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COMMENTARY

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Pay for Performance Based on Standardized Test Scores: Twenty Questions

Proposals for administrator and teacher evaluation schemes are not in short supply. Pay for performance systems based on students' results from state mandated standardized tests is a policy idea gaining traction in the halls of the United States (U.S.) Congress and state legislatures.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) renewal proposal includes rewarding teachers and administrators for increasing student standardized test scores.

The Race to the Top (RTTT) federal grant program requires states to link the evaluations and pay of school administrators and teachers to student performance. States such as Colorado, Texas, New Jersey, Missouri, Florida, Tennessee, Nevada, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, and others have passed legislation or have bills under consideration to link administrator and/or teacher pay to student performance as measured in part or totally by results on summative state-mandated standardized tests of academic skills and knowledge.

Will this be another policy example of data-less decision making?

Above the Law
Professor and economist Charles Goodhart (1975) is credited with demonstrating that "any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes" (p.116). This principle is known as Goodhart's Law.

Some questions and concerns arise when one applies that law to performance pay for teachers and school administrators based on student results on statewide tests. In the case of performance pay based on a student test score, it is the test score that becomes the "observed statistical regularity." Since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act ([NCLB] 2002), Goodhart's Law has clearly been observed.

The validity of state test results became unstable as a result of the high-stakes regulatory consequences attached to them. For example, the size of many states' gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress

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(NAEP) did not keep pace with gains on their mandated state tests of skills and knowledge. States like Texas reported large gains in the percentage of students who scored proficient on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, but demonstrated a smaller percentage gain of students rated proficient on the NAEP.

In response to the myopic focus placed on test scores by state education officials, school district leaders, in some cases, resorted to test-gaming practices. Among these are holding back low-achieving students instead of promoting them into a grade level with an important mandated test (Remember the Texas Miracle?), and counseling large numbers of students to drop out and pursue a GED prior to a high school exit exam.

A growing practice includes targeting school resources to those students close to passing the state test, known as "bubble kids," at the expense of other students. Students deemed as "almost or just-proficient" receive additional instruction while those more needy or gifted do not.

These well-documented practices illustrate how some districts are trying to raise scores, but ultimately are decreasing the validity of the results and impoverishing the educational experience for all students (Booher-Jennings 2005).

In some school districts, the results from state standardized tests provide little real information about student learning. The results are skewed because they are produced through intensive test preparation, lax truancy enforcement during testing cycles, yearly changes to state proficiency cut points, increased dropout rates in urban areas, moving and shifting of students among schools so their scores do not count, enrolling students to "home school" status at test time, and other practices that have little to do with quality

education practices, but have been known to raise aggregate test scores.

In essence, any links to student learning and the quality of teachers and school administrators are tenuous because the scores are produced, in part, by manipulation of the system and a focus on test scores causes a manipulation of the system (McNeil et al. 2008; Stroup 2009; Ravitch 2010). Issues of moral, professional, and ethical pollution will increase after more teachers and administrators are subjected to these types of performance schemes. The test scores and processes that produce them will continue to become corrupted (Nichols and Berliner 2005).

What we are now seeing in greater frequency is the confluence of Goodhart's Law and Campbell's Law. Campbell (1976) stated, "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.46).

Consider how body counts, school quality rankings in the newspaper, George H. W. Bush's war on drugs, and end of the month police ticket quotas (Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder, 2008) are easily corrupted. The body count analogy made by Rothstein et al. (2008) is useful. It is well known that U.S. commanders and civilian policy makers in the Department of Defense used quantitative data to make battlefield decisions during the Vietnam War (McNamara and VandeMark, 1996).

Quantitatively speaking, the U.S. won the Vietnam War by a landslide with less than 60,000 casualties compared to an estimated 1.17 million North Vietnamese (Soames, 2005). But as we now know the quantitative measures used by policy makers during the

Vietnam era to monitor success turned out to be imperfect, incorrect, and corrupted indicators.

A similar thing takes place when people make important decisions about students, teachers, administrators and schools based on student results from one statewide test. Koretz (2008, 236) called this phenomenon "corruption of measures" in educational testing policy.

Educators and policy makers who support pay for performance need to step back, slow down, ask more questions, and not accept the superficial answers coming from governors, state legislators, and others who neither understand the statistical intricacies nor in some cases care to learn.

Recent Research

School administrators need to move beyond the noise and corporate marketing of pay-for-performance schemes based on student test results and educate themselves on recent empirical evidence on the subject. Information gleaned from studies and reports provide some clarity on the issue.

First, very few white-collar private sector professionals receive performance pay based on a single or very narrow set of indicators. In fact, only six percent of private-sector employees received direct, output-based cash payments according to the 2005 National Compensation Survey (Adams et al. 2009; Springer et al. 2010). Most of those workers were in commission-based fields like used-car salesmen, penny-stock brokers, and real estate agents; hardly comparable professions to that of raising children to be productive, ethical, and moral citizens.

Results from the longitudinal Project on Incentives in Teaching (POINT) conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University's Peabody School of Education suggested that performance pay did not have a significant impact on student achievement in mathematics in Grades 5-8 (Springer et al. 2010) for students of teachers eligible for bonuses from between $5,000 to $15,000 compared to teachers not eligible.

The researchers stated, "… there were no significant differences for students in Grades 6-8 when separate effects were estimated for each grade level" (p. 43). A positive effect was found only in Grade 5 and it did not persist in Grade 6 or other grade levels. The researchers stated, "To conclude, there is little evidence that POINT incentives induced teachers to make substantial changes to their instructional practices or their level of effort …" (p.45).

Similar results were found from another experimental study conducted in New York City (Fryer, 2011). "Surprisingly, all estimates of the effect of teacher incentives on student achievement are negative in both elementary and middle school …" (p. 18).

The impact of performance pay on student achievement in elementary school and middle school in the area of language arts and mathematics, as measured by state standardized tests in NYC, was negative with effect sizes ranging from -0.02 to -0.05. Furthermore, the pay system in the NYC experimental study did not improve student attendance, grade point average, or achievement on alternative measures of achievement such as other standardized tests taken by students.

Results were similar for high school students. "Similar to the analysis of elementary and middle schools, there is no evidence that teacher incentives had a positive effect on achievement. Estimates of the effect of teacher incentives on high school achievement are all small and statistically non-significant" (p. 18).

Why?

So why would we, as a country, want to pursue another policy that has not been fully vetted, tested, or modeled to identify and address all the possible negative unintended consequences to children and education professionals? Evidence suggests that pay for performance based solely, or to a large degree, on standardized test scores is not universally effective and could be detrimental to achievement (Adams, Heywood, and Rothstein 2010; Buzik & Laitusis, 2010; Springer et al. 2010).

Twenty Questions

Before we launch ourselves off of yet another reform precipice without a parachute for children, those who are proposing the policy should at least have evidence-based answers for the following questions:

1. Why expose children and education professionals to yet another unproven intervention? (Think high school exit exams, Reading First, charter schools, vouchers, high stakes standardized testing in Grades 3-8, etc.)

2. Why, if only approximately six percent of professionals in the private sector have their pay tied directly to quantitative indicators, are we so quick to implement such plans in schools without further study or attention to the unintended consequences raised in recent studies on the topic (Adams et al. 2009; Springer et al. 2010)?

3. How do proponents of pay for performance based on student test results reconcile the scheme with theories such as Hertzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954), Reactance Theory, and the work of Pfeffer and Sutton (2006), among others, which suggest that long-term effects will be detrimental to the system and not result in improved student learning?

4. What protections will be put in place in the pay for performance schemes to protect against the narrowing of the curriculum that occurs when test results become the ultimate outcome variable to determine the quality of the education processes (see Au 2007)?

5. According to UNICEF (2005), the United States is second only behind Mexico in the percentage of children living in poverty in the industrialized world. How will pay for performance programs account for the debilitating effects poverty has on achievement (Coleman et al. 1966; Hart and Risley 1995; Sirin 2005; Emerson 2009)?

6. Student prior achievement has an effect size of 0.67 on later achievement. That is the difference between scoring at the 50th percentile compared to scoring at the 73rd percentile on a nationally norm-referenced test (Feinstein 2003; Duncan et al. 2007). How will pay schemes based on test results account for prior achievement?

7. Without mandated random assignment of students to classes how will policymakers ensure that classes are balanced in terms of student prior achievement, disabilities, and other demographic characteristics that effect student achievement on statewide standardized tests?

8. The effect size difference in achievement for students who attend a high-quality preschool program compared to those who do not is about 0.44, or equal to the difference between scoring at the 63rd percentile versus the 50th percentile. How will performance pay systems account for the influence of children having attended a high-quality, low-quality, or no preschool program at all on student achievement (Jones 2002; Loeb et al. 2004)?

9. How will pay schemes account for the effects of low birth weight on academic achievement? Low birth weight—more prevalent for African American babies and babies born into poverty—has a direct effect on IQ if medical and educational interventions are not in place during the early years of a child's life (Bhutta et al. 2002). The effect size difference between low birth weight babies who did not receive appropriate interventions during the early years and babies born within normal weight ranges is about 0.54, or the difference between scoring at the 50th percentile and the 65th percentile.

10. How will pay schemes account for changes in achievement caused by students going through divorce or a death of a parent? Although small, the achievement differences averaged 0.17 or about six percentile points on norm-referenced tests (Kunz 1995; Jeynes 2006).

11. How will the schemes separate the influence on student achievement that the Grade 8 language arts teacher has on Grade 8 math performance? For example, a review of the nation's high school and Grade 8 tests reveals that there is about a 0.50 to 0.75 correlation between language arts and math scores on state tests (Tienken 2008). How do the current policy proposals disentangle the interrelatedness of the education process that takes place in schools and outside of the school walls? Subject area learning does not occur in a vacuum.

12. How will pay systems that are linked to student standardized test scores account for the standard error of measurement (SEM)? SEM is similar to the margin of error in a political poll and it is inherent in all standardized test results. The reported score is not the student's true score (Tienken 2008). The amount of error on the Grade 8 state tests ranges from 3 scale-score points to 85 scale-score points nationally. In New Jersey, there are about 10 scale-score points of error in student test scores. If a student receives a 200 scale score, the true score can be anywhere from a 190 to a 210. That range could mean the difference between receiving a raise or not. No state education agency mediates SEM at the student level (Tienken 2011).

