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Board of Editors

EDITORIAL

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A Blueprint for Regressive Education

Marking a watershed moment in United States public education policy is "A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act" (United States Department of Education, 2010). In essence, the "Blueprint" cements a commitment to nationalize and standardize education and it has the potential to shift the governance of public schools further from a locally controlled endeavor and closer to a centrally planned operation. The Fall 2010 and Winter 2010 issues of the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* detailed historical, cultural, and empirical reasons why central control of education is an inappropriate idea for the United States. This commentary will provide a point-by-point analysis of the initial ESEA blueprint.

Point 1: College and Career-Ready Standards

The authors of "A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act" ("A Blueprint for Reform") call on state education personnel to adopt standards in "English language arts and mathematics that build toward college and career-readiness by the time students graduate high school" (p.3). This idea is superficial, simplistic, and an oxymoron. How can one set of standards in language arts and mathematics ever prepare children for myriad college and career opportunities?

Should the standards prepare students for two-year colleges, four-year colleges, competitive four-year colleges, non-competitive four-year colleges, or highly competitive colleges? What careers should the standards prepare students to pursue: Social sciences, medical, trades, communications, public service, sciences, mathematics,

performing arts, writing, manufacturing, technology, or other careers? Why should we only prepare students for college and careers? Is there not more to being a productive citizen? The recommendation that one set of standards can and should be used to address college and career preparation is a very blunt approach to a complex problem.

"A Blueprint for Reform" calls for "support the development of a new generation of assessments aligned with college and career-ready standards, to better determine whether students have acquired the skills needed for success" (pp. 3-4). I am unclear about the precise meaning of that statement, but once again, it is impossible to prepare all students for the various college and career options with one set of standards. Therefore, I am unsure how one standardized test, with all the known limitations of standardized testing, will be able to "better determine" student achievement of skills needed for success.

Once again, what skills are the authors of "A Blueprint for Reform" specifying here? Only those listed in the mathematics and language arts Common Core State Standards? As Yong Zhao and I (Tienken & Zhao, 2010) wrote in the winter 2010 issue, "We should not ask for better tests—they will not come. We should reject the notion of using one test as the indicator of anything" (p. 6). The idea of building a new generation of assessments is fantasy. It will not happen. In the meantime, billions of education dollars will have been paid to the testing industry; dollars that could have been spent in more fruitful ways.

"Students need a well-rounded education …" (p. 4). Unfortunately, this reauthorization will not provide for a "well-rounded education" based on the narrow, standardized test-driven focus on language arts and mathematics. A well-rounded, creative education will not be possible with stagnant sets of standards in a system born out of behaviorism, stimulus-response psychology, and rational choice theory. The increased use of rigid standards beg the question: Can a country develop an innovative citizenry and standardize the education of that citizenry at the same time?

Aside from fostering less innovation, the testing provisions of "A Blueprint for Reform," if adopted, will create the conditions that exemplify Campbell's Law (1976): "The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor" (p. 49).

Point 2: Great Teachers and Leaders in Every School
This sounds like a worthy expectation; however, the ideas offered for operationalization are cause for concern. "We are calling on states and districts … to identify effective and

highly effective teachers and principals on the basis of student growth and other factors" (p. 4). This is code for using standardized test scores for merit pay, bonuses, and employment decisions.

The empirical problems are obvious, especially because about half of the variance in student achievement results on standardized tests are explained by out-of-school factors; things schools cannot control. Also, the sizeable standard error of measurement (e.g., margin of test-score error) inherent in individual student test scores skews proficiency categorizations. For example, in New Jersey, the margin of error on most of the state tests is about 7-10 scale score points at the proficiency cut-score. This means that about 9,500 students a year are potentially mislabeled as not proficient due to imprecise test results. The test results are not as accurate as the testing companies and state education personnel would have us believe (Koretz, 2008; Tienken, 2008a; Tienken, 2008b; Tienken, in press).

This idea of "great teachers and leaders,' if operationalized as proposed, will result in principals and teachers who serve students in lower-socioeconomic areas to be disproportionately punished due to effects of inappropriate and regressive social, housing, tax, and labor policies than their colleagues in the suburban and wealthy areas. Those education professionals serving in lower-socioeconomic areas will also be more likely to be punished for imprecise test scores because their students score closer to their state's proficiency cut scores. That is where the margin of error counts most.

A reliable method to disentangle school factors and out-of-school factors from standardized tests does not exist. Perhaps that new generation of standardized tests promised in "A Blueprint for Reform" will provide such a system, but based on almost 100 years of

standardized testing history in this country, I am not hopeful. This policy recommendation is a set-up for failure for those who serve our nation's neediest students and it is offensive. However, if the focus on linking test scores to teacher and principal effectiveness is meant to cement teacher isolationism, instill fierce and counter-productive competition among teachers, and turn classrooms into penny-stock broker boiler rooms, then this is a perfect recommendation.

From the perspective of a former principal, the only way to begin to determine which teacher is more effective than another is to have all heterogeneous classes, all the time, in every subject and ensure that all students receive the same amount of time on task in math and language arts and the other subject classes. That means that any type of outside special education classes, Title I services, speech and language instruction, gifted education, and English language learning classes , to name a few, would have to be held outside the school day, if at all, because any type of special services might give an unfair advantage to the teachers of those students. For a system of rewards to be fair and equal, everyone must have the same raw inputs in order for school administrators, policy makers, and researchers to measure the outputs effectively.

"We call on states to … improve access to effective educators for students in high-poverty and high-minority schools" (p.5). The only way to do this is for states to assign teachers to districts, like they do in countries like Italy. In Italy, new teachers are assigned to schools. They earn the ability to request positions as they attain seniority. The government decides which teachers serve in the high-needs schools. This idea is unmanageable in the United States unless the teaching corps is militarized and "ordered" to serve in specific locales. This recommendation presumes,

wrongly, that there are not effective teachers already working with students in high-poverty and high-minority districts.

The emphasis on alternative routes to teacher and principal certification and licensure is yet another aspect embedded in Point 2. "We need more effective pathways and practices for preparing, placing, and supporting beginning teachers and principals in high-need schools" (p.5). Translation: Allow people to circumvent certification and licensure requirements via programs like Teach for America and for-profit, disguised as non-profit, "administrator associations" that run principal training programs.

The weaknesses of programs like Teach for America have been known for some time. Alternate route certifications water down the licensure requirements. For example, New Jersey is about to amend its certification laws to allow Advanced Placement courses, taken in high school, to count toward "content area certification credit" even if a college did not accept the high school course for credit. In essence, New Jersey is allowing high school credits to be substituted for meaningful certification requirements. Simply stated, students of "under-certified teachers" do not perform as well as students of teachers who were prepared in traditional university programs (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002).

For-profit, non-profit administrator associations that provide alternate routes to certification offer programs based on "best-practice" that are void of the rich theory and empirical base needed for leaders to actually know why they are doing what they are doing and how their actions will likely influence student growth and development.

These administrator preparation mills de-skill and over simplify the principalship to a series of recipes and "steps" one is to take in

various situations. If problem x arises, use solution z. English and Papa (2009) wrote "What these approaches will do is create homogeneity of practice. Homogeneity cannot be equated to any form of excellence …" (p. 30).

Replication of practice is just practice. It does not push the boundaries of a profession forward. John Dewey (1963, p. 28 cited in English & Papa, 2009 p.3) stated, "experience (practice) without the benefit of being placed with the larger plan [theory] was "wholly in the air." Expanding the use of alternate route certifications and licensures will only provide an alternate route to ineffectiveness.

Point 3: Equity and Opportunity for All Students

This point calls for "Rigorous and fair accountability for all levels" (p. 5). I wrote about rigor about a year ago and I am still waiting for someone to produce a research-based, agreed-upon definition. Until that time, I am unsure what rigorous means. Those of you who read the summer 2009 editorial of this journal (Tienken, 2009) remember that I was forced to use dictionary definitions of rigor. Definitions included: (a) stiffness, (b) harsh inflexibility in opinion, temper or judgment, (c) the quality of being unyielding or inflexible, (d) an act or instance of strictness, severity, or cruelty, and (e) exactness without allowance, deviation, or indulgence. I am unsure now, as I was then, if rigor is a term or idea we should associate with education.

Point 3 includes an ominous warning of things to come in schools whose students do not meet the college and career-ready standards. "But in the lowest performing schools that have not made progress over time, we will ask for dramatic change" (p. 5). Translation: In schools whose students do not show enough progress toward meeting a non-

evidence based, arbitrary standard we will fire the principal and annex the public school to an education management organization and effectively transfer public tax dollars to private or semi-private organizations that have no empirical track record of success or accountability to the taxpayers. We will do this regardless of the research that shows most of these schools serve students who live in poverty, and the conditions of poverty account for at least 50% of the variance in standardized test scores.

Point 4: Raise the Bar and Reward Excellence

Point 4 calls for supporting the *Race To the Top* (RTTT). My first question is why should we support this educationally and morally bankrupt initiative? Please Mr. Secretary or Jim Shelton in the Office of Innovation, provide us with the empirical evidence that anything in the RTTT initiative will make the lives of children better in the long run.

Point 4 of "A Blueprint for Reform also calls for "the expansion of high performing public charter schools and other autonomous public schools and support communities as they expand public school choice options for students within and across school districts" (p.6). Translation: We will continue to weaken participative democracy and support the fragmentation of society to separate further the ruling elites from the "others" through the use of pseudo-scientific rhetoric and structured discrimination via a two-tiered public school system.

Reports released within the last five years based on results from national and regional studies show clearly that charter schools offer no significant advantages related to student achievement when controlling for the socio-economic backgrounds of the students attending the charter schools and their

academic achievement prior to entering the charter school.

A recent report analyzed the study that claimed positive influences of charter schools on student achievement in New York City. Independent evaluations of that study revealed no significant gains for students attributed to charter schools when compared to similar students in the public schools (McEwan, 2009). Several other methodologically strong studies revealed that claims made by proponents that charter schools improve the education for our neediest students are unsubstantiated (Mishel & Roy, 2005; Skinner, 2009; van Lier, 2009). In fact, in most cases, the student populations of many charter schools are less diverse and not comparable to the schools in the surrounding community (Briggs, 2009; Miron, Mathis, Urschel, Tornquist, 2010). They generally have fewer students eligible for free lunch and they admit fewer students with special education needs. In a sense, charters are allowed to be semi-selective.

Point 5: Promote Innovation and Continuous Improvement

"The Investing in Innovation Fund will support local and non-profit leaders as they develop scale up programs that have demonstrated success, and discover the next generation of innovative solutions" (p. 6). Innovation and continuous improvement has the potential to help public school educators take their profession and students to higher levels of success. As Zhao (2009) explained, innovation and creativity is one aspect that sets America apart from other industrial and developing nations. Innovation and creativity are hallmarks of our economy.

