palmer, 2014), this study and the literature indicate subjective practices prevail (Palmer, 2014; Rammer, 2007). If principals are vital for school success and student achievement as
researchers have reported, the methods used to select school principals must be improved. School districts should judiciously work to develop objective methods for principal selection in order to better accomplish the primary purpose of K-12 education, student achievement.

**Author Biography**

Brandon Palmer is a school administrator at Antelope Valley Union High School District in Littlerock, CA. He writes about educational leadership and conducts research on principal selection as a post-doctoral student in affiliation with the doctoral program in educational leadership at California State University, Fresno’s Kremen School of Education and Human Development. E-mail: brandonp0803@gmail.com
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Career Advancement for African American School District Leaders: A Qualitative Study on Aspirations, Barriers, and Trust

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Abstract

In this article, the authors describe the use of phenomenology and thematic analysis to interpret raw data from interviews about the lived experiences of urban and suburban school African American administrators aspiring to the superintendency or another advanced school administrative position. The authors present overarching themes that capture the phenomenon of the lived-experiences of these administrators. Themes and findings are examined related to confidence, barriers, trust, and diminished aspiration. Recommendations are provided for further research to advance the opportunity for African American leaders to secure positions as school superintendents or other advanced administrative positions.

Key Words

superintendent, race, equity, barriers, confidence, African American, aspirations
During the fall of the 2014 school year, it was projected that the racial makeup of children in schools nationally would make an important shift. Maxwell (2015) writes, “... for the first time in history, the overall number of Latino, African-American, and Asian students in public K-12 classrooms is expected to surpass the number of non-Hispanic whites.”

The United States Department of Education National Statistics (2014) previously projected this shift in racial makeup. According to enrollment projections through 2024, White children enrolled in K-12 schools nationally will continue to decline, while Hispanic, Asian/Pacific and children of two or more races will continue to grow.

While Black students show a slight decline, this decline is minimal in comparison to the more significant decline for white students projected to enroll in K-12 schools as displayed in Figure 1.

Figur 1: U.S. department of education student K-12 enrollment

†NOTE: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Prior to 2008, separate data on students of two or more races were not collected. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Data for 2024 are projected. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD).

This same demographic shift is evident in Minnesota. Of the 857,039 students enrolled in schools in Minnesota in 2015, 29.5% are students of color. In the three largest school districts in Minnesota (Anoka Hennepin, St. Paul and Minneapolis), the percentage of students of color ranges from 24.6% to 77.6% to 66.4% respectively (MDE, 2015).
The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education projects that by 2019, the composition of public high school graduates in Minnesota alone will shift significantly. White non-Hispanics will decrease as a share of the total population while Hispanics, Blacks, and Asian Pacific Islanders will all continue to grow (2013). While these data points alone signify a country with a changing racial makeup, they also illuminate the continued urgency we face to eliminate predictable educational racial disparities. We already know that children of color fare much worse in school than White children. This is a known national and local concern. The National Association for Educational Progress (2012) data indicate insignificant change in the width of the gap in achievement levels between students of color and White students (Raskin, Krull, & Thatcher, 2015).

The Minnesota Department of Education achievement data (2015) reveal predictable racial disparity patterns that mirror national trends. In the last five years, in both math and reading, the data reveal a steady and unchanged racial discrepancy between the achievement levels of White and Black students. Black students, for example, achieve results that are approximately 30 percent lower than White students in math and reading.

Given these two clear patterns, changing demographics and racial achievement disparities, there is an urgent need for leaders of color to serve as school superintendents or in top leadership positions within school districts. While there are several key strategies to eliminating predictable racial disparities in schools, one that emerges as obvious is the need for students of color to see people of color leading their school experience. Campbell (2015) contends that with more than half of American public school students as children of color, school leadership should reflect student enrollment. Closing the leadership gap in education is integral to improving educational outcomes for students of color. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) reports that we have a long way to go in terms of more proportionately seeing leaders of color in leadership roles within the K-12 system: “We are nowhere near representing the population that is in our schools. These students need role models. When they see a brown or black face walk into their classroom, especially as the superintendent, they think ‘wow’ that could be me” (Domenech, n.d.).

Racially and culturally competent school leaders are essential to interrupting the predictable academic patterns of achievement for students of color. Leaders of color can empathize with students of color and provide a racial perspective when making decisions about student learning, as they have likely overcome barriers to achievement themselves. These attributes alone position them to allow students of color to see themselves in their leader and to guide school systems in eliminating practices and protocols that interfere with learning for students of color.

Leaders of color, because of lived experiences, bring a cultural and racial understanding of the learning needs of students of color. Camille Smith, (2005) indicated the importance of leaders of color, “Culturally competent leaders are individuals who develop and enact a vision of schooling that truly addresses the need for all students. They work to eradicate the distorted notion and stereotypes about students of color and create specific conditions and practices to address the needs of diverse students” (p. 28). Leadership matters when it comes to addressing changing demographics and racial disparities. We simply do not see leaders of color emerging as rapidly as needed into school leadership positions.
The AASA American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study of more than 1800 superintendents and 50 states found that only 2% of respondents categorized themselves as African American and another 2% as Latino. More than half of the superintendents of color were employed in school districts where the minority population exceeded 50% (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, & Ellerson, 2010). Additionally, in Minnesota, of the 320 school districts fewer than 4% have superintendents of color.

Statement of the Problem
Leaders of color are underrepresented as district superintendents or district leaders in proportion to the current and growing number of children of color in our schools. This is significant since historical efforts to successfully educate a growing population of children of color have failed. If we are to create pathways to leadership for more leaders of color, it is crucial to understand why leaders of color are currently underrepresented.

While candidates of color are striving for advanced leadership work, they are not securing the positions. According to Jackson (2008), “It’s not that there aren’t qualified candidates of color, instead they are not pursuing top school leadership positions” (p.25). Additionally, “African American candidates are rarely considered for positions in non-minority districts” (Jackson, 2008, p.25).

A study of the experiences of administrators of color found that the administrators believed the interview process for top executive positions was different for people of color than for white candidates. For candidates of color there was a more rigorous background check. The administrators further stated reservations about taking a top-level executive position. They questioned whether the school and community would allow them to do their jobs without focusing on their race (Kane, Fontana, Goldberg, & Wang, 2008). Additionally, AASA reported that administrators of color were more than twice as likely as their white peers to report they had encountered discrimination in their pursuit of the superintendency (Kowalski et.al, 2010).

It is apparent that the experiences leaders of color have while aspiring to higher school leadership positions are marked by resistance and barriers. Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, (2008) write, “We started thinking that African Americans are not getting the credit they deserve; they do not always have the doors opened; and when they get there, they are evaluated differently” (para 2). They suggest that even though explicit barriers have disappeared, well-trained leaders of color do not advance to leadership positions at the same rate as whites, suggesting evidence of a “white standard” to which leaders of color are compared.

The study that follows is dedicated to understanding the experiences of African American leaders as they have aspired to the superintendency or other advanced leadership positions. Further, the results will, in part, explain why African American leaders are disproportionately represented in top leadership roles within the K-12 educational setting.

Method
The broad perspective governing this research is qualitative in nature. Phenomenology was employed as a means of qualitative research and “provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). The central phenomenon of interest for this study was the lived experiences of African American school leaders with aspirations
toward the superintendency or another advanced administrative position. Each participant shared the following two universal phenomena: (1) African American administrators, licensed as superintendents and (2) aspirations toward the superintendency or another advanced administrative position.

Through identifying, describing, and understanding these phenomena, the researchers were able to comprehend how the administrators viewed themselves and their experiences. Further, by listening to the varied stories, experiences, and conditions of the participants, a deeper understanding of the shared perceptions and apparent effects of those experiences emerged.

Finally, greater knowledge was achieved regarding the disproportionately fewer African American leaders in prominent K-12 leadership roles.

Participants
The participants were selected to participate in the study due to their shared phenomenon as Minnesota school administrators. All were African American leaders with extensive levels of experience and advanced academic degrees. These leaders were also licensed as principals and superintendents.

