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A Study of the Status of the Strategic Planning Process as Used by Public School Districts in Six Suburban New York City Counties

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A STUDY OF THE STATUS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS AS USED BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN SIX SUBURBAN NEW YORK CITY COUNTIES

by

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Abstract

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Over the past two decades, strategic planning has emerged as a management tool
to assist administrators in leading public school districts forward. If strategic planning is
an important administrative tool in moving a school district toward its vision, how and in
what form is it being utilized in suburban New York City school districts? The purpose of
this study was to understand the utilization of strategic planning in suburban New York
City school districts and to understand the constraints, training and technical needs
regarding strategic planning. This study also discusses the relationship existing between
strategic planning and the key district variables noted in the research questions.

The research questions were to determine:

1.   How is strategic planning being utilized in suburban New York public
        school districts in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau,
        and Suffolk counties? For districts that do not have a written strategic
        plan, how are components of strategic planning incorporated in the
        planning process?

2.   What are the perceived constraints, training and technical needs of
        school districts in the area of strategic planning?

3.   What is the relationship between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and student performance on state English Language Arts assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11?

4.   What are the relationships between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and selected district variables of: percentage of students graduating with a New York State Regents diploma, cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch?

The first two research questions were answered using descriptive statistics and linear regressions while questions three and four were answered by analysis of variance and Pearson correlations.

The findings revealed that planning in these school districts encompassed a variety of forms and that strategic planning is still evolving as a planning tool for educators. Also, no assumptions can be made regarding the relationship between student achievement and strategic planning. Finally, if strategic planning is to emerge as a cultural component of school districts, the following areas should be addressed: training and technology needs, funding and staff requirements, and an understanding of the transformational nature of strategic planning.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Education is on the verge of dramatic change as the effects of technology take hold of the culture in this first decade of the 21st century. In correlation with technological changes, educators face external political pressures from the business community to incorporate best practices in order to develop efficiencies in operations and progress in student learning. State assessments backed by the No Child Left Behind federal legislation are external catalysts further mandating educators to shift the paradigm in measuring the performance of students and the utilization resources.

In the forefront of school districts successfully managing change is a call for schools to be proactive in seizing the opportunities that change presents. The benefits of strategic planning for school districts have been a focus since the mid-1980s. Cook's (2001) seminal work on the benefits of strategic planning noted its increasing utilization and declared that strategic planning needs to be part of school culture. From its genesis as a reaction to *A Nation at Risk* (1983), strategic planning in education has continued to gather momentum as political currents fostered a climate encouraging school districts to adopt successful business models to make them more efficient. This trend progressed as more business leaders became involved in their local schools through community programs and their boards of education. The symbolism of IBM chief Louis Gerstner hosting national educational conferences and appearing as a keynote speaker at the U.S. Governors Education Symposium (Hunt, 2004) cannot be minimized.

Thus, the evolution of strategic planning in school districts is one that has its roots among non-educators and state mandates. Rhode Island and Pennsylvania (Hippert, 1997) amongst others are states that now require school districts to submit a formal strategic plan to their respective state education departments. Despite a less-than- optimal inception, school districts are now more engaged in planning activities to maximize student performance and ensure organizational efficiencies. Strategic planning in education has been viewed as "a necessary alternative" to the incremental chaos present in today's turbulent environment. It allows educators to assume a proactive role in defining both the agenda and the critical outcomes for the future (Verstegen, D. & Wagoner, 1989). While originally associated with the business sector, the "bottom up" nature of strategic planning is more philosophically aligned with the collaborative, inclusive approach to successful school governance and leadership.

Given the opportunities that strategic planning presents for school districts to progress, an in-depth study of its utilization and impact on student progress indicators was warranted. The politics of school governance coupled with the complexity of the strategic planning process called for a greater understanding of the effectiveness of this tool in the realities of leadership by district superintendents. While the disciples of strategic planning have eloquently stated their case in the research (Conley, 1992), there have been few studies from the practitioner's perspective. The successful implementation of a strategic plan is a critical component to its effectiveness. Brooke-Smith (2003) noted that strategic planning can often be counterproductive due to the unpredictable variables of staff and students in the implementation phase. Also, school leaders who see planning

as a strong blueprint for the future need to realize that too much rigidity will create additional problems that planning was initially meant to circumvent.

Therefore, success in strategic planning is not a given and change will occur whether it is done effectively or not (Guthrie, 1986). Unlike operational planning, strategic planning functions to a greater degree under political influence (Ward, 1992). The shared governance approach gives stakeholders the opportunity to emphasize their areas of interest in the establishment of core values, organizational needs, and the setting of goals. While this process can be most effective in establishing a true community, parochial interests can negatively impact the potential benefits and create an environment totally counterproductive to the intent of district leadership.

Strategic planning provides educational leaders the opportunity to choose the best path for their school districts rather than simply focusing on what is wrong in the schools (Fields, 1994). Reflecting advocates of the process, Fields states that strategic planning is a necessity given the limited resources and external environmental influences impacting education. Strategic planning allows school communities to collaboratively work together to examine the culture and the needs of the organization and identify trends and goals to assist the district in moving it closer to its mission (Fields, 1994).

With limited revenues and increased expectations, American education is at a crossroad in how it will deliver services and respond to its critics. Strategic planning has been a component in the educational community's response. Yet it is a tool that appeared to lack consistency in both definition and implementation when applied to schools. Educators are seeking to determine if a lack of clarity and training in the strategic planning process has had a negative impact on the utilization and effectiveness of this

process. Or is it that districts have simply chosen to use aspects of the process that met

their specific culture and needs? The dichotomy of the value of strategic planning noted

in the literature in view of what was evident in the field needed to be explored further.

This study examined the utilization of strategic planning and the relationship between the

degree of strategic planning in a district and how students performed on New York State

assessments. The relationships between strategic planning and other district variables

such as the percentage of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas,

cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students

qualifying for free or reduced lunch were also examined.

The benefits of strategic planning in improving schools are not known unless they

are viewed in an effective context. The purpose of this study was to understand the

utilization of strategic planning in suburban New York school districts located in close

proximity to New York City and discuss the relationship existing between strategic

planning and key district variables: student performance on New York State English

Language Arts assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11, percentage of graduating students

receiving Regents diplomas, cost-per-pupil, the student drop out rate, student attendance

rate, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Thus, the study

examined if a relationship existed between districts that utilized aspects of strategic

planning and the aforementioned district variables. The study also examined what were

the barriers in districts engaging in the strategic planning process. A previous study was

conducted in Kentucky school districts (Basham, 1988). This research was guided by and

is similar to Basham's research.

Much of the research heralds planning as a significant function in assisting school leadership. While both educational leaders and their constituents confirm that schools need to plan strategically informal evaluations suggested that much of the strategic planning in suburban New York schools was inconsistent with the traditional model mandated by states and utilized in business. These findings paralleled the results of Basham's (1988) research and became the catalyst for a more in depth look to determine how the use of strategic planning had progressed in the more affluent setting of New York's suburban school districts nearly two decades later.

Indeed, the varied approach by educators in utilizing strategic planning could reflect the differing cultures and resources of each school district, the experience and effectiveness of the district's leadership and staff, or the openness of the staff and community. Given the manifold approach to such an important function, a study of a diverse number of school districts located in the suburban counties of New York City, the business and cultural capital of the nation, would prove beneficial in understanding if Cook's (2001) prophecy almost two decades ago was accurate: that strategic planning in the field of education is a function whose time has arrived. If and how public schools benefit from strategic planning needed to be clarified.

In addition to proponents such as Cook, the influence of the business sector on education in the past decade begged for an analysis of how a model borrowed from business is currently faring in an educational environment where it was not mandated by the state government. Conley (1992) forewarned that strategic planning could be a case of organizations simply responding to external pressures with educational leaders making an attempt to implement a practice they may not clearly understand in terms of its potential

and limitations. This observation gained credence in further studies on the impact of strategic planning in Pennsylvania. Concerns were noted with regard to limitations in the financial and human resource areas as well as the involvement of special interest groups or individuals exercising their personal agendas (Pliska, 1996).

In another state where strategic planning was mandated, McHenry and Achilles (2002) further validated the concerns stating that 96% of responding school districts in South Carolina were rated inadequate in strategic planning when defined in its broadest terms. Yet, strategic planning was expected or mandated in an increasing number of school districts. It has been seen as the tool to move districts closer to their respective visions while creating more ownership of each school district's goal setting process. Given the potential positive outcomes of strategic planning and the contrasting concerns, the effectiveness of strategic planning in a non-mandated educational context needed to be examined.

With such a potential for improvement, the expectation would be that a majority of school districts utilized and maintained 3-5 year strategic plans to provide a road map in achieving collaboratively defined goals. However, an informal review of school districts in New York's Westchester County revealed that published district strategic plans do not appear to be the norm. This was supported by an ad-hoc survey forwarded to school districts in this region by the local Board of Cooperative Education (Office of Negotiations Clearinghouse Services, 2004-2005). Even in regions where it was mandated, Hippert (1997) noted that while perceived as favorable, strategic planning in Pennsylvania was not consistent and was impacted by the superintendent's knowledge of the process and the varying methodologies among districts.

Purpose of the Study

If strategic planning is an important administrative tool in moving a school district toward its vision, how and in what form is it being utilized in suburban New York City school districts located in Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Rockland, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties in New York State. The purpose of this study was to understand the utilization of strategic planning in suburban New York City school districts and to understand the constraints, training and technical needs regarding strategic planning. The study would also discuss the relationship existing between strategic planning and key district variables: student performance on state English Language Arts assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11, percentage of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas, the cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Research Questions

The research questions were to determine:

1.   How is strategic planning being utilized in suburban New York public school districts in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk counties? For districts that do not have a written strategic plan, how are components of strategic planning incorporated in the planning process?

2.   What are the perceived constraints, training and technical needs of school districts in the area of strategic planning?

3. What is the relationship between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and student performance on state English Language Arts assessments in Grades 4, 8 and 11?

4. What are the relationships between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and selected district variables of: percentage of students graduating with a New York State Regents diploma, cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch?

A strategic planning model was utilized in this study and a questionnaire was designed similar to that used by Basham (1988) to collect data from New York superintendents in the six respective suburban counties. The first two research questions were answered using descriptive statistics and linear regressions while questions three and four were answered by analysis of variance and Pearson correlations.

The purpose of this study was to understand the utilization of strategic planning in suburban New York City school districts and to understand the constraints, training and technical needs regarding strategic planning. The study would also discuss the relationship existing between strategic planning and key district variables: student performance on state English Language Arts assessments in Grades 4, 8 and 11, percentage of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas, the cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. This study addressed the four research questions and provided insight with regard to the viability of strategic planning in school districts with varying resources and student populations. Understanding how and to what degree strategic

planning is utilized in suburban New York school districts provides knowledge to the research with regard to strategic planning's practicality when implemented in the educational environment. Insight into the practical uses of strategic planning in the school setting can lead to a determination of its feasibility for educators. Indeed the long-term outcome could be the development of a hybrid strategic planning model to fit the specific culture of school districts.

Significance of the Study

Transforming schools to meet the needs of students who will become leaders in the second quarter of the 21st century is a daunting and critical task. Strategic planning's potential to produce change in a methodical approach is a contrast to the norm of a school district's dysfunctional and incremental reaction to environmental pressures. Stecher and Kirby (2004) in discussing the Malcolm Baldridge criteria for improving organizations, noted that strategic planning is how school districts set strategic direction and define key action plans. Unlike previous eras, the current age of biotech and accountability no longer affords schools the luxury to function as a primarily reactive institution. The solutions that strategic planning facilitates in theory needed to be examined in an actual context because the significance of schools themselves has risen dramatically. The decline of the family and other societal institutions reflects the growing importance of schools and it is further heightened by changes in the world of work, medicine, and technology. Given this change in the role of schools, how districts plan must be a focus. The stakes have risen, and the global world increasingly segregates those who are educated and can think critically from those who cannot. Thus strategic planning can positively impact education

in a number of ways. In addition to a vision, core beliefs and collaboratively set district goals, there must be measurable progress in achieving the goals set by the district. Most importantly, the planning, goal setting and progress must be tie to improved student learning. The process of strategic planning provides this.

Despite the exposure strategic planning has received in the field of education, much of the research discusses the approach and terminology. There is little research on how it is incorporated into an educational context and how it impacts student achievement. Also, there exists a perspective that all the research and discussion about districts planning strategically is really rhetoric and educators have not really embraced strategic planning (McHenry & Achilles, 2002). While there has been research on the impact of strategic planning in those districts where it has been mandated by the state, studies of school districts that have a choice whether to utilize it are sparse.

The crisis in education today calls for leadership that is visionary in understanding student learning and managing organizational change. Strategic leadership is critical in having businesses and governments thrive in a competitive arena and strategic planning has been a fixture in these environments for decades. Is the same type of leadership necessary in the field of education? If so, effective leaders should plan strategically. Thus, it is significant to understand if and how educational leaders plan strategically. Indeed, the components of strategic planning mirror the research of the attributes of effective leaders. Leaders must have a vision and need to have their people share in that vision reflecting what the organization can become (Bennis, 1989). Covey (1992) discussed core values, while Fullan (1992) noted that leaders set the context and adherence to the vision but solutions to organizational challenges have to be met by

people engaged in the action. Vision, values, and collaboration are critical aspects of leadership research and also key elements in the strategic planning process.

This study revealed an insight beyond strategic planning into how leaders in resourceful, sophisticated school districts lead. Strategic planning is presented in the literature in a normative position as rational process (Preedy & Glatter, 2003). Indeed, Sallis (2002) noted that strategic planning allows for the formulation of long-term priorities and it enables change to be approached in a rational manner. Yet, Bolman and Deal (1997) point out that change *is hardly a rational process. Can strategic planning work in congruence with the political and personal change frames (Bolman & Deal, 1997) that affect the process? Do superintendents lead strategically in the midst of political agendas and personal needs that may conflict with the priorities truly needed by the district?* This study detailed if and how they lead strategically and revealed information regarding the relationship between leading strategically, student performance on state assessments and other key district variables.

Limitations of the Study

The following were limitations of the study:

1. The population of the study was limited to the school districts of Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties in New York State.

2. The data gathered and conclusions were limited only to those superintendents and districts who responded to the questionnaire.

3.	Responses to the questionnaire were subjective and they did not allow for interpretation or clarification.

4.	The values assigned for each aspect of the questionnaire reflect the weight assigned by the researcher. Assigning a different value for each question would produce a slightly different result. Thus districts listed as high in their planning process may have been ranked slightly lower using a different value system for the questionnaire.

5.	Student performance was measured on the basis of performance on the New York State fourth grade English Language Arts examination, the eighth grade New York State English Language Arts examination, and the New York State English Regents which is offered in the 11th grade and is a requirement for graduation in New York State. The Regents is considered an exit standard and was chosen accordingly. Performance will be measured in terms of the percentage of students achieving proficiency which is a score of 85% or higher on the assessment.