We should be supporting the development of innovative and creative citizenry. If the intent of Point 5 is to do that, then it is laudable and it could become a

spring board from which to launch positive initiatives that will give students unique learning experiences on a larger scale that were once not possible. But a disconnect exists between the recommendations in Point 1, greater standardization, and the calls for increased innovation in Point 5. Is it possible to standardize innovation?

One issue with scaling up programs is that they must be tested on larger samples of students. The fact is that we just don't know how some successful small programs will influence learning in a larger context. There will have to be trial and error and time given to work these things out. The Secretary should also consider investing in scaling up programs and ideas that have demonstrated success such as strengthening of the comprehensive high school, mandating small class size in Grades K-3, encouraging the development at the local-level of socially-conscious problem-based curriculum, calling a moratorium to high stakes standardized testing, and advocating for appropriate social policies.

In its current form, "A Blueprint for Reform" for ESEA reauthorization should be rejected for being (a) socially and educationally regressive, (b) absent of empirical evidence demonstrating the efficacy of the recommendations, and above all, (c) dangerous to the health of a participative democracy because it will foster a two-tiered education system that fosters further fracturing of the social strata in this country. Although some education organizations have already come out and lauded the secretary for his proposal I would urge educators to resist this effort to degrade our public school system. Our professional associations and elected officials need to hear our voices. They need to conduct their due diligence and dig below the surface of these initiatives and ask why?

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Leadership to Improve Student Achievement: Focus the Culture on Learning

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Abstract

This study on leadership for second order change and improved student achievement represents interview and observational research with 62 leaders at the district and school levels in 10 states. Seven consistent leader action themes emerged across all participants regardless of demographics of the school, demographics of the leader, or position assignment. First and foremost all attributed the positive improvement to the first leader action theme: focusing the culture on learning. The remaining 6 leader action themes supported the accomplishment of the first. These 6 are: make decisions for student learning, stimulate intellectual growth, invest personally in the change, expect collaboration, strategize for consistency, and expect and support data-based decision making.

Key words

Change, Instructional Leadership, Student Achievement

"It's not one thing, it is everything! I had to change the culture to make the priority all students learning." High School Principal

Introduction

With accountability for improvements in student achievement based on standardized assessments, leaders seek evidence-based instructional leadership practices to implement.

Principals and district leaders who improve student learning to the extent there is measureable improvement in mathematics and literacy make significant, not incremental changes. The kinds of innovations made by the

leaders in this study are called second order changes: those that require thinking differently about the work, taking different actions, and are a departure from the normative behavior in the environment (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Critical to improving student achievement is leadership as noted by Waters and Grubb (2004), Leithwood (1994), Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008). Teachers, although essential to improving learning, cannot improve student achievement by themselves. Leaders create the conditions and culture for the target changes to take place that lead to improvement in student achievement.

Through meta-analysis research of over 5000 studies conducted from 1971- 2001, Marzano, et. al (2005) identified seven leadership responsibilities associated with successful second order change at the school level that relate to improvement in student achievement:

1. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment;
2. Optimizer;
3. Intellectual stimulation;
4. Change agent;
5. Monitoring/evaluating;
6. Flexibility;
7. Ideals/beliefs.

Similarly, five district level leadership responsibilities were listed by Waters and Marzano (2007), identified through a meta-analysis research of over 4500 studies related to successful second order change and student achievement:

1. Nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction;
2. Use of resources to support goals for achievement and instruction;

3. Collaborative goal setting;
4. Monitoring of goals for achievement and instruction;
5. Board alignment with and support of district goals for achievement and instruction.

The identified leadership responsibilities associated with second order change and improvement in student achievement formed the conceptual framework for this study. The current context of accountability for student achievement is different from the years when the aforementioned original findings were generated, leading the researcher to seek recent evidence of successful leaders of second order change and improvement in student achievement.

The research questions that guided the qualitative study are:

1. To what extent do leaders who have lead successful second order change exhibit the factors related to successful second order change identified by Marzano, et al. (2005), and Waters and Marzano?
2. To what extent do leaders who have lead successful second order change create structures and systems to support the change?
3. What themes, conclusions, or questions related to leadership for second order change have not previously been identified, but emerge in interviews?

Methodology

For over one year (2007-2008) the author interviewed 62 leaders who had made second order change in their schools and districts. Student achievement data was studied and time was spent in the schools and districts where improved learning was supported by data. Leaders offered other evidence supporting successful change with examples from student

attendance, student discipline, anecdotal evidence, and from employees.

Only those leaders whose student achievement data supported positive results were included. These leaders may or may not have worked in high performing districts, but their area of responsibility-either as a school principal or district administrator—showed improvement in student achievement.

Each leader in the study had made changes in learning and was recommended from a university colleague or practicing school administrator.

Participants in the research were often in their first principal or district office assignment belying the belief that experience is needed to lead change. As can be seen in Table 1 the participants were evenly divided between males and females, but were not diverse racially. Half of the participants either were pursuing a doctorate degree or already had earned one.

Table 1

Demographic Variables of Participants

Position	Gender		Race			Doctorate		
	Male	Female	White	Hispanic	Black	Yes	In Program	No
Elementary School 8 Principal N=16	4	12	14	1	1		6	2
Middle School 6 Principal N=12	10	2	12	0	0		4	2
K-8 School Principal N=2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
High School 8 Principal N=20	15	5	14	2	4		8	4
District Leader 7 N=12	3	9	10	0	2		5	0
Total N=62	34	28	52	3	7	23	8	31

(Taylor, 2010)

Each leader participated in a structured interview using questions based on the work of Marzano, et al. (2005), Waters and Marzano, Taylor and Collins (2003), Bolman and Deal (2003), and Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, (2004). Partial sets of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A (Principal Interview) and Appendix B (District Leader Interview). The complete sets of questions can be obtained from the researcher. Section I of each interview gathered information on the change or innovation to which the leader attributed the improvement in student achievement.

Addressing research question 1, Section II of each interview related to the factors of second order change associated with improvement in student achievement identified by Marzano, et al. (2005) for principals, and Waters and Marzano for district leaders.

The third section of each interview provided information for research question 2 and addressed organizational factors that may influence changes in student achievement based on the work of Taylor and Collins, Bolman and Deal, and, Leithwood et al. Data for the third research question was gathered through the final section of the interview where themes and conclusions from each individual were noted.

Participants were first asked to describe the innovation to which they attributed the improvement in student achievement and their role in that change. From that response information related to the remaining items was frequently gathered as the leaders gave detailed responses.

Other questions for each item were included in the interview as prompts if no information came forward. A constant comparison analysis of the interview responses and examples revealed seven consistent leader actions that the researcher entitled leader action themes.

Findings
To what extent do leaders who led successful second order change exhibit the factors related to successful second order change identified by Marzano, et al., and Waters and Marzano?

Through the interview process each participant confirmed the factors of second order change related to improvement in learning identified by Marzano, et al. were present and provided specific examples within the school context.

After describing the innovation participants shared a theoretical basis, research, or literature that guided the change (intellectual stimulation). Consistently, they took the lead role (optimizer) and insisted that data be used to create a sense of urgency as well as a cause for celebration of the change (change agent). Participants discussed the curriculum, instruction, and assessment related to the change as well as the monitoring and evaluation.

Although these leaders believed they were flexible with the implementation, they were not flexible in the target change needed to improve learning, a finding consistent with La Cava's (2009) study of second order change behavior of principals of Title I elementary schools and Bristo's (2010) study of second order change implementation in two high schools. Within the interview principals communicated a commitment to their ideals and beliefs, and indicated that they shared these with the stakeholders.

Similarly, district leaders were consistent in affirming the second order change factors related to change in student achievement, except for the need to work toward school board alignment to support the

goals. At the district level, school board support for change was a non-issue as school board members expected the leaders to improve student achievement.

The goal setting processes in all cases were data-driven with an expectation of improvement. All schools were expected to align their school improvement plans and change efforts with the district identified goals and curriculum alignment with district funds allocated to support the needed improvement. Monitoring of student achievement and creation of predictive assessments and formulas was typical. Each of the district leaders interviewed expected the principals to support district goals, but gave the principals autonomy in selecting the pathway to achieve the goals with the understanding of accountability for success.

To what extent do leaders who have lead successful second order change create structures and systems to support the change?
In striving to create efficient and effective systems to support the target change all principals created structures such as teams, groups, or small learning communities. District leaders created structures to enhance knowledge and skill of school- based leaders while enhancing accountability for success.

Leaders at both levels reorganized personnel and responsibilities, and supported changes that were critical with redistributed financial resources.

What themes, conclusions, or questions related to leadership for second order change have not previously been identified, but emerge in interviews?
Themes for second order change emerged from the interviews and overlap with the work of Marzano, et al. (2005) and, Waters and Marzano. They were similar for both district leaders and school principals. The contemporary context of high accountability for student achievement yielded additional results. Rather than labeling the themes as responsibilities, they are labeled leader action themes because the leaders characterized action in the interviews, in contrast to knowledge or skill.

Leader Action Themes
Leader Action Theme 1: Focus the Culture on Student Learning
As the interviews began the researcher found a consistent response to the prompt, "Tell me the role you played in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the innovation leading to the improvement in student achievement." In 90% of the interviews, the initial response was that there was not a program, approach, or single practice that made the difference in student achievement. Their perception was that the difference was made through changing the school or district culture to be one focused on student learning.

School culture has been defined as: how we do things around here: the practices, traditions, and mores of the organization (Peterson, 2002; Peterson & Deal, 2002). One might think that all schools are focused on student learning as the number one priority, but in some cases priorities have been other than all students learning. That is, the priorities may have been teacher convenience, past practice (this is how we have always …) expediency, political influences, or contemporary trends.

Examples provided represent schools or districts focused on other things such as, "Our community has changed; can you really expect these students to do well?" or "Our teachers are set in their ways and have their own way of doing things," or "The previous principal did not want to rock the boat." Keeping the adults

comfortable may have been important even if it meant accepting lack of success on the part of some students.

A situation was shared where the office staff spoke for the principal and did not like to bother him with issues. In this elementary school assignments for clerical staff were made based on longevity in the school, rather than on the needs of the students. In other words, the culture had developed over time to be focused on adult preferences, the status quo, or lack of change in instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

Frequently, the culture was focused on the success of certain groups of students, but not on the success of all students. These types of examples are what leaders indicated they were compelled to change, and to change as quickly as possible. As one principal whose school made great strides in student achievement in all student subgroups said, "This school was dysfunctional. I couldn't wait to make the changes that would allow me to do my job to help all students learn!"