All participants were current school administrators in school districts ranging from 10,000 to 35,000 students. The participants were known to the researchers. This known background knowledge of the participants provided the needed information to include them in this study. Participants are described in Table 1.
Table 1: Participant Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Description</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Years of Experience in Education</th>
<th>Positions Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. African American Male (A.H)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Master’s Degree Educational Doctoral</td>
<td>8 years’ experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher Principal Assistant Superintendent Superintendent*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. African American Male (J.P.)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Master’s Degree and Educational Specialist</td>
<td>12 years’ experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher, school administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. African American Female (C.S.)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree, Master’s Degree and Educational Specialist</td>
<td>20 years’ experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher, Principal Assistant Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. African American Female (A.L)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree. Master’s Degree and Educational Specialists</td>
<td>17 years’ experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. African American Female (G.J.)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Master’s Degree and Educational Doctorate</td>
<td>25 years’ experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher, Principal, Assistant Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. African American Female (J.T)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Master’s Degree and Educational Doctorate of Philosophy</td>
<td>26 years experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher, Principal, District Office**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. African American Female (C.K.)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s, Degree Master’s Degree Educational Doctorate</td>
<td>21 years’ experience in education</td>
<td>Teacher, Principal, District office***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Was appointed to a superintendent position during the study
** Appointed by the superintendent to a district level position.
*** Appointment was made just prior to the study.

Data collection
Two semi-structured focus groups and seven semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. Participants met first as focus groups to respond to the following two questions: What are your aspirations related to advancing your career to either the superintendency or another advanced leadership position and what are your experiences related to aspiring to the superintendency or another administrative position? Each focus group met
for three hours. In addition, individual follow-up interviews were held with each participant for one hour. This created the opportunity to more thoroughly understand the context and effects of the lived experiences by the participants as discussed in the focus group.

This opportunity also gave the participants the chance to follow up on the focus group questions and speak more freely about their personal experiences. All group and individual interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

**Data analysis** All transcribed text was downloaded and analyzed through NVIVO 10 (QSR International), a qualitative research analysis software program. NVIVO 10 was chosen because of the potential for complex coding, analysis, and code summary reporting and thematic analysis support. NVIVO 10 was used by both researchers to separately code the text. Bryman’s four stages of qualitative text analysis was followed (2008).

The text was read entirely first, establishing broad themes, then re-read and marked for more specific themes. The strength of the theme was determined through indexing, coding and frequency.

Finally, relationships and connectedness of themes and subthemes was confirmed. To validate the overarching themes and sub-themes, the researchers compared and contrasted their separately identified categories and code frequencies, searching for broad and then specific agreement on selected phenomenon, themes and sub-themes.

**Findings and Themes**
An analysis of the text revealed four overarching themes and three sub-themes relating to the lived experiences of leaders of color while attempting to advance their careers in education. These themes are listed in their order of appearance during the interviews:

1. Confident with Leadership Aspirations
2. Barriers
   a) Racial
   b) The Need to Prove
   c) Microaggressions
3. Limited Trust in the Systems Designed to Advance Leaders in Education
4. Diminished Aspirations

These particular themes emerged because of the frequency of the citations coded under the same category and because nearly every participant described an experience of this same genre.
The themes are listed in the order in which the participants described their experiences and as their stories unfolded. The theme, racial barriers, was by far the most prominent theme with the greatest number of text citations.

1. Confident with Leadership Aspirations
Early on, the participants described themselves as confident and ready to make important change. They saw themselves as having the potential to lead with a clear aspiration to contribute:

> When people talk about the achievement disparities, I get really serious, and it’s always been in the center for me. I aspire to be a superintendent where I can help be the face of a system to make significant changes (C.K, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

All participants expressed a sense of confidence and a positive vision for their capacity to meet the expectations required for an advanced position:

> I want to be a superintendent and say, ‘I’m going to be the one that does it. The career chose me, meaning that there were things that I felt like I needed to do (A. H, personal communication, April 10, 2014).

They believed in themselves. Participants expressed the idea that they are leaders and that they were prepared:

> I remember my counselor from my high school told me that I shouldn’t go to college because I didn’t have leadership skills. I said, that’s interesting. I pretty much lead everything I’ve been involved in (J.P, personal communication, June 6, 2014).

C.K. discusses this aspiration as follows:

> So I don’t know that I had this grandiose plan to be a principal or superintendent, but it was that I am a leader and I truly have this confidence and this ambition and desire to help and make a change (C.K, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

This theme indicates that the participants could see themselves as advanced leaders: ready and hopeful. Early on in their pursuit of advanced positions, they expressed a strong vision for their own leadership.
2. Barriers: Racial, Proof and Microaggressions

While the participants had hopes and aspirations of either leading as superintendents or in advanced roles, they experienced roadblocks or barriers. These barriers, however, emerged in various forms. The participants described barriers through the following sub-themes: a) racial in nature, b) the requirement to prove their quality, and c) microaggressions.

a) Racial

Race emerged, to the participants, as an unwelcome interference. It was rarely present as a support for their interviewing or job-seeking experience. Universally, the participants described this barrier as overt, expected and unfair.

G. J says it in this way:

\[ I \text{ have three different things against me. I’m a woman, I’m black and I have an accent. No matter how smart I am, no one believes me (G.J., personal communication, May 21, 2014).} \]

Additionally, she explained:

\[ I \text{ was told I was too dark for a picture for my badge. I came in and they said I was too dark for the camera. So I took a badge and I said, ‘we have a camera for the black folks’, and I left. Then they called me and I said, ‘Oh, wait I have a better camera.’ That is what kills me (G.J., personal communication, May 21, 2014).} \]

Tied to overt racial barriers was the anticipation that their own beliefs related to equity leadership in schools would be an added, and often risky, problem. To the participants, this meant that their jobs were already on the line due to their race; therefore, leading on behalf of race would further compromise their job security:

\[ I’ve \text{ watched too many other people’s careers end who believe the same way I believe and they’re white, so it’ll be really quick for me to end my career being a black woman and doing the fight on equity work (C.S., personal communication, May 21, 2014).} \]

The feelings of personal pain and anguish emerged as participants navigated their surroundings. Leaders hoping to advance their personal careers tried ignoring the racial barriers they experienced, almost hoping that the racial context was not actually what it appeared to be. However, the realization and confirmation of these barriers created emotional stress:

\[ \text{In the work I do, I try to suppress the notion of racism because we are really trying to make a difference for the people we’re serving. Even if we know that the notion of racism exists and that lack of desire to give us an opportunity is there, I suppress it and then when it happens that frustration, anger, hurt and disappointment come up because it’s confirmed (C.K., personal communication, May 27, 2014).} \]
The theme of race as a barrier was both overt and covert. As they sought to advance their careers, they were confronted with direct and indirect racial inquiries. Moreover, women of color felt they faced not only racial barriers but gender barriers as well.

b) The Need to Prove
Participants described the need to prove their quality and readiness for advanced leadership work. The fact that they needed to over-sell themselves simply because of their race was evident:

*I have to create my own job and sell it...I knew I had to work hard, had to create it and prove myself, and show I can do it. Even after observation, after observation, I knew I would have to prove myself and that’s just the life of a black woman with an accent* (J.T., personal communication, May 29, 2014).

These leaders appeared to internalize the need to be extra prepared—owning the notion that the organizations would not be a ready for them as leaders, therefore anticipating the requirement to “prove” and even fight for their jobs:

*I feel like the people around this table have proven themselves. We know that as a black males or females we will always have to prove ourselves and play the game. Here in Minnesota, people aren’t ready for the people who are sitting around this table. You just have to be ready as a black person and leader leading white people. When you’re really in charge there is just something you really have to be ready for. You have to be ready for the fight. I don’t know if the fight will ever go away* (J.P., personal communication, June 6, 2014).