13. How will pay for performance schemes account for differences in access to resources within and among classes within schools in the same district?

14. How will pay schemes account for having to work for a school or district administrator or school board that does not understand the research regarding evidence-based practice and mandates negative or educationally bankrupt practices?

15. Are pay for performance policy initiatives just Trojan horses for union busting and under-paying teachers and administrators?

16. Why are some school administrators and their organizations actively supporting pay for performance schemes when they lack answers to the above questions?

17. Should school administrators who willingly implement pay for performance schemes linked to student results on standardized tests without strong empirical evidence lose their licenses due to educational malpractice?

18. Does implementing an untested intervention on children who are compelled to participate violate any of the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* (ISLLC) standards? If not, why?

19. Would a child be compelled to be part of a medical experiment in which the prior results were negative and/or unknown? If not, then why are some school leaders allowing students in their schools to be subjected to this unknown system?

20. If the private sector cannot get pay for performance schemes correct and most private sector managers do not think they are a good idea (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006), why is the education field willing to support these ideas?

School leaders—and, more importantly, teachers—have very little control over the answers to these questions. Schooling does not dictate the processes or environments that cause poverty, divorce, low birth weight, or academic experiences prior to entering school. Nor can it mediate fully their effects using resources currently available. Therein resides the problem: The proposed policies on pay for performance do not account for or mediate the main factors that affect performance on state standardized tests.

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Factors Accounting for Variability in Superintendent Ratings of Academic Preparation

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Abstract

This study utilized findings from the 2010 decennial study of the school superintendent to determine the extent to which four predictor variables (*courses, professor credibility*, *size* [enrollment of employing school district], and *gender*) accounted for variability in superintendent overall ratings of their academic preparation. The standardized regression coefficients indicate that most of the variance accounted for in the linear equation was due to ratings of *professor credibility* and ratings of the perceived value of *courses*. Neither the institutional variable, *school district size*, nor the personal variable, *gender*, accounted for meaningful variance in the overall ratings. Recommendations are made for extending this line of inquiry.

Keywords

Superintendent Preparation, Education Leadership, Superintendent Certification

Traditionally, school district superintendents have been prepared academically in schools of education. From a policy perspective, their professional education has been inextricably tied to state licensing but in a manner unique to most other professions. In high-status professions, such as medicine and law, scholars and practitioners have set academic standards and enforced them through rigorous program accreditation; state licensing criteria were aftereffects (Connelly & Rosenberg, 2003).

In education, however, licensing criteria were developed first, primarily by policymakers; professional preparation curricula and accreditation standards were the aftereffects (Wise, 1994). This atypical alignment allowed states to establish highly dissimilar licensing policies, a condition that then produced highly dissimilar academic preparation programs among and even occasionally within states (Kowalski, 2006, 2008). Moreover, resource allocation and rigor have been found to vary substantially among superintendent preparation programs (Murphy, 2002, 2007).

Over the past two decades, deregulation advocates (e.g., Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003; Hess, 2003) have argued that inconsistencies and deficiencies provide evidence that traditional licensing and academic preparation are at best inconsequential.

To no one's surprise, the vast majority of professors preparing superintendents disagreed with them; however, their underlying reasons for opposing deregulation have not been homogeneous. Some professors, for example, have contended that the purported deficiencies in academic preparation are

invalid; therefore, they have argued that traditional approaches to preparation and licensing should not be altered.

Others have contended that the deficiencies are valid; these professors opposed deregulation on the grounds that making licensing policy uniform and making academic studies more rigorous are more socially responsible and advantageous alternatives (Kowalski, 2004).

In light of prevailing concerns and opposing views on how to address them, there is a need to broaden the knowledge base concerning the effectiveness of superintendent preparation. This study was designed to serve this purpose, specifically by analyzing superintendent perceptions of the pre-service academic experiences.

Data analyzed were obtained from the American Association of School Administrators 2010 decennial study of superintendents (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). The specific objective was to determine if a linear combination of four predictor variables accounted for substantial variance in superintendents' overall ratings of their pre-service academic preparation.

In order to provide a theoretical context for the topic, the literature on preparation was reviewed with respect to content, criticisms, and prevailing opinions. Then methods and findings in this study are discussed. Outcomes reveal that two program variables (*professor credibility* and *courses*) accounted for higher levels of variability in the overall ratings than did either an organizational variable (*size* of the employing school district) or an individual variable (superintendent *sex*).

Theoretical Framework
Nature of Superintendent Preparation
Logically, academic preparation in a profession is based on essential knowledge, dispositions, and skills. With respect to school district superintendents, extant literature addresses these factors in relation to five role conceptualizations. The first four—instructional leader, manager, democratic leader, and applied social scientist—were identified and described by Callahan (1964). The fifth, effective communicator, evolved in the context of the current information age and was identified and described by Kowalski (2001, 2005).

Expectedly, accreditation of professional preparation programs validates standards of institutional quality, integrity, and worthiness by ensuring that the curriculum is congruent with conceptualizations of practice (Seldon, 1977; Young, Chambers, Kells, & Associates, 1983). Moreover, this standing is intended to protect public interests (Kaplin, 1982; Millard, 1983; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 1990; Wise 1992).

In education, preparation programs may be accredited institutionally (e.g., North Central Association of Colleges and Schools) and professionally (e.g., by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE]). A decade ago, NCATE (2001) adopted new standards for preparing all district and school administrators. They include 11 knowledge and skill areas integrated under four broad categories of leadership (strategic, instructional, organizational and political-community) and an internship. The standards are stated as outcomes and therefore, they neither prescribe nor require a specific curriculum.

Consequently, the nature of principal and superintendent preparation can vary substantially even among programs holding the same accreditation (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). This condition is accepted by many on the grounds that knowledge and skills can be acquired in numerous ways.

Concurrently, however, program variability has elevated political vulnerability and produced skepticism regarding the value of and need for traditional preparation and licensing (Kowalski, 2009). Conceptually, most institutions have treated superintendent preparation as an extension of principal preparation by merely requiring students to complete several additional courses.

This practice continues even though district and school administration have become increasingly dissimilar (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Moreover, some programs have gone so far as to permit students to personalize a course of study (e.g., they are allowed to select the requisite number of courses from a long list of courses). The generalizations about this process commonly found in the literature are clearly precarious given the variability in state licensing policy, the effects of state policies on academic preparation, and the absence of a national curriculum to prepare superintendents. (Kowalski, 2008).

Criticisms
The need for and quality of the academic preparation of superintendents have been deliberated ever since states began issuing licenses for the position (Orr, 2006; Young, 2005). In part, opposing views stem from perceptions of practice. Those promoting deregulation have tended to view the position as one requiring a mix of efficient management and political savvy.

In its *Manifesto*, the Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2003), for example, contended that courses in educational administration are unessential for persons who already have proven themselves as business executives, elected officials, or military officers.

Other critics (e.g., Hess, 2003) have maintained that professional preparation requirements are unnecessary because they do not stem from a valid knowledge base nor are they especially relevant to managerial work. Such assertions, however, are dubious for several reasons.

For instance, they fail to consider the literature on role conceptualizations; they are, at best based on anecdotal evidence; they fail to consider the fact that the vast majority of superintendents are employed in very small systems where they have little or no district-level support staff (Kowalski, 2004).

Superintendent preparation also has been criticized from within the profession. As examples, Björk, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno, 2005, Grogan and Andrews (2002), and Murphy (2002; 2007) agree that many preparation programs have given inadequate attention to the instructional leadership role. Foskett, Lumby, and Fidler (2005), and Heck and Hallinger (2005) maintain that many preparation programs have failed to prepare superintendents to apply research to problem solving.

Other scholars (e.g., Clark, 1989; Elmore, 2007; Guthrie & Sanders, 2001) have contended that educational administration programs were established as, or evolved to become, "cash cows"—programs with low admission, retention, and completion requirements that generate substantial revenue.

In his study of administrator preparation, Levine (2005) concluded that many university-based programs were (a) inattentive to problems of practice, (b) operated by faculty who had profoundly different philosophies (that they were unwilling to debate and reconcile), and (c) characterized by low standards and curricular inconsistencies.

He also reported that new and supposedly creative programs were in some ways worse than their traditional counterparts. He found that many of them were created at institutions that previously had no mission to prepare administrators, and, as a result, their courses frequently were void of theoretical content, taught by part-time faculty (largely local principals and superintendents), and based solely on instructors' personal experiences.

In addition, a myriad of commission reports, books, and articles have called for massive reforms for all administrator preparation programs. Analyzing this literature, Willower and Forsyth (1999) identified two recurring recommendations: programs should embrace higher academic standards and there should be fewer, but higher, quality programs. Dubious policymakers, however, have not been inclined to support suggestions that potentially elevate state funding or reduce the supply of administrator applicants.

In his studies of teacher preparation, Ingersoll (2001) pointed out that states intentionally have overproduced educators (including administrators) to ensure that school boards could set salaries politically rather than economically; that is, an abundance of applicants allowed boards to set compensation at politically acceptable levels. Although astute policymakers may espouse more rigorous preparation programs as part of educational reforms, some have actually promulgated

antipodal policy, such as encouraging entrepreneurial or low-cost programs (Kowalski, 2009). Despite calls for reform, limited evidence suggests that many preparation programs have not changed over the past few decades (e.g., King, 2010).

Opinion Studies

Much of what is known about academic preparation has been derived from opinion studies conducted with program graduates. Broadly, findings from this body of research provide two types of information: overall ratings of academic preparation and ratings of specific elements of academic preparation. Not uncommonly, studies found the former to be high and the latter to be mixed. Moreover, they reported the view that selected aspects of academic programming need to be changed.

As an example, Dance (2007) found three recommendations to be pervasive among Virginia superintendents: making courses more applicable to practice, placing less emphasis on theory, and employing instructors with superintendent experience. In a Texas study, Iselt (1999) reported finding that courses should be more practice-based and taught by instructors who have been superintendents.

Over the past two decades, several national studies (e.g., Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000; Glass & Francesschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011) found that although most superintendents were satisfied or highly satisfied with the overall quality of academic preparation, their ratings of program aspects (e.g., courses, instruction) fluctuated.