Leaders in successful schools focused the culture on all students learning by demonstrating high expectations regardless of economic status, disability, home language, or any other categorization. The philosophy they demonstrated was that each of the students would have research-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment, with evidence of these in the work of the student.

Another example of leaders' actions was influencing the school philosophy of student placement in classes. Changes were reflected in representation of more students as well as more diverse students in high school Advanced Placement or honors classes, thus providing higher expectations in regard to the quality of the curriculum, student work, and assessment. Principals in high schools

perceived this shift in philosophy to relate to positive changes in student achievement.

A commonality among the schools making improvement was a focus on the relationships among the adults, and, among the adults and students. If the adult relationships were competitive (I won't share my strategy with you, I always teach the high level students) rather than collaborative (teachers planning instruction and assessment together), then there was a good chance that novice teachers might not have the modeling and mentoring needed to persist to become a successful career teacher. A principal of a kindergarten through Grade 8 school where students made significant improvement identified that his first task was to improve adult relationships and shared, "The adults have to show respect for each other and for the students. We have to be nice to each other."

Six Additional Leader Action Themes Support Changing the Culture

While the overarching leader action theme is to change the school or district culture to one focused on all students learning, there are six other action themes that were consistently mentioned by each of the 62 participants:

1. Leaders make decisions for student learning;
2. Leaders stimulate intellectual growth;
3. Leaders personally invest in the change;
4. Leaders expect collaboration and results from collaboration;
5. Leaders strategize for consistency;
6. Leaders provide the expectation of and support for data-based decision making.

These six additional leader action themes support the change in school and district culture to one focused on student learning; leaders perceived that together these actions provided a system for successful

change. None of the themes seem to be more important than the other, but the combination they are powerful in supporting change.

Leader Action Theme 2: Make Decisions for Student Learning
The first inclination of a school or district administrator might be to go with the status quo. Leader after leader shared that they were advised by mentors to do just that, but the need to serve students drove each to do what was thought best for students. Because many adults were comfortable with their daily work—schedule, students taught, adults supervised, and responsibilities assigned—making decisions that changed these could be risk taking, but necessary for a leader committed to all students learning.

Reorganization of time, space, resources, and people took place. For the teacher who historically taught the advanced students and who had a new expectation to teach lower achieving students, this change could be difficult requiring a new philosophy about the value of all students, about one's own professional role, and about instructional strategies and student assessment.

As a result of the changed decision making philosophy to focus on what is best for students' learning, 75% of the established (versus new) schools had high employee turnover the first year and some the second year. By the third year faculty and staff stabilized and student achievement began to improve. The consistency in the turnover of faculty and staff is something that leaders considering second order changes should consider. The positive aspect of this turnover was that opportunities were created to select employees whose philosophy aligned with that of the leadership and who were willing to attend to all students' needs.

Leader Action Theme 3: Stimulate Intellectual Growth
In the interviews with successful leaders, one of the consistencies was the inclination to support their actions with theory and research as Marzano, et al. (2005) found. Without being asked, leaders shared research and publications. This begot an agenda for continuing their own professional growth, as well as expecting it from other leaders, faculty, and staff. Interest in their own academic learning was reflected in that 50% of the participants were either pursuing a doctorate degree or already had earned one.

Because of the importance placed on continual learning, they modeled the value by attending professional development or conferences with others, such as attending Advanced Placement workshops with teachers to learn and to be sure that the concepts of the workshops were implemented. Leading study groups or book studies on topics of interest, like grading, assessment, or grouping was common.

An elementary principal shared that he read the *Outliers* (Gladwell, 2008) and liked it so much that he started a book study with his leadership team. Next, he gave a copy to his supervisor who then purchased other books by Gladwell for the principals she supervised.

The expectation of creating in-house experts was consistent. While outside experts and conference attendance was common, more and more teachers became experts providing professional development in the form of action research, study groups, peer coaching, or other collegial forms of professional development.

As an example of in-house experts leading collegial professional development, the researcher visited a novice middle school social studies teacher's classroom with a mentor

teacher as part of district professional development.

The novice teacher was skilled in using stations for differentiated instruction and infusing literacy learning with high-level thinking questions. During the debriefing the mentor teacher shared that the two plan instruction together, and often the novice would visit the mentor's class if there was an instructional strategy with which she was unfamiliar or if she had difficulty envisioning how the class would work.

Leader Action Theme 4: Personally Invest in the Change

Delegation of the target innovation or change was not an option. They chose to personally lead and manage change, not delegate it. As a result, other responsibilities were delegated that in prior years leaders might have handled. In these schools and districts learning was the priority and the leader was the key instructional leader. When a deputy superintendent was complimented for the leadership she provided in improving reading in the district, she quickly responded, "The superintendent is our instructional leader. He provides the direction for the changes we have made."

Regularly, both district and school based administrators visited classrooms. One high school principal documented 1,644 classroom walkthroughs during the 2007-2008 school year—an amazing accomplishment in any large urban high school. Furthermore, these leaders had authentic conversations about performance, expectations, and data. Leaders' presence in classrooms and in data meetings and their subsequent actions confirmed that they were knowledgeable, cared about student learning, and held the subordinates accountable for acting on what they know.

Leader Action Theme 5: Expect and Support Collaboration

At the forefront of change was the non-negotiable of collaboration. Participants collaborated with others and shared what was learned. Furthermore, they expected collaboration of subordinates and expected them to be accountable for artifacts and results from the collaboration.

The accountability for collaboration and results strategically increased annually. An example was that in year one the principal organized the teachers into collaborative teams and invited them to collaborate. Second-year teachers were expected to identify objectives to be accomplished from the collaboration and to provide results to the leadership. The third-year faculty was told to join or create a professional learning community (referring to Dufour, 2004), determine a focus of study, and report the instructional decisions made as a result of the collaboration.

One high school's mathematics department chose to create a professional learning community to study mastery learning and related grading so that students could continue to work towards a higher grade. Teachers found that students were more motivated, classroom participation improved as did the students' grades.

Leaders Action Theme 6: Strategize for Consistency

When making educational change, one of the greatest difficulties was achieving consistency as advocated by Leithwood, et al (2004). Leaders in this study strategized for consistency and they emphasized instructional objectives and remained transparent in their decision-making (Taylor & Collins, 2003; Bolman & Deal, 2003). They created communication and feedback systems to continually clarify misconceptions and to get input. Leadership groups met systematically so that leaders throughout the organization spoke with the same voice.

They did not rely on second-hand information, but visited schools and classrooms to see progress and to draw conclusions. Leaders perceived that their presence, personal knowledge, and involvement with authentic feedback enhanced the level of consistency in implementation of the innovations. While in schools and classrooms leaders asked the difficult questions about learning and achievement, "Who in your class is not learning? What are the strategies you plan to implement to intervene?" The improvement objectives, results, and data were available for all to see both within the school district and in the community at large, typically via a technology-based system.

Leader Action Theme 7: Provide the Expectation and Support for Data-based Decision Making

Student achievement data were the basis for decision making. The objectivity that data-based decision making provided supported the leader in helping others to see the path to improve student achievement (Reeves, 2006).

Data de-personalized the decision making and made it objective. Leaders asked questions like, "When the demographics and student characteristics were the same, why did one group outperform another? What did the teacher do whose students outperformed others?"

Data-based decision making using on-going student data included monitoring assessments, student work, classroom assessments, and observations. They discussed which student subgroups were making progress and the instructional strategies or resources needed. Regular data meetings were scheduled at the school and district levels. Particular students were prioritized for careful study to be sure they increased their learning, while high achieving students might have been less frequently monitored.

An elementary principal indicated that students reading below proficient level were monitored each week while those who read at proficient or above were monitored every other week. The leaders did not wait for the annual assessment results to arrive in the summer.

The data study required a manageable data system. All but three leaders in the study had data in a usable format made available to everyone involved. The data represented various types of evidence: student work, grades, monitoring assessments, formal assessment data, attendance, and discipline.

During an interview, one high school principal turned to his computer and brought up a teacher's roll with grades for various types of assignments. The class roll had indicators of students' performance in reading and mathematics.

Each teacher had this same information with indicators for those students in the class who were below proficient so the teachers could provide extra support when needed and monitor progress. Then, the principal brought up an individual student's file that showed each of his classes and the grades, including missing work, and attendance.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

The major conclusion from this study is that leaders who are successful with implementation of second order change linked to improvement in student achievement do certain things represented by the seven leader action themes-- which can be learned and replicated. Similarly, leaders who have improvement of student achievement as their focus will ensure that the rapidly changing student populations are well served with knowledge and implementation of evidence-based instruction, an aligned curriculum, and appropriate assessments.

Current and future leaders need to ensure that all students are learning with the guide for every decision being, "Is it good for students?" Their decisions need to be based on sound data and not common practice. To assure that everyone in the school or district grows professionally, collaboration should be nonnegotiable aligned with accountability for results. By modeling personal investment in targeted changes and delegation of responsibilities less directly related to learning, the message will be clear: change is not optional and serving students excellently is not optional. Resulting practices within a school or district will be consistency in evidence-based practices. By changing the culture of the school and district to one focused on all students learning, student achievement will increase.

Author Biography

Rosemarye Taylor has authored six books. The most recent, in 2010, is titled *Leading Learning: Change Student Achievement Today!*. She focuses on leadership for learning and organizational leadership at the University of Central Florida and in speaking, research and writing for national and international audiences.

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APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

Section I
1. Describe the innovation and the role you played in the design, implementation, and evaluation.
2. How do you know it was successful? Data? Evidence?

Section II
1. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
   How did the innovation affect curriculum?
   a. How did the innovation affect instruction?
   b. How did the innovation affect assessment?
   c. Give an example of your work individually or in groups regarding the innovation?

2. Optimizer
   "Who provided the most leadership for implementation of the innovation?
   a. What role did you play in implementing the innovation?
      Can you give an example of speaking positively about it? Providing examples of other schools being successful?
   b. How did you instill confidence in others that this innovation would yield results? Provide examples of you voicing continued confidence in the innovation's success and impact.
   c. How were roadblocks and challenges identified and addressed?

3. Intellectual Stimulation
   Can you tell me about the research or theoretical background of the innovation?
   a. How did professional staff learn about the theory and research behind it?
   b. Give an example of you including it in conversations, leading discussions, or asking questions?

4. Change Agent
   What political processes were used to move the innovation beyond the status quo?
   a. Give an example of you raising issues related to student achievement?
   b. Give an example of you sharing data.
   c. Give an example of you providing comparisons of where the school/district was and where it needs to be?
   d. Can you think of a time when you demonstrated tolerance for ambiguity related to the innovation?
(Taylor, 2010)

APPENDIX B

DISTRICT LEADER INTERVIEW

Section I
1. Describe the innovation and the role you played in the design, implementation, and evaluation.
2. How do you know it was successful? What was the average student gain in student achievement? Data? Evidence?