Definition of Terms

Strategic planning- is a process producing a plan covering a period of at least 3 years that includes:

1.	Analyzing the current status of your school district and forecasting the future trends and needs in conjunction with the district's collaboratively established vision and mission statements.

2.   Setting goals and objectives which address outcomes based upon the educational and operational needs, interests, and expectations of the school district.

3.   Designing and implementing short-term and long-term actions for achieving goals and objectives.

4.   *Addressing the needs of such areas of school district programs and operations as curriculum, staff development, public opinion, facilities, personnel, finances and student services.*

New York State Grade 4 and 8 English Language Arts (ELA) Examinations: a state designed ELA assessment administered in the second semester of the fourth and eighth grades. Students are assessed as Level 1 showing a minimal understanding of intermediate level written and oral text, Level 2 showing a partial understanding of intermediate level written and oral text, Level 3 showing a general understanding somewhat beyond the literal level of intermediate level written and oral text, and Level 4 where students consistently show thorough understanding of intermediate level written and oral text.

New York State English Regents: a state designed ELA assessment administered in Grade 11 that is a requirement for graduation. Passing is a grade of 65% or higher; proficiency is a grade of 85% or higher.

Proficiency in this study was defined by those students scoring a Level 3 or higher on the Grade 4 New York State English Language Arts examination. Those students who scored a Level 3 or higher on the Grade 8 New York State English Language Arts

Examination were also considered proficient. A score of 85% or higher on the New York State English Regents was categorized as proficient.

Suburban New York school districts: Suburban school districts located in New York State in close proximity to New York City in the counties of Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction containing the context of the problem, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and the definition of terms.

Chapter 2 presents the review of the literature related to strategic planning. The review presents the evolution of strategic planning in a historical context. The literature is then reviewed with regard to strategic planning and leadership and also in dealing with the change process. The final segments of the chapter review the literature on the implementation and adaptation of strategic planning and its impact on student learning.

Chapter 3 notes the design of the study, the procedures, and the methodology employed in the study. Also it discusses the population, sample, instruments, data collection procedures, and the statistical methods that are utilized in the study.

The data is presented in chapter 4 as well as an analysis of the data gathered. Chapter 5 presents the summary and the results of the findings of the study and the conclusions derived from the findings. It also discusses practice and policy as well as recommendations for further study.

Literature Review

Introduction

The evolution of strategic planning in the field of education is a journey detailed

in the literature. The advent of computer technology in post World War II America

facilitated a culture of sharing that began with the military, other government institutions

and eventually the business sector. For decades, strategic planning was seen as a tool for

leaders of government or for business managers driven by profits (Sybouts, 1992). Until

the 1970s, education was generally seen as a unique, time-tested service that would foster

change as educators saw the need to so. By then, however, the dynamics of change had

been accelerated by a poor national economy, greater dissatisfaction and higher

expectations regarding education, and a paradigm shift concerning who was responsible

when students did not succeed. Thus, questions ensued about how school leaders

governed and more specifically how did they plan?

With little historical context in systems or the processes of planning, schools

became the last link in sharing what worked in other disciplines. As the literature on

strategic planning for school districts began to emerge in an advisory tone, educators

were jolted into a reactionary position with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983).

Suddenly what had been a conversation of collaboration among education, business, and

government leaders was now a dialogue of crisis with aspects of the American education

system seemingly in need of triage. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (U. S. DOE,

1983), leaders began to explore education reform.

The prevailing thought among educators has been that top-down policies are harmful to programs and students (Lee, 2002). Bracey (2002) noted it is quite evident that a tried and proven way to gain recognition in politics is to discredit America's education system and propose improvements to "fix" it. Historically, the pattern has been well established. Whenever America finds itself at a disadvantage, its school systems are held under the microscope. The post World War II pattern was established in 1958 with the USSR launch of Sputnik. *Life* magazine then began a five-part series on the crisis in American education. Suddenly school curricula and philosophies were under attack and set to be revamped (Ravitch, 1983). Yet, a little more than a decade later America had met President Kennedy's challenge and put a man on the moon. There was little acclaim however for the schools which had educated NASA's finest. Instead, it was time to dwell on a hallmark writing that actually noted progress in 95% of the studies it discussed, but was still entitled, *Crisis in the Classroom* (Bracey, 2002).

With the political pattern established, a little over a decade later Secretary of Education, Terrance Bell, "went looking for what he called 'a Sputnik-like event' that would startle America with revelations of the low state of its schools" (Bracey, p.40). "Unable to find such an event, a disappointed Bell assembled the National Commission on Excellence in Education" (Bracey, p.40). The outcome was the publication of a *Nation at Risk* (U.S. DOE, 1983) which pointed out the need to reform our education system noting that we were losing our economic edge to Asian and European countries. According to this report, failing U.S. industries were the result of failing schools, and it was time for political and business leaders to lead the charge in education reform. American education has since been subjected to reform enthusiasm (Mazzoni &

Clugston, 1987). Many politicians and industry leaders were willing to lead this charge and non-educators continued to preach how our schools had failed, portending the demise of the U.S. as the economic leader. The public generally accepted the commission's findings and braced themselves for the U. S. assuming a rank behind the new economic engines of Japan and Germany. The demise that was portended never happened as America saw a rebounded economy throughout the mid-1980s and the strongest economy ever in the late 1990s. Amazingly, the educational system held responsible for the predicted demise would receive very little credit for America's increasing dominance in global economics.

The past two decades have seen the tone unchanged despite the prophetic errors prevalent in *A Nation at Risk* (1983). While the U.S. has maintained its global economic prominence, education leaders have been further challenged by environmental factors unheard of in the country's previous 200 year history: the advent of a global economy and global communications, advances in the delivery of instruction and the science of how children learn, and a breakdown in societal norms coupled with an elevation of accountability and expectations in schools. Thus, the need to plan effectively became a needed skill in dealing with the internal and external changes taking place, and strategic planning became a part of the education community's response to these pressures.

Strategic planning was perceived as a viable response, because it allowed educational leaders to demonstrate that they could manage change with a visionary approach on a symbolic level at the very least, while preparing their schools for the 21st century at the optimum level. Two decades later, strategic planning continues to be

adopted and is still a key part of the dialogue as a tool for school improvement despite its detractors.

This chapter discusses the literature on strategic planning as a tool in an educational setting since the release of *A Nation at Risk* (1983). This literature review will convey how the role of strategic planning has evolved as a response to internal and external influences as well as how it is distinguished from other types of planning. The literature review will portray how the evolution of the participatory and transformational leadership styles coincides with the growth of strategic planning. Finally the literature review will focus on strategic planning and its impact in managing change and student learning.

Historical Perspective

If *A Nation at Risk* (1983) was the lead catalyst in propelling strategic planning into the educational arena, then William Cook could be portrayed as the lead disciple. His book *Bill Cook's Strategic Planning for American Schools* (2001) was instrumental in establishing the benefits, context and "know how" with regard to strategic planning in schools (Canole, 1999). Cook's affiliation with the American Association of School Administrators along with a background in both the public and private sectors gave him a fertile venue to spread the word regarding the opportunities of strategic planning. He eventually formed the Cambridge Management Group, Inc. which specializes in strategic planning in education. In his latest edition (Cook, 2001), he points out the continuing groundswell toward planning in school districts and reasserts his contention that strategic planning's time has come to enhance our nations schools.

As noted in Hippert (1997), in 1986 the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published the *Guide to Strategic Planning for Educators* by Shirley McCune. This guide strongly contributed to the windfall of interest in strategic planning by school administrators (Hippert, 1997).

In concert with these seminal publications, school leaders continued to be pressured by a hostile external environment. Thus, strategic planning's promise to place leaders in a proactive stance with regard to the opportunities and threats in the environment continued to gather appeal. Peterson (1989) noted that the benefits of strategic planning are quite evident, and the call for schools to plan implies they are too passive in reacting to external influences.

Strategic planning's usefulness as a vehicle for educational institutions to market themselves and gain prominence in an increasingly competitive environment was also reflected in the literature. Kotler and Fox (1985) noted that a strategic plan should be the basis for the marketing plan of an organization. While strategic planning is new to schools, the programs that are emphasized in the plan serve as the geneses for communicating to the community and promoting the progress that has been achieved. Brown and Marshall (1987) also pointed to strategic planning as a process to move a school district forward. Strategic planning was also perceived as a necessary alternative to a turbulent environment allowing educators to assume a proactive posture (Verstegen, D. et al., 1989).

However, the practice of districts engaged in strategic planning had just begun to emerge. Basham (1988) noted that 64% of Kentucky school districts reported that they did not have a written strategic plan. Additionally, Basham (1988) found that 25% of

those involved in strategic planning completed their plan within the past year. Despite the limited use of strategic planning within school districts, strategic planning was gradually being seen as a critical tool for educators to enable them to respond to the evolving crucial issues of demographic changes, funding limitations, and curriculum requirements (Johnson, 1989).

The early 1990s saw a continued growth in the literature on strategic planning and its benefit as a tool in education. Echoing Cook (2001), strategic planning was declared as "in," and all educators were put on notice that they would soon find themselves planning strategically (Kaufman & Herman, 1991). As cited by Cohn (1999) strategic planning now became popular with educators flaunting its benefits: Kaufman and Herman stated that educators were enamored with strategic planning's stated ability to deal with societal changes, Blum and Kneidek pointed to improved student outcomes, while Caldwell and Wood highlighted the improved educational climate of schools, and Kolski focused on strategic planning managing systemic change.

Concurrently, government and business leaders focusing on education's shortcomings worked to convert those individuals whom they perceived as either uninformed or unimpressed regarding the ability of strategic planning to solve the many issues that school districts were facing. Freericks (1991) concluded that the process of strategic planning utilized in corporate and military sectors is effective in school districts. Results of her study included the perceived benefits of strategic planning for participating representatives: greater accountability, enhanced staff empowerment, increased communication, greater staff and community involvement, and improved organizational structure. Ron Brandt (1991), Executive Director of the Association for Supervision and

Curriculum Development, also pointed out that leaders who engage in strategic planning will think proactively, be able to adapt and if they involve their staffs, will be more likely to move the district ahead. Brandt's position was supported by Psencik (1991) who referred to the success of strategic planning in one Texas school district that had demonstrated an increase in community and parent involvement, confidence in the school district, and control over events in the future.

Vincent (1992) in his study of Des Moines Public Schools pointed out the significance of strategic planning in providing a structure for school districts. Without the structure he noted the loudest voices and the most politically astute can gain the upper hand and are likely to be satisfied regardless of the district's needs. By 1994, strategic planning was becoming a more a widely used tool in the field of education. Fields (1994) reported that its wide use is related to the ability of the process to challenge planners and leaders to examine all aspects of the school. Fields reported that strategic planning is necessary for school districts to compete for limited public resources, adapt to change, and meet state mandates.

While there were many proponents of strategic planning in the field of education, business leaders on both the national and community levels seized the bully-pulpit to place additional pressures on administrators to start the process of planning strategically. This was fueled by the need for a competitive work force and the tax implications on business revenues (Mazzoni & Clugston, 1987). Joining this chorus, some politicians and bureaucrats at various state education departments chose a top-down approach and mandated district superintendents to file a strategic plan with the state on an annual basis.

With the initiative now becoming more top-down, this complex process of planning strategically became more open to a variety of interpretations as there was little consideration given to resources or training. Hambright and Diamantes (2004) noted that even in the literature, strategic planning was not a clearly defined concept and much of the writings sought to differentiate strategic planning from other models (Valentine, 1991). With a clarification process ongoing in the literature, the actual implementation process was more subjective in the educational arena.

Strategic planning was further bolstered by the reshaping of the American political landscape. The historical tradition of education being a local matter was altered dramatically by national candidates wanting to be seen as "education" presidents. Thus, in 1992 President Clinton set the climate for more accountability and government mandates leading to Goals 2000 (Jennings, 1995). This involvement has since been exceeded by the Bush administration's philosophy and the No Child Left Behind Legislation (U.S.DOE, 2002). Change was even greater at the state level as education departments increasingly initiated annual assessments and district "report cards" throughout the decade of the 1990s. As the decade progressed, leaders at various levels found that planning strategically could give districts a road map to navigate the external expectations that were being thrust upon them.

Thus, the literature reflected this political trend as the benefits of strategic planning for school districts were reported and analyzed. Hayden (1993) noted that strategic planning produces a results-based, action-oriented plan and can greatly assist rural school districts in determining their future. Conley (1992) reported that districts that

were engaged in strategic planning communicated it was effective. Conley (1992) also reported that districts were utilizing a variety of models in the process.

Management and Leadership

Historically, the growth of strategic planning was reinforced by its bottom-up approach and the introduction of participatory management to the American culture. The economic decline of the 1970s and early 1980s led to American business leaders examining the industrial rise of Japan. American researchers became enamored with the Japanese approach toward quality and participatory management. Strategic planning with its strong participatory approach subsequently filled the void when managers and educational leaders needed a tool to demonstrate a new "management" approach to achieving goals and redefining their organizations. Also, strategic planning served as a good fit for those advocates of the concept of "total quality management" (Carole, 1993). Peters (1987) noted there is no such thing as a good strategic plan but rather it is the process that creates positive change. Conley (1993) noted that strategic planning may be the critical component in the success of decentralized decision making. Hambright and Diamantes (2004) stated that in a study on change effectiveness in a large school district that Frese (1996) credited strategic planning and shared-decision making as critical variables in fostering positive organizational change. Participatory organizations not only planned strategically, but they were led by leaders who implemented strategy by taking all levels of the organization into the process.

The evolving research on effective leadership was congruent with leaders who utilized strategic plans and involved all stakeholders in the process. Leadership research continued to support the type of leaders that would engage in strategic planning. Lambert

(2003) noted that high leadership schools are learning communities that have members sharing a vision through participatory activities and responsibilities. Many of the elements of effective leaders discussed in the literature were in fact components of the strategic planning process.

Sergiovanni (1996) noted that school leadership differs from visionary corporate leadership. He proposed leadership as pedagogy with administrators committing to serving, caring and moving learning forward throughout the organization. Strategic planning can fit within this paradigm; however, all participants must share the passion to assure the optimum results. Bennis (1989) also saw leadership as innovative learning where one makes decisions from both the context that exists and from imagining the context of the future. This would require leadership to successfully re-culture the school district (Fullan, 1992) as it engages in a systemic change such as strategic planning. Both innovative learning and the challenge of creating a new culture are ingrained in the process of strategic planning.

DeRoche (1987) stressed that an instructional leader is a team builder who possesses knowledge and understanding of the school's instructional program. Instructional leaders, he noted, are visible, work closely and collaboratively with the staff, and have high expectations for teacher and student performance. These are also skills of leading and planning strategically. In his study Cawelti (2003) came to the conclusion that leaders simply decide what to do and then they gather support to achieve their objective.