Analysis of Predictor Variables
Data Source

Data analyzed in this paper were generated as part of the 2010 decennial study of the American superintendent (Kowalski et al., 2011). These studies began in 1923 and have

been replicated every succeeding decade except during the 1940s. All studies prior to 2010 were conducted with population samples via written surveys.

In 2000, for example, the sample size was 5,336 and the return rate was 42.4% (2,262). In 2010, the total population of superintendents in districts actually enrolling and educating students was estimated to be approximately 12,600. Because some superintendents are employed by more than one district (in one instance, for example, a single superintendent served six rural districts), the actual head count of district superintendents in 2010 was less than that figure.

All district superintendents for whom e-mail addresses could be obtained were invited by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to complete an online survey. The instrument, developed by the authors (Kowalski et al, 2011) and subsequently reviewed by a panel of experts (current or former professors who previously had served as district superintendents), was available to respondents in December, 2009 and January, 2010. Responses were tabulated by K-12 Insight, a private consulting firm serving as agent for AASA; the data then were analyzed by the authors.

A total of 1,867 surveys was completed and analyzed. All states were represented in the returns providing a national perspective without disproportionate overrepresentation from any state, region, or district student enrollment configuration. Responses to large population studies, and especially those conducted electronically, are often low. Analysis of such studies, however, indicates that a low response rate does not guarantee low accuracy; instead, it indicates a risk of lower accuracy (Holbrook, Krosnick, & Pfent, 2008). Thus, it should be noted that findings of the 2010 decennial study

are representative of those who responded and caution should be exercised in making inferences to all superintendents.

Method of Analysis

The statistical analysis of perceptions of academic preparation was intended to address the following research question: *Did a linear combination of predictor variables account for substantial variance associated with superintendents' overall evaluation of their academic preparation*? The criterion (or dependent) variable in this analysis is the superintendents' overall ratings of their academic preparation.

In the 2010 decennial study (Kowalski et al., 2011), the overall evaluation was measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale with a higher rating reflecting a more positive perception than a lower rating. The anchors and percentage of respondents selecting each of them in the 2010 decennial study were as follows: *poor* coded as"1" (3.6%); *fair* coded as "2" (17.9%); *good* coded as "3" (53.7%); *excellent* coded as "4" (24.8%).

Four predictor (or independent) variables were analyzed as potential sources accounting for systematic variance in superintendents' ratings of their overall academic preparation. They were (a) respondents' composite ratings of *courses*, (b) respondents' ratings of *professor credibility*, (c) the *size* (enrollment) of respondents' employing districts, and (d) respondents' *sex*.

The first stage of analysis was the development of a composite score for the perceived value of courses. Courses were rated on a 3-point scale as follows: *extremely important* rated "3," *moderately important* rated "2," and *unimportant* rated "1." The total points for each course listed on the survey were determined based on the ratings and number of respondents who completed the courses. The number of respondents for each course varied because curricula for superintendent preparation are not homogeneous.

Data then were used to calculate a composite score. Reliability of the composite score was assessed by coefficient *alpha* and was found to be .88, a value well within an acceptable range (Nunnally, 1994). Specific course rating data and the composite score (scaled to the same values, i.e., 1-3) are in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Academic Courses

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School law	1847	1.00	3.00	2.71	.49
School finance	1824	1.00	3.00	2.70	.59
Human resources	1773	1.00	3.00	2.48	.58
Public relations, school-community relations	1747	1.00	3.00	2.48	.60
Curriculum	1837	1.00	3.00	2.36	.60
Decision making	1721	1.00	3.00	2.32	.65
District administration	1734	1.00	3.00	2.25	.63
Instructional methods, pedagogy	1817	1.00	3.00	2.20	.64
School facility planning/management	1627	1.00	3.00	2.19	.63
Politics of education	1617	1.00	3.00	2.17	.67
Organizational theory	1809	1.00	3.00	2.10	.66
Tests and measurements	1755	1.00	3.00	2.09	.63
Research methods	1808	1.00	3.00	2.02	.65
Diversity	1509	1.00	3.00	1.90	.66
Valid N (listwise)	1236				

Single item scales were used to assess the three remaining predictor variables (*professor credibility*, *size* [enrollment] of respondents' employing districts, and respondents' *sex*).

Credibility of professors was measured on a 4-point scale with higher rating noting more credibility than lower ratings. Anchor points on this scale were *excellent* rated as "4,"

good rated as "3," *fair* rated as "2," and *poor* rated as "1."

The *size* scale was based on a student enrollment classification scheme included in previous AASA-sponsored decennial studies (e.g., Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011). The codes applied were: *less than 300 students* coded as "1," *300-2,999* coded as "2," *3,000-24,999* coded as "3," and *25,000 or more* coded as "4."

Superintendent sex was dummy coded by using either "0" or "1." Females were coded as "0" and males were coded as "1," and females served as the referent group in the regression analyses.

Superintendent perceptions of overall academic preparation were regressed on the four predictor variables. Because all data were obtained from a defined population (rather than a sample), a descriptive (rather than an inferential) regression analysis was calculated. Within this regression analysis, a simultaneous method of variable entry was used that included all predictor variables in the linear equation.

Findings

The analysis revealed that 47% of the variance in superintendent perceptions of overall academic preparation was due to a linear

combination of the predictor variables. According to most methodological authorities (e.g., Cohen, 1977), 47% is a substantial amount of variance. As a descriptive statistic, this finding constitutes a large effect having practical implications.

Additional analysis was conducted for each of the four predictor variables. Table 2 contains results of the deconstructed linear equation reflecting un-standardized regression (b) coefficients (unique to their scale of measurement) and standardized regression (β) coefficients (having a common scale of measurement). The standardized regression coefficients, i.e., β, reveal the relative contribution of each of the predictor variables in this particular linear equation and are the focal points of this study.

Table 2

Predictors of Superintendents' Ratings of Overall Academic Preparation

Variable	Un-standardized Coefficients (b)	Standardized Coefficients (β)
Intercept	0.11	
Composite course score	0.03	0.22
District size[*]	0.04	0.03
Professor credibility	0.57	0.58
Superintendent sex[**]	0.01	0.01
R^2	.10	0.22

[*]Based on total district enrollment
[**]Females coded "0" and males coded "1."

The standardized regression coefficients (β) indicate that most of the variance accounted for in the linear equation was due to ratings of

professor credibility (β = .58) and to ratings of the perceived value of *courses* (β = .22). Neither the institutional variable, *school district*

size (β = .03)*,* nor the personal variable, *sex* (β = .01)*,* accounted for meaningful variance in the ratings of the value of overall academic preparation.

Discussion

The national decennial studies of superintendents (e.g., Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011) as well as many single state studies (e.g., Dance, 2007; Iselt, 1999) have rather consistently found high ratings for overall academic preparation. Nevertheless, variability in ratings for specific program elements and recommendations for program improvements also has been common. Considered collectively, these findings prompt the consequential question: What accounts for variability in superintendents' ratings of their overall academic preparation?

The purpose here was to examine the influence of four predictor variables on the satisfaction ratings of overall academic preparation. Two of them, *professor credibility* and *courses*, are program variables; one, *size* (enrollment) of the employing school district, is an institutional variable; one, *sex*, is an individual variable.

Findings indicate that much of the variability in ratings of overall preparation were due to the two program variables, with *professor credibility* clearly being the most influential. This outcome is understandable in light of the fact that preparation nationwide differs in terms of curriculum (Kowalski, 2006, 2008), quality of instruction (Murphy, 2002, 2007), and program standards (Clark, 1987; Levine, 2005).

The fact that the institutional variable (*size* of the employing school district) accounted for little of the variance in ratings of overall satisfaction is noteworthy because the literature (e.g., Lamkin, 2006; Tobin, 2006)

often depicts the work of large and small district superintendents as being very different. Thus, one might expect that superintendents' ratings are influenced by the nature of the employing system. Ratings of overall academic preparation might be influenced by what superintendents are required to do than by the context in which these roles are performed.

Likewise, the finding that the individual variable (*sex*) accounted for little of the variance in ratings of overall satisfaction is noteworthy because the literature often depicts male and female superintendents as having dissimilar foci and leadership styles (e.g., Grogan, 2000; Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Washington, Fiene, & Miller, 2007), such as men preferring to be managers and women preferring to be instructional leaders. Thus, one might assume men and women would rate their academic preparation differently. Based on data reported here, an explanation regarding the individual variable is not readily apparent.

Additional research probing factors that influence superintendent ratings of academic preparation is needed. Specifically, effort should be made to determine the extent to which other characteristics of preparation programs (e.g., traditional versus nontraditional, face-to-face versus online, university-based versus other) influence opinions.

Additional research based on institutional characteristics also is warranted. Specifically, ratings of preparation programs can be compared on the basis of variables such as program resources, rigor, and curriculum.

Last, qualitative studies of dissatisfaction could enhance the knowledge base by providing detailed explanations of why some superintendents found their academic preparation to be ineffective or irrelevant.

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Research Article_____

A Hierarchy of Application of the ISLLC 2008 Standards' "Functions" to Principal Evaluation: A National Study

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Abstract

The primary research question addressed in this paper is: What ISLLC 2008 Standards "functions" are considered to be the most important by a national sample of school superintendents when applied to the process of principal evaluation?

A Friedman Test for related samples on the Standards "functions" determined that the five most important "functions" that influence a national cross section of superintendents when evaluating principals are: *Be an advocate for children* (VI)*; Model principles of ethical behavior* (V); *Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students* (III); *Nurture and sustain a culture of learning* (II); *Implement a plan to achieve the school's goals* (I); *Nurture and sustain a culture of high expectations* (II).

Keywords

Superintendent, ISLLC, Leadership Standards

Introduction

The actual skills, dispositions and knowledge individuals need to develop, possess and use to be successful building principals have garnered much attention during this era of accountability (Ellet, 1999; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Shipman, 1999) and continue to persist through the prism of No Child Left Behind law.

Whether this is defined by the "21 responsibilities of the school leader" (pp. 41-43) identified by Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) or the "six standards that characterize instructional leadership" (NAESP, 2001, p.2), it is evident that the skills needed to be successful in the role of a principal are wide-ranging.