Section II
1. Goal Setting Process
   a. Share the goal setting process in curriculum and in instruction.
   b. To what extent are goals focused on change, rather than status quo?
   c. How were goals shared with district administrators and teachers and with the schools?
2. Non-negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction
   a. How did you model understanding of instructional design?
   b. Which schools enacted these agreed upon goals?
   c. To what extent were school based action plans designed around these goals?
   d. Is there a common framework for instruction or is it determined at the school level? (instructional language, vocabulary, design)
      1. Are instructional strategies determined to address varied needs?
      2. Provide examples of how principals support the goals explicitly and implicitly. Were there examples of principals subverting the goals?
3. Board Alignment With and Support of the Goals
   a. How did the board demonstrate support for the goals?
   b. How did the board maintain these goals as top priority and keep other competing priorities from subverting them?
   c. What professional development was provided for the board related to the goals? How did you determine the effectiveness of the professional development?
   d. How did you and the board remain politically and situationally aware of the climate regarding the goals?
4. Monitoring Achievement and Instructional Goals
   a. Provide examples of how you monitored achievement and progress toward goal attainment. Was there an evaluation program?
   b. How did you ensure that each school monitors its progress?
   c. When discrepancies in teacher instruction and the curricular and instructional expectations exists, what happens?
   d. How often do you observe classrooms?
   e. Describe the system used to implement the change.
   f. How were efforts among individuals and groups coordinated so that response to needs and failures could be made?

(Taylor, 2010)

Research Article

South Carolina Superintendents' Change Style Preferences

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Abstract

Little is known about the change style preferences of superintendents, and how they differ from school principals and from business leaders and whether a superintendent's change-style preference affects student achievement. The purpose of this study was to explore the change-style preferences of South Carolina superintendents, compare them with other leaders and identify potential links to student achievement. The *Change Style Indicator* developed by Musselwhite and Ingram was used to identify personal change styles: c*onserver*, p*ragmatist*, and o*riginator.* The responses of the South Carolina superintendents were more conservative than principals or business leaders. While links to student achievement from the office of the superintendent can be elusive, it remains an area in need of continued research.

Keywords

Change, Leadership, Student Achievement

Much has changed. The last 25 years have brought about advances in technology, increases in societal challenges and reforms in education. Beginning with *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and culminating with *No Child Left Behind* (No Child Left Behind [NCLB PL 107-110], 2002), education improvement has become a local, state and national focus.

The role of the superintendent has evolved in response to these reports and legislation. Superintendents are expected to understand and lead change (Fullan, 1993; Johnson, 1996; Ireh & Bailey, 1999). Little is known about the change style preferences of superintendents, and how they differ from school principals and

from business leaders and whether a superin-tendent's change-style preference affects student achievement. The reforms and improvement initiatives expected by legislators, businesses and community leaders, and others call for rapid increases in student achievement. (NCLB, 2002; South Carolina Goals 2010, 2000).

The literature review revealed that organization change and individual change are pertinent topics for leaders, both within the education community and in the private sector. Organization-change theories and leadership theories have developed in tandem with business books, websites and journals dedicated to the topic of change leadership.

Few studies have focused on superintendents' change-style leadership and its relationship to student achievement. Rather, some researchers have focused on effective schools individually, not collectively (Burnett, 1989; Endeman, 1990; Petersen, 1999; Ponticello, 1987; Thomas, 2001; Wooderson-Perzan & Lunenburg, 2001). Missing from the literature is definitive research results compared change-style preferences of superintendents with other leaders and investigates any potential links to student achievement.

Charged with leading the transformation and evolution of education, superintendents must understand their own attitudes toward change and how to lead change. Helping district administrators develop more knowledge regarding their change-style preference will help boards and superintendents better determine if they are compatible. Superintendents who comprehend the differences in individual preferences will be better equipped to prepare for resistance and even use that resistance to their advantage.

Little study has been done that focused on the relationship between superintendent leadership behaviors and student achievement. Regardless of the lack of research and helpful information, leaders must continue to pursue excellence.

Thomas (2001) offered: "Educational superintendents must simultaneously function as educational leaders, politicians, and organizational managers to influence change in their districts. A clear understanding of how successful CEO's function in each role is needed to move this research forward" (p. 11).

Musselwhite and Ingram published the Change Style Indicator (CSI) in 2003. The authors asserted that the better individuals understand their personal change style, the likelier they are to be successful in leading change. The approaches to leading change identified from responses to the instrument are: (1) c*onserver*, (2) p*ragmatist*, and (3) o*riginator*. *Conservers* tend to use a traditional approach and move toward changes slowly, incrementally and methodically, building on the foundation of past successes. *Originators* are change agents. *Pragmatists* lead change from the middle—keeping what is successful, and creating new initiatives.

The Problem
Superintendents are expected to lead systemic, sustainable school improvement (Glass & Franscini, 2007; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier & Glass, 2005; Johnson, 1996). Education reform and accountability have been the focus of much debate in South Carolina since the early 1980's. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) brought a new wave of concern as disaggregated data displayed specific weaknesses. Improvements have been made through the development of state standards, a focus on professional

development, and recruitment of highly qualified teachers; however, South Carolina continues to have numerous educational challenges to overcome.

The South Carolina 2010 Goal states that, "South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, South Carolina must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country" (South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, 2008).

The annual South Carolina Report Card uses five terms to describe the level of student performance for individual schools or districts: excellent, good, average, poor, or unsatisfactory.

The Absolute Rating designates the level of performance on measures of research-based factors associated with student success during the school year. An increased understanding of the change-style preferences of the superintendent may have important implications for the effective leadership of schools and school districts.

1. What are the change-style preferences of South Carolina superintendents? How do those preferences differ from other leaders?
2. What are the relationships between superintendents' change style preference and student achievement?

The researchers sought to examine the change-style preferences of South Carolina superintendents, to compare those preferences with other leaders' preferences, and to identify any relationship of those preferences to student achievement.

Significance

There are few published studies regarding superintendents' change-style preferences or its relationship to student achievement. This study extends the body of research using the CSI to identify the change style preferences of South Carolina superintendents.

Focusing research at the district level may provide a clearer understanding of how school systems can be lead to promising gains in student achievement.

This research may assist superintendents, board members and community stakeholders in identifying the type of leader that best suits their district. The CSI, though used primarily in business, presents a continuum of change relevant to any career field. The CSI has not been used in published research with superintendents. It has however been used extensively with business leaders (Musselwhite & Ingram, 2003).

Fullan (2001) offered that education and business can learn from each other through shared commonalities: "One of the main conclusions I have drawn, is that the requirements of knowledge societies bring education and business leadership closer than they have ever been before" (p.136).

Recent moves toward district accreditation made by accrediting organizations reflect the recognition that districts are systems that must be led with an understanding that the parts affect the whole and vice versa (AdvancED, 2007). School districts represent complex living organizations. Each department, school, and individual influences the rest of the organization.

Instrumentation

The *Change Style Indicator* (*CSI*) was selected for this research after a review of relevant

literature, including instruments used in the research regarding superintendent leadership. The three approaches to leading change, *conserver*, *pragmatist* and *originator*, provide a framework to help leaders to explore their attitudes toward change.

     Conservers tend to change incrementally and methodically. *Originators* are risk takers and do not readily accept the status quo. *Pragmatists* fall between *originators* and *conservers*, leading change from the middle—keeping what is successful, and creating new initiatives.

Demographic Data

There are 85 superintendents in South Carolina. Fifty-eight (68.2 %) are male and 27 (31.8%) are female. There are 22 (25.8%) African-American superintendents and 63 (74.1%) Caucasian superintendents.

     The response rate was 51.7%. Of the 44 responding superintendents 30 (68.1%) were male and 14 (31.8%) were female; 8 (18.1%) were African-American, and 36 (81.8%) were white. Table 1 reflects that the respondents were generally representative of the group as a whole.

Table 1

Demographic Comparison of Superintendents and Sample Group of Superintendents

Superintendents Demographic Data	South Carolina Group		Sample	
	N	%	N	%
Male	58	(68.2%)	30	(68.1%)
Female	27	(31.7%)	14	(31.8%)
African-American	22	(25.8%)	8	(18.1%)
Caucasian	63	(74.1%)	36	(81.8%)

Results

The highest possible score on either end of the change style continuum scale is 66, positive or negative. Respondent scores ranged from -26 to 26. Musselwhite and Ingram stated that 50% of the population generally scores in the pragmatist category (middle of the continuum) scoring between -13 and 13. Figure 1 illustrates the change style ranges providing categories and score point breaks (p.7-3).

Figure 1

Change Style Ranges Providing Categories and Score Point Breaks

Conserver		Pragmatist			Originator
-66		-13	0	13	66

What are the change-style preferences of South Carolina superintendents as reflected on the CSI and how do those preferences differ from other leaders? The results displayed in Table 2 indicated that responding superintendents tended to be categorized as *conservers* and *pragmatists* in their reported change-style preferences, with only four of the forty-four respondents scoring in the *originator* category. Of the respondent superintendents, 16 (36.2%) scored in the *conserver* category and 24 (54.5%) superintendents responded in the *pragmatist* category. The four *originator* scores constituted 9% of the responses. Of the four respondents in the *originator* category, two were female and two were male. Fewer than 1% of the responding male superintendents and 14% of the responding female superintendents were *originators*.

Table 2

CSI Categories

	Sample Group	
Change Style Categories	N	%
Conserver	16	(36.2%)
Pragmatist	24	(54.4%)
Originator	4	(9.0%)

n = 44

Superintendent mean points for selected statement pairs on the *CSI* are provided in Table 3. Three points were distributed for each pair, with the mean of 1.5 for each statement.