The constant feeling of having to appear much more qualified than other candidates was discussed as an unfair practice to participants. Further, the idea that who there were, as they were, was not nearly enough to achieve higher-level positions. The only way the participants could envision advancement was by becoming someone other than who they were. The challenges experienced by these individuals led to participants second-guessing their own identity, instilling a limited sense of self-efficacy.

c) Microaggressions
Sue et al. (2007) define microaggressions as, “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (p. 271).
Our participants found they experienced these kind of subtle interferences that often felt like small paper cuts every day. The constant and, at times, subtle snubs, insults and derailments contributed to their routine feelings of personal disappointment:

_The following year I got a building and the first thing people said was that I’m not qualified. What qualification does she have to start this school? I was like okay, this is the test. It came as a huge price, a personal price_ (G.J., personal communication, May 21, 2014).

The microaggressions were often presented as frustrating and confusing experiences that contributed to self-doubt and second-guessing by the participants:

_But then something comes up that I want to apply for, not in my district. I decide to ask the superintendent for a little reference. Normally when I ask for something or email my supervisor he emails me right back at least some time during that day. He never emailed me back and he never responded. I called him out in the parking lot one day and I just asked him, What’s going on? and he apologizes because he said, I know I didn’t email you back. I said, Yes, I know. When you don’t email me back, I make up stuff in my head about what’s going on_ (C.K., personal communication, May 27, 2014).

These microaggressions disrupted the participants’ thinking and sense of direction, because the rationale for the interactions was not fully understood. As barriers, microaggressions are often the most insidious because of their initial lack of transparency.

3. Limited Trust in the Systems Designed to Advance Leaders of Color

Eventually, the participants described the compounding effect of these barriers on their trust in the systems designed to advance leaders into higher positions. This diminished trust was either with the search firms dedicated to advancing leaders into higher positions or the systems they were working in:

_If did not trust the search firm at all. I didn’t trust the search firm that was pushing me forward. I think that they knew whom they were going to push forward. I actually thought the only reason why I was one of them (the applicants) was because I was pushing myself forward; it wasn’t because they were pushing me forward. I was selling myself--but you see, I went in like that because they didn’t come after me. They didn’t recruit me. So I knew that I had to sell myself and as a black woman, you just know that_ (C.S., personal communication, May 21, 2014).
The lack of trust emerged because these participants expected the system to fail them. Having experienced it before, they described the patterns and anticipated the outcomes:

I don’t necessarily trust the system. I truly don’t because whether it’s looking for entry-level or top--level positions, I believe that the system is set up to weed people out first. Obviously, there are people you don’t want for the position, but then there are subtleties that are systemic or like soft racism infused into it to weed other people out and that’s generally people of color (A.L., personal communication, May 27, 2014).

In general, participants believed that the very presence of a leader of color would be too much for the system to handle; therefore, they did not have faith that the system would advocate for them:

Well, I have very minimal trust. Looking at trust in the true sense of the word, I believe that one day there will be a time for people like men ... but to trust within the system to promote and uphold or value the skills that we bring is very, very rare, limited. Cause when you look at the situation, if you are really doing your job and due diligence, you are like a threat and people will try to either discourage you, undermine you, or even ignore you totally ... putting you in a situation where you don’t shine (J.P., personal communication, June 6, 2014).

Mistrusting the process or people involved in advancing them professionally was a result of earlier experiences. These lived-experiences or barriers eventually turned into beliefs that the search firms or organizations of which they were a part would betray them, let them down, or simply not create a pathway to successful job advancement.

4. Diminished Aspirations
Eventually and finally, participants reported diminished aspirations their ultimate career goal, with a degree of fatigue and letting go:

I don’t know if I’m willing to do that kind of hard work anymore but I am willing to, if the door was open ... but, the hard work I’ve already done I’m not willing to do it anymore. Either it’s going to happen or it’s not. It’s kind of where I’m at now, because I’ve been through that, trying to do not only what I thought people expected, but what I expected (A.L., personal communication, May 27, 2014).
Participants altered the level of their aspirations. They still had a belief in themselves and passion for their work but not at the level to which they once had aspired.

For example, C.K explains:

*My aspiration has changed. Not that I necessarily don’t believe in fighting, because I’ve done that for 58 years* (C.K., personal communication, May 27, 2014).

Further, C.S describes this in the following statement:

*My aspirations have changed (but) I still think that there are a lot of things that I would like to offer in school systems where people may not understand differences. People who don’t realize they need someone in there to help them see the bigger picture* (C.S., personal communication, May 21, 2014).

Eventually some participants even determined that, in fact, they might be more effective in a position that was at a lower level within the system. They reframed their contributions and pointed themselves in a new direction with less authority:

*At this point, I don’t necessarily have a desire to be a superintendent. Again, I don’t want to offend anyone, but I don’t believe that you have the ability at that level to make the change that you really think you’re making because of the politics. I truly believe that at the assistant superintendent,* or even more so, at the building level, *you can affect and have more change* (J.T., personal communication, May 29, 2014).

This theme suggested that these leaders who began with high aspirations to advance their own careers in education eventually lowered their personal expectations or changed them. Often the changed personal goal was redefined to a lower level position that they felt would be a better fit with a greater opportunity to make a difference.

**Discussion**

A thorough analysis of the themes associated with the lived experiences of the participants in this study has led to a deeper understanding of the *meaning* of these experiences, along with the ability to tie them together for greater cohesion. What emerged were four broad themes with subthemes. It was clear that the African American leaders in this study began with confidence and a belief in their own potential. As they pursued their professional goals, they were faced with barriers. These barriers emerged in various forms. At times, the interference was in the form of a micro-aggression, a subtle or confusing snub, jab or derailment. Additionally, participants either self-imposed or adhered to imposed requirements to over-prove their qualifications for the job. Finally, they believed they faced
barriers that were directly or indirectly linked to their race. As a result of barriers faced, participants expressed lower levels of trust.

This diminished trust was either with the search firms dedicated to advancing leaders into higher positions or within the school systems where they worked. Eventually, the participants showed less interest in advancing professionally, found reasons to stay where they were or sought a position that was less than they had originally intended. In the end, they aspired for lower level positions or even questioned the value of seeking higher-level positions. While the summation of these experiences marginalized career aspirations, the onset of racial battle fatigue (Smith, Yosso, & Solonzano, 2006) is also present. The cumulative effect of racial microaggressions pointed to various forms of personal anguish, distress and exhaustion.

Additionally, the degree to which participants had internalized and nearly accepted the racial stereotypes as a way of navigating forward is not only concerning but a key factor in their personal career advancement.

**Conclusion**

The themes, described in the order in which they emerged, explain, in part, why these leaders did not emerge as school superintendents or achieve the advanced professional positions they had hoped to achieve.

These themes were (a) confident with leadership aspirations, (b) barriers, including racial, the need to prove, and microaggressions, (c) limited trust in the systems designed to advanced leaders in education, and (d) diminished aspirations. The sequential nature to which the themes emerged suggests that one experience led to another. These leaders moved from strong interest in career advancement as
top district leaders to a disbelief in possibility and personal potential. Therefore, based upon the themes and discussion, the following four recommendations are important and necessary:

1. Since search firms and school boards are key to hiring superintendents, it is imperative that these agencies engage in personal and professional training related to racial equity. This personal knowledge will arm them with the skills to advance African American leaders proactively and with intention.

2. Communities should strive for a more racially diverse school board. Board members of color will be equipped, because of their lived experiences, to offer perspectives and solutions for removing barriers that interfere with career aspirations for African American leaders.

3. The culture of a school district should be a place where the barriers described here are identified and removed. Therefore, all members of a school culture should be racially conscious and prepared to eliminate barriers for African American career aspiration. Further, in this kind of environment, African American leaders will be more trusting of career advancement possibilities.

4. Communities everywhere, especially suburban communities where racial demographic changes are rapid, are important settings for change. Communities that engage in dialogue and discussion about race will be more likely to see and remove barriers for African American leaders aspiring to advanced positions in school districts.