Covey (1992) focused on leadership and the person but also on the organization and the managerial function. He noted the seven chronic problems

in organizations: no shared vision, no strategic path, poor alignment, wrong style, poor skills, low trust and low integrity. He further pointed that optimization of an organization will not occur if any of the seven chronic problems exist in an organization. As Covey developed his points, integrity, vision, and values continued to resonate. With no shared vision and values, there is no deep understanding of the commitment to the mission. The values noted by Covey are prerequisites to a successful strategic plan.

Turan & Sny (1996) noted the skills of effective transformational leadership paralleled the strategic planning process:

> Like strategic planning, transformational leadership is vision driven which emphasizes communication, vision, self confidence, and inner strength. With special attention to humans and their needs, beliefs and concerns, the leader is able to create an environment in which the future concerns of the organization and individuals can be addressed. Providing and sharing information with people in the process of developing strategic planning is fundamental for effective planning" (p. 19).

The potential of strategic planning to transform organizations was noted by Hippert (1997). Hippert noted a key allure of strategic planning is its development of a new sense of what can be in a school district. Through the scanning of external and internal environments, developing effective communication and trust, strategic planning can transform what will be. The process of strategic planning also gives superintendents the opportunity to assess strengths and weaknesses in order to find a practical way to move toward the organization's vision. Thus, most administrators view strategic planning as a vital process for their organizations (Hippert, 1997). The literature supported

strategic leaders as they noted a transformational leader follows a process of building a commitment to organizational objectives that then empowers followers to accomplish the defined goals.

Reavis and Griffith (1992) also referred to the trust and participatory management that is necessary if strategic planning is to be successful. Teachers, parents and community members come to the table as equals with management in this process. Superintendents who need to be in constant control were not effective leaders in the strategic planning process. Link (1990) pointed out that the process of developing a plan needs to be truly collaborative as one constructed mainly by administrators will not be effective. Raynor (2004) discussed the illusion of control in the strategic planning process. He noted the need to adhere to the process but emphasized the advantages of being flexible when the dynamics of change accelerate threats and opportunities in the environment. Leaders who behave to the contrary and act in a controlling, autocratic manner minimize the purpose and deny the realization of the complexity of school processes, relationships, patterns and structures (Brooke-Smith, 2003). Schools are dynamic, adaptive, nonlinear systems that operate best when the organization employs a feed back system that is reciprocal and based upon relationships and purpose. Within this dynamic system, schools can grow and improve by allowing all to participate in the adaptive change process (Heifetz, 1994).

The leader as a person of moral principle who builds a learning community based upon trust (Sergiovanni, 1996) and gains further credibility is in contrast to the research of authoritarian and adversarial leadership (Blasé & Anderson, 1995). It was noted how control-oriented behaviors on the part of leaders directly impact the behavior of staff in a

negative manner with regard to teacher involvement and performance in the planning

process. Blasé and Anderson's findings noted how administrators need to be trusting and

flexible in implementing a process:

> An overwhelming portion of the data supports the general conclusion that the
>
> use of control tactics by school leaders tends to have profound negative consequences
>
> for teachers. Specific effects were noted for teacher classroom performance in terms
>
> of morale, decisional discretion, instruction, and classroom resources. Likewise,
>
> school-wide performance was negatively affected in terms of morale, involvement
>
> and expression. Relationships among teachers, between teachers and principals, and
>
> between teachers and students also suffered as a result of these tactics as did school
>
> pride (p.41).

This would be contrary to the philosophy of strategic planning as a participatory,

inclusive process that is based upon trust and shared commitment.

Cook (2001) stressed that strategic planning is not based upon a system,

methodology or a process but "by the context in which the plan is derived" (p.47). He

notes, "Quite simply stated: Only strategic organizations can do strategic planning. Plans

developed by non-strategic organizations or units, even though the planning schema

resembles that of strategic planning, can be at best comprehensive or long-range" (p.47).

Cook's interpretation requires school districts to concentrate all efforts, resources, and

energies toward the goals set forth.

The role of school leaders has been reshaped over the past three decades as an

outcome of school reform (Datnow & Castellano, 2001). As educational leaders have

been challenged to make schools effective by establishing communities of commitment

and trust, the level of complexity needed to establish successful leadership is still being realized. Strategic planning presents an opportunity to address the complexity of today's leadership. Involving the professional staff and the community in defining, addressing and solving the challenges is indicative of the type of skills and attributes needed and strategic planning provides a template for leaders to move districts toward excellence.

Adaptation and Implementation

The most difficult aspect of planning is turning it into action; all the work and intentions must translate into making a difference in the quality of learning (MacGilchrist, Mortimore, Savage, & Beresford, 1995). Much has been noted regarding the distinction between strategic planning and long range planning. Sybouts (1992) noted that confusion between the two processes is likely to exist and recommends that people refer to the literal meanings as there is a strong distinction. He notes many superintendents see strategic planning as a more in-depth type of long-range planning. Long-range planning focuses on components such as forecasting, monitoring, goal setting and implementing, while strategic planning engages in environmental scanning and collaboratively compiling action plans in tune with the core values while moving the district toward a vision of what it can be. Lumby (2002) noted that linking a vision with a strategy can be difficult. If there is to be success in terms of implementation, then the vision must be shared.

Short and long term planning are usually top down while strategic planning requires ongoing participation throughout the organization by all stakeholders (Canole, 1999). McCune (2002) noted that with societal changes there is a need for educational restructuring and many see strategic planning as a tool to assist in organizational change.

However, McCune warned that few administrators recognize the effort needed to implement strategic planning and organizational change. According to McCune, strategic planning requires an organization's total transformation. Fullan (1992) noted that organizations need to prepare to be successful in the future: developing relationships based upon trust, acting with a moral purpose, building and sharing knowledge, providing a supportive change environment and establishing coherence throughout the organization. This would create a culture for success in strategic planning.

Link (1990) noted that a spirit of collaboration can exist during the development of a plan; however, participants need to be in congruence during the implementation phase. This proves to be more difficult as expectations and obstacles are not always clearly recognized or understood. This was echoed by Conley (1993) in his study: *Strategic Planning in Practice: An Analysis of Purposes, Goals and Procedures*. Conley took a more in depth look at strategic planning surveying 79 school districts throughout the country. His findings indicated that school districts did not distinguish in the practice of planning among technical, political, and the consensual processes. Conley's findings with regard to strategic planning revealed that interactive activities need to be done in an organizational context and there existed an incongruence in a number of districts between the mission statement and stated strategies. Conley also found that personal conflicts of interest were a continuing part of the process so a mechanism needs to be put in place to ensure continued dialogue between planning participants to resolve the political aspects of the process. Peterson (1989) pointed that school board members also instinctively like the idea of strategic planning; however, many admit to confusion about the process and what is required for implementation.

In a paper on strategic planning issues in educational reform, Pliska (1996) cited the significance of communication in the implementation phase. According to Pliska, if there are not effective relationships or a venue to communicate issues then personal or parochial agenda items have more of an opportunity to resurface. McLaughlin (1987) as cited in Pliska stressed that the first step of implementation is for the participants to learn the "rules of game". In addition to stressing communication, few school districts have invested in training administrators, staff and community members in the strategic planning process. In the absence of training, issues continue to surface as committee members are uncertain of their roles. This lack of role clarity has resulted in misunderstandings, controversy and eventually administrators being vulnerable to lost credibility and antagonism (Pliska, 1996). Nebgen (1991) also stressed that communication during the implementation phase is critical to success. Communication and resource issues impacting the strategic planning process were factors both at the district level and the state level.

The impact on strategic planning regarding communication and resource issues was echoed in a study of strategic planning in Utah's public schools. In an executive summary presented to the Utah State Office of Education, The Western Institute for Research and Evaluation (WIRE, 1993) noted that there was no state funding available to districts for the implementation of strategic planning and that this lack of funding was a major concern cited by superintendents. Also, the report indicated that over one third of superintendents in the state reported they had never seen the Utah State Education Department's strategic plan despite each superintendent being sent a copy. The fact that over one third of the superintendents had never seen the state's strategic plan could have

been a reflection of apathy on the part of the superintendents or poor communication on the part of the Utah State Department of Education (WIRE, 1993). Finally, the stakeholders in the Utah survey cited the need for time and patience in implementing school district strategic plans (WIRE, 1993).

The need to understand that planning must be done in a proper window of time was also noted by Wincek and O'Malley (1995) stating: the process is often perceived as arduous and not related to daily functions. There is a need for both understanding the process and the dynamics of strategic planning because it is fundamental to educational improvement. Investing proper time, communication and involving people was evident in the Davies and Ellison (2003) protocol for developing a strategic plan. The process must include sharing a completed draft of the strategic plan with comments and revisions to be considered by the planning committee before recommending the plan to the Board of Education for adoption.

Thody (1991) noted the increasing recognition of strategic planning as a viable tool. However, Thody also cited the task orientation of principals as an obstacle to effective strategic planning. According to Thody, principals need to begin to increase the amount of time that they engage in reflective planning if strategic planning is to be successful within a school district. In Pennsylvania, researchers found that planners tended to disregard environmental indicators focusing instead on internal indicators where educators and stakeholders could exercise more control (George, 1993).

The Office of Performance Improvement in Miami-Dade County (2003-2004) noted that a successful implementation plan needs to account for a turn-over in personnel. A review of budgetary expenditures and a defined process for collecting data was critical

for increasing the potential of a successful implementation. In addition, decisions should not be preconceived and should only be made after all data has been analyzed (Office of Performance Improvement, 2003-2004). This will contribute to a culture of trust and an ultimately better outcome. The Miami-Dade School District also linked individual school goals with the resources needed to achieve them. Thus, implementation was enhanced by assuring the strategic plan was tied-in with the annual budget. Districts in this county also were required to dedicate appropriate time, personnel and resources to facilitate the implementation.

Cook (2001) stated that the point of implementation is where most strategic plans fail. While the point of the plan is to "translate strategic intent into strategic action" (p. 96), districts often fall short due to internal resistance, operational distractions, and confusion regarding the concept. He further detailed the need for school leaders to collaboratively agree on mutual expectations. Unless there is agreement, trust and accountability then the implementation segment of strategic planning will lead to disenchantment for the participants. Failure in any one of these areas is likely without an emphatic commitment from the school districts leaders, especially the superintendent (Cook, 2001).

Managing Change

Thus, a successful implementation requires a leader who can transform the organization effectively. Bass (1985) noted that leaders transform the personal values of followers to support the vision and goals of the organization by fostering a climate where relationships can be developed and nurtured in an environment of trust. Strategic planning provides an approach that involves teachers and the key constituents of the

district (Webster & Luehe, 1992). A commitment to change and improve is implicit in the strategic plan. This is a change especially for the teaching staff; however, it is incumbent that school leaders persuade staff and community that their involvement is critical. All too frequently planners have not participated in the implementation, and those in the implementation have not been part of the planning. With this addressed, the linkage of decision making can be turned into positive results (Webster and Luehe, 1992).

The dynamic changes that have taken place in education do not reduce the need for vision as without vision and process, planning becomes reactionary and may be eliminated all together (Bell & Harrison, 1998). If schools are to be learning communities, school leaders must become proficient in managing change (Fullan, 1992). Thus, it is incumbent on leaders to take the responsibility to deal with change. As noted by Bell and Harrison (1998), school leaders need to determine the strategic frame from within which the school wishes to operate and to be relentlessly successful in achieving the promise of this strategy. Strategies like change do not just happen or emerge they are managed (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1992). Sallis (2002) noted that strategic planning allows for change to be managed in a rational manner. Because managers are working on strategic goals and not bogged down in the day-to day activities, strategic leaders are more apt to handle internal and external change forces.

Heifetz (1994) offered a perspective on leadership that involves an understanding of a leader's position in society or an organization and how one can effectively orchestrate the most positive outcomes in a changing environment. Examining leadership in terms of legitimate authority and organizational effectiveness, Heifetz introduced the concept of leadership in terms of adaptive work. In this situation, leadership is linked to

change with regard to a vision, following a process, and focusing on achieving goals

within a societal-organizational context. In parallel with the research on strategic

planning, adaptive work also requires managing change from a vantage point where a

leader has the opportunity to think and act strategically.

Many plans in the public and private sector are not effective because they do not

factor in or account for change. Poole (1991) emphasized that environmental scanning is

a critical aspect of strategic planning because change is just as likely to come from

sources not normally expected. Leadership that lacks the ability to frame situations will

not be able to achieve the desired outcomes that they expect (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Administrators should anticipate a resistance to change and propose a conversation

framed around the district's proposed goals and sort them out from a political, personal,

economic, social, educational and technological perspective.

Brandt (1991) pointed out that schools have ignored many of the socio-global

changes of the later decades of the 20th century. Strategic planning is one avenue districts

should consider to address the data and trends of assuring students are prepared for the

dynamic changes of the 21st century. Sybouts (1992) noted that school leaders must

constantly adjust to the overwhelming factors of change in the American family and

society. This puts additional strain on educational resources and will impact any district's

needs assessment focusing action toward the issues created by changes in the external

environment. However, the key reason for educational organizations to enter into the

strategic planning process is to manage internal and external change (Canole, 1999).

Marazza (2003) noted that the supportive environment as a result of participatory

leadership where all stakeholders are engaged will facilitate a transformation. However,

when reforms are driven by state mandates the varying responses by each district will be based upon the perception of the local participants (Wills & Peterson, 1992). Thus, forming strategies through planning could serve to objectify a local leadership's perception of the reforms from state governments. This could lead to more positive change in the school district.

Conley (1993) noted that schools are impacted by external changes to a greater degree than anyone had acknowledged, strategic planning provides educators the opportunity to assert its core values and mission. Yet, managing change through strategic planning encompasses many more components which are not always executed properly. Understanding and managing changes in the external environment is a feature of strategic planning that was highlighted by Brown and Marshall (1987). This feature furthered the potential of utilization of strategic planning in school districts.

McCune (2002) pointed out that education faces the need to restructure based upon external factors of technology and societal changes. Societal transformations and their implications create pressures for change and the environmental scanning aspect of strategic planning can facilitate positive outcomes.

Student Learning

In his book *Educational Administration and Policy* (1986), James Guthrie pointed to educators focusing greater attention to the planning process. He pointed out that schools directly impact millions of children and expend billions of dollars annually. There is too much at stake not to give planning the attention it deserves. With the stakes raised by No Child Left Behind, it is clear that government leaders expect school districts to have visible plans for the public to see how improvement for students is expected

(Cohn, 1999). As noted a number of states such as Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania have simply mandated districts to publish strategic plans in expectation of raising student achievement (Canole, 1999).

The establishment of a vision and core beliefs as part of the strategic planning process must also articulate schools as learning communities. Bell and Harrison (1998) pointed out that strategic planning fosters control in reacting to external and internal pressures. Thus all objectives and refinements during the development and implementation stages of strategic planning must keep the value of student learning and the communal aspect in the forefront.

As stated, the Malcolm Baldridge criteria for improving organizations noted that strategic planning is how school districts set strategic direction and define key action plans (Stecher and Kirby, 2004). The emphasis on results in the Baldridge award allows school districts to measure progress against goals aligning instruction with standards while accounting for diverse learning styles. The outcome of these efficiencies should translate into more student learning. As expected, enhancing student performance was a key goal for districts participating.