Table 3

CSI Mean Scores for Paired Statements

		Mean Points
1.	I am good at generating new ideas.	.98
	I am good at building upon existing ideas.	2.02
2.	I become bored easily with routine tasks.	1.75
	I can perform long detailed tasks without boredom.	1.25
3.	I am good with details.	.66
	I can see the big picture.	2.34
4.	I like to work on practical problems.	1.81
	I like to work on theoretical problems	1.19
5.	I value originality.	1.23
	I value practicality.	1.77
6.	I prefer to follow the book.	1.80
	I prefer to make it up as I go along.	1.20
7.	I like to try out new and untried solutions.	1.25
	I like to try practical solutions.	1.75
8.	I prefer to work on one project at a time.	1.02
	I prefer to work on several projects simultaneously.	1.98
9.	I produce many ideas, some of which may be unworkable.	1.22
	I produce a few relevant and proven ideas.	1.78
10.	I believe policies should be challenged.	.84
	I believe policies should be followed.	2.16
11.	I promote harmony in groups.	1.21
	I promote the sharing of different opinions in groups.	1.69
12.	I bend the rules.	.75
	I abide by the rules.	2.25

13.	I seek familiarity.	1.52
	I seek adventure.	1.48
14.	I complete projects in a roundabout way.	1.00
	I complete projects in a step-by-step fashion.	2.00
15.	I like doing things in a familiar way.	1.84
	I like doing things differently each time.	1.16
16.	I like to hand off a project once I know it can be done.	1.43
	I like to follow a project through to the end.	1.57
17.	I prefer creating something new.	1.18
	I prefer improving upon something that already exists.	1.81
18.	I appreciate tradition.	1.39
	I appreciate change.	1.61
19.	I like working on cutting-edge issues.	1.47
	I like working on relevant day-to-day issues.	1.53
20.	I make decisions based on actual fact.	2.02
	I make decisions based on my intuition.	.98
21.	I prefer written instructions.	1.47
	I prefer picture instructions.	1.53
22.	I respond to situations in a measured way.	1.98
	I respond to situations spontaneously.	1.02

In Table 4 the researchers compared the percentage of superintendents, principals and business leaders responding in each CSI category. The sample group of superintendents (36%) than did principals (20%) or business leaders (12%).

had a lower percentage in the *originator* category than did principals and business leaders. Superintendents had a substantially higher percentage in the conserver category

Table 4

CSI Category by Occupation

	Conserver	Pragmatist	Originator
Superintendents (SC)	36%	54%	9%
Principals (national)	20%	37%	43%
Business leaders	12%	55%	33%

In Table 5 the researchers compared superintendents' mean points with school principals and business leaders' mean points. The mean points of superintendents (-6.9) was

more conservative than both the principals' mean points (5.9) and business leaders' mean points (5.6).

Table 5

CSI Mean Points by Three Job Categories

Superintendents	-6.9
Principals	5.9
Business leaders	5.6

What is the relationship between the change style preferences of the superintendents and student achievement? Analyses of

superintendents' change-style preferences and South Carolina Academic Report Card ratings utilizing an analysis of variance revealed no

significant differences in student achievement, regardless of the change style preference of the superintendent. The data collected from the superintendents' CSI responses and data collected from the South Carolina District Report Cards from 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 were analyzed to account for two years of absolute ratings.

The analysis revealed that the CSI category of *originator*, with only four superintendents, was insufficient to test for a significant effect on district report card rating; however, the categories of *conserver* and *pragmatist*, were sufficient.

Three tests were conducted. First, the data were analyzed by the year for absolute rating. Next, the data were analyzed for a difference in the average row and column marginal means between CSI categories of *conserver* and *pragmatist*.

The final analysis tested for an interaction effect. In Table 6 the researchers present the results of the analysis of variance for each of the tests. At the 0.05 significance level, the p-values of .47 indicated that the marginal means are homogenous over both years; therefore, there was no significant year effect on absolute rating.

For the second test, at the 0.05 significance level, the $p < .05$ value of .97 indicated that the average of the row and column marginal means was the same for *conservers* and *pragmatists*.

The final test statistic tested for an interaction effect—whether year effects are different for *conservers* or *pragmatists*. The p-value of .7070 is larger than a significance level of 0.05, indicating that the year effect on absolute ratings was the same for *conservers* and *pragmatists*.

Table 6

Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	χ^2	$Pr > \chi^2$
Intercept	4	1165.97	<.0001
Year	4	3.57	.4674
CSI	4	.55	.9688
CSI*Year	4	2.16	.7070

Although the South Carolina system of accountability is arguably flawed in its ability to gauge subtle academic increases, it remains a consistent benchmark of academic achievement. Anecdotal data, disaggregated data, and other indicators such as high school graduation rates may reveal nuances in student achievement gains that the report card calculations are not currently designed to measure.

Conclusions and Discussion

The researchers' purpose for this study was to explore the change-style preferences of South Carolina superintendents, as determined by self-reported responses of a sample of South Carolina superintendents, compare them with other leaders and identify potential links to student achievement. The researchers determined that the sample group of superintendents was generally conservative or pragmatic in their change- style preferences.

The item analysis of the Change Style Indicator data completed by the researchers revealed several patterns of interest. The items indicated that the superintendents valued practicality, processes and policies, and approached problems systematically. South Carolina superintendents are conservative and when compared to leaders from business and individual schools, substantially so.

However, the change-style preferences of the sample group of superintendents revealed a conservative position that seems to contradict change leadership called for when substantial reforms are needed. While student achievement may be a priority for superintendents, risk-taking for purposes of reform is not.

With much education change expected in most South Carolina school districts, the responses of the sample group of superintendents were conservative, more than the responses of principals or other leaders.

Petersen's (1999) research revealed that successful superintendents were often risk-takers, willing to make changes that were in the best interest of the students and student learning. Hord and Hall (1987) found that 'initiators' had the greatest success at implementing change by showing high expectations, innovativeness and creativity.

Perhaps accountability measures have led to a reduction in the number of superintendents willing to take such risks. Possibly the traditional bureaucratic school system is still rewarding politically-safe district-level initiatives. Superintendents can feel vulnerable when the inevitable resistance to change occurs.

Maybe superintendents are a reflection of the conservative communities they serve. Are boards of education reluctant to hire and retain creative change agents? These questions, not addressed in this study, certainly warrant further research.

Recommendations

Although links to student achievement from the office of the superintendent can be elusive, it remains an area in need of continued research. If superintendents are the chief executive officers and leaders of learning, ways to gauge their success in initiating change and improving student achievement must continually be explored.

Two specific recommendations flow from this research. First, boards of education need to consider whether they are truly seeking and employing change leaders for their school district. Community representatives and the boards that represent those communities expect newly employed superintendents to make changes that result in improvements such as increases in student test scores. New superintendents are generally viewed as a symbol of change and a harbinger of better

times ahead. However, substantive change often brings disruption, resistance and discomfort, not generally appreciated by boards. Symbolic change, rather than substantive change, may be all the board really wants or feels is needed. Perhaps some boards are simply reflecting the conservative nature of the communities they serve or their own hesitancy to challenge the status quo.

Second, policy makers at the local, state, and national levels need to review current accountability systems. Are they really promoting innovativeness or are they increasing the vulnerability of the superintendent and hampering reform efforts? The superintendent of schools has a high profile and politically sensitive position. However, specific contractual accountability for improved academic achievement, higher salaries, and increased partisan political participation in school board elections may have raised the level of superintendent vulnerability to a new and perhaps a higher level. That perceived vulnerability may be nourishing a more cautious group of leaders. Much has changed—or has it?

Author Biographies

Annette Melton is an elementary assistant principal. She has also served as a primary teacher and elementary counselor. She is a member of the South Carolina Southern Association of Colleges and Schools State Council.

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Research Article

Correlations Between Perceived Teacher Empowerment and Perceived Sense of Teacher Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Empirical research has linked teacher efficacy with student achievement. In this study, the authors determined the perceived levels of empowerment and self-efficacy from 70 elementary teachers in two schools. Descriptive and predictive statistics were used to explore the degree to which perceived empowerment and self-efficacy were related in an attempt to discern if empowerment serves as an enabler to support teacher self-efficacy, and subsequently student achievement. The findings and inferences from this study suggest an organizational design that provides teachers control over conditions that influence their work life, and provides an interactive social system to foster trust, professionalism, collegiality, and collaboration around teaching and learning, may give teachers access to psychosocial experiences needed for the growth of their professional self-efficacy.

Key words

Empowerment, Efficacy, Student Achievement

Current (2009-2010) trends for accountability in education mandate educators to leave no child behind; educators are challenged to re-design teaching around sophisticated models to close performance gaps among groups and increase students' academic achievement. Many studies since 1980 directed educators' attention to the importance of teacher efficacy

in improving student achievement (Fives, 2003). Teacher efficacy is defined as "teachers' beliefs about their capability to impact students' motivation and achievement" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001, p. 2).

The increased focus on teacher efficacy has been substantiated from over 500,000 studies whose authors have attempted to assess the most contributing factors that influence student achievement. Hattie's (2003) evaluation of these studies found teachers' responses made up 30% of the variance of determining what influenced learning the most. All other school variables were three to six times less influential on student learning than that of teacher effectiveness (Hattie). This finding heightened the importance for educators to focus on school organizational variables that may empower teachers' self-efficacy to improve student learning.

Studies on teacher empowerment have also revealed the importance of establishing operational models in schools that allow teachers more control in making decisions to influence what and how they teach. An ex-post facto study of 3,366 K-12 career and technical teachers revealed that teachers' perceived empowerment was consistent among males and females; the need for teachers to make meaningful decisions regarding the teaching and learning processes in their school necessary for school improvement (Scribner, Truell, Hager, & Srichai, 2001).

A rationale for implementing empowerment structures in school operations is to promote greater achievement through granting authority to those who know content and students well —the teachers. Short and Johnson (1994) identified the need for a focus on teacher empowerment in improving teacher effectiveness, but Bandura (1997) viewed empowerment as a "misused construct" that is

something that cannot be given, but rather generated as one experiences development of personal efficacy (p. 477). The study of teacher empowerment has resulted in many contradicting viewpoints, interpretations, and conclusions on how empowerment affects teaching and learning.

The construct of empowerment for this study was carefully defined and assessed for relatedness to teacher efficacy. The operational definition of organizational empowerment for this study was the enabling capacity for an organization to support the development of self-efficacy. McGraw (1992) related organizational empowerment in terms of greater teacher autonomy in decision making. McGraw believed that the way to increase teacher autonomy and empowerment was to remove time consuming approval processes of bureaucratic leadership. This study was based on Kanter's theory of structural power viewed as an operational process in schools that gives teachers greater autonomy in decision making and access to resources, information, support and personal advancement. These liberating qualities provide teachers the power to mobilize resources and information for action (Kanter, 1993).

An operational design in schools is important where teachers may address and resolve conflicts without delay. Teachers who have the legitimate power to control their job behavior demonstrate higher levels of efficacy than those who have diminished power to control their job behavior (Short & Johnson, 1994). The combined definition of teacher empowerment from McGraw (1992) and Kanter (1993) depicts empowerment as a liberating process where teachers make decisions, and choices, regarding the resources and problems associated with their teaching.

