

**LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN
THE COURSE OF CHANGE**

By

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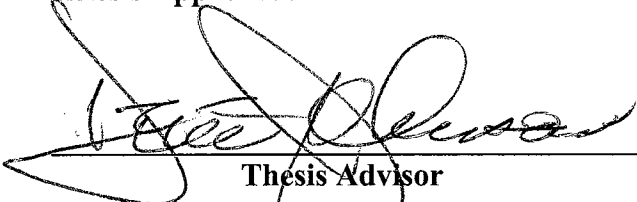
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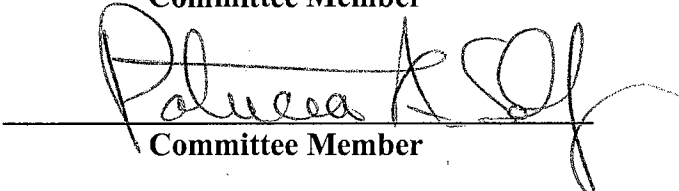
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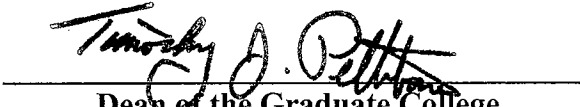
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Superintendents in public schools today have a daunting task. They must be knowledgeable in a multitude of areas, such as personnel, finance, organizational theory, and leadership strategies, to insure appropriate over-sight. They must serve as the public relations specialist for their district while being politically active on a local and state level in the hope of obtaining support and adequate funding. And they must serve as a leader and role model in their district to demonstrate the organization's goals and purpose to insure student success in their district. This job can be especially daunting for a new superintendent. When a superintendent arrives from outside the district, strategies employed during that leadership change may make the difference in whether a superintendent is accepted, perceived as a leader, capable of working with the many factions of a school and community, and ultimately establish an environment that will result in student success.

The term "leader" has different meanings to different people. To some it is simply a position held, usually of high authority. To others, it is a characteristic or trait. In public schools, it has often referred to the person with longevity in a system or perseverance of pursuing a position or formal education or favor of school boards. Increasingly, schools appear to be looking for leaders who have leadership ability, rather than longevity, perseverance, and/or favor. Given the seemingly formidable challenges and reforms lying ahead for education, this seems a wise move, but one that continues to be a struggle.

Few would argue that leadership has a tremendous impact on what occurs in any organization and there appears to be a new emphasis on school leadership. *Education Week* devoted a front page to this topic, saying:

After years of work on structural changes—standards and testing and ways of holding students and schools accountable—the education policy world has turned its attention to the people charged with making the system work.

Nowhere is the focus on the human element more prevalent than in recent recognition of the importance of strong and effective leadership. (Policy Focus Converges on Leadership, 2000)

Increasingly the availability of such leaders is a concern. Educational leadership has undergone considerable change across the nation, including an increase in requirements for administrative certification. Many educators are opting not to pursue a career in administration, reportedly due “. . . to long hours, high stress, and questionable rewards At the same time, retirements are thinning the ranks of present administrators, with precious few to take their place.” (Zirkle & Cotton, 2001)

The definition of an “effective leader” may vary considerably in different districts, dependent upon structure, social needs, and politics in a school. It has been said in the past that superintendents are either about curriculum and instruction or beans, busses, and buildings. The head instructional leader must now go beyond those stereotypical responsibilities. For the superintendent new to a district, the issue becomes how to assess the organization and facilitate transition. Effective leadership is most challenging in these situations.

Effective educational leadership is key to the future of education. During the course of change, it is responsible leadership which will determine how schools survive or thrive. “Voltaire once said, ‘An institution is the lengthened shadow of one person,’ which clearly depicts the critical role of the leader.” (Cassle, 1999) The challenge is in

defining “role of the leader” and identifying effective strategies a leader can employ in the process of change.

Statement of the Problem

The national and local demands for education reforms result in many changes for leaders. The problem for most superintendents, as they move into a new position, is to identify effective strategies which can be employed during leadership change. Through this study, successful strategies are identified for this process.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this qualitative study is to identify superintendents new to their position and the successful strategies they have employed during their transition into that position, using a case study design. This study identifies leadership strategies through self-report by superintendents, as they are interviewed. The identified strategies are the subject of focus groups, to further understand the effectiveness and impact of the strategies. Through this study, general information is gained to support other superintendents as they consider new positions and the myriad of changes that likely will ensue when they do take new positions.

Grand Tour Questions and Sub Questions

Why do some superintendents move into new leadership roles and positive changes occur? How can a superintendent taking a new position increase acceptance and facilitate changes needed in a district? These Grand Tour Questions are the driving force behind this study. Sub Questions include some of the following: What actual strategies have been successfully employed during change? How is the superintendent’s perception different from the perception of others related to these strategies? What types of

communication have been effective during leadership change? Which groups in the school community have been involved in the change process? And how? What commonalities in strategies exist between different districts?