Strategic planning brings people together in a collaborative spirit; however, the benchmarking aspect forces districts to perform a competitive analysis ensuring best practices for student learning are incorporated into the school culture (Marazza, 2003). Leithwood and Aitken (1995) noted that instruction is the core of learning and the value of the other variables "is to be judged by the support they provide for instruction" (p. 88). Their layers of leadership are numerous and manifold, listing eight attributes of an educational leader: one who is inspirational, provides constant support, models behavior,

provides intellectual stimulation, creates high expectations, recognizes achievement, develops commitment to goals and encourages initiative and improvement. With these attributes, outcomes should always be related to improving instruction. The benchmarks of a leader's expectations must always lead to more effective instruction (Leithwood & Aitken, 1995).

Hippert (1997) reported that superintendents in Pennsylvania believe strategic planning would promote efficient curriculum development linked more toward actual lesson content and student achievement. Shy (1992) noted that superintendents who advocate strategic planning as a communications or public relations tool will be part of another failed education reform. Rather, educational leaders should be committed to strategic planning for its strengths in managing resources and maximizing learning and growth.

Brooke-Smith (2003) noted that traditional planning can have a harmful impact on a learning organization. She refers to systems being interrelated and interdependent, and student achievement is dependent upon the alignment of structures and systems following the vision of the school. Schools must be learning organizations with feedback loops so problems that arise during implementation can be addressed and understood. Strategic planning requires feedback allowing leaders to understand and acquire institutional learning. Thus, planning feedback loops, typical of strategic planning, allow for the effective corrective action rather than making a change that could eventually hurt student learning. Inherent in the strategic planning process is a mechanism to monitor progress and make adjustments when problems are identified.

Canole (1999) noted that Purkey discussed that school improvement plans which are mini versions of a strategic plan also demonstrated a strong positive relationship between student and school improvement and strategic planning. Canole also noted that Brown found that the planning process created a focus among participants and improved student achievement. The newly defined roles that leaders have been asked to play have resulted in additional challenges adding to the complexity of the leadership skills required. Studies indicate that leaders can make an important difference in student learning and the effectiveness of instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). However, to lead effectively educators must not only ensure learning through good instruction but now must increasingly devote more time and effort toward selling their school and communicating with parents, school boards and other external agents. The role of educational leader as community builder is multi-dimensional and interrelated (Murphy, 2002). Strategic planning, if performed correctly, offers leaders a tool to manage these multiple components with an ability to remaill focused on student learning.

Chapter two reviewed the literature on strategic planning in education from a number of perspectives: a historical perspective, management and leadership, adaptation and implementation, managing change, and student learning. The genesis and development of strategic planning as noted in the literature reflect a perspective that is positive in the ability of the process to affect school districts. Likewise, the literature on management and leadership fosters a natural connection between participatory leadership and the strategic planning process. However, the strong association in theory is challenged when studied in the context of the implementation and adaptation of strategic

planning in an educational setting. The need for coherent communication and adequate resources resonates as a prerequisite for success.

The literature on the phenomenon of internal and external change illustrates both the opportunities and challenges regarding strategic planning in school districts. It can be used to manage change or if not implemented and structured correctly, create unwanted changed. Finally, the benefits of strategic planning with regard to student achievement are advocated in the literature. The conclusion is more anecdotal and intuitive than statistical. This supports the significance of further study of the process of strategic planning in school districts.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology utilized in determining the findings and conclusions presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Describing strategic planning as it is utilized in suburban New York Schools located in six counties and understanding its relationship to the educational variables of each school district was the study's purpose. This study was designed to gather information from suburban New York superintendents with regard to how and if strategic planning occurs in their districts, what are the constraints and needs of school districts in the area of strategic planning and what is the relationship of strategic planning to student performance on state English Language Arts assessments, percentage of graduates receiving a New York State Regents diploma, cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Chapter 3 details the methods and procedures utilized in the study. This chapter reviews the sample population, the instruments used, the method of data collection, the research questions, and the statistical analyses included in the study.

Subjects

The population for this study consisted of 161 superintendents of suburban New York school districts located in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. The survey was mailed to the entire superintendent population of 161 district superintendents, and 42 of those superintendents responded in completing the survey. The names and addresses of each school district and their respective superintendent are public information and were acquired by a review of the New York Education Department's published school report cards (2004-2005).

Instruments

Since the study involved measuring the degree to which each district engaged in strategic planning and the relationship between strategic planning and key district variables including student performance on ELA assessments, the utilization of an instrument similar to that used by Basham (1988) was used. This entailed a descriptive questionnaire as this technique was also validated in previous studies.

The instrument was initially developed by Basham (1988) and her colleagues at the University of Louisville, Graduate School of Education. The focus of the instrument was to measure behavior with regard to strategic planning and not to gather data pertaining to beliefs and feelings. The questionnaire utilized in this study did not alter the approach developed at the University of Louisville; however, modifications were made pertaining to New York State achievement measures and the district variables.

The questionnaire instrument was constructed using an item pool of statements describing specific strategic planning concepts (Basham, 1988). A criterion of validity was then established by Basham, professors of educational administration at the University of Louisville, Graduate School of Education, a planning consultant and administrators in the Kentucky Department of Education. Aspects of the criteria required that survey items should: be behavioral based, use simple language, describe specific behaviors limited to one idea per item, be on a low level of abstraction, written in the present tense, not be evaluative/emotionally toned, and avoid adverbs referring to the frequency of the behavior surveyed. The survey was then piloted and an actual field test was conducted by Basham (1988) for superintendents outside of the State of Kentucky. There had been screening for "ambiguity, wording, content overlap, and the extent to

which they tapped the universe of behaviors suggested by the strategic planning

conceptualization" (Basham, p. 31).

Thus, a similar questionnaire (see Appendix A) was utilized to measure the extent

of strategic planning in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk

County school districts. It consisted of 20 items with a forced-choice approach to

measure the degree of implementation of strategic planning. Scores range from a low of 0

indicating the lowest degree of utilization to 211 indicating the highest degree of

utilization of strategic planning. The questionnaire also contained questions which

identified constraints such as training and technical assistance limiting a district's ability

to engage in strategic planning. These questions were not scored and did not impact a

district's total strategic planning score.

Data Collection

With the questionnaire adapted for this investigator's research, the instrument

measured the extent of utilization of strategic planning in suburban New York City

school districts. The questionnaire was mailed to each superintendent through the U.S.

Postal Service on February 23, 2006 introducing the researcher and detailing the

importance of the questionnaire requesting a response by March 24, 2006. A follow-up

letter was forwarded to each superintendent on March 27, 2006, who had not responded

requesting a response to the questionnaire.

The responding superintendents answered a total of 14 scale items and scores on

the questionnaire ranged from a low of 0 to a maximum of 211 representing a high degree

of strategic planning. Also, while not counted toward any point contribution, the survey

also provided questions to identify the constraints in limiting the utilization of strategic planning for suburban New York school districts.

In terms of student performance, achievement data for this study were drawn from 2005 New York State English Language Arts assessments mandated for students in Grade 4 at the elementary level, Grade 8 at the middle level, and Grade 11 as an exit requirement at the high school level. This data is public record and available in each district's annual report card published by the New York State Department of Education.

The study also addressed other district characteristics pertaining to strategic planning. District data pertaining to the percentage of graduates receiving a New York State Regents Diploma, cost per pupil, the student drop out rate, student attendance and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch were obtained from New York State Report Cards issued annually by the New York State Department of Education.

Research Questions

The data was collected via the survey instrument to answer the following

research questions:

> 1. How is strategic planning being utilized in the suburban New York school districts in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk counties? For those districts that do not have a written strategic plan, how are components of the strategic planning process incorporated into the district's planning?

2. What are the perceived constraints, training and technical needs of school districts in the area of strategic planning?

3. What is the relationship between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and student performance on state ELA assessments in Grades 4, 8 and 11 in the district?

4. What are the *relationships between the degree of utilization* of strategic planning and district variables such as: percentage of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas, cost-per- pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch?

Data Analysis

From the ratings derived from tabulating each superintendent's response to the questionnaire, qualifying school districts were then categorized as having a high degree of utilization of strategic planning placing in the upper 25% of all districts responding, or a low degree of utilization of strategic planning placing in the lower 25% of all districts responding. Standard descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, standard deviation and percentages were used to answer the research questions as to what degree school districts are engaged in strategic planning, whether they have an existing written plan or if not, and do they use components of the strategic planning process in their district's planning? A regression analysis and correlation was performed to see if a relationship existed between strategic planning scores and district quartiles based upon strategic planning constraints, and training and technical needs.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare mean scores of those districts in the upper quartile of the survey's ranking to those districts in the lower quartile. A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to describe the relationship between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and the aforementioned variables: student performance on the ELA state assessments, percentage of graduates receiving Regents diplomas, cost per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Chapter IV

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study, provides a summary of the methods used in the study, and presents analyses of data collected in the study relative to each of the four research question

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the utilization of strategic planning in suburban New York City school districts and to understand the constraints, training and technical needs regarding strategic planning. The study would also discuss the relationship existing between strategic planning and key district variables: student performance on state English Language Arts assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11, percentage of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas, the cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

The research questions were to determine:

1. How is strategic planning being utilized in suburban New York public school districts in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk counties? For districts that do not have a written strategic plan, how are components of strategic planning incorporated in the planning process?

2. What are the perceived constraints, training and technical needs of school districts in the area of strategic planning?

3.   What is the relationship between the degree of utilization of strategic

planning and student performance on state English Language Arts assessments in

Grades 4, 8 and 11?

4.   What are the relationships between the degree of utilization of strategic

planning and the selected district variables of: percentage of students graduating

with a New York State Regents diploma, cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate,

student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced

lunch?

This study addressed the four research questions and provided insight with regard

to the viability of strategic planning in school districts with varying resources and student

population. Understanding how and to what degree strategic planning is utilized in

suburban New York school districts provides knowledge to the research with regard to

strategic planning's practicality when implemented in the educational environment.

Insight into the practical uses of strategic planning in the school setting can lead to a

determination of its feasibility for educators. Indeed the long-term outcome could be the

development of a hybrid strategic planning model to fit the specific culture of school

districts.

Summary of the Methods

A strategic planning model was utilized in this study, and a questionnaire was

designed similar to that used by Basham (1988) to collect data from New York

superintendents in the six respective suburban counties. The first two research questions

were answered using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while questions three

and four were answered by analysis of variance and Pearson correlations. This study was designed to gather information from suburban New York superintendents with regard to how and if strategic planning occurs in their districts, what are the constraints and needs of school districts in the area of strategic planning and what is the relationship of strategic planning to student performance on state English Language Arts assessments, percentage of graduates receiving a New York State Regents diploma, cost-per-pupil, the student drop out rate, student attendance, and percent of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

The population for this study consisted of 161 superintendents of suburban New York school districts located in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. The survey was mailed to the entire superintendent population of 161 district superintendents, and 42 of those superintendents responded in completing the survey. The questionnaire was mailed to each superintendent through the U.S. Postal Service on February 23, 2006, introducing the researcher and detailing the importance of the questionnaire requesting a response by March 24, 2006. A follow up letter was forwarded to each superintendent on March 27, 2006, who had not responded requesting a response to the questionnaire.

The responding superintendents answered a total of 14 scale items and scores on the questionnaire ranged from a low of 0 to a maximum of 211 representing a high degree of strategic planning. Also, while not counted toward any point contribution, the survey also provided questions to identify the constraints in limiting the utilization of strategic planning for suburban New York school districts.

Forty-two superintendents responded to the questionnaire representing a 26%

response rate from the superintendents in six suburban New York City counties.

Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to answer the first two research

questions. The final two research questions were answered using analysis of variance and

Pearson correlation.

Presentation and Analyses of Data

Research question 1. How is strategic planning being utilized in the suburban New York

school districts in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk

counties? For those districts that do not have a written strategic plan, how are

components of the strategic planning process incorporated into the district's planning?

Questionnaire Item No. 1: Do you have a written strategic plan-of-action for your school

district?

Of the 42 superintendents responding, 28 (67%) indicated that their district had

written strategic plan. Fourteen (33%) of the superintendents responding noted that their

districts did not have a written strategic plan. Table 1 reflects the percentages of school

districts with a written strategic plan.

Table 1

Written Strategic Plan of Action

Responses	N	%
Yes	28	67
No	14	33
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 2: What period does your school district's strategic plan cover?

Fifteen superintendents, or 36%, of the total respondents reported their school district's strategic plan covered a time period of 5 years or more. Seven superintendents reported that their written strategic plans covered a time period of 3 years. Five superintendents reported that their written plans covered a time period of only 1 year. Thus, a total of 22 districts representing 52% of the districts that responded had written plans covering 3 years or more. Fourteen districts did not answer this question or indicated this item was not applicable (See Table 2).

Table 2

Period of Time Covered by the Strategic Plan

Years	N	%
Not applicable or no response	14	33
1 year	5	12
2 years	1	2
3 years	7	17
4 years	0	0
5 years or more	15	36
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 3: If yes, what year did your school district first implement a

long-range strategic plan?

Eight superintendents, or 19% of the respondents, had implemented strategic plans

within the past 3 years. Five superintendents, or 12 %, first implemented a long-range

strategic plan before 1994, while eight superintendents, 19 % of the respondents,

implemented a long-range strategic plan between 1997 and 1999 or a least 6 years ago.

Two districts implemented their plans between1994-1996, and 4 districts, or 10%,

implemented a plan between 2000-2002. One superintendent reported the first year of

implementation was unknown. Fourteen superintendents did not respond or noted that

this item was not applicable. Table 3 illustrates the first year of implementation among the New York area suburban districts that responded. A total of 19 superintendents, almost 46% of the respondents, stated their strategic plans have been in place before 2003.

Table 3

First Year of Implementation of Long-Rang Strategic Planning

Year	N	%
Not applicable	14	33
Prior 1994	5	12
1994-1996	2	5
1997-1999	8	19
2000-2002	4	10
2003-2005	8	19
Not sure	1	2
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 4: Which of the following key areas of your school district do you plan, for what period of time, and is the plan written or non-written?

This questionnaire was subdivided into seven categories (see Tables 4 & 5). Responses by superintendents were highly positive, with 62% of the superintendents reporting that they engaged in planning in all seven specified categories. Student

learning and growth rated the highest with 38 or 90% of the superintendents planning in this area. Thirty-two, or 76 % of those superintendents who responded, indicated they had written plans in this area and 31% of the superintendents reported they had written plans for 5 years or more.

The category of instructional programs and services was next highest with 34 or 81% of the superintendents that responded affirmed they plan this area. Thirty superintendents, or 71%, had plans for instructional programs and services in writing. Fourteen of the superintendents that responded, 33%, had plans in this area covering at least 5 years.