In order to see academic change going forward, it is imperative that many more African American administrators are leading at the highest levels of school systems where district-wide decisions are made. Ultimately, a
racially diverse top leadership team will inform and guide school districts toward success. Success of this nature means effectively reaching all students while ensuring that the predictable racial disparities we see today between children of color and white children disappear.

**Limitations of the Study**

Participants in the study were known to one or both researchers, thereby creating the potential for researcher bias. Bracketing was employed intentionally, as a method of setting aside any prior knowledge by the researchers. This study is generalizable only to this group of participants in one geographical area. Finally, only African American leaders were included in the study.

**Implications for Future Research**

The barriers, issues of trust, and diminished aspirations unearthed in this study are worthy of further examination with leaders of color on a broader scale both in terms of numbers and location. An intentional review of each barrier will provide insight into the complexity of the barrier itself.

A deeper analysis with a larger community of leaders of color including leaders who are not African American will provide needed and instructive insight regarding the comprehensive nature of these barriers. Finally, studying African American leaders whose administrative aspirations were achieved will inform us on what was successful, overcome, or immensely challenging.

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The Influence of the Student Mobility Rate on the Graduation Rate in the State of New Jersey

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of the student mobility rate on the high school graduation rate of schools in the state of New Jersey. Variables found to have an influence on the graduation rate in the extant literature were evaluated and reported. The analysis included multiple and hierarchical regression models for school variables (i.e., teacher mobility and school size) and student variables (i.e., percentage of limited English proficient students, special education students, low socioeconomic status, and minority students). All data explored in this study pertained to 316 public comprehensive high schools in New Jersey during the 2010-2011 academic school year, which was the first year of a cohort graduating under the new compact formula. The results of the study revealed that the student mobility rate does influence the graduation rate.

Key Words

student mobility, graduation rate, low socioeconomic status
Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires schools to meet certain accountability measures in order to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and this includes the use of the graduation rate for secondary public schools (NCLB, SEC. 1001).

In 2012, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) provided each State Education Agency (SEA) with the ability to request for itself or its Local Education Agencies (LEA) flexibility in following the mandates of NCLB.

Each state-developed plan must use the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as the accountability measure for improving educational achievement for all students and subgroups (USDOE, 2012). The waiver also requires SEAs to focus on high schools with a consistently low graduation rate.

In addition, states and school districts are required to report on state and local report cards the four-year adjusted cohort rate, including the graduation rate of the subgroups (USDOE, 2012). The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 which replaces NCLB maintains the graduation rate as an accountability measure.

During a time with strong federal and state demands for accountability, mobility has become a challenge many U.S. schools now face. Even with new accountability measures and the many amendments to the accountability requirements, no provisions were made or guidance provided to address mobility as a factor that influences the graduation rate that remains administratively mutable.

Problem, Purpose and Research Questions

The importance of educating students to high school graduation takes on an important role in the political and policy making arenas because of the accountability measures that are now in place. Because NCLB required all states to implement a single accountability system, New Jersey concurred by utilizing the provision indicated in NCLB to calculate AYP for its schools.

In addition, New Jersey has asked for a waiver to the AYP requirement since the “approved flexibility request created differentiated categories of schools, identified as Priority, Focus, and Reward schools” (NJDOE, 2012a, p.1). The criteria used to place schools in the designated categories include “subgroup academic performance, measures of student growth, and graduation rate” (NJDOE, 2012a, p.1).

Education bureaucrats at the New Jersey Department of Education adopted the federal formula for calculating graduation rates at New Jersey high schools beginning with the 2011 high school graduating class.

Utilizing NJ SMART, the warehouse New Jersey uses to store student data, state education officials calculate the adjusted cohort graduation rate for New Jersey’s public schools, publish this rate on the New Jersey School Report Card, and include this data in the AYP calculation of the school.

This new formula, the adjusted cohort graduation rate, “divides the number of 4-year graduates by the number of first-time ninth graders who entered the cohort four years earlier” (NJDOE, 2012b).
The new Performance Report resulting from New Jersey’s approval for ESEA flexibility utilizes the adjusted cohort graduation rate. In this report, a table presents the graduation rate for the school and for each subgroup in the school with comparisons to peer schools and the state average.

The formula, however, does not take into account student mobility and the potential influence of student mobility on a high school’s graduation rate. While school personnel have no control over student mobility, it is one of those factors that can affect a school’s graduation rate. No research exists on the influence of student mobility on the New Jersey graduation rates as calculated by the adjusted cohort graduation formula.

The purpose of this non-experimental, correlational, quantitative study was to explain the influence of student mobility on the calculated graduation rate of schools in the state of New Jersey. This study explained the amount of variance in the graduation rates of New Jersey public high schools accounted for by student mobility percentages at individual high schools and created research based evidence that will assist all in public education with policy creation pertaining to mobile students and graduation rates as accountability measures.

**Research Questions**

I guided this study with the overarching research question: What is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate of New Jersey's high schools? I also considered these subsidiary questions:

1. How is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate influenced by the controlled student characteristic variables of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, percentage of special education students, and percentage of limited English proficient students?

2. How is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate influenced by the controlled school characteristic variables of school size and teacher mobility?

3. How is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate influenced when controlling for both student and school characteristics?

**Conceptual Framework**

In a school district in Northeastern Pennsylvania, Mulroy (2008) examined the influence of school related factors such as school size on students possessing risk factors such as poverty, special education, and English language learners.

One conclusion of the study showed that the school size was not a factor based on the participants in the study. Dalton (2013) studied the relationship of mobile students in high poverty schools and student achievement.

The findings of the study showed “no significant difference between mobile and nonmobile students, mobile and nonmobile African American, Hispanic, and White students” (Dalton, 2013, p. 92).

This study extended Mulroy’s and Dalton’s works through an explanation of the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate in the state of New Jersey controlling for independent variables identified in the literature to influence high school
graduation such as the socioeconomic status of students, percentage of special education students, percentage of English language learners, size of the school, and ethnicity of the students. Both of these studies contain similar variables with a different focus. This study combined Mulroy’s and Dalton’s studies with a specific focus on mobility and the graduation rate.

Theoretical Framework
The literature presents many reasons why students do not complete high school, and the theories surrounding students dropping out of school encompasses various factors. Rumberger (2011) identifies two perspectives – an individual perspective and an institutional perspective.

The individual perspective draws on the theory of how not being engaged either socially or academically can affect student’s achievement in high school. Finn (1989) suggests that disengagement or lack of participation in the school related activities may impede the student’s ability to connect or identify with the school.

Lack of engagement could be the result of instability resulting from student mobility. If a student is always changing schools, he/she may have a more difficult time connecting with the school.

Abraham Maslow’s theory about hierarchy of needs identifies the needs that motivate human behavior. The *Physiological Needs* include the basic needs for physical survival. This includes food, shelter, sleep, and air. *Safety Needs* are associated with feeling secure. “Children need a predictable world and prefer consistency, fairness and a certain amount of routine. When these elements are absent, he/she becomes anxious and insecure” (Goble, 1970, p. 54).

Humans desire to be loved and have loving relationships with people; this includes trusting people. Maslow refers to this need as the *Belongingness and Love Needs*. The *Esteem Needs* include a desire for confidence and recognition, acceptance, attention and appreciation from others. The *Self-Actualization Needs* include the psychological need for growth, development and utilization of potential (Goble, 1970).

Mobile students’ needs are compromised and as a result, their achievement in school which determines graduation is affected. Maslow’s needs are affected by poverty which cause health related issues and affect home, family and community life (Rebell & Wolff, 2008).

Rumberger (2008) argues that it is more of a challenge to reduce the dropout rate in urban schools with a high poverty rate. At the same time, Swanson (2004) found that low socioeconomic disadvantaged districts have low graduation rates.

James Coleman’s theory of social capital is yet another theory which impacts the mobile student and student achievement. Social capital makes it possible to obtain or achieve that which the absence of social capital would not (Coleman, 1988). Ream (2003) defines social capital as “relationship networks from which an individual is potentially able to derive various types of support via social exchange” (p. 238).