Since the relationship between the principal's influence on student achievement and school improvement is significant (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Kaplan, Owings & Nunnery, 2005), it is surprising that the literature discussing an effective principal-evaluation system based on reliable and agreed upon criteria, as identified by the field and the research base, is not as extensive as one would think (Catano & Stronge, 2006; Murphy & Shipman, 1999; Rosenberg, 2001).

In fact, one might argue that in most cases principal evaluation is as varied from district to district as the personalities of the principals and superintendents themselves. In many cases, the influence of local politics (Davis & Hensley, 1999) or student performance on state mandated assessments (Ediger, 2002; Kaplan, Owings & Nunnery, 2005) are the major determinants of a principal's effectiveness.

With this in mind, and considering the national impact of the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards* or ISLLC (CCSSO, 1996) on principal preparation and licensing, a principal evaluation system that reflects these criteria might be suggested on a national level (McKerrow, Crawford, & Cornell, 2006; Murphy & Shipman, 1999; Van Meter & McMinn, 2001).

Essential to this initiative is a better understanding of the perceptions, attitudes and knowledge base of the ISLLC standards by school superintendents, the primary evaluators of the nations' principals (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). Therefore, the purpose for this research project is to begin that investigation.

This project was inspired by three similar studies on the possible application of the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008) on the process of principal evaluation by school superintendents.

The first two investigated how the ISLLC Standards "footprints" and "functions" might be applied by suburban New Jersey school superintendents to the process of principal evaluation (Babo, 2009a; 2010). The third identified a preferred operational hierarchy of the ISLLC 2008 Standards "footprints" on the evaluation of principals by a national sample of school superintendents (Babo, 2009b).

Using a Friedman's Test for related samples, the author concluded that when the nation's superintendents refer to the Standards "footprints" as a guide for principal evaluation, Standard II (Instruction) is the most important followed in rank order by Standard I (Vision), Standard V (Ethics), Standard III (Management), Standard IV (Community) and Standard VI (Larger Context) (Babo, 2009b).

Based on in-depth analyses of the data from the national study, this paper attempts to

build upon the previous research by exploring what ISLLC 2008 Standards "functions" are deemed most important by a national sample of school superintendents (n = 211) using principal evaluation as the contextual archetype or conceptual model.

The primary research question addressed is: What ISLLC 2008 Standards "functions" are considered to be the most important by a national sample of school superintendents when applied to the process of principal evaluation?

Methods
Survey and Data Collection
Data for this study were collected using an online survey data collection tool through Qualtrics Inc. (http://www.qualtrics.com/) and was developed based on the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008). The survey consisted of 66 items/statements that dealt with the "functions" delineated in each of the ISLLC 2008 Standards and asked the superintendents to indicate the level of importance for each of the Standards "functions" when applied to the process of principal evaluation.

Superintendents were asked to rate the survey items (functions) as "Essential," "Important," "Somewhat Important," and "Insignificant." Construct validity for the 66 item "forced response" multiple-selection survey was acquired through expert review. Reliability index (.95) for the 66 items was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha.

Although there are six (6) ISLLC Standards "footprints," the number of actual survey questions corresponding to the respective "functions" for each Standard varied. Standard I, encompassing 5 "functions," translated into 10 questions; Standard II, consisting of 9 "functions," translated into 16 questions; Standard III, involving 5 "functions," constituted 12 questions; Standard

IV, covering 4 "functions," resulted in 9 questions; Standard V, comprising 5 "functions," resulted in 13 questions; and Standard VI, consisting of 3 "functions," constituted 6 questions. The second part of the survey was designed to collect demographic data for each of the participating respondents to describe the sample.

A random sample of participants' school district's e-mail addresses was selected from each of the 50 state departments of education's Internet websites. Forty addresses were then randomly selected from each state website for a total sample of 2,000. A formal letter was e-mailed to these potential respondents explaining the purpose of this research and the instructions for participation.

Of the 2,000 addresses e-mailed, 257 failed to be delivered. Of the remaining 1,743, 363 individuals decided to participate for a return rate of 21 percent. Of these 363, a range of 199 to 211 respondents answered the 66 item survey, accounting for a return rate of between 11 to 12 percent. Consequently, the low return rate serves as a limitation to the study's findings and subsequent discussion as it relates to the field in general.

Results and Discussion
Demographic Results
The national sample of school superintendents participating in this study represented an equitable cross-section of U.S. superintendents: 70%. were male and 30% were female, somewhat reflective of the gender split across the country. Additionally, 22% were from the Northeast, 25% the Southeast, 24% the Midwest, 24% the West and only 5% from the Southwest. Sixty-eight percent were from rural school districts, 21% from suburban, 8% from urban and 3% from urban-inner city. Eighty percent of the participants administer K-12 school districts, and approximately 79% said that they have 11 or more years of

administrative experience. Forty-six percent noted that they have a doctorate (EdD/PhD) and 79% claimed to have six or more years of teaching experience.

Findings

The Friedman Test for related samples (Huizingh, 2007) was used to evaluate if there were significant differences among the mean rankings of all 66 survey items. The Friedman Test for all 66 survey items was found to be significant, χ^2 (65, $N = 159$) = 2846.71, p < .000), suggesting a prioritized hierarchy for the ISLLC 2008 Standards "functions."

The data analysis and discussion in this article focuses on the 15 lowest (16.03-26.34) ranked "functions" (see Table 1) and the 15 highest (41.35-47.07) ranked "functions" (see Table 2) as determined by the Friedman Test for related samples. The means and mean rankings for each of the highest and lowest ranked "functions," which determined the participants' prioritized rankings, are displayed in both tables by their respective rankings (i.e., 15 lowest ranked are listed from lowest-highest and 15 highest ranked are listed from highest-lowest).

Table 1 displays the lowest ranking "function" as "act to influence State and/or national decisions affecting student learning," Standard VI. It is followed by "promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse intellectual resources,"

Standard IV (CCSSO, p.15, 2008). The remaining thirteen lowest ranked functions include four from Standard IV, three from Standard III, three from Standard VI, two from Standard II and one from Standard V. Interestingly, none of the "functions" from Standard I are part of the lowest ranked items.

The majority of the low ranking "functions" come from Standards IV and VI, which articulate the importance of the principal collaborating with community and understanding the larger context, respectively.

Clearly this indicates a perception that this sample of the nation's superintendents believe skills related to connecting with the community, both on a micro and macro level, to be of lesser importance when evaluating district principals.

This contradicts current thought on leadership assessment as proposed by Portin, Feldman and Knapp (2006) who posit that an important aspect of school performance is the ability of the school leader to "connect[ions] to external communities" (p. 4). However, it is congruent with the findings of McKerrow, Crawford and Cornell (2006) who discovered a negative relationship between years of experience and the importance of collaborating with the community in a study that explored principal perceptions of the ISLLC Standards as they apply to actual practice.

Table 1

15 Lowest-Ranked "functions" for all ISLLC 2008 Standards based on the Friedman Test for

Related Samples

Function	Standard	Mean	Mean Rank
Act to influence State and/or national decisions affecting student learning.	VI	2.67	16.03
Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse intellectual resources.	IV	2.80	16.67
Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse social resources.	IV	2.82	17.35
Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural resources.	IV	2.89	19.42
Anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies.	VI	2.95	20.89
Evaluate the management and operational systems.	III	2.96	21.50
Monitor the management and operational systems.	III	3.00	22.08
Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize technological resources.	III	3.03	22.62
Sustain productive relationships with community partners.	IV	3.04	22.71
Build productive relationships with community partners.	IV	3.08	23.79
Assess and analyze emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies.	VI	3.07	24.12
Ensure a system of accountability for every student's social success.	V	3.08	24.75
Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching.	II	3.13	25.36
Be an advocate for families and caregivers.	VI	3.13	25.46
Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support learning.	II	3.17	26.34

Additionally, Table 1 displays three functions related to Standard III (Management) that appear within the ten lowest ranked "functions" while conversely, four functions from Standard III are ranked among the 15 highest ranked "functions" (see Table 2).

This dichotomy of importance as demonstrated by this national sample supports the thoughts of Catano and Strong (2006) who opined that "[B]ecause clear agreement on what encompasses the role of the school principal is lacking, the task of principal evaluation becomes a challenging enterprise" (p. 226).

Clearly, the evidence here seems to suggest a growing trend across the nation that although management of the building is an important part of the building leader's responsibilities it might not be as integral as it once was in light of the accountability movement and its focus on standardized assessment performance (Kaplan, Owings & Nunnery, 2005).

The 15 highest ranked "functions" reveals that the most important function for a building principal is to "be an advocate for children," Standard VI (see Table 2). It is followed by "model principles of ethical behavior," Standard V (CCSS0, p.15, 2008).

The remaining thirteen highest ranked "functions" concentrated on ISLLC Standards I, II, and III, with 33% of the items representing Standard II and 26% representing both Standards I and III, respectively. Curiously, none of the items from Standard IV were ranked in the top fifteen.

Table 2

15 Highest Ranked "functions" for all ISLLC 2008 Standards based on the Friedman Test for Related

Samples

Function	Standard	Mean	Mean Rank
Be an advocate for children.	VI	3.89	47.07
Model principles of ethical behavior.	V	3.88	46.99
Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students.	III	3.87	46.57
Nurture and sustain a culture of learning.	II	3.86	46.08
Implement a plan to achieve the school's goals.	I	3.83	45.46
Nurture and sustain a culture of high expectations.	II	3.81	44.63
Maximize time spent on quality instruction.	II	3.79	44.30
Collaboratively implement a shared vision and/or mission.	I	3.74	43.29
Ensure teacher time is focused to support quality instruction	III	3.75	43.10
Promote and protect the welfare and safety of staff.	III	3.74	42.82
Nurture and sustain a culture of trust.	II	3.74	42.80
Ensure teacher time is focused to support student learning.	III	3.72	42.49
Collect and use data to identify school goals.	I	3.72	42.21
Create a plan to achieve the school's goals.	I	3.71	42.02
Evaluate the impact of the instructional program.	II	3.69	41.35

With the exception of the two highest ranked standards in Table 2, both which could be considered anomalies or suggest two overarching dispositions that apply to the practice in general, the emphasis seems to indicate that the nation's superintendents place a high value on student learning and instruction and student and staff safety.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Kaplan, Owings and Nunnery (2005) who found that 63% of the State of Virginia's superintendents base principal evaluation on student performance and achievement. Five functions from Standard II (Instruction) are ranked within the top eleven "functions." Additionally, two of the four

"functions" from Standard III (Management), which appear in Table 2, are directly related to student learning.