The high results in these two categories may illustrate the impact of New York State mandates and assessments passed down to the local districts that have been in place for several years preceding the federal No Child Left Behind Legislation. Many districts have realized that with the advent of public accountability, a written plan fosters progress in critical areas measured by the public such as student performance and instructional programs.

Over a decade ago, the New York State Regents formally mandated each school form a building committee composed of all stakeholders including community members. This may have impacted the high percentage of positive responses from superintendents pertaining to community involvement. Thirty-three, or 79% of superintendents that

responded, indicated their districts planned in this area, and 69% of superintendents

indicated there was a written district plan being followed for community involvement. A

high percentage of superintendents, 76%, also responded positively to planning for

professional training and evaluation. Thirty-one, or 74% of the superintendents, reported

that written district plans had been implemented in this category.

Traditionally, district planning has been usually strongest in the area of facilities.

This stems from the financial implications of capital planning and the definitive

consequences of those who plan poorly or not at all in this category. This category was

also responded to positively by 32 or 76 % of the superintendents. Also, 74% of the

superintendents had written district plans for facilities. Fifty-two percent of the

superintendents indicated that they had plans for facilities covering at least 5 years. By

far, facilities was the highest of all categories that planned for 5 years.

The categories of innovation and organizational management rounded out the

seven categories. Twenty-seven, or 64% of the superintendents that responded, indicated

that they planned for change or innovation. Twenty-three, or 55%, had written district

plans in this category, while 29% of these plans covered at least 5 years. Organizational

management had 62% of the superintendents indicating that they planned in this area,

with 48% of the districts having written plans in this area.

Table 4

Areas of District Planning-Written or Non-written

Key area	Plan				Written			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Student Learning &growth	38	90	4	10	32	76	10	24
Organizational mgmt.	26	62	16	38	20	48	22	52
Community involvement	33	79	9	21	29	69	13	31
Professional eval. & training	32	76	10	24	31	74	11	26
Innovation	27	64	15	36	23	55	19	45
Instructional prog. & services	34	81	8	19	30	71	12	29
Facilities	32	76	10	24	31	74	11	26
Other	9	21	33	79	9	33	9	33

Table 5

Period of Time that Districts Plan

	Years covered in planning											
Key area	0		1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Student learning & growth	13	31	7	17	2	5	7	17	0	0	13	31
Organizational mgmt.	17	40	6	14	0	0	8	19	0	0	11	26
Community involvement	10	24	13	31	3	7	4	9	0	0	12	28
Professional eval. & training	12	29	8	19	0	0	8	19	0	0	14	33
Innovation	16	38	5	12	0	0	9	22	0	0	12	29
Instructional prog. & services	10	24	9	22	1	2	8	19	0	0	14	33
Facilities	10	24	3	7	1	2	6	14	0	0	22	52
Other	33	79	2	5	0	0	2	5	0	0	5	12

Questionnaire Item No. 5: Does your school district have a designated

coordinator/director of planning?

Results from item five indicated that few of the superintendents responding had

designated a staff position to the planning function. Only eight superintendents, or 19%,

had a positive response to this question. The result could reflect the fiscal limitations

districts face in allocating resources to planning. It may also indicate what priority

planning is given by superintendents (See Table 6).

Table 6

Number and Percentage of School Districts Which

Have Designated Coordinators/Directors of Planning

Response	N	%
Yes	8	19
No	34	81
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 6: If yes, what percentage of his/ her time is spent on

planning?

Of the eight superintendents who responded "yes" to the previous item, five

superintendents indicated that they limited the designated planning role to a maximum of

10% of the total job function. Three superintendents indicated that they had their

planning person dedicate up to 35% of their time toward planning.

Table 7 illustrates the fact that the planning position in school districts is often

limited by resources or competing priorities.

Table 7

Percent of Coordinators'/Directors' Time Spent on Planning

Percent	N	%
No Response	34	81
Upto 10	5	12
11-25	0	0
26-35	3	7
36-50	0	0
51-75	0	0
75-100	0	0
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 7: Does your school district have a budget for planning?

The overwhelming majority of superintendents responded they did not budget for

planning. Thirty-four, or 81% of the superintendents, chose "no" with regard to their

having a budget for planning. The low percentage of districts dedicating fiscal resources

to the planning process reveals the lack of priority school districts place on planning

when compiling their annual budgets (See Table 8).

Table 8

Number and Percentage of School Districts

Which Have a Planning Budget

Response	N	%
Yes	8	19
No	34	81
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 8: If yes, how much for the 2005-2006 school year?

The five superintendents who responded "yes" to this item noted budget lines

ranging from $20,000 to $100,000. Two superintendents reported budgets of $100,000,

while another district reported $85,000 as the planning budget. Two superintendents

reported their planning budget was approximately $20,000. Analysis of the data indicates

that three superintendents that responded positive to item number seven did not respond

to item number eight. This could indicate uncertainty regarding the exact amount

budgeted.

Questionnaire Item No. 9: What percent is the planning budget of your district's

total budget?

Two of the districts that budgeted funds for planning noted that 2% of their

budget was geared for the planning process. Another district responded .01%. The other

districts that did budget did not respond to item number nine.

Questionnaire Item No. 10: Does your district have a district-wide planning committee?

Twenty-seven superintendents, or 64%, responded positively to having a district-wide planning committee. Fifteen, or 36% of the superintendents, responded negatively to having a district-wide planning committee. Two superintendent, who reported they did not have a written strategic plan noted that they did have a district-wide planning committee. This indicates that three districts with a written strategic plan do not utilize a district-wide planning committee.

Table 9

Number and Percentage of School Districts with

a District-Wide Planning Committee

Response	N	%
Yes	27	64
No	15	36
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 11: If yes, what groups are represented in the committee?

Analysis of the data indicates that most groups are well represented. Sixty percent of the superintendents who responded to this item reported that teachers, administrators, and parents are on their committees. It is noteworthy that four districts that have a district-wide committee do not have the superintendent participating on the committee.

Table 10

Groups Represented on District-Wide Planning Committee

Group	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Teachers	26	62	16	38	42	100
Administrators	25	60	17	40	42	100
School board	21	50	21	50	42	100
Students	15	36	27	64	42	100
Parents	25	60	17	40	42	100
Community members	12	29	30	71	42	100
Superintendent	23	55	19	45	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 12: Does your school district provide the district-wide planning committee training in strategic procedures?

Only 12, or 29% of superintendents, reported that their districts provided training in strategic procedures for the members of the district-wide planning committee. Thirty superintendents, or 71%, responded that training was not provided or not applicable. Of the districts that had district-wide committees, the majority of them, 53%, did not offer training in the strategic planning process (See Table 11).

Table 11

Training for the District-Wide Planning Committee

Response	N	%
Yes	12	29
No	16	38
Not applicable	14	33
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 13: Does your district have a local school board policy governing strategic planning?

Only 21% of the superintendents who responded indicated they had a local school board policy regarding strategic planning.

Table 12

School Board Policy That Governs Strategic Planning

Response	N	%
Yes	9	21
No	33	79
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 14: Does planning in your school district include a critical analysis/needs assessment?

Eighty-six percent of district superintendents reported that they included a critical analysis/needs assessment in their planning process (See Table 13). Assessing needs and establishing goals based upon priorities is a basic tenet of planning; therefore, the rather high percentage affirming this practice supports the belief that districts rely on some process of planning. It would be difficult for the eight superintendents who reported that they do not do a needs assessment to engage in any form of strategic planning. Eight superintendents who reported that they did not have a written strategic plan responded positively when asked if their district used a needs assessment in their planning process.

Table 13

School Districts Who Use a Needs Assessment

in Their Planning Process

Response	N	%
Yes	36	86
No	6	14
Total	42	100

Questionnaire Item No. 15: If yes, what internal environmental data is collected and analyzed?

The internal environmental data refers to the data resultant within the operations and personnel of the school district. This data would be collected as part of the needs analysis. The data illustrated in Table 14 indicate that there is a high emphasis on programs and services offered by the district. The areas of academic achievement and curriculum ranked highest at 79% and 76% respectively. Teacher opinions and per-pupil expenditures were third and fourth highest at 69% and 66%. The strong responses regarding curriculum and academic achievement reflect the recent introduction of New York State standards and widely published assessment results. Data on extracurricular expenditures was utilized by 27 districts, or 64% of all the respondents. Student enrollment data was utilized by 60% of the respondents.

Table 14

Internal Data Collected and Analysed by School

Districts During the Planning Process

Data	Yes	%
Teacher		
Teacher opinions	29	69
Teacher holding power	9	21
Teacher rank/experience	9	21
Teacher performance	13	31
Student/teacher ratio	23	55

Table 14

(continued)

Data	Yes	%
Students		
Student opinions	19	45
Retention rate	19	45
Student enrollment	25	60
Student attendance	23	55
Student work status	7	17
Holding power	6	14
Dropout	17	40
School Funds		
Teacher salaries	24	57
Administrator salaries	22	52
Classified salaries	19	45
Sources/amounts of revenues	22	52
Per-Pupil Expenditures	28	66
Other	16	38

Table 14

(continued)

Data	Yes	%
Administrators		
Administrator performance	23	55
Administrator holding power	9	21
Programs and Services		
Curriculum	32	76
Academic achievement	33	79
Co/Extra curricular part.	27	64
Post-High school education	20	48
Special services	23	55
School climate	23	55

Six of the seven districts, 86%, that did not have a written strategic plan but did a

needs assessment utilized teacher input as a main resource in the planning process. This

percentage, 86%, was also consistent for these districts in the areas of administrative

opinions and academic achievement. Analysis of the date indicates that the absence of a

written strategic plan does not preclude constituents from providing input into a district's

planning process.

Questionnaire Item No.16: What external environmental data is collected and

analyzed?

Thirty or 71% of all the respondents cited parents as a source of external data. This was the largest subgroup for the collection of external data. State and federal mandates were an external data source for 25, or 60%, of the superintendents that responded. Community groups/members comprised the next largest group with 57% of superintendents reporting they use community input as an external data source. Industrial-business input was used by only 19% of the superintendents and may reflect that school districts have yet to be linked with the trends in the business arena (See Table 15).

Of the 28 districts with a written strategic plan, 25, or 89%, utilized parent opinion as external data. Five, or 36% of the 14 districts without a written strategic plan, used parent opinion as a source of data. Only two, 14%, of the 14 districts without a written strategic plan utilized community input for data. Contrarily, 79% of the districts with a written plan used community opinion as a source of data. Twenty of the 28 districts with a written strategic plan, 71%, collected data and analyzed information regarding state and federal mandates. Five of the 14 districts without a written strategic plan, 36%, collected and analyzed data pertaining to state and federal mandates.

Table 15

External Data Collected and Analysed During the Planning Process

Data	Yes	%
Parent opinion	30	71
Community opinion	24	57
Dropout opinion	7	17
Graduate opinion	17	40
Non-public schools	2	5
Economic status	16	38
Industrial- business trends	8	19
State and federal mandates	25	60
Others	4	10

Questionnaire Item No. 17: What planning components are included in your school

districts planning?

Of the 42 superintendents that responded, 33, or 79%, linked goal setting with

their planning process. Thirty-two superintendents, 76%, reported that a mission

statement was a component in their planning process. A high amount of districts

indicated that they establish annual objectives, 71%, and utilized timelines, 64%, to

maximize their planning outcomes. Also, a high percentage of the districts, 67%, had a

vision statement to guide them in their planning. Twenty-five, or 60%, of districts noted

that they used a statement of needs as part of their planning process. It is noteworthy that

more than half of the districts, 57%, planned by not including assumptions regarding the

future (See Table 16).

Table 16

Planning Components Included in Strategic Plans

Component	Yes	%
Vision statement	28	67
Mission statement	32	76
Statement of needs	25	60
Assumptions about the future	18	43
Core values	23	55
Goals	33	79
Annual objectives/outcomes	30	71
Evaluation procedures	26	62
Activities	21	50
Timelines	27	64
Persons responsible	25	60
Specific strategies	20	48
Reporting procedures	20	48
Other	1	2

Of the 14 superintendents that did not have a written strategic plan, eight responded that goal setting was a component of their district's planning. Seven evaluated procedures as part of the planning process and only six employed timelines to monitor planning in their districts.

Research question two. What are the perceived constraints, training and technical needs of school districts in the area of Strategic Planning?

Questionnaire Item No. 18: To what degree do the following constraints limit strategic planning in your school district?

Funding and staff time were the leading constraints cited by responding districts (See Table 17). More than half the superintendents, 59%, responded that limits on funding were a medium-to-high constraint to strategic planning, while 43% noted that funding for strategic planning was a low priority and therefore a constraint. Much of the research noted that the resource of time was critical to strategic planning. Yet, staff time was cited as insufficient and a constraint by 24 superintendents, or 57% of the superintendents who responded to the questionnaire. While financing and staff time were only 2 of the 12 constraints specified in the questionnaire, the fact that they received the highest ratings by superintendents is a reflection of how critical fiscal and human resources are to the strategic planning process. Each of these constraints alone could serve as a key obstacle to planning.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that 19 of the 42 superintendents, or 45%, cited both insufficient funds and staff time as medium-high constraints to strategic

planning. This provides some insight as to why districts that have plans, plan differently. This information supports the data illustrated in Table 6 and Table 7 where 81% of the superintendents responding had no personnel assigned as a district director or coordinator in the planning process. Also, only 19% of the responding superintendents said they had a budget for planning.

The next highest constraints noted involved the communication of the process/results and the implementation of the process. Each category was listed as a medium-high constraint by 34% of the responding superintendents. Strategic planning was listed as a low priority by the staff and a medium-high constraint by 13 superintendents, or 31% of the respondents. Slightly over a quarter, 26%, of the districts felt that staff resistance was a medium-high constraint to the process.

While staff time was noted as a considerable constraint, expertise in the strategic planning process was noted as a constraint by only seven superintendents, or 17% of the respondents. This may reflect an increase in the knowledge about the process or support a perspective noted in the research: that superintendents themselves have differing perceptions regarding the strategic planning process.

Table 17

Constraints That Limit Strategic Planning

Constraints	None		Low		Medium		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Insufficient funds	13	31	4	10	17	40	8	19
Insufficient expertise avail.	17	40	17	40	6	15	2	5
Insufficient staff time	6	14	12	29	14	33	10	24
Lack of planning expertise	14	33	21	50	5	12	2	5
Low priority for staff	17	40	12	29	8	19	5	12
Low priority for funding	15	36	9	21	13	31	5	12
Resistance from staff	13	31	18	43	7	17	4	9
Low reward for participating	20	48	12	29	6	15	4	9
Inadequate communication of the planning process/results	17	40	11	26	8	19	6	15
Inadequate implementation of planning procedures	17	40	15	36	3	7	7	17
Poor BOE support	27	64	7	17	2	4	6	15
Poor community support	23	55	12	29	3	7	4	9
Other	5	55	2	22	0	0	2	22

—

A linear regression was performed with the constraint rating for each district by quartile and the total score for strategic planning. The linear regression had an R square of .056, indicating that 5% of the variance in the total strategic planning score can be explained by the quartiles based upon constraints to strategic planning. The Pearson correlation of -.236 indicates a small negative relationship between the quartiles and planning score. The correlation had an .06 significance which just misses the standard .05 criteria. The ANOVA indicates no significance between constraint quartiles at .132 (See Table 18).