According to Coleman (1988), “social relations can constitute useful capital resources for individuals” (p. S102). For example,
Coleman (1988) describes the hypothetical of two people doing favors for one another and building trust with the expectation of reciprocation. Mobile students and their families are unable to build this trusting relationship due to constant movement.

Social capital exists outside the home, within the school and community, and amongst parents, students and school personnel (Coleman, 1988; Ream, 2003). Coleman (1988) discusses intergenerational closure as social capital since it provides parents with social capital in child rearing. This is due to the connections made by parents of different children. These parents become friends as their children are friends resulting in a constant monitoring in the raising of the children in school and community matters (Coleman, 1988). Again, this relationship is nonexistent for the mobile child.

Mobile students loose social capital with each move, and they are unable to develop, build upon, and maintain a networking system of relationships (Coleman, 1988; Ream, 2003). The inability to build upon social capital strains students’ efforts to build relationships and friendships within the school (Ream, 2003). One effect for a child without social capital is not completing high school (Coleman 1988).

Methodology
According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012), “Correlational research involves collecting data to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables” (p. 204).

I used a correlational design to conduct this quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory study to investigate the relationships, if any, that exist between mobility, student and school characteristic variables, and the graduation rate and/or to make predictions. Scores for all variables were obtained for each school in the study, and these scores were correlated with the results, a correlation coefficient, indicating the degree of the relationship (Gay et al., 2012).

I used multiple regression models so that I could determine which student variable (mobility, percentage of special education students, percentage of limited English proficient students, and socioeconomic status) and which school variable (school size and teacher mobility) had a statistically significant relationship to the graduation rate.

In addition, because variance is only accounted for once, predictor variables should be highly correlated to the criterion variable and not highly correlated amongst themselves, as they will be explaining the same variance and only one will have a significant contribution (Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs, 2003).

In this study, I examined the amount of variance in the criterion variable graduation rate that can be explained by the school related and student related predictor variables.

The final sample for this study consisted of 316 public comprehensive high schools in the state of New Jersey. New Jersey has 21 counties, and within these counties are 590 operational public school districts consisting of elementary and middle schools, comprehensive high schools, magnet schools, vocational schools, charter schools, and special education schools (NJDOE, 2010a).

The grade composition of the 590 operational school districts varies, with some consisting of Grades PK-12 and others separated into elementary K-6 or K-8 districts and high school districts. Many of these school districts are regional school districts in that the
student population comes from various sending districts.

The size and grade composition for the high schools vary in that some high schools consist of Grades 6-12, 7-12, 8-12, or 9-12, and the size of these high schools varies with a range from just under 200 students to over 3,000.

For the purposes of this study, magnet schools, vocational schools, charter schools, and special education schools were not included. Schools that were included in the sample met the following criteria:

1. housed only Grades 9 through 12;
2. were considered local public schools and were not part of a sending/receiving relationship with another school district;
3. did not have entrance criteria or discriminate based on standardized achievement scores, special education status, or English language learner status.

Those schools listed as a ninth grade school or schools consisting of Grades 10-12 were excluded in order to keep consistency in the sample.

This study utilized comprehensive public high schools in New Jersey representing all socioeconomic levels and sizes. Vocational schools, charter schools, special education schools, alternative schools, and schools without data for each variable were excluded from the study.

Of the 485 public high schools in New Jersey, 316 provide education to students in Grades 9-12 and have data for each variable in the study.

Data analysis
I used simultaneous multiple regression and hierarchical linear regression to perform the analyses. I checked the data to ensure they met the assumptions for conducting simultaneous and hierarchical linear regression.

The relationships between predictor and dependent variables were linear, as demonstrated by scatterplots; and the residuals were distributed normally and not related to the predictor variables.

Because there are more than two predictor variables to correlate, I ran a Pearson correlation. The simple regression showed the impact of X on Y, its significance, if the relationship is positive or negative, and the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable.

The next set of statistics that I ran was a series of multiple regression equations. I used multiple regression equations in order to take advantage of the predictive power of multiple predictor variables and controlled for student characteristics (socioeconomic status, percentage of special education students, and percentage of limited English proficient students).

Each of these models provided data as to how much of the variance in the graduation rate could be explained by student mobility. The statistical significance of the regression equation revealed whether the equation was statistically significant (p value ≤.005).

The Standardized Coefficient was examined to determine the direction (positive or negative) and possible influence student
mobility may have on the graduation rate. All of the scatterplots had linear regression showing a negative correlation except the scatterplot of the graduation rate and students with disabilities, which shows the points not fitting well, $r^2 = .002$ (see Figures 1 to 3).

*Figure 1.* Graduation rate and student mobility scatterplot.

The scatterplot in Figure 1 shows the relationship between the two variables. The figure has an $R^2$ of .47, which indicates that 47% of the variance of the graduation rate was explained by student mobility.
The scatterplot in Figure 2 shows the relationship between the graduation rate and the percentage of students receiving free lunch which is used to present the socioeconomic status of the school. The figure has an $R^2$ of .497 which indicates that 50% of the variance of the graduation rate was explained by the percentage of students receiving free lunch.
Figure 3. Graduation rate and limited English proficient students.

The Figure 3 scatterplot shows the relationship between the graduation rate and the percentage of limited English proficient students in the school. The figure has an $R^2$ of .264 which indicates that 26% of the variance of the graduation rate was explained by the percentage of LEP students.
A correlation coefficient matrix was analyzed to identify the relationship between the variables (see Table 1). The values of the correlation coefficients are between -1 and +1, which indicates a perfectly correlated negative or positive relationship.

The Pearson receiving free lunch and the dependent variable graduation rate (r = - .705), which is statistically significant (p < .000), and the predictor variable student mobility rate and the graduation rate (r = -.686), which is statistically significant (p < .000).

There is a negative moderate relationship between the predictor variable percentage of Black students and the dependent variable graduation rate (r = -.598), which is statistically significant (p < .000).

The Correlation Table (see Table 1) shows that there is a strong negative relationship between the predictor variable students

### Correlation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Adjusted_Cohort_Grad_Rate</th>
<th>Student_Mobility_Rate</th>
<th>Teacher_Mobility</th>
<th>BlackPER</th>
<th>HispPER</th>
<th>FreePER</th>
<th>LEPPER</th>
<th>DISABPER</th>
<th>ReducedPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>-.588</td>
<td>-.495</td>
<td>-.705</td>
<td>-.514</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student_Mobility_Rate</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher_Mobility</td>
<td>-.222</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlackPER</td>
<td>-.588</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HispPER</td>
<td>-.495</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>-.119</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FreePER</td>
<td>-.705</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEPPER</td>
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<td>.087</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>.572</td>
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<td>-.052</td>
<td>.190</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISABPER</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.009</td>
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<tr>
<td>ReducedPER</td>
<td>-.372</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.310</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. (1-tailed) | Adjusted_Cohort_Grad_Rate | . | 0.00 | .000 | 0.00 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .227 | .000 |
| Student_Mobility_Rate | .000 | 0.00 | 0.031 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | .004 | .000 |
| Teacher_Mobility | .000 | 0.031 | .000 | .008 | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.004 | .260 | .000 |
| BlackPER | .000 | 0.000 | 0.008 | .001 | .000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | .168 | .000 |
| HispPER | .000 | 0.000 | 0.001 | 0.001 | .000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | .017 | .000 |
| FreePER | .000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | .448 | .000 |
| LEPPER | .000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | .180 | .000 |
| DISABPER | .227 | 0.004 | 0.260 | .168 | .017 | .448 | .180 | .437 | .000 |
| ReducedPER | .000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | .437 | .000 |

| N | Adjusted_Cohort_Grad_Rate | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| Student_Mobility_Rate | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| Teacher_Mobility | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| BlackPER | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| HispPER | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| FreePER | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| LEPPER | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| DISABPER | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| ReducedPER | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 | 316 |
The table also shows a strong relationship between the percentage of students receiving free lunch and student mobility (r = .604), the percentage of students receiving free lunch and the percentage of Black students (r = .667), the percentage of students receiving free lunch and the percentage of Hispanic students (r = .729), the percentage of students receiving free lunch and the percentage of limited English proficient students (r = .572) and the percentage of limited English proficient students and the percentage of Hispanic students (r = .678).