This hierarchical ranking of the 15 most important "functions" suggest that when evaluating principals, the nation's superintendents are primarily focused on instruction and student learning, student advocacy and management of the overall learning environment.

These findings support the recent emphasis in the field on the need for today's building principals to be "instructional leaders" (Catano & Strong, 2006; Marzano, Walters & McNulty, 2004; McKerrow, Crawford & Cornell, 2006).

In general, the results displayed in Table 2 are congruent with Hallinger's model as it is defined and cited in Leithwood et al. (2004) where mission/vision, managing instruction and providing for a positive learning environment best define what it is to be an "instructional leader."

Conclusions
The results clearly answer the research question that there is a preferred hierarchical ranking of what superintendents consider to be the essential "functions" for principals in the context of evaluation.

Note that the superintendents evaluated the 66 statements that constituted the ISLLC 2008 Standards "functions" without them being explicitly identified as functions of any one particular ISLLC Standard.

Results reported here clearly indicate that the responding superintendents place a premium on the principal's ability to influence and improve instructional practice and their influence on student achievement, which is

congruent with much of the current literature base in the field.

Previous research that served as inspiration for this study, specifically the research on the New Jersey sample of superintendents (Babo, 2010; 2009a) and the national study on the prioritized ranking of the Standards "footprints" (Babo, 2009b) that used this same national sample, found ISLLC 2008 Standards IV and VI to be consistently ranked at the bottom of the list in order of importance when superintendents evaluate their districts' principals.

This was consistent whether it was a prioritized ranking of the Standards "footprints" or their "functions." This lack of importance attributed to the importance of the community, whether at the micro or macro level, leads to a possible conclusion that when it comes to evaluating their principals, superintendents maintain a rather parochial archetype. However, many principals might very well tell us that one indicator of his/her success is dependent upon how she/he is perceived in the community, specifically the local milieu (Davis & Hensley, 1999).

In the national "footprints" study (Babo, 2009b), which was based on the same sample as this research project, superintendents' priority ranked the Standards "footprints" in the following order, Standards II (Instruction), I (Vision), V (Ethics), III (Management), IV (Community), and VI (Larger Context).

Using the prioritized ranking of the "functions" from this research, as displayed in Tables 1 and 2, one could suggest a prioritized ranking of the Standards "footprints" in the following order, Standard II (Instruction) is first, Standards III (Management) and I (Vision) tie for second, followed by the remaining three standards - V (Ethics), VI (Larger Context), and IV (Community).

Subtle differences between the two prioritized rankings do emerge when comparing the two studies on the "footprints" and the "functions."

Do these differences suggest that when the nation's superintendents are asked to determine what they believe is important for a principal to do on the job (rank-ordering of the "footprints') as opposed to what they believe is essential for principals to be successful on a day-to-day basis (rank-ordering of the "functions"), the dichotomous result is attributable to a classic case of "espoused theory" versus "theory in use" (Argyris, 1993)? Is this a manifestation of what superintendents think they should say as opposed to what they actually believe and do?

Additionally, when one analyzes all 66 rank-orderings of the Standards "functions" the inconsistencies among the "functions" themselves are evident: for example, the two top-ranked "functions" are from Standards VI and V respectively, yet a majority of these Standards "functions" are distributed throughout the rankings with most occurring in the middle-and lowest- ranked categories.

Does this suggest that the current articulation of the ISLLC 2008 Standards "footprints" and "functions" are essentially flawed and ambiguous in their present makeup?

If one were to subject the 66 item survey data collected from this inquiry to a factor analysis would the analyses reveal factor items that load similar to the ISLLC 2008 Standards "footprints" or something else entirely?

These questions suggest that continued research is imperative concerning the ISSLC 2008 Standards and their relationship to the preparation and potential evaluation of the nation's principals since these standards are becoming more nationally accepted as the standard for building leadership in the new century.

As of 2006, forty-three states now include some type of reference to the ISLLC standards in their respective principal licensing criteria (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008).

Principal preparation programs discuss these questions and their possible implications and incorporate that discussion into their respective curricula.

Additionally, similar studies should not only influence principal-training programs but also inform the advancement of professional development programs in the nation's school districts to facilitate principal evaluation and quality.

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Research Article_____

A Validation Study of the *School Leader Dispositions Inventory©*

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Abstract

Although university-based school administrator preparation programs are required by accreditation agencies to assess the dispositions of candidates, valid and reliable methods for doing so remain scarce. *The School Leaders Disposition Inventory*[©] (SDLI) (abbreviate first time used in text) is proposed as an instrument that has promise for identifying leadership dispositions grounded in transformational leadership theory. In this research report, the authors explain the development of the SDLI and report on a pilot study. With the instrument's internal consistency established, the SDLI will assist school leader preparation program personnel in assessing the degree to which candidates for school administrator positions reflect dispositions aligned with transformational leadership theory.

Keywords

SLDI, Leadership, ISLLC

Both researchers and practitioners alike are giving renewed emphasis to the use of scientifically-based data in educational administration (Manna & Petrilli, 2008). Programs in educational administration, as a consequence, are under increasing scrutiny by education organizations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), and the related Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) for ensuring that prospective school administrators meet performance-based standards.

As university professors grapple with standards generated by these organizations, use of data in the accreditation process, and reform initiatives, they are under increased pressure to identify scientifically-based research tools for use in assessing performances and dispositions of candidates. While many valid and reliable and instruments exist to measure behaviors and performances of educational administrators, the profession is in need of valid and reliable instruments to measure leadership dispositions (Schulte & Kowal, 2005).

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires assessment of educator dispositions (NCATE, 2008), but the concept of assessing candidate dispositions provides a complex challenge for professors teaching educational administration programs.

Dispositions, defined as "values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behavior" (NCATE, 2002, p. 53), can be more difficult to teach and assess than knowledge and skills (Edick, Danielson, & Edwards, 2005; Edwards & Edick, 2006).

While NCATE assumes that education administration programs influence candidate dispositions, a recent survey of professors of education administration reported a lack of agreement on which dispositions should be assessed.

Moreover, they indicated a need for valid and reliable instruments to assess them (Melton, Mallory, & Green, 2010). Standards-based literature, such as *Performance Expectations and Indicators for Education Leaders: An ISLLC-Based Guide to Implementing Standards and a Companion Guide to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008* (CCSSO, 2008a), has suggested examples of dispositions, which had been included explicitly in 1996 Standards and were noticeably not stated in the 2008 ISLLC standards.

Murphy (2003) described the reaction to inclusion of dispositions in the 1996 ISLLC standards as a debate on whether dispositions can, indeed, be assessed with any validity or reliability. However, *dispositions* were listed in the ISLLC 2008 *Guide* as "underlying dispositions" to remind those in the profession of their "importance when interpreting and operationalizing indicators" (CCSSO, 2008b, p. 6).

For accreditation purposes, many approaches to assessing candidate dispositions have been developed, ranging from checklists completed by professors, self-reported descriptions of candidate beliefs, to qualitative and subjective means (Chandler, 1998; Melton, Mallory, & Green, 2010; Schulte & Kowal, 2005; Stahlhut & Hawkes, 1994; Wasicsko, 2000).

However, methods of valid and reliable assessment of dispositions are limited, and the question exists in the education administration profession as to whether dispositions of effective school administrators can be assessed

with an acceptable degree of reliability and validity. Although research identifies several key dispositions, such as "caring for others, engaging others, " etc., there is limited research on authentic assessment to identify whether one possesses or the degree to which one possesses, the disposition, or behaviors necessary for effective school administration (Wildy & Louden, 2000).

The purpose for this article is to describe the results of a validity study of the *School Leader Dispositions Inventory© (SLDI),* an instrument designed by the researchers to assess the dispositions of school administrators *in situ.* The instrument, a 15-item, scenario-based questionnaire, was based on a framework of dispositions developed by the researchers and informed by Bass and Avolio's (1990) theory of transformational leadership and McGregor's (1960) Theory X/Y.

The instrument is intended to help prospective school administrators learn about dispositions they hold and that influence the way they will go about their work. In this article, we discuss the development and validation of the SLDI.

Background for the Study
Review of the literature
In university-based principal preparation programs, much attention has been given to leadership *dispositions*, in part due to accrediting agencies' standards. Standards adopted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in the late 1990's and early 2000's were delineated in broad areas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Although the new 2008 ISLLC guidelines delineate performance-based standards, they provide the opportunity for state personnel to define more specifically knowledge, skills, and dispositions that university-based education administrator programs are expected to address in training and developing school administrators.

Educational administration professors have been somewhat successful in designing methods for assessing knowledge and skills through a variety of methods, including observations, case study, and clinical practice. However, they have not been so successful in identifying and assessing dispositions (Schulte & Koval, 2005).

The elusive nature of leadership provides a complex challenge for assessing dispositions of administrator candidates. A previous study by Melton, Mallory, and Green (2010) investigating educational administrator preparation procedures for the identification and assessment of leadership dispositions found that there was little consistency in practice.

While findings indicated that the vast majority (72.2%) of participants relied on either NCATE or ISLLC for the definition of dispositions, there was scant agreement on which leadership dispositions are associated with effective leadership.

Researchers have been examining dispositions of effective educators for decades, although they found that the first challenge was in defining the term.

Definitions have varied, with most researchers in the last decade defining *dispositions* as values, beliefs, and behaviors (Combs, 1974; Fullan, 2002; Perkins, 1995; Schulte & Kowal, 2005; Wasicsko, 2000). NCATE (2002) defined professional dispositions as "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors …" (p. 89).

With these definitions in mind, Ritchhart (2002) contended that "dispositions concern not only what we can do, our abilities, but what we are actually likely to do, addressing the gap we often notice between our abilities and our actions" (p. 18). Wasicsko (2000) added to our understanding when he defined dispositions as "personal qualities or characteristics … including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values, and modes of adjustment" (p. 2).