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions have been established by the researcher and are utilized, both during interviews/focus group meetings and in writing:

- **communication:** written or verbal interaction about the educational philosophy, changes, or perceptions of those involved
- **effective:** a positive result tied to a specific action or strategy
- **instructional practices:** the selected curriculum and the means by which it is delivered
- **leadership:** the ability of administrators to encourage those in the organization to increase effectiveness in their work area
- **organizational framework:** the established goals to support the organizational mission
- **school climate:** the general positive or negative feeling of stake holders in a school community
- **school community:** all persons on campus as well as those in the immediate surrounding area with interests in the school and its success
- **strategies:** specific behaviors planned to increase knowledge, understanding, and support of identified changes

Theoretical framework

As new leaders move into positions, they must give pause to many leadership theories that relate to their work. A theoretical framework is then established, based on the organization and their role in it.

This study is framed with the theories of Transformational Leadership Theory and Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) discuss transforming leadership as a process where leaders and followers aspire to moving beyond individual needs toward the higher ideals of the organization. Transformational leaders meet the basic needs of their followers, in terms of Maslow's Hierarchy, which creates a sense of trust, loyalty, and respect. This translates into commitment to the organization and striving to achieve the goals of that organization.

Schein's Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning describes the need for strategy formulation and implementation in organizational culture. (1992) He stresses the need for leaders to not only communicate a vision, but to also listen and search for trends in what they find. This leadership and communication are central to the organization. He also discusses strategies related to tasks of the organization, developing consensus on goals, and needed stability for a positive climate.

Through this study, superintendents will be viewed as to their leadership style, especially looking for transformational leadership as they identify their strategies employed in a new school district. Strategies will be identified in areas related to Schein's ideas: leadership, instructional practices/curriculum (organizational tasks), organizational framework/goals, communication, and overall school climate.

Through these valuable conceptual frameworks, the direction of this study was established. The general areas of investigation, as well as specific questions, relate to the guidance of these sound theories.

Procedures

The explanatory case study method of inquiry is employed for this study. This method is best utilized to answer “how” or “why” questions related to a specific phenomenon. (Yin, 1994) Merriam also supports this type of study as an “. . . ideal design. . .”, especially in education, stating that “A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes. . .” (2001) This study is designed to identify and better understand the process (strategies) employed during leadership change and gain meaning for those interviewed and included in focus groups. Therefore, a qualitative case study seems the ideal design for evaluation of this project.

During the course of this research, both interviews and focus groups have been utilized to gain data. Morgan (1997) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of these techniques. The individual interview offers advantages of control over the topics discussed and the amount and quality of information that can be gained through this method. Superintendents, as most leaders, are more likely to be themselves and share information in a one-on-one setting as opposed to being part of a group of those working in their organization. Through individual interviews, Morgan states that another advantage “. . . occurs when the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a person’s opinions and experiences.” (1997) This study largely is seeking to explain the superintendent’s selected strategies during change and his/her perspective as to their

effectiveness. Focus groups of others in the district will allow for other strengths in data collection. While “less depth and detail” (Morgan, 1997) may be achieved in a focus group, this technique offers an opportunity for the moderator to witness interaction and varied perspectives on the given topic in an efficient manner. According to Morgan’s “rules of thumb” for focus groups, three to five groups per project are optimal. However, he also states that each researcher must determine what is most appropriate for their study. Morgan emphasizes that “Small groups thus work best when the participants are likely to be both interested in the topic and respectful of each other.” (1997) This study includes six focus groups from three different districts. One focus group from each district is comprised of school staff and one focus group is comprised of involved parents. Gaining information from those who have experienced the leadership change in their district with their present superintendent is key to the perception of effectiveness of the strategies employed. With this, these groups also meet Morgan’s support of participants who are both interested in the topic and respectful of each other. (1997)

Creswell (1994) supports triangulation in studies, “. . . based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods.” Patton (1987) offers different ways of achieving triangulation, one of which is triangulation of data sources, data triangulation. Through this study, triangulation is achieved primarily with three superintendent interviews, three staff focus groups, and three community focus groups. The researcher’s observations and notes will be used to support or negate data from the interviews and focus groups. With these structures in place, data collected will carry increased credibility.