The regression method model summary showed that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) was .805 and the Adjusted $R^2$ was .638 for the complete model. Approximately 64% of the variance in the graduation rate can be predicted from the combination of percentage of limited English proficient students, Black students, Hispanic students, students receiving free lunch, students receiving reduced-price lunch, the teacher mobility rate, and the student mobility rate.

According to Morrow-Howell (1994), one way to deal with multicollinearity is to eliminate redundant variables or one of the highly correlated variables. Therefore, I ran the data eliminating the Black and Hispanic variable because in the United States, race is related moderately with poverty. In this sample, the correlation coefficients indicated relationships between .6 and .7 for poverty and race–Black and Hispanic.

In this simultaneous multiple regression model, the combination of variables was statistically significant, $F(6, 309) = 83.98$, $p < .000$.

The R Square is .620, which indicates that 62% of the variance in the graduation rate can be predicted from the percentage of limited English proficient students, students receiving free lunch, students receiving reduced-price lunch, the teacher mobility rate, and the student mobility rate. The elimination of the two variables did not drastically reduce the strength of the model, as the variance went from 65% to 62%.

In Table 2, the beta coefficients are presented and all variables are significant with the exception of the percentage of special education students and the percentage of students receiving reduced-price lunch.

The strongest variables were student mobility, -.399, and the percentage of free lunch, -.368. The others significantly influenced the graduation rate when all variables are included. The Adjusted $R^2$ was .612. This indicates that 61% of the variance in the graduation rate was explained by the model.

The standardized residuals suggested that the residuals in the initial simultaneous regression model were normally distributed. Analysis of the standardized residuals demonstrated acceptable values of around 2.0, as verified through the Durbin-Watson test. (See Table 2)
Hierarchical Regression

Whereas the multiple regression model measured the influence of the predictor variables on the graduation rate together, the hierarchical regression model measured the influence of the predictor variables on the graduation rate separately.

The models were evaluated at the .05 level of significance, which is most common in social science research for significance with the alpha set at .05, the significance threshold used in social science research (p<.05). The Model of best fit included the variables student mobility, free lunch, percentage of limited English proficient students, and teacher mobility.

In Model 1, Table 3, the predictor variable was student mobility and R Squared was .470, which indicated that 47% of the variance of the graduation rate in the model was explained by student mobility. In Model 2, the percentage of students receiving free lunch was added to student mobility and R Squared was .604, which indicated that 60% of the variance of the graduation rate was explained by the percentage of students receiving free lunch and student mobility. The R Squared change from Model 1 to Model 2 was .133, which shows that 13% of the variance was now added by the percentage of students receiving free lunch. This R Squared Change was statistically significant F(1, 313) = 105.07, p < .000.

The third model added the percentage of limited English proficient students, and R Squared was .610, indicating that 61% of the variance in the graduation rate can be explained by adding percentage of limited English proficient students. The R Squared change from Model 2 to Model 3 was .007, which shows that .7% of the variance was now added by the teacher mobility rate.

The R Squared change from Model 2 to Model 3 was statistically significant F(1,312) = 5.51, p < .020. The final model added the teacher mobility, and R Squared was .619, indicating that 62% of the variance in the graduation rate can be explained by adding

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Table 2

**Coefficient Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant) 98.051</td>
<td>1.083</td>
<td>90.563</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher_Mobility -.190</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>-2.524</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student_Mobility_Rate -.484</td>
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<td>-.399</td>
<td>-8.738</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>.011</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.767</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FreePER -.184</td>
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<td>ReducedPER -.075</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>-.701</td>
<td>.484</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEPPER -.313</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>-.108</td>
<td>-2.444</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Adjusted_Cohort_Grad_Rate
limited English proficient students. The R Squared change from Model 3 to Model 4 was statistically significant $F(1,311) = 7.14, p < .008$. (See Table 3)

Table 3

Model Summary Hierarchical Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig. F Change</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.686a</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td>8.13700</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>278.936</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.777b</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.601</td>
<td>7.05187</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>105.070</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.781c</td>
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<td>.607</td>
<td>7.00160</td>
<td>.007</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>.020</td>
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<td>.619</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>6.93366</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>7.144</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Student_Mobility_Rate
b. Predictors: (Constant), Student_Mobility_Rate, FreePER
c. Predictors: (Constant), Student_Mobility_Rate, FreePER, LEPPER
d. Predictors: (Constant), Student_Mobility_Rate, FreePER, LEPPER, Teacher_Mobility

Research Questions and Answers

Research Question 1: How is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate influenced by the controlled student characteristic variables of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, percentage of special education students, and percentage of limited English proficient students?

The VIF scores for BlackPER, HispPER, and FreePER were 3.016, 4.771, and 6.908, all of which were well over 2. This indicated that multicollinearity existed among those variables.

When this occurs, researchers can combine like variables or eliminate the redundant variables. Storer et al. (2012) utilized census data to study the role of race and socioeconomic status of students graduating or not graduating from high school. The results showed a relationship between the variables. The removal of BlackPer and HispPer reduced the VIF score and the model regained significance. The percentage of special education students is not significant. The R Squared was .610, indicating that 61% of the variance in the graduation rate is explained by student mobility, socioeconomic status, and limited English proficient students.

Therefore, results of this study indicate that mobility, along with socioeconomic status and limited English proficiency, are statistically significant predictors of the graduation rate in New Jersey public high schools.

Research Question 2: How is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate influenced by the controlled school characteristic variables of school size and teacher mobility?

The R Squared change tells the reader how much the variable contributes to the model. In the fourth hierarchical regression model, the R Squared change was .009 when adding the variable teacher mobility. This indicated that
only 9% of the variance in the graduation rate was explained by adding teacher mobility. Furthermore, the beta was -.095, confirming that it is not a strong predictor of the graduation rate because a beta closer to 1 has a stronger predictive power.

The summary for Model 2 including enrollment was not statistically significant (p=.305); therefore, the size of the school does not influence the graduation rate in New Jersey public schools. (See Table 4)

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Student Mobility and School Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig. F Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.688*</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td>8.13700</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>278.936</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.687*</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td>8.13627</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>1.056</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>.305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Student_Mobility_Rate
b. Predictors: (Constant), Student_Mobility_Rate, Total_Enroll

Research Question 3: How is the influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate influenced when controlling for both student and school characteristics?

When controlling for significant student and school characteristics, the model summary provides an R Squared of .614, which indicated that 61% of the variance in the graduation rate is explained by the significant student and school characteristics of student mobility, free lunch, limited English proficient, and teacher mobility.

Thus, the results of this study indicated that student mobility, socioeconomic status, limited English proficient, and teacher mobility are statistically significant predictors, accounting for 29% of the graduation rate in New Jersey public high schools.

The null hypotheses were rejected. Student mobility was a statistically significant (p=.000) predictor variable with a beta of -.686 and a t value of -.16.701. Student mobility is a strong predictor of the graduation because the beta (-.686) is close to 1 and the closer the beta is to 1, the stronger the predictive power. Student mobility’s influence on the graduation rate is negative as indicated with the negative beta.

Summary
Student mobility and socioeconomic status accounted for the greatest amount of variance in the graduation rate – 60%. The results from this study suggest that factors school personnel cannot control play a part in determining the graduation rate of that school and school district.

Implications for Practice
New Jersey’s public high schools continue to be driven by federal and state legislation with strong accountability measures that include
reporting the graduation rate and sanctions for schools not producing graduates. Under the current accountability mandate, schools with a graduation rate below 75% are identified as either a Priority or a Focus school, and those with the lowest achievement and graduation rates are identified as Priority schools (NJDOE, 2012b).

While this accountability measure is in place with schools being sanctioned for not meeting the graduation target rate, no empirical quantitative evidence exists on the relative influence variables that schools and districts cannot control, such as student mobility, have on the graduation rate.