Though no specific research has been found to link the presence of teacher

empowerment directly to the fostering of teacher efficacy, the works of Kanter, McGraw, and Short and Johnson imply that an operational design of shared decision making over issues influencing job performance may provide an environment for the activation of the four sources of efficacy defined by Bandura's

(1997) social cognitive theory and the exercise of control. Figure 1 depicts the flow of the present study and presents the questions addressed in describing the relationships between perceived empowerment and teacher self-efficacy.
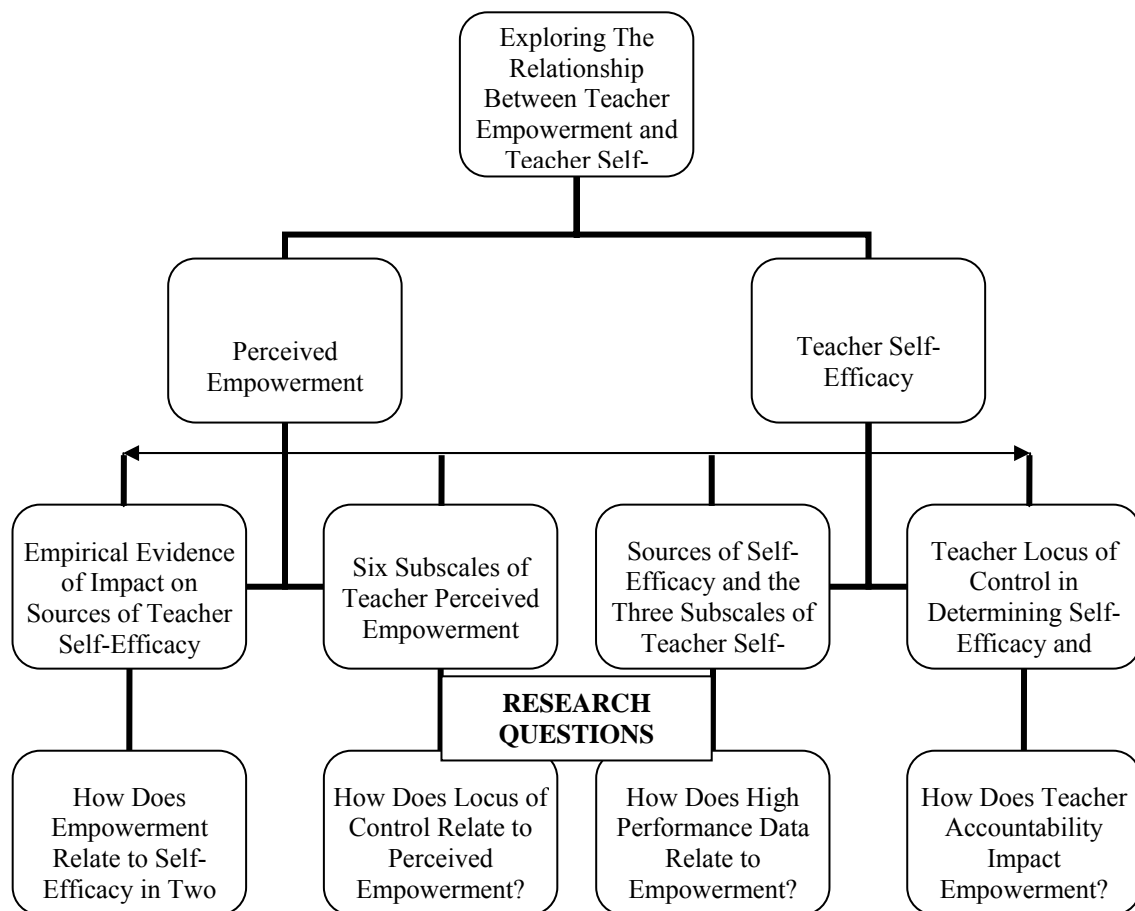
Figure 1. Testing the relationship between perceived empowerment and teacher efficacy. Theoretic framework for this study.

Purpose

In the present study the researchers explored and compared the levels of teacher-perceived empowerment and teacher efficacy from 70 teachers in two K-5 elementary schools. Results from theoretical research in psychology and results from empirical studies were used to establish the constructs and to determine the level of teacher-perceived empowerment and efficacy. Quantitative analyses and descriptive statistics were used to assess the relationships between the concepts of perceived empowerment and self-efficacy.

An analysis of disaggregated data from teacher questionnaires, teacher personal information (census data), and specific student achievement data, furthered researchers' understanding of linkages between teacher-perceived empowerment and self-efficacy within each school, across both schools, and with the aggregate results from both schools. The theoretical constructs and empirical findings were used to support, or refute, the assessments in this study. The proposed idea that organizational empowerment may serve to improve teacher self-efficacy was explored.

Methods

Teacher-perceived empowerment was assessed with a 38-item questionnaire developed by Short and Rinehart (1992). The questionnaire was entitled the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). Short and Rinehart demonstrated the validity of the instrument by demonstrating the coefficient alpha for the SPES instrument at .94, and the coefficient alphas for the subscales at (a) decision making (.89), (b) professional growth (.83), (c) status (.86), (d) self-efficacy (.84), (e)

autonomy (.81), and (f) impact (.82). The SPES had an overall internal consistency of .94. These coefficient alphas indicated that the scale and subscales were internally consistent (1992). The SPES questions assessed empowerment by obtaining mean Likert scores in six dimensions, or subscales: involvement in decision making, opportunities for professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Participants rated their involvement in each subscale by choosing their degree of agreement on a Likert-type response set ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Teacher self-efficacy was assessed using a 12-item questionnaire developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2002). The questionnaire was entitled the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES-short form). The two Rand questions were used to assess Julian Rotter's locus of control factor originally designed in the 1966 Rand study (Fives, 2003). The TSES instrument assessed the teachers' self-reported efficacy for instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The TSES used a nine-point response set ranging from nothing (1) to a great deal (9) in response to the question stem "how much can you do?" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001).

The theoretical assumption is that the level of perceived teacher empowerment may indicate the degree to which the organizational nature of the school influences teacher self-efficacy through the provision, or inhibition, of the sources of self-efficacy. Figure 2 represents the theoretical model designed for this study.
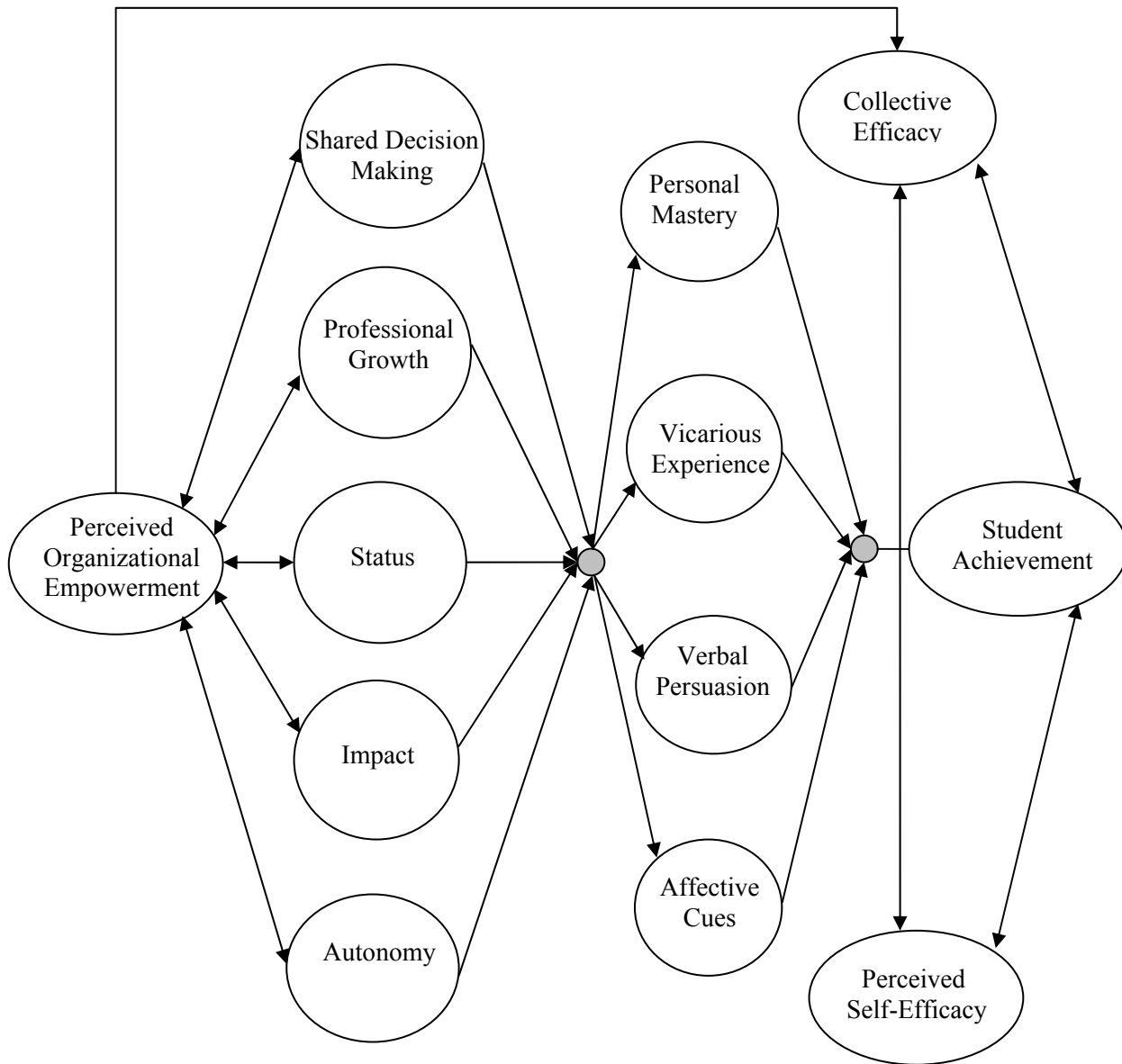
Figure 2. Theoretical model of empowerment and self-efficacy for this study.

The framework of this study was aligned with using the survey-method quantitative research design. The researchers attempted to correlate the existence of empowerment with self-efficacy and reveal predictive significance in the two schools. Both self-efficacy and empowerment were grounded in separate theories describing human behavior in organizations.

The results did not seek to prove a cause and effect relationship between the two constructs, nor their subscales, but sought patterns in the relationship between perceived empowerment and self-efficacy depicted from the 70 participants.

Findings

To test this theoretical assumption, data from three surveys were collected from 70 teachers from two K-5 elementary schools. The instruments assessed self-efficacy, efficacy as related to Ratler's locus of control, and perceived empowerment. The raw data, and totals, from the three instruments were subjected to quantitative analysis to determine similarities by comparison of descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression. Using multiple regression with ordinal level data presents some limitations to the interpretation of the results of the analysis.