Table 18

Linear Regression Constraints by Quartile

and Total Score on Strategic Planning

Correlations

		Tot. Score Strategic Plan	Con. Score Quartile
Pearson Correlation	Tot Score Strategic Plan	1.000	-.236
	Con Score Quartile	-.236	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Tot Score Strategic Plan		.066
	Con Score Quar	.066	
N	Tot Score Strategic Plan	42	42
	Con Score Quartile	42	42

Table 18

(continued)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.236	.056	.032	45.879

Predictors: (Constant), Con Score Quar

Dependent variable: Total Score Strategic Plan

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4965.794	1	4965.794	2.359	.132
	Residual	84195.182	40	2104.880		
	Total	89160.976	41			

Predictors: (Constant), Con Score Quar

Dependent variables: Total Score Strategic

Questionnaire Item No. 19: Identify the training needs of your school district by

rating the following planning competencies/functions.

Forecasting future trends/needs, 63%, and the gathering/analysis of data,

at 61%, were identified as the strongest areas requiring training assistance in the

planning process. Over 60% of the superintendents that responded to these questions

cited these areas as a medium-high need. Other areas noted as a medium-high training need were: measuring the effectiveness of planning, 59%; establishing accountability, 56%; and involving the community, 54%. The need to be trained in the areas of gathering/analyzing data and measuring planning effectiveness could indicate that many districts still have not integrated planning as part of the school culture. Given that of the 28 superintendents indicated that they have a written strategic plan, it is noteworthy that 15 of those districts, or 54%, specified a training need (medium-high) in the category of gathering or analyzing data. This supports the perspective that even when motivated, the collection and analysis of data is a much different skill set than the education of children. Likewise, 9 of the 28 districts, 32%, with a written strategic plan cited a training need in forming and operating a district-wide committee.

Seventy-one percent of the superintendents who responded indicated that there was no-low need for training in establishing goals. Twenty-four, or 86%, of the 28 districts with a written plan expressed a low or no need for training in this area. Similarly, a no-low need in training was also cited in the area of creating measurable objectives, 59%, and developing action plans, 58%. For those districts with a written plan, 86% had a low or no training need in creating measurable objectives, and 75% of those districts cited a low or no need in developing action plans (See Table 19).

Table 19

Training Needs Identified by School Districts

Training needs	None		Low		Medium		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Forming/operating district-wide committee	11	26	10	24	16	38	5	12
Gathering and analyzing data	6	15	10	24	17	41	8	20
Involving the community	5	12	14	34	15	37	7	17
Forecasting future Needs/trends	4	10	11	27	20	49	6	14
Developing support for planning	4	10	14	35	18	45	4	10
Establishing goals	11	27	18	44	9	22	3	7
Creating measurable objectives	9	22	15	37	13	32	4	10

Table 19

(Continued)

Training needs	None		Low		Medium		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Developing action plans	12	29	12	29	10	25	7	17
Measuring the effectiveness								
of the planning process	6	15	11	27	14	34	10	25
Establishing accountability	6	15	12	29	16	39	7	17
Communicating with staff								
and community members	9	21	13	31	17	41	3	7
Marketing action plans	6	15	16	41	8	21	9	23
Measuring cost of goals								
implementation	7	17	13	33	15	39	4	10

A linear regression was performed with the training need rating for each district by quartile and the total score for strategic planning. The linear regression had an R^2 of .072, indicating that 7% of the variance in the total strategic planning score can be explained by the quartiles based upon training needs for strategic planning. The Pearson correlation of -.268 indicates a small negative relationship between the quartiles and

planning score. The correlation had an .04 significance. The ANOVA indicated no

significant differences between quartiles at .08 (See Table 20).

Table 20

Linear Regression Training Needs by Quartile

and Total Score on Strategic Planning

Correlations

		Tot. Score Strategic Plan	Train. Score Quartile
Pearson Correlation	Tot Score Strategic Plan	1.000	-.268
	Train Score Quartile	-.268	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Tot Score Strategic Plan		.043
	Train Score Quar	.043	
N	Tot Score Strategic Plan	42	42
	Train Score Quartile	42	42

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.268	.072	.049	45.480

Predictors: (Constant), Train Score Quar

Dependent variables: Total Score Strategic Plan

Table 20

(continued)

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
1	Regression	6422.381	1	6422.381	3.105	.086
	Residual	82738.595	40	2068.465		
	Total	89160.976	41			

Predictors: (Constant), Train Score Quar

Dependent variables: Total Score Strategic

Questionnaire Item No. 20: Rate the need your school district has for the following types of technical assistance with strategic planning

This item mirrored some of the responses noted in item number 19. Areas noted requiring the greatest needs were again in the area of forecasting future needs, data collection instruments and data collection/analysis. Each of these areas was cited as a medium or high need by a majority of the districts that responded to this question: 59%, 56%, and 55% respectively(See Table 21). In the area of forecasting needs, 50% of those superintendents with a written plan noted this area as a medium-high technical need compared to 64% of those without a written plan. Similarly, 64% of those districts without a written plan rated data collection instruments as a medium-high technical need compared to 46% of districts with a written plan. This was paralleled in the area of data

collection/analysis where 64% of superintendents without a written plan cited a medium-high technical need while only 46% with a written plan did.

Twenty-six or 65% of the superintendents indicated low or no need for assistance in developing a written planning system. This response is consistent with the data obtained in item number one where 28 superintendents responded they already had a written plan in place. However, of the 14 districts without a written plan, nine (64%) reported a medium-high technical need in the area of a written planning system. Also, 50% of the superintendents without a written plan pointed to a medium-high technical need in the category of community involvement compared to 29% of the superintendents who had a written plan.

Table 21

Technical Needs Identified by School Districts

Technical assistance needs	None		Low		Medium		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A written planning system	14	35	12	30	8	20	6	15
Data collection and analysis	8	20	10	25	18	45	4	10
Forecasting future needs/status	6	15	10	26	17	44	6	15
Data collection instruments	7	18	10	26	18	46	4	10
Computer services	11	28	15	37	10	25	4	10
Strategy for community involvement	9	23	15	38	11	28	4	10

Table 21

(continued)

Technical assistance needs	None		Low		Medium		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Identification of alternative activities	9	23	12	31	15	38	3	8
Information of effective planning practices	8	21	14	36	15	38	2	5
Evaluating the strategic plan	8	20	11	26	18	44	4	10
Evaluating plan outcomes	8	20	11	26	19	46	3	7

Most superintendents reported that they felt satisfied with resources for computer services as 26 (65%) of the districts considered this a low need or not a need at all. For those districts citing a medium-high need in this area 29% had a written plan, while 43% did not have a written plan.

A linear regression was performed on technical needs quartiles and total strategic planning scores (See Table 22).

Table 22

Linear Regression Technical Needs by Quartile

and Total Score on Strategic Planning

Correlations

		Tot. Score Strategic Plan	Tech. Score Quartile
Pearson Correlation	Tot Score Strategic Plan	1.000	-.366
	Tech Score Quartile	-.366	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Tot Score Strategic Plan		..010
	Tech Score Quar	.010	
N	Tot Score Strategic Plan	42	40
	Tech Score Quartile	40	40

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.366	.134	.111	43.974

Predictors: (Constant), Tech Score Quar

Dependent variables: Total Score Strategic Plan

Table 22

(continued)

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
1	Regression	11331.180	1	11331.180	5.860	.020
	Residual	73480.480	38	1933.697		
	Total	84811.660	39			

Predictors: (Constant), Tech Score Quar

Dependent variables: Total Score Strategic

The linear regression had an R^2 value of .134, indicating that 13% of the variance

in the total strategic planning score can be explained by the placement in technical needs.

For each quartile the total score in strategic planning dropped over six points. The

Pearson correlation of -.366 indicates a moderate negative relationship between the

quartiles and planning score. There was a significance at .01 in the correlation between

the quartiles of technical needs and the score on strategic planning. Also, there was

significance at .02 in the ANOVA between quartiles of technical needs and the total score

of strategic planning.

Research question three. What is the relationship between the degree of utilization of

strategic planning and student performance on state ELA assessments in Grades 4, 8 and

11 in the districts?

To answer this research question, school districts were grouped by their degree of utilization of strategic planning based upon their score on the questionnaire. As noted, each of the 42 responding districts was assigned a numerical value for their degree of utilization of strategic planning. The districts were grouped into quartiles with the 11 districts achieving the highest scores on strategic planning in the first quartile and those 11 districts scoring the lowest placed in the fourth quartile.

The analysis of variance, ANOVA, was used to determine if there were significant differences in English Language Arts assessments between those districts in the first quartile and those that scored lowest in strategic planning in the fourth quartile. The English Language Arts (ELA) assessments were developed and administered state-wide by the New York State Department of Education in Grades 4, 8 and 11. The level of significance was selected at .05 (See Tables 23-25).

Table 23

Aanlysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Grade 4 ELA Assessments

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

ELA 4th Grade Test Scores

Levine Statistic	$df1$	$df2$	Sig.
1.509	3	38	.228

Table 23

(continued)

ANOVA

ELA 4ᵗʰ Grade Test Scores

	Sum of Squaraes	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Between Groups	49.10	3	16.470	.164	.920
Within Groups	3810.709	38	100.282		
Total	3860.119	41			

Table 24

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Grade 8 ELA Assessments

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

ELA 8ᵗʰ Grade Test Scores

Levine Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	Sig.
.428	3	38	.734

ANOVA

ELA 8ᵗʰ Grade Test Scores

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Between Groups	376.341	3	125.447	.453	.716
WithinGroups	10514.064	38	276.686		
Total	10890.405	41			

Table 25

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Grade 11 Assessments

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

ELA 11th Grade Test Scores

Levine Statistic	*df*1	*df*2	Sig.
.802	3	38	.500

ANOVA

ELA 11th Grade Test Scores

	Sum of Squaraes	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Between Groups	101.114	3	33.705	.100	.959
Within Groups	12778.791	38	336.284		
Total	12879.905	41			

As noted, the data indicate that there is no significant difference at the .05 level between districts that scored in the upper quartile of strategic planning and those districts in the lowest quartile in ELA assessments for Grades 4, 8, and 11. A review of the data indicates that there were several districts with relatively high test scores in all three assessments that did not engage in the strategic planning process, or if they did so, did not participate in the process to a high degree.

Also, the questionnaires revealed that that there were several small city districts in the suburban New York counties that had the organizational resources to engage in strategic planning. Thus, these districts scored high in strategic planning; however, these

same districts had relatively lower test scores compared to some of the smaller, wealthier districts that may not have the organizational capacity for strategic planning.

Correlations were performed to determine if a relationship existed between the total strategic planning score and scores on the New York State ELA assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11. The results are presented in Table 26. As noted, the two tailed significance results were .891, .464 and .779; not meeting the criteria of .05. The r values reflect the lack of relationships and predictability between the two variables: score in the strategic planning process and the performance on the ELA assessments. The results were: Grade four, $r = .022$, eight $r = -.116$, and eleven $r = -.045$.

Table 26

Results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis Between the

Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning and ELA

Assessments in Grades 3, 8, and 11

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	ELA 4th Grade Test Scores
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.891
	N	42	42
ELA 4th Grade Test	Pearson Correlation	.022	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.891	
	N	42	42

Table 26

(continued)

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	ELA 8th Grade Test Scores
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	-.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.464
	N	42	42
ELA 8th Grade Test	Pearson Correlation	-.116	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.464	
	N	42	42

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	ELA 11th Grade Test Scores
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.779
	N	42	42
ELA 11th Grade Test	Pearson Correlation	-.045	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.779	
	N	42	42

Research question four. What are the relationships between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and district variables such as: percent of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas, cost-per- pupil, the student drop out rate, student attendance and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch?

To answer this research question, school districts were grouped by their degree of utilization of strategic planning based upon the superintendent's response to the questionnaire. With each district assigned a value for their degree of utilization of strategic planning, districts were ranked by quartile. Those scoring highest in strategic planning were placed in the upper quartile while those scoring the lowest were placed in the fourth quartile.

The analysis of variance, ANOVA, was used to determine the presence, if any, of differences in five district variables between those districts whose scores placed them within the upper a quartile and those whose scores placed them within the fourth or lowest quartile. The five district variables analyzed were percentage of New York State Regents graduates, percent of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, the student drop-out rate, attendance rate and the cost per-pupil. The level of significance was selected at .05. The results are presented in Tables 27-31.

Analysis of the data indicates that there are no significant difference at the .05 level between districts that scored in the upper quartile of strategic planning and those districts in the lowest quartile with regard to the five aforementioned variables.

A review of the data indicates that there were some districts with a high degree of wealth that did not score high in strategic planning and were placed in the fourth quartile. There were also a number of wealthy districts that placed in the upper quartile. Poor school districts also scored high and low in strategic planning and were consequently

place in both the upper and the fourth quartiles. Analysis indicates that district wealth is not an indicator for strategic planning. Consequently, there was no significant difference between the quartiles in free and reduced lunch, cost per pupil, the drop out rate and student attendance. The percentage of Regents graduates paralleled the ELA assessments with no significant difference. These findings support and reinforce data obtained in response to research question three which indicate that there were several small city districts in the suburban New York counties that had the organizational resources to engage in strategic planning. Thus, these districts scored high in the strategic planning; however, these same districts also had relatively lower test scores compared to some of the smaller, wealthier districts that may not have the organizational capacity for strategic planning.

Table 27

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Percent of Regents Graduates

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Percent of Graduates with Regents Diplomas

Levine Statistic	$df1$	$df2$	Sig.
1.041	3	38	.385

Table 27   (continued)

ANOVA

Percent of Graduates with Regents Diplomas

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	273.332	3	91.111	.624	.604
Within Groups	5548.573	38	146.015		
Total	5821.905	41			

Table 28

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Percent Free and Reduced Lunch

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Free and Reduced Lunch

Levine Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.161	3	38	.109

ANOVA

Free and Reduced Lunch

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	795.176	3	265.059	.573	.636
Within Groups	17576.206	38	462.532		
Total	18371.383	41			

Table 29

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Student Drop-Out Rate

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Student Drop-Out Rate

Levine Statistic	$df1$	$df2$	Sig.
2.202	3	38	.104

ANOVA

Student Drop-Out Rate

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.416	3	7.472	.810	.496
Within Groups	350.628	38	9.227		
Total	373.044	41			

Table 30

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Student Attendance Rate

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Student Attendance Rate

Levine Statistic	$df1$	$df2$	Sig.
2.190	3	38	.105

Table 30

(continued)

ANOVA

Student Attendance Rate

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.793	3	.931	.292	.831
Within Groups	121.380	38	3.194		
Total	124.173	41			

Table 31

Analysis of Variance for the Relationship Between

Strategic Planning and Cost Per Pupil

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

 Cost Per Pupil

Levine Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.561	3	38	.644

ANOVA

Cost Per Pupil

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11576127	3	3858708.953	.493	.689
Within Groups	3.0E+008	38	7823716.817		
Total	3.1E+008	41			

Table 32 summarized the correlations between the score on strategic planning and

each of the five respective variables: percentage of New York State Regents diplomas,

cost-per-pupil, student drop out rate, attendance rate and percentage of free and reduced

lunch. The results indicate that there is no relationship between a district's use of

strategic planning and each of the five variables.