When Edmonds (1979) was engaged in effective schools research, he always promoted the idea that the starting point to address challenges in schools was the disposition to address the problem, an issue of values of the people involved in the problem. Moreover, Murphy (2003) has argued that educational administration is fundamentally a moral activity, based on values and beliefs.

The inescapable moral nature of leadership work requires an understanding of values and beliefs held by those aspiring to become school administrators. As Sergiovanni (2006) has explained, anyone aspiring to be an effective principal needs to have a sense of what he or she values.

There have been some studies conducted in an attempt to operationalize the definition of dispositions. These studies generally focused on an integration of leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions, as dispositions are thought to underlie leadership behavior. Costa and Kallick (2000) identified as dispositions such actions as persisting, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking about one's own thinking, taking responsible risks, etc.

In a study to validate an instrument to assess the practice of co-creating leadership, Wasonga and Murphy (2007) delineated two components of the co-creating leadership

process, including dispositions and context. Dispositions consisted of eight factors: trust and trustworthiness; humility; active listening; resilience; egalitarianism; patience; collaboration; and cultural anthropology.

In another study of dispositions at a southeastern university, Martin (2009) assessed dispositions essential for successful school administrators through the lens of four domains: professional demeanor and work habits; relationships; intellectual integrity; and moral and ethical dimensions. Martin found that educational administration candidates presented as strengths the following dispositions: effort; cooperation and collaboration; being reflective and self-aware; and being open-minded and receptive to unique styles and ideas.

Instrument Development
Theoretical underpinning of transformational leader dispositions
With such variance in the list of dispositions, the investigators in this study returned to seminal theories on leadership in an attempt to identify values and beliefs related to effective leadership.

Given the focus on development of transformational leaders in university-based principal preparation programs, the researchers turned to Burns' views of values inherent in his conceptualization of transformational leadership. Burns' (1998) clarified three types of leadership values: ethical; modal; and end. He described ethical values as "old-fashioned character tests, such as sobriety ... kindness, altruism," (p. x) and other rules of conduct. He explained that these values were essential for status quo kinds of leaders who need to maintain good community relations in a stable environment.

Burns described modal values (such as integrity, honesty, and accountability) as

necessary for transactional leaders who depend on others to live up to promises and agreements. His description of ends values (such as liberty, equality, justice, and community) constituted core values of his view of a transformational leader, one who seeks substantive changes in the organization.

This view of values yields some insight into what makes a leader and what makes a leader effective. Human values elevated to action in the realm of democratic values must be considered an important dimension of the transformational leader.

In another theoretical approach to leadership, McGregor (1960) viewed leadership in terms of assumptions the leader makes about the members of an organization, which he categoried as Theory X and Theory Y. Cunningham and Cordeiro (2009) described leadership based on Theory Y assumptions as facilitating, supportive of efforts by subordinates to develop and express themselves and to act in the best interests of the school. Bennis (2006) reviewed McGregor's work on Theory X and Theory Y to conclude that Theory Y was prevalent in 21st Century leadership training literature.

He summed up the themes of Theory Y in the following propositions:

- active participation by all involved;
- a transcending concern with individual dignity, worth, and growth;
- re-examination and resolution of the conflict between individual needs and organizational goals, through effective interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates;
- a concept of influence that relies not on coercion, compromise, evasion or avoidance, pseudosupport, or bargaining, but on openness,

confrontation, and "working through" differences;
- a belief that human growth is self-generated and furthered by an environment of trust, feedback, and authentic human relationships (p.xvi).

These propositions, translated as values and beliefs, may be used to identify dispositions necessary for effective leadership in schools. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of the work of Burns, McGregor, and Bennis, the researchers constructed a list of 14 educational leadership dispositions grounded in transformational leadership.

Creation of the School Leader Disposition Inventory (SLDI)

With the dispositions identified, the researchers set about developing a method to assess those dispositions. Although there has been some work in developing valid and reliable measurements of leadership dispositions (e.g., Schulte & Koval, 2005; Williams, 2009), the assessment of dispositions, in particular the assessment of leadership dispositions, remains a problem for educational leadership professors.

While most educational administration programs are required to assess dispositions, most professors of educational administration will readily acknowledge that their systems are inadequate (if they claim to have a system at all). Moreover, they will readily acknowledge that they could benefit by knowing how other faculty are dealing with the issue (see Melton, Mallory, & Green, 2009).

To avoid participants responding with an "expected" response, the researchers wanted to create a scenario-based instrument that would capture individuals' leadership dispositions in a way that would more closely

emulate a field setting as opposed to a laboratory setting.

Over the course of nine months, the researchers developed, refined, and piloted the scenarios, which resulted in a survey instrument, the *School Leader Dispositions Inventory*© (Reavis, Green, Mallory, & Melton, 2010), which was designed to assess the dispositions of school leaders *in situ.*

The instrument is comprised of fifteen (15) items, with each item comprised of a real-life situation and four possible responses an administrator might make to each situation. After reading and reflecting upon a given situation, the participant indicates the degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the stated responses.

Each of the four responses is aligned with either TheoryY, Theory X, Soft X, or Pseudo Y leadership constructs based on the works of McGregor (1960), Argyris (1971), Burns (1978), Price (2003), and Bass (2008). A participant's set of responses results in a leadership disposition profile as aligned with a particular leadership theory.

During each phase of the *SDLI*'s development—beginning with the listing of the 14 dispositions and continuing through the creation of each of the scenarios and their respective responses—external reviewers were engaged for the purpose of establishing face validity.

However, since the SDLI is intended for use in education administration preparation programs for assessing school administrators' dispositions and assisting them in planning their programs for professional development, a pilot study was necessary for the researchers to determine whether the instrument merits further development and validation.

Method
Participants
Candidates enrolled in graduate-level courses in education administration programs served as participants in the study. Participants were recruited from five courses at three campus locations.

Of the 50 candidates enrolled in the courses, 48 opted to participate in the research for a response rate of 96%. Within the sample, 68.8% of the participants ($n = 33$) were female, and 29.2% of the participants ($n = 14$) were male. (One participant chose not to indicate his/her gender.)

With regard to current professional positions, 68.8% of the sample ($n = 33$) held positions within P-12 schools, and 22.9% of the sample ($n = 11$) held positions within higher education administration. Four participants (representing 8.3% of the sample) did not indicate current employment status.

Aside from current employment status, participants also identified overall experience within education settings. Within the sample, 47.9% ($n = 23$) had experience within an early childhood or elementary setting, 60.4% ($n = 29$) had middle grades experience, and 41.7% ($n = 20$) reported secondary school experience. An additional 33.3% ($n = 16$) of participants indicated professional experience within a higher education setting.

Measures
The current research project was designed to evaluate the reliability of the *School Leader Dispositions Inventory* (SLDI)©. As previously stated, members of the research team developed a list of 14 key dispositions for individuals in educational administration. The measure was designed and is intended to align school administrators with the key dispositions reflecting Theory X, Theory Y, Soft-X, and Pseudo-Y styles.

Based on the 14 dispositions, the instrument was constructed with 15 brief scenarios that are feasible to encounter in the school setting and would require a response from an administrator. After each scenario, four follow-up items are presented. Each follow-up item offers an administrator's response corresponding to one of the four aforementioned styles.

Participants are asked to respond on a 5-point scale rating her or his agreement with each course of action, with zero indicating that the response is "Not an option" and five indicating "I strongly agree with this course of action." A neutral response of "I am undecided" is presented as a midpoint option on the scale. Across the SLDI instrument, the follow-up items are presented in a counterbalanced manner across the styles of Theory X, Theory Y, Soft-X, and Pseudo-Y.

Procedure
Within the courses where the study was conducted, a member of the research team met with the class at its regularly scheduled meeting time and explained the purpose for the research. A graduate assistant from a program other than Educational Leadership also attended the class meeting.

After explaining the purpose and procedures, the research team member and the instructor of the course exited the room indicating that the class would resume its regular format after two hours. The graduate assistant remained in the room to conduct the research. Any candidate unwilling to participate in the research was allowed to leave at that time and instructed to return to the class in two hours.

Those candidates interested in participating in the study read, signed, and returned the informed consent document. The graduate student distributed the demographic information form and the SLDI to the participants. Upon completion, the participants placed the materials in a sealed envelope labeled with a pseudonym of their choosing for the purpose of potential future research with the SLDI.

Data Analysis
For the initial pilot study of the instrument, the data were subjected to a correlation matrix to investigate potential singularity and/or multicollinearity among items and descriptive statistics. To assess reliability of the instrument, the total scale was measured in the form of Cronbach's alpha. Additionally, the follow-up items were clustered according to their alignment with Theory X, Theory Y, Soft-X, and Pseudo-Y for further reliability analyses.

Results
Results from the correlation matrix revealed the lowest inter-item correlation to be $r^2 =$ .001(Scenario 2, Item 1- Pseudo-Y and Scenario 2, Item 2- Theory X). Although these items on different styles do not appear to relate to one another, each item demonstrates mid-range correlations with other items of its style to rule out issues with singularity. The highest inter-item correlation was $r^2 = -.67$ (Scenario 3, Item 1- Soft-X and Scenario 3, Item 4- Theory Y). This mid-range correlation indicates no issues with multicollinearity across the instrument.

The total scale reliability was estimated with Cronbach's alpha at .85. The mean across all items was estimated as 1.87 with a range of .30 (Scenario 3, Item 2) to 3.68 (Scenario 2, Item 3). When clustering items across style, the Theory X reliability was .66. The overall item mean of Theory X items was 1.6 with a range from .60 (Scenario 3, Item 4) to 2.92 (Scenario 11, Item 2). Theory Y items had a reliability of .57 with an item mean of 2.74 (range .75

Scenario 11, Item 5 – 3.40 Scenario 14, Item 1). The reliability of Soft-X items was measured at .65 with a mean across items of 1.95. The range of item means across Soft-X was .57 (Scenario 14, Item 4) – 3.68 (Scenario 2, Item 3). Finally, the reliability of the Pseudo-Y items was .75. The overall item mean was 1.22 with a range of .30 (Scenario 3, Item 2) to 2.64 (Scenario 4, Item 3). Table 1 depicts a summary of the results.

Table 1.