The results of this study revealed that mobility was a statistically significant variable that negatively influenced the graduation rate. This means that schools with a high mobility rate tend to have lower graduation rates. The more mobile the community, the likelihood the graduation rate is low.

These results highlighting the negative relationship between student mobility and graduation rates is consistent with the literature when considering the studies of researchers on student mobility and the dropout rate, student achievement, and academic achievement.

The significance of this finding lies in the fact that school officials have absolutely no control on students being mobile, yet they are being held accountable for ensuring that all students graduate from high school and that the school reaches the acceptable graduation rate.

The reason graduation rates are affected by student mobility is that mobile students suffer from lower academic achievement. In some cases, this is due to mobile students not being properly assessed when they enter a new school, resulting in inappropriate classroom placement. In this instance, the mobile student may be in a class where the lesson is moving too fast or too slow. Inaccurate placement and constant movement and changing of schools could result in a mobile student missing portions of the curriculum.

Even with the gaps in curriculum and learning, mobile students are still required to take and pass state mandated assessments. In addition, curriculum delivery varies, as no two teachers teach in the exact same manner. Mobile students have to adjust to different teaching styles more often than non-mobile peers.

The constant changing of schools creates social issues for mobile students. While humans have a basic desire to be loved and have loving relationships with people, including trusting people (Goble, 1970), each move requires mobile students to create new friendships and build trusting relationships with peers and school personnel.

Students’ social interaction can be strained since peer groups are already established. These students have to learn with each move which person in the school provides what type of service. Each change in schools makes it difficult for the mobile student to connect with the school community, resulting in the mobile student not being actively engaged in the school. This effect of student mobility ultimately affects students academically.

High student mobility adversely affects the academic achievement of non-mobile students and the school as a whole. In some cases, the pacing of the curriculum becomes problematic. Teachers in schools with high mobility rates often find themselves adjusting or restarting curricular topics to address the gaps in the mobile students’ learning experiences. They stress that the constant
movement of the mobile student requires them to spend more time on tasks not related to instruction.

As a result, teachers are left with very little to no time to identify gaps in curriculum knowledge (U.S. GAO, 1994). New students added to classrooms during the year require shifts in lesson planning. This shift and slower pace ultimately affects the academic achievement of all students.

A study conducted in California showed that the test scores of non-mobile high school students were significantly lower in highly mobile high schools (Rumberger, Larson, Ream, and Palardy, 1999). Much of this is due to the slower pace of the curriculum and the increased socially related issues of the school as a whole.

The NJDOE has created Regional Achievement Centers (RACs) to assist struggling schools identified as Priority Schools and Focus Schools. The NJDOE believes “if interventions are implemented faithfully … each Priority and Focus School should achieve sustained, positive growth in student achievement that dramatically narrows the achievement gap and sets schools on a trajectory for preparing all students for college and career” (NJDOE, 2010b).

Part of the RACs’ approach is to monitor student performance and progress in Priority Schools during six to eight week cycles and annual performance on state mandated assessments (NJDOE, 2010b). Currently, a number of high schools have been labeled as a Priority School or a Focus School because of their graduation rate. While these schools have graduation rates below 75%, their mobility rate is significant, as they only report mobility for the high school and not what may have happened prior in the elementary and middle schools (see Table 5).
Table 5

Priority Schools and Focus Schools Due to Graduation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL NAME</th>
<th>Adjusted Cohort Gradation Rate</th>
<th>Student Mobility Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden High School*</td>
<td>44.69</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem High School</td>
<td>67.88</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbury Park High School</td>
<td>59.46</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Jefferson Arts Acad High School</td>
<td>53.55</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adm. W. F. Halsey Ldrshp High School</td>
<td>60.27</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John E. Dwyer Tech Acad High School</td>
<td>55.88</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeton High School</td>
<td>67.96</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln High School*</td>
<td>55.39</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingboro High School</td>
<td>69.82</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side High School*</td>
<td>53.71</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Snyder High School*</td>
<td>51.58</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barringer High School*</td>
<td>35.91</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz High School*</td>
<td>63.66</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulsboro High School</td>
<td>62.16</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick High School</td>
<td>58.76</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvington High School</td>
<td>50.47</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plainfield High School</td>
<td>70.12</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic City High School</td>
<td>67.98</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood High School*</td>
<td>70.11</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penns Grove High School</td>
<td>74.03</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poverty, mobility, and the graduation rate in New Jersey have a connection. The high schools labeled Priority Schools and Focus Schools because of the graduation rate have a high mobility and poverty rate or a high mobility or high poverty rate. For example, Passaic High School has a student mobility rate of 9.9%, while the poverty level in the city of Passaic is three times that of the state at 35.9%. Willingboro High School has a poverty rate relatively close to the state’s rate at 14.5%. However, the mobility rate is 26.4%. Camden High School, Salem High School, and Asbury Park High School have the lowest graduation rate and the highest percentage of poverty at 50.3%, 43.4%, and 44.9%, respectively, representing close to five times the state’s level (see Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Mobility Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William L Dickinson High School</td>
<td>69.96</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasantville High School</td>
<td>64.29</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillside High School</td>
<td>66.12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial High School</td>
<td>72.77</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange High School</td>
<td>58.28</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Reg High School</td>
<td>73.42</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passaic High School</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty High School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy High School</td>
<td>71.93</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sig Grant School
Table 6

*Priority Schools and Focus Schools with Poverty Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL NAME</th>
<th>Adjusted Cohort Gradation Rate</th>
<th>Student Mobility Rate</th>
<th>Poverty Levels for the City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden High School*</td>
<td>44.69</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem High School</td>
<td>67.88</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbury Park High School</td>
<td>59.46</td>
<td>41.8</td>
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<td>60.27</td>
<td>33.6</td>
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<td>55.88</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>67.96</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln High School*</td>
<td>55.39</td>
<td>28.1</td>
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<td>62.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Brunswick High School</td>
<td>58.76</td>
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<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plainfield High School</td>
<td>70.12</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic City High School</td>
<td>67.98</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendations for Future Research

**Research**

I suggest the following for future research:

1. Recreate this study in other states and at the national level and compare the findings.
2. Conduct a study on the academic achievement of non-mobile students in highly mobile schools in New Jersey.
3. Design a study that closely examines the mobility of New Jersey students who have not graduated from high school.
4. Conduct a study that investigates the relationship between the mobility rate and students’ performance on state-mandated tests.
5. Conduct a study on teacher and administrator perception of mobility and accountability.

Author’s Note: This article is based on the conference presentation “The Influence of Student Mobility on High School Graduation: A Statewide Study,” given at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL, April 20, 2015.

### Author Biography

Lavetta Ross has served as a secondary educator for 28 years. She is currently an assistant principal at Manalapan High School which is in the Freehold Regional High School District, a high school only school district located in western Monmouth County, NJ. Email: lross@frhsd.com
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The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools

Written by Christopher Lubienski and Sarah Lubienski
Reviewed by Art Stellar

Art Stellar, PhD
Vice President,
National Education Foundation
McLean, VA

The title is enough to gain attention among public school advocates who eagerly list this book as ammunition in their battles against private and choice schools. The lead author, a professor of education at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, previously co-edited The Charter School Experiment: Expectations, Evidence and Implications and School Choice Policies and Outcomes: Empirical and Philosophical Perspectives. These intellectual experiences enhance his credibility when comparing and contrasting public schools with other forms of school.

The authors and their families have experience with attending and sending their children to public, private, and home schools in this country and overseas. Like many parents, they have children attending their neighborhood school and magnet high school, “… owing more to convenience than conviction …” (p. xviii).

Due to the authors’ knowledge and perspective, readers in the first few chapters may feel they are reading a book about the superiority of private and charter schools. The reasons that the market place is viewed as a better structure for education, especially by reformers, are vividly described. Government and bureaucracy are seen as ineffective and wasteful, creating monopolies that stifle competition and creativity. The result is “… complacency and even disincentives for employees to innovate or otherwise respond to the needs of their ‘customers’” (p. xvi). The criticism of public school is fairly thick and consistent with generally acknowledged complaints, even from participants.