The average responses on each of the subscales of the TSES were used as the variables in the multiple regression analysis. The empowerment variable included a self-efficacy subscale in addition to the five other subscales. Table 1 presents the combined means and standard deviations for faculties in both schools on the TSES and the Total empowerment scales (See Appendix A.)

In Table 1, the means for each of the instruments show that on average participants responded positively. For the TSES, the mean (88.36) represented 82% of the total possible score. On the school participant empowerment survey means are presented for total empowerment with the self-efficacy subscale included (M=146.19) representing 76.91% of the total possible score and without the self-efficacy subscale included (M=119.56) representing 74.72% of the total possible score (TPS).

Table 2 contains disaggregated data from both empowerment and self-efficacy surveys (N = 70). (See Appendix B.)

Data in Appendix C confirm that the two surveys assessed separate constructs. The TSES was correlated with the SPES results with the self-efficacy scale included (r = .288) and without the self-efficacy subscale included in the correlation calculation (r = .232). The decline in the correlation coefficient suggested that the self-efficacy subscale assessed by the SPES and the TSES were assessing some of the same constructs.

A multiple-regression analysis was used to predict total self-efficacy from the subscales of the SPES. Results suggest that impact was the only variable that contributed significantly to the level of self-efficacy. The adjusted R^2 (.120) indicated that impact only contributes about 12% of the explained variance of total self-efficacy. (See Appendix D.)

Conclusions

In this study the consistent articulation of empowerment to levels of efficacy generally implies the importance for schools to value and address the nature of organizational properties. The establishment of a supportive, positive, and interactive climate which is focused on the unified purpose of advancing student achievement should receive considerable attention. Although the SPES was limited in context to exhibit the comprehensive degree of climate quality in this study, the nature of organizational empowerment's overall relationship with efficacy did reveal the importance of promoting the sense of impact and status among the teachers in the two schools.

From the findings in this study, the researchers inferred that a professional learning community may be a more accurate assessment of a school's capacity to engage teachers in a psychosocial process focused on a unified mission for the improvement of teaching and learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). This implication is supported by Bandura's (1997) proposal of the bidirectional quality between self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

If the social-cognitive support, as assessed by the degree of use of the professional learning community concept in a school, is linked to proportionate increases in collective teacher efficacy, then researchers inferred that the organizational design of a school has the potential to empower teachers with self-efficacy through the mechanism of collective efficacy.

Finally, study findings implied that the sense of empowerment may vary substantially when comparing subgroups within schools. This may be associated with the perceived inconsistent distribution of power and ownership in the school culminating from a lack of a unified purpose (Hipp, 1997) and equity for equal representation and participation by all stakeholders (Stewart, 2007).

An understanding of the interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal conflicts teachers experience in their school appears to be important in the quality of the sense of empowerment (Melenzyer, 1990).

Recommendations for Administrators

The findings associated with young teachers in this study suggested that the principals of the two schools in this study, and possibly in others, should place greater emphasis on supporting the sense of empowerment in the orientation and induction processes of new teachers. Although the younger teachers represented higher efficacy than most other teachers, their starting point of efficacy was not assessed.

The risk of lower empowerment having a declining effect on efficacy may exist. Supportive strategies for indoctrinating new staff into the culture and creating meaningful bonds within the social system of the school may decrease isolation, interpersonal and intrapersonal stresses that would lead to lower empowerment and efficacy. Literature supports the trend for most teachers to decline in efficacy as they progress through the early years in teaching (Edwards, 1996). Intentional support strategies within the organization may minimize this decrease.

It is imperative that leaders in education recognize the significance of protecting and supporting the self-efficacy of their teachers. Leaders must realize their role and responsibility to value opportunities to help

teachers realize and reflect on mastery experiences.

Educational leaders should create shared opportunities for the positive vicarious and persuasive activities surrounding teaching and learning. Finally, leaders must be cognizant of the constraints and barriers perceived by the teachers and collaboratively participate in the removal of the limiting conditions. Such support would decrease the level of task difficulty a teacher considers when appraising their self-efficacy for successfully accomplishing a task (Bandura, 1997). Training with school leaders to recognize the empowering quality of a school to support self-efficacy are keys to this theoretical construct.

Author Biographies

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APPENDIX A

CENTRAL TENDENCIES AND VARIABILITY OF TOTAL SELF-EFFICACY, TOTAL EMPOWERMENT, AND TOTAL EMPOWERMENT WITHOUT THE SELF-EFFICACY SUBSCALE (BOTH FACULTIES COMBINED)

Scales	Means and Standard Deviation (SDS)			
	N	Mean	% TPS*	SD
Total self-efficacy from TSES	70	88.36	81.81	10.16
Total empowerment	70	146.13	76.91	14.00
Total empowerment less the self-efficacy subscale	70	119.56	74.72	12.44

*Total Possible Score

APPENDIX B

GLOBAL CENTRAL TENDENCIES AND VARIABILITY OF THE SUBSCALES OF SELF-EFFICACY AND EMPOWERMENT (BOTH SCHOOLS COMBINED)

Scale	Descriptive Statistics		
Subscale	N	Mean (% TPS[*])	SD
Empowerment			
Decision Making	70	30.46 (60.92%)	5.87
Professional Growth	70	25.29 (84.30%)	2.81
Status	70	25.99 (86.83%)	2.45
Autonomy	70	12.33 (61.65%)	2.94
Impact	70	25.50 (85.00%)	2.77
Self-efficacy	70	26.57 (89.56%)	2.81
Efficacy			
Classroom Management	70	29.76 (82.66%)	4.18
Student Engagement	70	28.56 (79.33%)	4.00
Instructional Strategies	70	30.04 (83.44%)	3.54

[*]Total Possible Score

APPENDIX C

CORRELATIONS MATRIX FOR TOTAL SELF EFFICACY, EMPOWERMENT, AND EMPOWERMENT WITHOUT THE SELF-EFFICACY SUBSCALE (BOTH FACULTIES COMBINED)

Variables	Self-Efficacy	Empowerment	Empowerment Less Self-Efficacy
Self efficacy	__	.288	.232
Empowerment	__	__	.984

APPENDIX D

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH EMPOWERMENT SUBSCALES, LESS THE SELF-EFFICACY SUBSCALE, TO TOTAL EFFICACY (RESPONSES OF FACULTY AT BOTH SCHOOLS COMBINED)

Model		B	t	Sig.
Impact	(Constant)	49.231	4.605	.000
		1.472	3.680	.000

Best Practice Article

What Counts As Knowledge in the Small School District: Superintendents' Thoughts About Decision Making

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Abstract

Based upon the words of small school-district superintendents, this article explores how superintendents might lead in these complex contexts. In national focus groups, thirty-five participants described their decision-making processes as resting upon "doing what's best for students," acknowledging the unique challenges of small school district leadership, and negotiating priorities that are in constant flux. The article offers that being reflective may be the best way to lead in such complexity. Additionally, it provides eight means to honing reflection: time to pause, continuous development, small practical steps for leading, and self-regulation being a few.

Keywords

Superintendent, Small School Districts, and Decision Making

Some researchers suggested that a systematic study of administration has yielded formula-like advice that administrators can apply in situations to produce predictable results. Scholars argue that this knowledge could "be used with confidence to guide leadership practice, policy, and research" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2), and they claim generalizations are possible because "some leadership practices are valuable in almost all contexts" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, p. 19).

Skeptical about this systematic approach to leadership, scholars, such as English (2006, 2007, 2008), have claimed that school administration is context-dependent, that it is not helpful to search for generalizations that apply in all situations, and that leadership development programs, therefore, should not attempt to enshrine good practices "as the ultimate ends" (2008, p. 5).

Greenfield (1993) argued that searching for scientific knowledge about administration indulged "at best in a premature hope and at worst in a delusion" (p. 5). In his view, to become a good administrator, one should strive to know oneself and to understand the human condition. Similar beliefs seem to have led to Littrell and Foster's (1995) claim that "administrators accomplish … feats not because of their scientific training and their judicious use of principles of management, but because of their personal and moral presence (p. 33).

Purpose
Because researchers have yet to pinpoint what practicing superintendents perceive as knowledge that really counts and how they use this knowledge in decision-making, we explored how small school-district superintendents described their decision-making as a continuous act of weighing and

balancing various factors. We conclude with recommendations for learning to lead in such complex contexts and situations as the small-district superintendency.

Method
As part of the University Council of Educational Administration's (UCEA) *Voices* phenomenological research project that collected focus group data nationally from 93 principals and 81 superintendents, this study focuses on 35 superintendents of small school districts, having fewer than 1,000 students (see Appendix A).

Each focus group interview lasted approximately two hours and followed an interview protocol based on the works of Krueger (1998) and Krueger and Casey (2000).

The authors have written articles and papers from these six focus groups, have discussed them in depth and at length, and share here our interpretations based on that experience.

Our findings derive from "multiple coders so that the researcher[s] could see whether the constructs being investigated were shared and whether multiple coders could reliably apply the same codes" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 283). Using N5 text analysis software, we coded all of the transcripts, looking for descriptions of decision making and responses to No Child Left Behind, yielding a number of textual units (Creswell, 2007).

We grouped these textual units into relationships and themes by identifying further similarities and collapsing them into categories. We cross checked these units and themes by reading and rereading large sections of the physical transcripts (Agar, 1980). The data analysis can be described as a movement of

reading sections of transcripts, then interpreting and classifying, then returning to the transcripts for further description, a looping form of analysis (Creswell, 2007).

To maintain confidentiality, we have identified superintendents only by number, region of the country, and year in which the focus group took place. Because we worked with a subset of a larger database, the numbers are not consecutive.

Findings

From the focus group transcriptions and the coded selections, we individually read and chose sections that all three researchers agreed upon.

Our participants described that knowledgeable decisions were based upon the pivotal expression, "doing what's best for students"; the specific small school district context; and the balancing act of multiple priorities.

"What's Best for Students"

When the researchers asked the small school-district superintendents to talk about their experiences of "doing what is best for students," all of the participants described the expression as a pivotal value.

Superintendents described themselves as directing their school leadership toward meeting the needs of students. To do so, the participants detailed how they used the expression as a touchstone to navigate a myriad of negotiations that they encountered, or needed to make.

Superintendent 18 said:
 "That's always kind of been the thing that I've gone with. That's been my bottom line. If there's a dilemma as to

what to do, I'll always say, 'What's best for my students?'" (Southwest & West, 2005).