Item Means and Reliability Estimates for Dispositional Types (using the SDLI)

Dispositional Type	Item Mean	Cronbach's alpha	Number of Items
Theory Y	2.74	.57	15
Soft-X	1.95	.65	15
Theory X	1.60	.66	15
Pseudo-Y	1.22	.75	15

Discussion

The purpose for this pilot study was to estimate the internal consistency of the *School Leader Dispositions Inventory* (SDLI)© in order to assess the feasibility of continuing its development.

Given that the total scale reliability was estimated with Cronbach's alpha at .85, the investigators are encouraged that the instrument demonstrated acceptable internal consistency.

Accordingly, further development is planned, including procedures for measuring the instrument's concurrent validity against the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*© (MLQ). In addition, the investigators plan to continue adding to the sample size, while observing effects on multicollinearity and internal consistency.

Several aspects of the findings merit further discussion, first among them is the convenience sample used for this phase of piloting the instrument. Since all of the participants were enrolled in a graduate program for preparing educational administrators, a large proportion did not hold administrative positions. One might speculate that a sample comprised exclusively of practicing administrators (i.e., superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal or assistant principal) might yield decidedly different results.

For example, the sample used in this investigation indicated that its dominant set of dispositions is aligned with Theory Y. Would a sample comprised entirely of experienced school administrators produce a dominant set of dispositions more in alignment with Theory X or Soft-X? This speculation argues in favor of additional piloting, with the next round utilizing a sample of geographically dispersed and experienced school administrators.

Related to the characteristics of the sample is the matter of dispositional types that were recorded. As depicted in Table 1, the prevailing dispositional type was Theory Y. However, this dispositional type also recorded the lowest value for Cronbach's alpha. Further analyses with larger data sets are warranted to determine whether any of the Theory Y items should be revised or deleted.

Overall, the first phase of the validation study of the *School Leader Dispositions Inventory* (SDLI)© has demonstrated that the instrument possesses an acceptable degree of internal consistency. Further investigation into test-retest reliability and concurrent validity with other instruments holding strong construct validity are warranted.

Summary

Faculty in education administration programs remain perplexed when it comes to assessing the dispositions of its candidates. It is rare when any one, let alone accreditation agencies or professional organizations, agree on what, actually, are dispositions. And the confusion is compounded when the discussion turns to how, exactly, dispositions are best assessed.

It is little wonder that many professors of education administration are skeptical when it comes to expecting the tools used to assess dispositions to be both valid and reliable. Yet, that is what they are required to do—assess the leadership dispositions of candidates using instruments that are both valid and reliable.

The *School Leadership Disposition Inventory* (SDLI)© was designed to fill a need in graduate education programs in education administration by providing a time-efficient and cost-effective instrument grounded in leadership theory that could be used to assess the dispositions (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, and values) of its candidates.

The investigators first settled on a list of 14 dispositions that were consistent with transformational leadership theory, especially as it is derived from McGregor's Theories X and Y.

Then, they created an instrument designed to observe these dispositions through 15 scenarios that required closed-end responses. The instrument was piloted with 49 educational administration candidates enrolled in Ed.D. and Ed.S. programs in a large southeastern university, with results indicating that the instrument showed strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

Investigators plan to continue with a second phase of the validation study by enlarging the sample and enhancing its geographic diversity. The second phase will also include procedures for testing concurrent validity.

Leadership is a complex set of skills that integrate with an even more complex set of personal traits.

Researchers have had great success in identifying the managerial and interpersonal skills associated with effective leadership, and there has been significant progress in the assessment of personality attributes of successful leaders. However, understanding the dispositions—attitudes, beliefs, personal

and professional values—and observing them with any measure of validity and reliability remains elusive.

The *School Leadership Dispositions Inventory* (SDLI)© holds promise as one step toward that goal.

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California on the Verge of a Fourth Wave of School Finance Reform

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Abstract

Equity issues in public school finance have been discussed in terms of three waves. The first wave was a challenge to the U.S. Supreme Court to provide equal education to all students as a fundamental right. After a ruling against the plaintiffs in San Antonio v Rodriguez (1973), the fight shifted to a second wave in the state courts. The third wave has addressed issues of adequacy for all students. Now California is on the verge of a fourth wave that would combine equity and adequacy to focus on student achievement in relation to state curriculum standards. These four waves are discussed in relation to the recent history of declining resources and student achievement in California.

Keywords

School Finance Litigation, California Public Schools, School Finance and Achievement

School finance has been a contentious issue for many years. The Great Recession of 2008-2010 has put even more pressure on states to provide adequate resources to educate an increasingly diverse population. The state of California is a case of special interest because of its large size and its tendency to set the trend for the rest of the nation. The current problems faced in California are likely to become the future problems for other states.

California is on the verge of a fourth wave of school finance litigation that challenges the state to provide adequate financing for all students to meet state curriculum standards. The challenge comes almost 40 years after Serrano v Priest (1971) required California to become the first state to provide equal funding for students. The challenge will be difficult to meet because since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, education has lost funding and student achievement has decreased relative to other states.

In this paper we examine four waves of school-finance litigation and trace how California has gone from first to worst in public education. California represented the hopes and fears of America.

On the one hand, there have been an initial strong commitment to public education from kindergarten through college and a welcoming attitude toward immigrants from around the world.

On the other hand, there have been race riots, decreasing resources, and declining student achievement. Legislators would do well to consider successful practices in other states, but more importantly, a generation that has been educated in less-than-adequate conditions will need to wake up to the need to recommit to quality education.

Four Waves of School Finance Litigation

Brown v. Topeka Board of Education (1954) was a 9-0 U.S. Supreme Court decision that appeared to be the beginning of advances in the civil rights of students and equity in education. However, the ruling was slow to be implemented, and Milliken v. Bradley (1969) stopped desegregation at the county line on a 5-4 decision. In another 5-4 vote just four years later, San Antonio v Rodriguez (1973) declared that education was not a fundamental right under the 14th amendment and that while equity of school spending was desirable, it was not required by the U.S. Constitution.

San Antonio v. Rodriguez (1973) represented the first wave of school finance litigation. In the second wave, efforts to provide equity moved to the state level. California led the way with Serano v Priest (CA 1971), which declared that education was a fundamental right under the state constitution. It was quickly followed by Proposition 13 in 1978 that drastically cut property taxes and led to an erosion of funding for schools that continues to 2011 and shows no signs of abatement. Equity was achieved by leveling down.

In the first two waves of school finance litigation, the question was what constitutes equal educational opportunity. The third wave moved away from equity issues.

Researchers began to ask what an adequate education is for all children. Defining adequacy proved problematic. In Rose v. Council (KY 1989), the Kentucky system of financing education was declared unconstitutional because it did not provide "sufficient" levels of education in a variety of areas. In this case adequacy was defined as what was sufficient. Kentucky established a

variety of programs to address seven learning goals. The programs included extended school services, family resource and youth service centers, preschool, professional development, school based decision making and technology. The approach helped to equalize funding and improve education, but it was still part of the third wave that focused on education inputs to define adequacy.

Defining adequacy according to outcomes for students represents a fourth wave of school finance litigation. Robles-Wong v. State of California (2010) challenged the adequacy of California education based on the standards set by the state.

The rationale for the suit would not have been possible, if not for California's pioneering work in developing content standards for each subject in 1995. An assessment system soon followed. The intent was to improve education, but this work also had the consequence of providing a definition of adequacy. The long-elusive concept was clearly spelled out in the content standards, and students were assessed on an annual basis.

Decisions about standards-based adequacy will take place in a state that has been first and last in education. The recent history of California, its promise and problems should be examined so people may understand how adequacy will play out in the state context and the extent of its relevance for finance in other states.

California from First to Worst

California has 38 million residents and leads the nation in agricultural production (Grunwald, 2009). If California were a nation, it would have the world's eighth-largest economy. Its gross state product was $1.6 trillion in 2005 (Education Data Partnership, 2008), and it is home to 51 Fortune 500

companies (Grunwald, 2009). The public schools have 6,259,972 students.

Among the five most populous states, California has the highest percentage of English Language Learners (ELLS, 25%), 49% of California students are on free and reduced-price lunch, and 18% are eligible for special education. Hispanics make up over 50% of the student population, whites comprise only 27%. (Education Data Partnership, 2010).

"California schools are attempting to educate the most diverse and challenging school population in the country and doing it with substantially fewer human resources than almost any other state. The state has the most students, a diverse group of students, more English learners than any other state, and substantial numbers of students from low-income backgrounds" (EDP, 2008).

California experienced a huge influx of immigrants from around the world. Grunwald (2009) reported that it was a majority-minority state with a white-majority electorate.

The California Master Plan for Education was developed by Clark Kerr in 1960 with a promise to create first-rate research institutions and to make college education accessible to all (State Board of Education and The Regents of the University of California, 1960).

The plan created three tiers: the University of California (UC) focused on research and has had highly competitive admission standards. The California State University (CSU) admitted students who completed a list of high school requirements and provided graduate programs with an emphasis on applied fields. The Community Colleges admitted all high school graduates who applied and prepared them to transfer to a

four-year campus. Recently eight of the 10 UC campuses were in the *US News & World Report's* top 100 campuses, and the number of young people attending college was impressive (US News & World Report, 2010). That promise is now threatened by the economic downturn. The UC campuses took 2300 fewer students, and the CSU's campuses took 40,000 fewer in 2010. But even before the Great Recession, higher education was in trouble because students had not been adequately prepared in K-12.

California faced a property tax revolt in 1978 when voters passed Proposition 13. The effects were dramatic; it "capped property-assessment increases at two per cent a year, amended the state constitution to require a two-thirds majority of the legislature to raise taxes or pass a budget and, in effect, broke the government" (Friend, 2010, p. 25). Property was taxed at a maximum of one percent of market value.

The equalization of funding that followed from Serrano v. Priest (1971) may have contributed to the Proposition 13 vote. Residents of wealthy districts lost the ability to spend property taxes locally and felt that cutting property taxes would not have a negative effect on their local district.

There have been some efforts to counterbalance the funding losses from Proposition 13. In 1998, Proposition 98 gave K-12 and community-colleges a constitutionally protected share of the state budget that provided a guaranteed funding source to grow with the economy and student enrollment.