The private school sector and many choice alternatives are seen as simple and compelling models to reformers. The outcomes are better. “There, school employees have built-in incentives to work harder, or at least more effectively, at providing a better education, for fear of losing students, losing tuition funds, losing their jobs, or even seeing their school ‘go out of business’” (p. xvi).

Common or public schools came into existence to educate young people for a changing society. A few centuries later the troubles with public schools are often framed as
a crisis which calls into question the very existence of the institution. The litany of reports and statistics of low achievement, high dropouts, poor behavior, etc. dominate the general discourse. Democracy is considered at stake. Achievement gaps between high and low socioeconomic, racial, and gender groups, as well as state differences in the US and between the US and other countries seem insurmountable. Public education is widely viewed as being incapable of transforming itself into a more productive version of itself. Politics is the driver of public education, along with expert opinion. With this background, wholesale alternatives to the dominate model of schooling are enticing.

The market place is considered to appeal to the self-interest of both the providers and the consumers. Those who offer enhanced schooling are rewarded along with their customers who benefit with better educated students. While politicians, researchers, educators and reformers endlessly debate what works best; “… markets bypass thee squabbles and give the ultimate power to the consumer.” (p.16). “… the market solution is said to offer a tidy fix for our schools that bypasses all the political entanglements and expert debates of the other models. As market advocates have noted, market relationships can guarantee that everyone is happy: no one is forced to participate unless they recognize a distinct benefit for themselves” (p. 20).

The book’s narrative starts to take a twist with the chapter titled “The Private School Effect.” One of the opening lines reads: “The superior results achieved in private schools - including private schools that serve poor and minority students—strongly argue that these schools possess particular characteristics that are lacking in the lagging public school sector.” (p.45) James Coleman’s famous finding “… that achievement gaps were much less a result of school inputs than of a student’s family background and peers” (p.47) is presented with the researched reasons why parents select private schools. The research results of charter schools and vouchers have been mixed according to the authors.

Lamenting the fact that the true research gold standard, randomization, is difficult to utilize in education; they propose two other means of comparing results—cross-sectional and longitudinal. Then they introduce a mother lode of data, the National Center of Educational Statistics’ High School and Beyond study. These authors cite other researchers who have “… identified an organizational advantage for private schools” (p.59). Quoting the authors, they “… find that although private school math scores are indeed higher than public school scores, this apparent private school advantage is due to the characteristics of the students they attract rather than to superior organizational effectiveness and, in fact, public schools are relatively effective” (p.59).

The next few chapters go into detail about the statistical designs and methods used to squeeze more findings from the research. Some readers may skim this material stopping at the findings which are likely of more interest.

Private schools have superior student achievement results. “Of course, the question is whether those superior student results are due to better private schools or to the fact that those schools tend to serve more academically advantaged families, that is, if differences in test scores between various school types—public schools, charter schools or Catholic and other private schools—are primarily due to inherent differences in the effectiveness of these various school types or to differences in the student populations served by these different sectors. If it is the former, then policymakers should seek to further replicate private sector
organizational models in the public sector, using approaches such as charter schools and vouchers to promote choice, organizational autonomy, and competition. But if it is the latter, then such structural changes are limited in their ability to address the roots of educational inequality and ineffectiveness in schooling” (p.61).

From the National Assessment of Educational Progress database, “…when adjusting for differences in student populations, public school achievement is roughly equal to or higher than other school types” (p.64). Furthermore, “After adjusting for demographic differences, no charter or private school means are higher than public school means to any statically significant degree; moreover, particularly at grade 4, public schools actually score scientifically higher than do private and charter schools” (p. 80). Some of the authors’ findings have been replicated by researchers at Stanford and Notre Dame.

Another interesting finding is that public school teachers tend to take part in more professional educational experiences both pre-service and in-service than Catholic school teachers. According to the authors, this calls into question the autonomy touted for non-public school personnel. Parents may make decisions about where to enroll their children on the basis of factors other than improving equity of student achievement. It is logical that safety is a prime concern along with the peer student body. The marketplace is generally at conflict with many educational goals relative to diversity and equity of results. The authors conclude that while markets are effective in many areas of our society, “…universal education embodies goals that resist the simplistic imposition of market models for the organization and distribution of schooling for meeting those goals” (p.146).

This book is an important piece of the debate surrounding public schools regardless of one’s position before digesting the contents. Proponents of choice will be reinforced with the references to higher overall achievement at private schools, minorities doing better at private schools, the ease of the marketplace, and even quoted research studies such as Coleman which concluded that schools themselves make little difference, but families and peers are key factors. Public school advocates can tap some of the arguments presented against the effectiveness of the marketplace and that public school teachers may be better trained.

However, the strongest point is that when socioeconomic advantages are statistically discounted, public schools seemingly have higher student achievement, especially in fourth grade. While this work limits its attention to test scores, The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools still should be read by policy makers, reformers, and school administrators engaged in the topic.
Reviewer Biography

Art Stellar is vice-president of the National Education Foundation, an organization that assists superintendents in acquiring funds and resources. Having served as a superintendent for 25 years, he has been widely recognized for turning around school districts in both educational and financial terms. A life member of AASA, he has been acknowledged with national awards for “Leadership for Learning,” the Effie Jones Humanitarian Award, and Distinguished Service from AASA. He has served as president of ASCD, the Horace Mann League, and the North American Chapter of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction, as well as vice-president of the New York State PTA. He has authored over 500 publications and consulted with many educational organizations. E-mail: artstellar@yahoo.com

The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools is written by Christopher Lubienski and Sarah Lubienski, professors at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014; 276 pages, paperback, $18.
Mission and Scope, Copyright, Privacy, Ethics, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines, Submissions, Publication Rates & Publication Timeline

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biographical sketch. The contributor must indicate whether the submission is to be considered original research, evidence-based practice article, commentary, or book or media review. The type of submission must be indicated on the cover sheet in order to be considered. Articles are to be submitted to the editor by e-mail as an electronic attachment in Microsoft Word.

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The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* maintains a record of acceptance rates for each of the quarterly issues published annually. The percentage of acceptance rates since 2010 is as follows:

- 2011: 16%
- 2012: 22%
- 2013: 15%
- 2014: 20%
- 2015: 22%

**Book Review Guidelines**
Book review guidelines should adhere to the author guidelines as found above. The format of the book review is to include the following:

- Full title of book
- Author
- City, state: publisher, year; page; price
- Name and affiliation of reviewer
- Contact information for reviewer: address, country, zip or postal code, e-mail address, telephone and fax
- Date of submission

**Publication Timeline**

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**Additional Information**
Contributors will be notified of editorial board decisions within eight weeks of receipt of papers at the editorial office. Articles to be returned must be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.
The AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice reserves the right to make minor editorial changes without seeking approval from contributors.

Materials published in the AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice do not constitute endorsement of the content or conclusions presented.

The Journal is listed in Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities. Articles are also archived in the ERIC collection. The Journal is available on the Internet and considered an open access document.

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 ✓ AASA Historical Archives Moving to George Washington University, Washington, DC
For about 25 years, much of AASA’s historical riches have resided in Annapolis Junction, Md. But AASA’s documents, photos, publications and reports describing all facets of the association’s 151 years of existence will be part of the Gelman Library’s Special Collections and Archives at George Washington University in Washington, DC.

The historical materials, including minutes of governing board meetings dating back more than a century, will be organized in categories, and the special collections library will create a comprehensive directory accessible electronically to users. The directory is expected to be finished during the first quarter of 2017. In addition, the collection will be available to the general public at the special collections’ reading room.

Leading the project for AASA have been two of the longest-serving AASA staff members Sherri Montgomery, retired executive assistant to AASA’s executive director, and Jay P. Goldman, editor of School Administrator magazine.

Upcoming AASA Events


 ✓ 2017 National Conference, March 2-4, New Orleans, LA, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. For information, go to nce.aasa.org