Researcher

Because the nature of qualitative studies involves the interaction of the researcher and those studied, some biographical information on the researcher is appropriate. My personal and professional opinions and biases are based in my experiences. My early professional background comes not from education, but from a more clinical setting, as a Speech-Language Pathologist. I worked in clinical, residential, hospital, private practice, and school settings as a Speech-Language Pathologist for twelve years. I have worked under numerous clinical and educational leaders, all of whom I'm certain have impacted me in some way, either positively or negatively. While in a suburban school setting, I was asked to "temporarily" fill an administrative position, as Director of Special Services, a position I have held for over twelve years. Shortly after taking this administrative position, I felt the need to gain a stronger knowledge base, both in education and in leadership. Over the past seven years, I have become fascinated by the application of change and leadership theories to the practices before me. It seems that change and leadership in schools can be viewed so differently by different people in the same setting.

My "drive" for education and seeking answers comes from my father. He forever reminded me to not let "being a girl" dissuade me and reminds anyone who will listen about the importance of education. This comes from his lack of formal education, and impacts my perspective on the value of education and the responsibility of those who choose to lead that field. Every day in school is every child's chance for an improved future.

Following my proposal approval, letters were sent to identified superintendents, asking their participation in the study. The first three to respond positively in a small,

medium, and large district were selected. We established appointments for interviews and they provided me with Informed Consent (Appendix B). At that time, superintendents also provided me with lists of staff members who had been employed during the new superintendent's transition, along with the name of their PTA contacts. Staff were randomly selected and asked to participate in a focus group at a designated time and location. PTA personnel selected members who would be willing to participate in a focus group at a designated time and location. All focus group members gave Informed Consent at that time (Appendix B).

My biases cannot be completely removed during this study, as they color who I am and my perceptions. In addition, I do have a professional relationship with some of the participants of School B. I feel strongly that this in no way altered the feedback provided by those individuals. I believe that they would have responded similarly to another researcher and I remained cognizant of the danger that this relationship could affect the results and I guarded against that. Despite these biases, by looking at triangulated information through the lens of theory, valid and useful data is obtained.

Significance

This qualitative study is very relevant in connecting current theory to practice. As public school reform is increasingly demanded, change is certain and on going. Establishing specific strategies that a superintendent can employ in the process of change has great value for administrators in the field, as well as others in leadership roles. This study investigates strategies in varied sizes of schools, with administrators new to their current position within the past three years. The subsequent focus groups insure that

strategies are viewed not only from those who selected them, but from those directly impacted by those strategies. In this way, a true sense of effectiveness will be obtained.

The implication for educational leaders is immense. While superintendents were once managers who were valued primarily for their authoritarian decision-making skills, current trends focus on the need for superintendents to be leaders. Leading requires tremendously more effort and finesse in order to engage followers rather than handing down edicts. Building a constituency and sharing a vision require communication skills and interpersonal skills that have previously not been critical characteristics of a superintendent. A major component of this study revolves around the investigation of specific leadership and communication strategies.

Other implications are in place for superintendents facing change. In years past, once certified and experienced, superintendents could typically stay in the same school or move from school to school and use those same decision-making skills without facing a great deal of change. Again, that is no longer true. Education reform is nationally demanded and increasingly on the forefront politically. President Bush's No Child Left Behind law is the latest reminder of educational reform. State and local education agencies find the need for coalition building and shared planning are increasing daily. The superintendent of today must understand change as well as the organization and be able to lead and share in a way never before seen. Curriculum and student achievement are continuously dissected and questioned. Superintendents must stay abreast of these issues to insure the best education for students and be responsive to their constituency. This study reports the perception of effectiveness of specified strategies during leadership change.

As the school environment and educational leadership role change, so does the need to reevaluate current theories and concepts related to educational leadership. From the 1940s focus on Trait Theory to the transactional ideas of Situational Leadership Theory, research has shown needed modifications and expansions in theory. This will need to continue.

One area of research which needs further investigation is specific strategies implemented by leaders during change. Ann Hart (1991) states that “. . . education scholars need to expand inquiry into deliberate strategies to promote desired outcomes during succession when expectations for change are high.” This study takes one step in that direction.

Limitations

Limitations of this study do exist. The researcher’s own bias exists as a limitation. To address this, interviews were transcribed verbatim by an outside source. The few number of participants involved is a limitation of generalization of all data. Districts from different areas, with different student and community populations might have yielded different results. Different staff or parents from the even the same districts may have yielded some varying of results. Every effort has been made to insure the validity of information obtained through this study. Limitations do exist.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify specific strategies that new superintendents have employed, followed by evaluation of effectiveness by others involved in each district. The Transactional Leadership Theory of Burns (1978) is used as a means of looking at leadership in these schools. The effectiveness of leaders is tied to

the leader's support and relationship with others in the organization. Sergiovanni's Community Leadership Theory (1996) is also important in looking at the strategies as superintendents strive to establish schools as communities with matching goals. Schein's (1992) Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning has significance in this study, as it relates to establishing strategies for leadership during change. The application of these theories provides a conceptual framework for this case study. Data triangulation is employed to insure credibility with the data, through the use of interviews and focus groups, supported by the researcher's notes and observations.