However, funding continued to erode. California ranks near the bottom of states in both per pupil spending and achievement. Loeb, Bryk, and Hanushek (2007) reported

that California was 7th lowest in 8th grade mathematics according to the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, and "Texas spends 12 percent more than California; Florida, 18 percent; New York, 75 percent, and the rest of the country, 30 percent" (p 36).

Falling Educational Expenditures
Public school spending is low in California compared to other states. Loeb, Grissom, and Strunk (2006) reported that per pupil expenditures adjusted for cost differences for 2004-2005: California spent $8,831 compared to $11,507, the average for other states. The Great Recession made these differences larger than they were before. The California Legislative Accounting Office reports an 11.3% reduction in K-12 spending between the academic years 2008-09 and 2010-11.

California also suffers from a patchwork system of educational finance. A large portion of funding comes in the form of categorical funds that have restrictions specified by the state. There is little autonomy on the district level. Many other states receive funding through a weighted-student formula that gives districts more discretion on how to spend funds.

Falling Student Achievement
Although California can be lauded for high standards, it has gone from "first to worst" in educational achievement.

The state ranks near the bottom in staffing ratios and spending. Nearly half of the schools have students scoring low enough to be categorized in the "program improvement" category.

Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) give California students low grades as well. On the 2005

NAEP, California students ranked 43rd among states in Grade 8 math and performed 3rd lowest in reading and 2nd lowest in science (Loeb, Grissom, & Strunk, 2006).

The high ratio of pupils per staff member in 2006 was even more striking: California had 21 pupils for each staff member while other states averaged 15.6 to 1. The average number of pupils per administrator in California was 476.2 to 1 compared to other states at 303 to 1. The ratios for teachers are also getting larger. On April 6, 2010, then State Superintendent of Instruction Jack O'Connell announced that schools and districts in California were laying off over 26,000 teachers.

A generation of children has gone through the school system since Proposition 13 in 1978. Students and their parents may well be unaware of the educational standing of California in relation to the rest of the nation. These citizens need to make a greater commitment to public education, but does the state have the capacity to change and what changes would be required?

Capacity and Effort
From the foregoing discussion, one might conclude that California is just not making the effort to fund public education. This may be partially true, but there are also several special circumstances. The cost of living and the large proportion of young people in the state make California's capacity to fund education less that might be expected.

California's average teacher salary, $59,825 in 2005–2006, was higher than in any other state. California has a relatively high cost of living. The American Federation of Teachers analyzed average teacher salaries in 2000–2001 and determined that when cost-of-living factors were taken into account, California ranked 16th

in the nation (Education Data Partnership, 2008).

Effort to support public education can be measured by what a state spends on schools per $1,000 in personal income. California's investment in 2003–04 was $38 per $1,000 in personal income; three dollars below the national average, for a ranking of 33rd.

While California's effort appears to be low, there is another way to understand effort. California has the largest economy of any other state. However, it ranks 12th in per capita personal income at $35,172, and has the fifth-largest number of K-12 students. Its capacity to support public education can be determined by dividing personal income by the number of K-12 students. By this measure, California has been above average in funding since 2001–02, ranking tenth in the nation in 2003–04 (EDP, 2008).

California has a larger population of school-age children than do other states and consequently a below-average capacity to support public schools. Even though California spends more than the national average per capita on K–12 schools, the spending is spread over more students than in other states. (EDP, 2008).

In addition, California spends more than 20% above the national average on corrections, police and fire, and health and hospitals (EDP, 2008). The state leaders have chosen to make considerable social expenditures but a lesser portion of that allocation goes to schools than is the case in other states.

Governance
The funding of California education has become highly centralized. There are so many ballot initiatives that the legislature is eclipsed by referendum.

Grunwald (2009) called ballot initiatives the "crack cocaine of democracy." They are quick fixes that cause trouble in the long-run. The legislature, in turn, has created more categorical programs than in any other state. There are state mandates for everything from class size to special education. Twenty-two percent of funding comes from the local district and 67% from the state. Of the state share, 40% is restricted through categorical funding (Timar, 2006).

The California legislature is constantly in session. Until the election of November 2, 2010, it was one of only three states with a two-thirds super majority required to pass a budget or raise taxes (Grunwald, 2009). Legislative districts are gerrymandered and the results make for a high degree of partisanship. The legislature rarely met its budget deadline because representatives had no incentive to compromise. They came from districts that were gerrymandered solidly in favor of one party or the other.

Most other states rely on a weighted-pupil formula to distribute funds to school districts. Rather than allocating a lump sum for special education or other special programs, the state reimburses districts based on the count of pupils. Each special education student is "weighted" more to receive additional funding.

In other states education-finance reform came only after rulings by the state supreme court. In Texas, for example, the state Supreme Court ruled three times that the system was unconstitutional before the legislature came up with a viable solution (Edgewood Independent School District v. Kirby, 1989; Edgewood Independent School District v. Meno, Tex. 1995).

Outside directives from the courts were necessary to break the gridlock and get legislators to act. In Williams v. State of

California (2000) plaintiffs charged that the state had denied thousands of children the fundamental right to an education by failing to provide the basic tools necessary for education. Plaintiffs argued that every student should be provided "safe and decent" school facilities.

Now the state is on the verge of entering wave four of education-finance litigation. This wave is a combination of revisiting equity issues and adequacy issues with the important addition of content standards and systematic assessment of students.

Breaking the Gridlock: A Fourth Wave of Education-finance Reform

Robles-Wong v. State of California (2010) made the case that the state has clear standards for student achievement that are not being met at a minimal constitutional level. Plaintiffs argued that the finance system has no relation to the constitutional intent of funding education. This case holds the promise of providing the impetus and pressure for the Court to rule and the Legislature to act.

One might object that this is not the time for change in school finance. After all, California public schools have just suffered a $17 billion reduction in funding, and in the spring of 2010, had an unemployment rate of 12.5% (Gross, 2010). But the state Supreme Court was not designed to make a decision based on temporary economic conditions, but rather, to weigh the larger issues of justice that will affect the future of the state and the nation.

Recommendations

If the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of Robles-Wong, the state legislature would be provided legal authority to act. What changes should be enacted? Long-term structural changes are needed. The first change was already enacted when citizens voted to

eliminate the two-thirds legislative vote required to pass the budget.

The process was simplified, but at the same time voters added a restriction by requiring a two-thirds vote for the legislature to raise or institute new fees.

After simplifying the rules to pass the budget, California should eliminate categorical programs and adopt a weighted student formula. School district personnel would have the flexibility to transfer funds among various programs and create new programs to meet the needs of students in their communities.

Loeb, Bryk, and Hanushek, (2007) made clear that local flexibility was necessary for school district leaders to spend money wisely and monitor results for student achievement. This same flexibility for school districts should also be extended to schools as a good way to increase achievement (Ouchi, 2008).

In addition, California should restructure the tax system to reduce volatility and provide consistent funding for schools. Other states have more stable funding because of greater reliance on property tax.

Proposition 13 in California taxes similar properties at vastly different rates and it forced the state legislature to rely on the income and sales taxes that go up and down with the economy.

On the positive side, there is state wealth, a tradition of innovation, and high curriculum standards. On the negative side are centralized control, Proposition 13, government by referendum, the two-thirds majority requirement to increase fees, and extreme partisanship.

Immediate short-term changes are needed to prevent further budget reductions and provide emergency revenue. In the long-term, the state needs a more functional legislative system and a balanced and progressive tax system. Reliance on categorical funding should be replaced with a weighted student formula to give necessary flexibility to address problems.

These changes will not come quickly or easily. The decline in funding and achievement has been going on for over 30 years. A push from Robles-Wong v. State of California (2010) could make the recovery much faster than the decline.

At the same time, broad programs to educate the public can allow dialogue. Leadership can come from many sources: the governor and state superintendent, legislators, education associations, administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

A new generation was born into a system that did not experience the golden era of the 50's and 60's in California education. They grew up with fewer resources than other students around the country and might be in danger of taking their current situation for granted.

The community can awaken to recognize the needs of schools and realize that globalization will require more investment in education to assure a competitive workforce.

Support needs to be galvanized by advocates who know the issues and are committed to change. One such group is current and future education leaders at the classroom and school levels. Their communication with parents and community members can create the dialogue necessary for change.

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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 evidence-based practice that advance the profession of education administration.

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- Full title of book
- Author
- City, state: publisher, year; page; price
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AASA Resources

❖ *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study* was released December 8, 2010 by the American Association of School Administrators. The work is one in a series of similar studies conducted every 10 years since 1923 and provides a national perspective about the roles and responsibilities of contemporary district superintendents. "A must-read study for every superintendent and aspiring system leader ..." — Dan Domenech, AASA executive director. See www.rowmaneducation.com/Catalog/MultiAASA.shtml

❖ *A School District Budget Toolkit.* In a recent survey, AASA members asked for budget help in these tough economic times. The toolkit released in December provides examples of best practices in reducing expenditures, ideas for creating a transparent budget process, wisdom on budget presentation, and suggestions for garnering and maintaining public support for the district's budget. It contains real-life examples of how districts large and small have managed to navigate rough financial waters and offers encouragement to anyone currently stuck in the rapids. See www.aasa.org/BudgetToolkit-2010.aspx. [Note: This toolkit is available to AASA members only.]

❖ Learn about **AASA's books program** where new titles and special discounts are available to AASA members. The AASA publications catalog may be downloaded at www.aasa.org/books.aspx.

❖ **Join AASA** and discover a number of resources reserved exclusively for members. Visit www.aasa.org/Join.aspx. Questions? Contact C.J. Reid at creid@aasa.org.

Upcoming AASA Events
Visit www.aasa.org/ProgramsAndEvents.aspx for information.

✓ **Inside Innovation Workshops, Arlington, VA**
  Oct. 19-20, 2011, Nov. 15-16, 2011

✓ **AASA Legislative Advocacy Conference, Washington, DC**
  July 12-14, 2011

✓ **Good Governance is a Choice, Arlington, VA**
  Oct. 7, 2011

✓ **AASA Women in School Leadership Forum, San Diego (Coronado Island), CA**
  October 20-21, 2011

✓ **AASA National Conference on Education, Houston, TX**
  Feb. 16-18, 2012