Table 32

Results of the Pearson Correlations Analysis Between the

Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning and Per Cent

of Regents Graduates, Cost-Per-Pupil, Drop Out Rate,

Attendance Rate, Free and Reduced Lunch

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	Percent of Grads with Regents Diplomas
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	-.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.318
	N	42	42
Percent of Grads with Regents Diplomas	Pearson Correlation	-.158	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.318	
	N	42	42

Table 32

(continued)

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	Cost Per Pupil
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.844
	N	42	42
Cost Per Pupil	Pearson Correlation	-.031	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.844	
	N	42	42

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	Student Drop-Out Rate
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.649
	N	42	42
Student Drop-Out Rate	Pearson Correlation	.072	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.649	
	N	42	42

Table 32

(continued)

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	Attendance Rate
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	-.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.566
	N	42	42
Attendance Rate	Pearson Correlation	-.091	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.566	
	N	42	42

Correlations

		Total Score Strategic Plan	Free and Reduced Lunch
Tot Score Strategic Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.433
	N	42	42
Free and Reduced Lunch	Pearson Correlation	.124	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.433	
	N	42	42

Summary

In chapter 4, data and analysis were presented and used to answer the four research questions. Several statistical approaches were utilized in the analysis including descriptive statistics, regression, ANOVA, and correlations. A number of conclusions on how suburban New York City school districts plan strategically can be drawn. These findings will be presented in chapter 5.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions based upon the key findings of the study. The first section details the summary of the study. The key findings are presented in section two. Conclusions from these findings are noted in section three. Section four presents the recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if and how strategic planning was being utilized in six suburban New York City school districts, to identify constraints, training and technical needs, and to determine if strategic planning was related to academic performance on ELA assessments and/or five other identified district variables. The districts studied were in the counties of Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau and Suffolk.

Four research questions were used as a basis for the study:

1. How is strategic planning being utilized in the suburban New York school districts in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Nassau, and Suffolk counties? For those districts that do not have a written strategic plan, how are components of the strategic planning process incorporated into the district's planning?

2. What are the perceived constraints, training and technical needs of school districts in the area of strategic planning?

3. What is the relationship between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and student performance on state ELA assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11?

4. What are the relationships between the degree of utilization of strategic planning and district variables such as: percentage of students graduating with New York State Regents diplomas, cost-per- pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch?

A questionnaire adapted from a previous study of Kentucky Public Schools (Basham, 1988) was used to gather data in answering the research questions. One hundred and sixty one superintendents were surveyed and responses were received from 42 district superintendents, a response rate of 26%.

Key Findings

The findings from this study provided insight into how strategic planning is utilized and paralleled the numerous perspectives detailed in the research. Key findings from this study included:

1. Slightly more than two thirds of the superintendents in the suburban counties of New York City reported that they have a written strategic plan. District wealth did not appear to be a factor in differentiating whether districts had a written plan or not. Many economically challenged small city districts had a written plan; while some affluent districts did not.

2. The majority of superintendents, 52%, reported that their districts had a written plan that covered a time period of three years or more. Thirty-six percent of the superintendents reported that their written strategic plan covered a period of at least 5 years.

3. The strategic planning process was recently implemented between the years 2000 and 2005 by 31% of the districts. Therefore, 64% of all districts either do not have

a plan or recently implemented one. Only 17% of the districts have been engaged in the strategic planning process for 10 years or more.

4. The majority of school districts engage in some type of planning process in the critical areas of student learning, instructional programs, facilities, professional training/evaluation, community involvement, organizational management and innovation. The main planning focus by districts was in the area of student learning where 90% of the districts planned. Districts also emphasized planning in instructional programs and services, 81%, and professional programs and services with 76% participating. These data indicate that while some districts do not have written strategic plans, they do have written plans that address specific areas based upon their district culture.

5. Few districts, 19%, dedicate a person to be responsible for effective planning in the district. While the majority of districts are involved in strategic planning, most were not vested enough in the process to dedicate resources so that planning was a primary responsibility within a job function. Even for those districts with a designated planning person, no person spent more than 35% of their job involved in strategic planning.

6. The lack of personnel resources was paralleled by a lack of financial resources to support strategic planning. Eighty-one percent of the superintendents who responded to the questionnaire indicated their districts do not have a budget to support planning. Only three, or 7%, of the superintendent noted a planning budget above $25,000.

7. The majority of districts, 64%, utilized district-wide committees to facilitate the planning process. Almost every committee was composed of teachers, parents, and administrators. Community members were underrepresented participating in the strategic planning process. Only 29% of the superintendents who responded indicated that their community members participated in the strategic planning process. Superintendents were not represented in 15% of the districts that had a committee.

8. Only 29% of the districts provided training for their district-wide committee. The other districts, 71%, did not provide training or indicated that it was not applicable.

9. Most of the responding districts, 79%, reported they had no school board policy regarding planning.

10. A high majority of districts, 86%, reported they utilized a needs assessment as part of their planning process. Internal assessments focused highly on academic achievement, curriculum, teacher opinion and per-pupil expenditures. External data utilized by school districts were primarily derived from parental opinion, state and federal mandates, and community opinion. Input and performance data by graduates were gathered by only 48% of the districts. Only 31% of the districts considered teacher performance as part of a needs assessment to guide their planning.

11. Many districts used a variety of the components in their strategic planning process. No district utilized all of the components, but each component was used by the majority of districts except assumptions about the future which was utilized

by 43% of districts. A majority of the superintendents included: establishing

goals, 79%; following a mission statement, 76%; and setting annual objectives,

71%, as part of their planning process.

12. Funding and staff time were the leading constraints noted by superintendents

impacting their capability to have a strategic plan. The 59% of the districts that

listed funding as a medium-high constraint in their ability to plan strategically

does not account for districts who have not looked at the planning process

seriously and considered the fiscal support needed. A majority of districts, 57%,

also noted the limited staff time available to engage in a complex, time-

consuming activity like strategic planning. Almost half of the districts, 45%, cited

both these constraints as medium-high. Slightly over one third, 34%, of the

districts cited communicating the strategic planning process and the ensuing

results as a medium-high constraint. Almost one third of the responding districts

felt strategic planning was a low priority among the staff.

13. A linear regression revealed 5.6% of the variance in the total strategic planning

score can be explained by the quartiles based upon a district's constraint to

strategic planning. There was a small negative relationship between the quartiles

by constraint and the planning score. The ANOVA indicated no significance

between the quartiles.

14. Forecasting future trends/needs, 63%, and the gathering/analysis of data at 61%

were identified as the highest areas requiring training assistance in the planning

process. Over 60% of the districts that responded to these questions cited these

areas as a medium-high need. Other areas noted as a medium-high training need

by the superintendents responding were: measuring the effectiveness of planning, 59%; establishing accountability, 56%; and involving the community, 54%. The high need to be trained in the areas of gathering/analyzing data and measuring planning effectiveness may indicate that districts still have not integrated planning as part of the school culture. A majority of the superintendents, 71%, responded that there was no-low need for training in establishing goals. A no-low need in training was also cited by a majority of superintendents in the area of creating measurable objectives, 59%, and developing action plans, 58%. For those districts with a written plan, 86% had a low or no training need in creating measurable objectives, and 75% of those districts cited a low or no need in developing action plans.

15. A linear regression with the training need rating for each district by quartile and the total score for strategic planning revealed an R^2 of .072. This indicates that 7% of the variance in the total strategic planning score can be explained by the quartiles based upon training needs for strategic planning. The Pearson correlation indicated a small negative relationship between the quartiles and planning score. The ANOVA indicated no significant differences between training quartiles.

16. Technical needs in the area of strategic planning were primarily in the areas of forecasting future needs, data collection instruments, and data collection/analysis. Each of these areas was cited as a medium or high need, by a majority of the districts: 59%, 56% and 55% respectively. In the area of forecasting needs, 50% of those superintendents with a written plan noted this area as a medium-high technical need compared to 64% of those without a written plan. Likewise 64% of

those districts without a written plan rated data collection instruments as a medium-high technical need, while only 46% of districts with a written plan did so. This pattern was similar in the area of data collection/analysis where 64% of superintendents without a written plan cited a medium-high technical need, while only 46% with a written plan did so. There was a low or no need for assistance in developing a written planning system cited by 65% of districts. However, 64% of the districts without a written plan reported a medium-high technical need in the area of a written planning system. Twenty-four, or 64%, of all superintendents cited no or a low need for technical assistance in creating and implementing strategy for community involvement. However, 50% of the superintendents without a written plan pointed to a medium-high technical need in the category of community involvement. Most districts, 65%, cited computer services as a no-low need in the strategic planning process.

17. The linear regression performed on the technical needs quartiles and total strategic planning scores indicated an R^2 value of .134. This means that 13% of the variance in the total strategic planning score can be explained by the quartile placement in technical needs. The correlation revealed there is a moderate negative relationship between the quartiles of technical needs and the scores on strategic planning. The significance at .02 in the ANOVA between quartiles of technical needs and the total score of strategic planning indicated those districts without a written strategic plan had high needs in technical assistance.

18. The analysis of variance, ANOVA, determined there were no significant differences in New York State English Language Arts assessments between those

districts in the upper quartile and those that scored in the lowest quartile in strategic planning. Thus, there was no significant difference in student performance on the ELA assessments whether districts planned strategically or not. A review of the data indicated there were several districts with relatively high test scores that did not engage in the strategic planning process, or if they did so, did not participate in the process to a high degree. The data also revealed that there were several small city districts in the suburban New York counties that had the organizational resources to engage in strategic planning but did not have high achievement scores on the ELA assessments.

19. A correlation analysis determined that no relationship existed between the total strategic planning score and scores on the New York State ELA assessments in Grades 4, 8, and 11.

20. An analysis of variance, ANOVA, determined there were no significantly different means between districts grouped by quartile based upon their strategic planning score when analyzed according to the five district variables: percentage of New York State Regents graduates, percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, the student drop-out rate, attendance rate, and the cost per-pupil. The data revealed that there were some districts with a relatively high degree of wealth that did not score high in strategic planning and were placed in the fourth quartile. There were wealthy districts also scattered among quartiles one, two, and three. Poor school districts were also placed in all quartiles. Since district wealth does not appear to be a clear indicator in strategic planning, there was no significant difference between the quartiles in free and reduced lunch, cost

per pupil, the drop-out rate and attendance. The percentage of Regents graduates

also paralleled the ELA assessments with no significant difference.

21. Correlations revealed no relationship was found between the score on strategic

planning and each of the five respective variables: percentage of New York State

Regents diplomas, cost-per-pupil, student drop-out rate, attendance rate and per-

cent age of free and reduced lunch.

Conclusions

While strategic planning continues to be recognized in the literature as a viable

tool in the efficient operation of school districts, the results of the study indicate that

currently many districts in the suburban counties of New York City either do not have a

written strategic plan or have only recently implemented a written plan. The findings

suggest that strategic planning has not yet been integrated into the culture of school

districts in suburban New York City school districts.

The findings in this study support much of the previous research (See Appendix

B) that planning encompasses a variety of forms indicating that school districts either

planned informally, customized long-term and strategic planning into a hybrid, or

planned in strategic manner. For each approach, there was a specific customization

within each school district.

While many districts performed a needs assessment as part of the planning

process, many focused primarily on teacher and community input along with state and

federal mandates. Some districts stated they have written strategic plans, however; it

appears they did not perform a needs assessment as expected from strategic

organizations. Indeed, in today's political arena, school districts have little choice but to

receive parental and community input whether they plan strategically or not. Thus it was not surprising that most districts gathered external data from these sources. Yet for some districts these were the only sources of external data.

While student learning was a high resource for data analysis, very few districts assessed teacher performance as part of their planning process. This may reflect union resistance, if not teacher resistance, to analysis in this area which limited the planning process in several districts. While many districts indicated they planned comprehensively incorporating numerous areas, most districts planned in areas where there was state involvement via mandates or assessments. The area of facilities which was traditionally the strongest area for planning, remained strong with many districts having 5 year plans.

The functioning and utilization of district-wide committees also provided additional insight into the variation among districts regarding the strategic planning process. The fact that few districts, 29%, provided training for strategic planning for those who serve on district-wide committees indicated a lack of uniformity across the districts. Indeed, half of the districts responded that training was needed in forming and operating a district-wide committee. This lack of training can create a scenario in a district where dominant personalities and personal agendas can influence the needs assessment and hence, the objective and goals of a district.

The study also revealed school districts are still in the process of transforming to a data-driven culture. Facets of strategic planning, such as needs assessment and measuring outcomes need skilled professionals in gathering and analyzing data. There was a training need for that skill cited by 61% of the districts which could reflect the

quality of planning currently being conducted. Yet, most districts indicated a low training need in the areas that are compatible with long-term planning: setting goals and establishing action plans. Thus, the needs stated in conjunction with data pertaining to performing a needs assessments, budget allocations, and training and technical assistance gives credence to the concept that some districts are utilizing a hybrid of the long-term and strategic planning processes.

It was clear from the data obtained in this study that due to fiscal limitations or other priorities, most school districts have not allocated specific budgetary or personnel resources to the strategic planning process. Thus, the resources of staff, time, technology, and training have been limited. For 81% of the responding districts without a budget or a part-time staff person dedicated to planning, the implicit message was that planning would have to get done within everyone's job function. How much of a priority could it be? It would depend on the expertise, available time and priorities of the superintendent who has the responsibility of running the entire organization. So, districts were dealing with the conflict of the importance of planning while realizing there were limited resources to do so. This may also explain why school boards, 79%, would not have a specific policy regarding strategic planning. A policy could mean a commitment of resources.

It also was apparent that 17 % of the respondents successfully managed the issue of limited resources as these districts had been engaged in the strategic planning process for 10 years or more. Likewise, a majority of the districts utilized the critical components necessary for successful strategic planning. This reflects a desire and a competency by districts in the design phase of the planning process which

is a strong initial step. Also, the large majority of districts that developed mission and vision statements was an indication of their embracing a planning process rather than following a reactionary path.

While the data on restraints and training needs pertaining to strategic planning gave important insights into how the process was being conducted, there was statistical significance when districts were grouped into quartiles based upon technical needs in planning. The overwhelming availability of school data presented a technical need in integrating the data into information for planning purposes. Those districts that did not have written strategic plans indicated relatively high needs in technical assistance. Managing data from a technical perspective was a key limitation to school districts.