Superintendent 11 explained:
"If we're going to make a mistake, we're going to make it on the side of the students … And in trying to make the decision, we sometimes defer the decision to these people who have specific needs and try to meet those needs with the children's best interest in mind." (Southeast, 2006)

Superintendent 38 told us:
"As long as you believe that what you are doing is right, and when you use that same old benchmark of what is good for kids, and really mean it, I think it makes things line up pretty easily about what has to happen. 'Here is the goal and this is why, and I believe in it.' And it doesn't really matter after that." (Midwest, 2004)

"Doing what's best for students" is more than words for our participants. Taken to heart, superintendents pointed out that keeping students as the focus of their work helps them negotiate the multitude and range of decisions that they face daily.

Context Matters

The participants told us how their work in small school districts framed what counts as knowledge. In school leadership, district context is key.

These administrators talked in many ways about multiple roles and responsibilities of personnel, funding and district resource allocations, the importance of the superintendent's role in public relations as well as demands of accountability to their

communities, public, and school district boards of education.

Multiple roles of personnel

The superintendent of a small district must be cognizant that personnel must have various roles and responsibilities. Unlike their counterparts in large districts who depend often on the traditional hierarchical flowchart of positions and chain of command, superintendents in these districts must encourage all personnel to accept that everything is potentially "their job."

> Superintendent 23 noted:
> "We only have two administrators for 300 people, so … we have to decide who has to do this reporting and who has to do this training ..I don't [think] that any of us districts have a person to whom we just say, 'Okay, you're the NCLB person and everything that comes down (about NCLB) you just take care of that, and we can go about doing our jobs and not have to worry about that.' … We don't have the budgets for that." (Midwest, 2004)

The diverse responsibilities that each person handles make losing them (perhaps due to low pay in small districts) even more difficult than in a larger system with more administrative personnel.

Allocation of Resources

As indicated in the previous examples, the allocation of limited resources makes a huge difference in the small district.

> Superintendent 25 said:
> "I've been able to—just by how you channel the monies, how you focus some things, it makes a big difference in materials that teachers have to work with, and again getting good teachers." (Midwest, 2004)

What counts as knowledge for the small school-district superintendent is that within this context, one has substantial discretion with available resources, but must often do more with less.

Public Role

Besides asking others to fulfill a multitude of responsibilities with limited resources, participants claimed that their own roles were more complex and visible than the same roles would be in larger districts.

> Superintendent 19 noted that the small school-district superintendent is at the center of all responsibilities:
> "If the biscuits are bad at breakfast, they call you. If a kid is not being successful in class, they call you—the whole gamut, from the time it opens in the morning, 'til the time it shuts down at night … You have to know what's goin' on. You have to know how to handle it. You have to know how to get in contact with people who can handle 'it' in that situation … It's that whole thing of a small school system." (Southwest and west, 2005)

> Superintendent 14 noted that in the small school district, superintendents must be aware of their position in the community:
> "The superintendent has a very public role. I don't think we operate in a vacuum. We work for our communities and teachers. The priority is to give voice and I think as a superintendent, you really have to know the structure of your community and the real power brokers … It's all about knowing your community." (Southeast, 2006)

Knowing their context mattered greatly to our small school-district participants. The responsibilities facing personnel, the level of

influence staff and resources play, and the visible role they serve in their communities affect leadership in small school districts.

How Superintendents Negotiate Decisions
The small school-district context provides a foundation of what counts as knowledge for superintendents. Awareness of roles and responsibilities is essential. But, that foundation is only part of understanding how superintendents in small school district do their work and what counts as knowledge for them. Participants discussed their decision-making processes. They described a series of intertwined processes founded on negotiation and balance. Their decisions, therefore, became not based on one clear answer but on an answer that represented a thoughtful response that entertained and weighed the outcome for a number of items and people who are essential to the district.

> Superintendent 24 commented about the uncertainty:
> "Unfortunately in our job, it's not that this is the perfect answer and this is a totally wrong answer. Often we are faced with minimizing the negatives in order to arrive at a solution that is the best possible one there is. It's like—I think if you're a military commander and you have a mission, you're going to have some casualties, and you're derelict in your duties [if] all of your soldiers are killed or wounded. But on the other hand, you can't expect to accomplish a challenging goal, an obstacle, without having some things go wrong. What we do is not that extreme, but it's similar." (Midwest, 2004)

In a UCEA *Voices* study conducted prior to this one, a superintendent said she felt like the man on the Ed Sullivan show spinning plates, trying to keep a number of plates all spinning, running from one to the other, and

"The one that drops is the one that makes or breaks you" (cited in Restine, Hyle, & McClellan, 2007). Knowing that in a small school district, decisions can have an immediate and important effect, superintendents have the responsibility of weighing what was important in a situation and recognizing that even though it was important in this situation, its worth may be compromised in the next situation.

Conclusions and Implications
We learned that what counts for superintendents appeared to be in constant and fluid negotiation and still bound by doing what is right for students within their school context. We learned from these superintendents that their work was a series of problems without "right" answers. Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) reminded readers of "the original observation of John Dewey, who proposed that when it becomes known that some problems cannot be solved with certainty, what is needed is reflective thinking" (2009, p. 90).

We offer eight steps to enable small-district superintendents to hone their reflective thinking:

Step1: All involved in the enterprise need to realize that when a superintendent is not sure of what to do next, s/he is probably reading the situation correctly. This is not being inept or indecisive, but reflective.

Step 2: Superintendents and those working with them must realize that no matter how long superintendents have been working in the field, they can still get better. Day, Harrison and Halpin (2009) noted that three core aspects of individuals develop well into adulthood, identity, moral reasoning, and epistemic cognition (one's understanding of one's own understanding or metacognition). All three aspects can contribute to effective small-district superintending.

Step 3: Accept that the small-district superintendency, like many leadership roles, will, on occasion, bring one face to face with one's own limitations or the limitations of colleagues and clients. A superintendent can allow this to discourage him/her or can step off from this point into new learning experiences.

Step 4: Sometimes, to improve, superintendents need to learn small practical skills, not sweeping insights. It is fine to realize that one is bad at conflict resolution, or out of touch with current instructional practice, or that colleagues are lazy or inept, but that realization does not immediately make for better superintendent leadership. Such an insight is at the personal level, not the "performance" level (Day et al., 2009, p. 188). Sometimes that realization must be tied to a practical plan to improve in discrete areas.

Step 5: A trusted coach can help improvement in a discrete area. The coach does not help by making sweeping indictments or validation. Rather, the coach leads the superintendent to recognize his or her areas of strength and areas that require more learning. This recognition helps the superintendent develop understanding of one's own skill. Policy makers at state and national levels can help by realizing small-district superintendents may have the least access to coaches and that

government personnel can benefit the profession by providing opportunities for coaching.

Step 6: Learning superintendents will reflect about everyday experiences that have the potential to hone one's understanding or skill. They must realize that no matter how awkward a new behavior feels at first, it will seem more natural with practice.

Step 7: Learning superintendents must self-regulate. This is where the learner keeps an "eye on the prize" and focuses on doing the things needed to get the prize.

Step 8: Everyone involved in helping small-district superintendents grow must realize that leadership development is not a smooth process; rather it "may be discontinuous, nonlinear, and cyclical" (Day et al., p. 186).

Most of the school districts in the United States are small. Countless children have been educated in such districts. Leading them is no easy task. The small-district superintendents in this study are engaged in a worthy effort. They and others must be supported in it. These are ways to provide that support.

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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Year of focus group	Student enrollment of districts	Location	Number of Participants
2004	278 to 955	Midwest	4
2004	400 to 905	Midwest	4
2004	Ten districts with 95 to 774 students. One with 2,500	Southwest and West	11
2005	260-800	Midwest	4
2006	Six districts with 230 to 379 students. One with 1300 students	Midwest	7
2006	300 to 900	Southeast	7

Note. Focus groups contained a total of 37 superintendents. We did not analyze words of the two superintendents from districts with more than 1,000 students. Hence, only 35 superintendents are represented here.

Book Review

Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement
by John C. Hattie

Reviewed by
Donald C. Orlich, PhD
Professor Emeritus
Washington State University
Pullman, WA

Hattie provides a very detailed synthesis of studies describing specific effects on student achievement using meta-analysis. Meta-analysis is a technique of combining several studies related to similar variables. Hattie summarizes this monumental task into sets of variables that he labels as "contributions." The latter relate to: (1) students, (2) homes, (3) schools, (4) teachers, (5) curricula and (6) teaching approaches.

Hattie then converts the statistics of the hundreds of meta-analyses into "effect sizes." An effect size (d) of 1.0 would show a one standard deviation gain on a normal curve, or an increase of 34.13 percentiles. That effect would simultaneously be located at the 85th percentile of achievement, if the starting point were at the 50th percentile.

Ninety percent of all 138 computed effect sizes were positive, while 10 percent suggested a negative effect on student achievement. Hattie set a benchmark of d=0.40, which would indicate a 16 percent gain. This benchmark, argues Hattie, is a level at which "real world" differences could be observed in student achievement. The 138 traits and their effect sizes were then organized into "domains." Of all the variables tested, 66 met the d=0.40 benchmark, while 72 fell below.

The variables measuring a "d" between 1.44 and 0.80 were: Student self-reports of grades, Piagetian programs (growth models), providing formative evaluation, microteaching, acceleration and classroom management.

Among the many domains (variables) falling between d=0.77 and 0.60 were: teacher clarity, reciprocal teaching, feedback, teacher-student relationships, spaced vs. mass practice, meta-cognitive strategies, prior achievement, vocabulary programs, self-realization, professional development for educators, problem-solving teaching, not labeling students, phonics and teaching strategies.

Of the domains that Hattie identified, the following were in the bottom 10 with "d" scores ranging from 0.05 to -0.34. Included in this embarrassing array were: Whole language reading, multi-grade-age classes, student control over learning (constructivism), retention in grade, television and school mobility.

Obviously, this short review is incomplete, and impossible to discuss the implications of all the domains in detail. Nevertheless, two conclusions may be inferred: (1) teacher quality is a key link to student achievement and (2) most current educational reform efforts have simply been "fads."

This book is **must** reading for all involved in teacher education programs, those who determine educational policies and standards, and school evaluators. The U. S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, might examine Hattie's critique, and, perhaps, then resign.

Hattie's contributions to expanding our understanding of various effects on student achievement should receive accolades from every educational organization.

Reviewer Biography

Donald Orlich is a co-author of *Teaching Strategies: A Guide to Effective Instruction* (9th Ed.). E-mail: dorlich@wsu.edu

Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement by John C. Hattie is published by Routledge, London & New York, 2009; 379 pages; softcover, $43.15.

Mission and Scope, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines & Publication Timeline

The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* is a refereed, blind-reviewed, quarterly journal with a focus on research and best practices that advance the profession of education administration.

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