Given the relationship between technical needs and the strategic planning scores, it is apparent that the state education departments and professional organizations need to provide more services to school districts who wish to implement strategic planning. Additionally, superintendents identified numerous training needs as a priority which should also be addressed by the state or professional organizations.

The lack of correlation or significance in ELA scores and districts' strategic planning scores, was a reflection of small city, lower performing districts with more staffing resources engaging in the planning process, and some high achieving, wealthy districts not participating. Thus, there is no evidence from this study that students enrolled in school districts that have a high degree of strategic planning achieve higher in ELA assessments than students enrolled in school districts that do not plan strategically.

This also was evident in the analysis of a district's ability to plan strategically and

the relationship with district variables such as: percentage of New York State Regents graduates, cost-per-pupil, the student drop-out rate, student attendance, and percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Again the lack of relationship and significance was attributed to the fact that some high achieving, wealthy districts do not engage in strategic planning while poorer small city districts do participate. Thus one can conclude that strategic planning is not done solely in districts with high graduation rates, high per-pupil costs, and low free/reduced lunch, attendance, and drop-out rates. Nor can one assume it is always being done in affluent districts. Also, no assumptions should be made regarding districts with lower socio-economic populations and their ability to plan strategically.

The results of this study indicated that strategic planning has not been embraced by educators. Rather, strategic planning has continued to evolve as a tool utilized by superintendents in managing their school organizations. This evolution has been fostered by New York State mandates regarding community involvement and staff development as well as state assessments. In addition, greater demands by parents and community members have forced superintendents to be more skilled in district planning. Paradoxically, educators must manage the need for planning with the increased demands calling for greater quality in all aspects of schools at an effective cost. While the benefits of strategic planning are evident, educational leaders are faced with the dilemma of effectively managing scarce resources to meet the ever increasing, unfunded mandates while implementing a strategic planning process that could be critical to a district's long-term success. They constantly face pressing budgetary concerns which deplete resources for a successful implementation of strategic planning.

Data obtained from the school districts surveyed reflected a marked contrast with corporate and government organizations who have more personnel and fiscal resources dedicated solely to the strategic planning process. Indeed, superintendents who allocate resources toward planning do so at the educational and political risk of larger class sizes or less direct support for children. The long-term benefits of strategic planning are not an immediate priority to a parent whose child has a specific educational need or the community member challenged by high school taxes. Thus, it becomes so critical that all constituencies not only buy into the concept of strategic planning but that they advocate ample fiscal and human resources to assure success. This makes implementing and creating a strategic planning culture more difficult in the educational arena.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is needed in the area of strategic planning, especially the relationship between strategic planning and student achievement. Specifically, the following questions should be explored adding to the knowledge in this field.

1. What are the longitudinal benefits for individual school districts after strategic planning is integrated within the organizational culture and practiced for 5 years or more? Is there an impact on academic performance, graduation rates, or organizational efficiencies?

2. Is there a long-term difference in academic performance between districts of similar wealth for those who plan strategically and those who do not?

3. For school districts that have implemented a comprehensive written strategic plan, what process/systems did they develop to engage in the strategic planning process, and what constraints did they face as the strategic plan was implemented? How do these

school districts successfully balance fiscal and staffing needs with the need to plan?

4. What has been the impact of technology and the abundant availability of data on school districts with regard to strategic planning?

5. What is the impact of strategic planning in terms of academic performance and the relationship with the district variables such as attendance rate, cost per-pupil, the drop-out rate and the percentage of free and reduced lunch students in school districts located in more rural settings?

Policy and Practice

In the area of policy, going forward it is important that administrators receive support from state departments of education, professional organizations, and colleges and universities in staff development and technical assistance. Training and technology need to be supported by state departments of education if strategic planning is to be institutionalized in a majority of school districts. Appropriate local revenues directed at the planning function will not be realized, as the choice will always be to improve student programs or increase instructional staffing which have a clearer short-term benefit for students. So, state education departments need to actively support school district planning without additional mandates. Currently, states have placed a variety of mandates on school districts without subsidizing the high costs associated with these policies. Thus for educational leaders, the complexities of implementing a strategic planning process can sometimes outweigh the benefits when funding and resources are limited and directed more and more at other requirements mandated by the states.

Also, if colleges and universities acknowledge the value of planning and collaboration, should not administrative and teacher preparation programs address the

need of training future planners? The skill set to plan effectively needs to be elevated as a priority in the policies of the college and university preparation programs. Otherwise, school districts will continue their status as reactionary organizations in this first half of the 21st century.

From a practical standpoint, the political and state influences over the past decade have created an abundance of data which is available to technologically proficient teachers and community members to facilitate and enhance the strategic planning process. Educational leaders must evaluate the data in conjunction with the district's organizational structure and the skills of their respective staffs and then understand how they can successfully implement strategic planning to meet the challenges in the 21st century.

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APPENDIX A

-A QUESTIONNAIRE-

UTILIZATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

INSTRUCTIONS: Please review the following brief definition of strategic planning, respond to the questions, and return in the enclosed stamped envelope addressed to 140 Pleasant Avenue, Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570. Strategic planning is the process of:

1. Analyzing the current status of your school district and forecasting the future trends and needs in conjunction with the district's collaboratively established vision and mission statements.

2. Setting goals and objectives which address outcomes based upon the educational and operational needs, interests, and expectations of the school district.

3. Designing and implementing short-term and long-term actions for achieving goals and objectives.

4. Addressing the needs of such areas of school district programs and operations as curriculum, staff development, public opinion, facilities, personnel, finances, and student services.

Further, a long-range strategic plan typically covers a time frame of at least three years.

Please complete and return this questionnaire if your school does or does not

strategically plan long-range.

School District _____   Respondent _____

1. Do you have a written strategic plan-of-action for your school district?

_____Yes   _____No

2. What period does your school district's strategic plan cover?

(Check one.)

_____One year   _____Three years   _____Five years/more

_____ Two years   _____Four years   _____Not applicable

3. If yes, what year did your school district first implement a long-range strategic

   plan?

_____2003-2005   _____1997-1999   _____Prior to 1994

_____2000-2002   _____1994-1996

4. Which of the following key areas of your school district do you plan, for what

   period of time, and is the plan written or non-written? (Check all items that

   apply.)

a. Student Performance   _____Yes _____No

_____Written   _____Non-written

_____ One year   _____Two years   Three years

_____ Fours years   Five years or more

b. Organizational Management   Yes   No

_____ ____ Written ____ _____ Non-written

One year   Two years   Three years

Four years ____   Five years or more ____

c. Community Involvement   Yes   No

Written   Non-written

One year   Two years   Three years

Four years   Five years or more

d. Professional Evaluation and Training _____Yes _____No

_____Written _____Non-written

_____ One year   Two years _____ Three years

_____ Four years   Five years or more

e. Innovations (Improvements Through Change) _____Yes _____No

_____Written _____Non-writtten

_____One year   Two years   Three years

_____Four years   Five years or more

f. Instructional Programs and Services _____Yes _____No

_____Written _____Non-written

_____One year   Two years _____Three years

_____Four years _____Five years or more

g. Facilities   _____Yes _____No

_____Written _____Non-written

_____One year   Two years   Three years

_____Four years   _____ Five years or more

h. Other (List)   _____Yes _____No

_____Written _____Non-written

_____One year   Two years   Three years

_____Four years   Five years or more

5. Does your school district have a designated coordinator/director of planning?

_____ Yes   No

6. If yes, what percent of his/ her time is spent on planning? (Check one.)

_____up to 10 percent _____26 to 35 percent _____51 to 75 percent

_____11 to 25 percent _____36 to 50 percent _____76 to 100 percent

7. Does your school district have a budget for planning?

_____Yes _____No _____Not Applicable

8. If yes, how much for the 2005-2006 school year? $ _____

9. What percent is the planning budget of your district's total budget?

_____%

10. Does your district have a district-wide planning committee?

_____Yes _____No

11. If yes, what groups are represented in the committee? (Check all groups

that apply.)

_____Teachers _____Students

_____School Administrators _____Parents

_____School Board _____Other Community Representatives

_____Superintendent _____Other (List _____)

12. Does your school district provide the district-wide planning committee training in

strategic procedures?

_____Yes _____No _____Not Applicable

13. Does your district have a local school board policy governing strategic planning?

_____Yes _____No

14. Does planning in your school district include a critical analysis/needs assessment?

_____Yes   No

15. If yes, what internal environmental data is collected and analyzed?

(Check all types that apply.)

    a. Teacher

      _____Teacher opinions   _____Teacher rank and experience

      _____ Teacher holding power   Teacher performance

      _____Student/teacher ratio

    b. Students

      _____Student opinions   _____Student attendance

      _____Holding power   _____Retention rate

      _____Student work status   Dropout

      _____Student enrollment (current and projected)

    c. School Funds

      _____Teacher Salaries   Sources and amount of revenue

      _____Administrators Salaries   Per-pupil Expenditure

      _____Classified Salaries   Other line item expenditures

d. Administrators _____ _____ _____

_____ Administrator performance

_____ Administrator holding power

e. Programs and Services

_____ Curriculum   Post-High School education

_____ Academic achievement   Special services

_____ School climate   Co-curricular/extracurricular Participation

16. What external environmental data is collected and analyzed? (Check all that

apply.)

_____ Parent opinion   _____ Non-public schools

_____ Community opinion   _____ Economic status

_____ Dropout opinion   _____ Industrial-business trends

_____ Graduate opinion   _____ State and federal mandates

_____ Others (List)   _____

17. What planning components are included in your school districts planning?

_____ Vision statement   _____ Evaluation procedures

_____ Mission statement   _____ Activities

_____ Statement of Needs   _____ Timelines

_____ Assumptions about the future _____ Persons responsible

_____ Core Values _____ Specific strategies

_____ Goals _____ Reporting procedures

_____ Annual Objectives/Outcomes

_____ Other (List) ___

18. To what degree do the following constraints limit strategic planning in your school district?

	No Constraint	Low	Medium	High
a. Insufficient funds	1	2	3	4
b. Insufficient expertise avail.	1	2	3	4
c. Insufficient staff time	1	2	3	4
d. Lack of planning expertise	1	2	3	4
e. Low priority for staff	1	2	3	4
f. Low priority for funding	1	2	3	4
g. Resistance from staff	1	2	3	4
h. Low reward for participating	1	2	3	4
i. Inadequate communication of the planning process/results	1	2	3	4
j. Inadequate implementation	1	2	3	4

of planning procedures

k. Poor BOE support	1	2	3	4
l. Poor community support	1	2	3	4
m. other	1	2	3	4

Other information about constraints:

19. Identify the training needs of your school district by rating the following

planning competencies/functions.

	No need	Low	Medium	High
a. Forming/operating a district-wide planning committee	1	2	3	4
b. Gathering and analyzing data	1	2	3	4
c. Involving the community	1	2	3	4
d. Forecasting future needs/trends	1	2	3	4
e. Developing support for planning	1	2	3	4
f. Establishing goals	1	2	3	4

g. Creating measurable objectives   1   2   3   4

h. Developing action plans   1   2   3   4

i. Measuring the effectiveness of the

  planning process   1   2   3   4

j. Establishing accountability   1   2   3   4

k. Communicating with staff/

  community members   1   2   3   4

l. Marketing action plans   1   2   3   4

m. Measuring cost of goal

  implementation   1   2   3   4

n. Other (List)

20. Rate the need your school district has for the following types of technical

    assistance with strategic planning.

	No need	Low	Medium	High
a. A written planning system (set of	1	2	3	4
procedures, etc.)				
b. Data collection and analysis	1	2	3	4

c. Forecasting future status

and needs	1	2	3	4
d. Data collection instruments	1	2	3	4
e. Computer services	1	2	3	4
f. Strategy for community involvement	1	2	3	4
g. Identification of alternative activities	1	2	3	4

h. Information of effective planning

Practices	1	2	3	4
i. Evaluating the strategic plan	1	2	3	4
j. Evaluating plan outcomes	1	2	3	4

k. Other (List)

Please submit with this survey a copy of the following items if available. Thank you for your support.

1. **Your district's most recent strategic plan**

2. **Your district's goals**

3. **The district's vision and mission statements**

A SURVEY

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN SIX SURBURBAN

NEW YORK CITY COUNTY SCHOOLS

.... Score Key

Item	Point	
1	10 for Yes	
2	1 year.	2
	2 years	4
	3 years	6
	4 years	8
	5 years	10
3...	2003-2005	2
	2000-2002	.4
	1997-1999	6
	1994-1996	8
	Prior 1994	10
4	2 for Yes	
	2 for written	
	1 for each additional year up to five	

same for each item a-h (72 possible points)

5	10 for yes
6	2 for up to 25%
	4 for up to 50%
	6 for 51 to 75%
	8 for 76 to 100%
7	10 for Yes
8	None
9	None
10	None
11	1 for each group up to 8
12	10 for Yes
13	5 for Yes
14	10 for Yes
15	1 for each type of data up to 26
16	1 for each type of data up to 9
17	1 for each component up to 13

18	None
19	None
20	None

| MAXIMUM POINTS | 211 |

APPENDIX B

Comparison of Study Findings to Prior Research

Present Study Findings	Findings from Prior Research	
	Similar	Different
Educators are not embracing strategic planning as predicted in literature	Peterson, 1989 McHenry & Achilles, 2002	Cook, 1988 Fields, 1994
Majority of school districts in suburban New York City either do not engage in the strategic planning process; or they are in the initial years of implementing a strategic plan	Basham, 1988	Hippert, 1996
Process of strategic planning evidences much variability among districts	Basham, 1988 Conley, 1992 Hippert, 1997 Haimbright & Diamantes, 2004	
Implementation of strategic plans not consistent among districts	Hippert, 1997 Haimbright & Diamantes, 2004	
More training in the strategic planning process is required	Conley, 1992	

Financial and human resource limitations are a major constraint in strategic planning with districts not allocating appropriate levels of funding or personnel to the strategic planning process	Western Institute for Research and Evaluation, 1993 Pliska, 1996 Booke-Smith, 2003	

Numerous constraints and needs negatively impact the strategic planning process in school districts | McCune, 1991

Districts cited a strong need for training to enable them to forecast future trends/needs and to enable districts to gather/analyze data | Office of Performance Improvement in Miami-Dade County, 2003-2004 | Brandt, 1991

Psencik, 1991

Districts encountered many issues/needs in regard to effective communication with stakeholders as a result of lack/poor training in the strategic planning process | Pliska, 1996 | Freericks, 1991

Strategic Planning Process not | Brant, 1991

being implemented as intended	Ward, 1992		
– School districts focus on federal and state mandated areas and areas contained on state assessments.	Canole, 1999		
Strategic Planning focused on learning and curriculum	Hippert, 1997 Shy, 1992		
No relationship between strategic planning and student achievement, number of students receiving Regents diplomas, cost-per-pupil, student drop out rate, student attendance rate, and percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch			Blum&Kneidek, 1991 Caldwell& Wood, 1992 Canole, 1999