Reporting

Chapter II reviews the literature in areas related to this study. Chapter III presents the methodology employed in the data collection process. Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of that data is found in Chapter IV. Chapter V is the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As this study encompasses several areas of study, so does the review of literature. Research in the areas of educational leadership, change, and strategies relate to this study.

Leadership

Historically, leadership research focused on the traits or characteristics of an individual in a leadership role to attempt to define which traits seem to result in better leadership. From this thinking comes the age-old adage that leaders are born, not made. Many theorists prior to the 1950s searched for the “magical” qualities or personal characteristics held by great leaders. This focus on comparing leaders to non-leaders was largely unsuccessful in defining ones ability to lead. The Trait Theory was empirically negated with the work of Stogdill and Mann. (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959) Quickly following was the awareness that leadership traits and effectiveness were largely affected by the given situation or social environment, or Situational Leadership Theory. Robert Merton clarified this by saying, “Leadership does not, indeed cannot, result merely from the individual traits of leaders; it must also involve attributes of the transactions between those who lead and those who follow . . . Leadership is, then, some sort of social transaction.” (Hoy & Miskel, 1991) This opens to the idea that leadership is transactional. Leadership is affected by the traits of the leader, but also greatly influenced by many things in the social context, such as the nature of work, the organizational culture,

characteristics of the followers, the impact of the external environment, and the power held by various groups within an organization. Due to this multitude of factors, there is no one way to lead, but rather a good leader must evaluate all of these factors and respond differently in different environments or situations, requiring considerable ability to reflect and adjust appropriately, being adaptable and flexible. From this vein of thought arose the Contingency Theory of Leadership, stressing that it is “. . . based on the assumption that effective leadership is contingent on a compatible relationship between the administrator’s personal qualities and style and the demands of the situation.” (Snowden, 1998) From the Contingency Model have arisen many theories and ideas on how best to lead. The Path-Goal Theory is a major idea arising from the Contingency Model. Path-Goal emphasizes “. . . how leaders influence their subordinates’ perceptions of work goals, personal goals, and paths to goal attainment.” (Hoy & Miskel, 1991)

The Transformational Leadership Theory, put forward by Burns in 1978, expands the idea of the earlier transactional leadership theories. Transactional leadership relies on interaction of leaders and followers, largely based on the leader’s appeal to the followers’ self-interests. Transformational leadership focuses on the leader who impacts the outlook and behavior of others in the organization, largely applying Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs. As survival and security needs of people are met, they will elevate to a higher moral level, that of concerning themselves with social needs that serve the common good of others. Transactional leadership rewards compliance. Transformational leadership truly transforms followers to change. Bass (1985) further expanded this theory, with the assertion that the degree to which a leader is transformational depends upon his/her effect on followers. Bass and Avolio discuss four transformational leadership factors: idealized

influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. They surmise that “. . . leaders who display these behaviors more frequently are also generally viewed as more effective . . .” (Chemers & Ayman, 1993)

Research on leadership continues to evolve, largely moving to the leader as a manager or facilitator with the role of maximizing the organization’s output. The way in which this is accomplished and the individual characteristics of the leader continue to be the primary research emphasis.

Change

Another important perspective of effective leadership is that of change. Change is perpetual and unavoidable. Change is defined by perception. Change is difficult for most people. A strong leader who understands how to manage change in an organization can make it much more palatable to others. Public school superintendents are under a continual demand for change, adjusting, and reform.

The theoretical framework of Situational Leadership can be very helpful to a leader during organizational change. This theory provides a leader with a means of measuring leader behavior and group maturity. Hersey and Blanchard look at leader behavior in one of four styles, being high or low in task behavior and high or low in relationship behavior. Hoy and Miskel (1991) state that, “According to situational leadership theory, effectiveness is promoted by matching leader behavior with the appropriate situation.” As a leader is striving toward change, this offers tremendous opportunities to review the organization in an on-going fashion and adjust leader behavior as indicated. Being able to reduce leader task and relationship behavior and offer more leadership to the group is typically perceived as the leader having confidence

and trust in the group. This model does require the leader to have a true understanding of subordinates and the organization to be able to honestly evaluate the maturity level of the group. The leader must also be flexible in changing task and relationship behavior and delegating when appropriate.

When leading an organization in change, a leader must consider many issues, some of which are specific to each organization. One of the more critical issues in school change is that of constituency building or involvement of those affected. Superintendents do not work in a vacuum and must gain support of those with different experiences and perceptions in order to implement successful change. Sarason (1996) discusses his conclusion that, rarely are the ideas, opinions, and feelings of those who will be impacted by change given genuine consideration. He also points to the frequency of leadership failure being tied to “. . . failure to see teachers as a constituency that, therefore, needed to be informed and involved at all stages.” (1991) Sarason also supports having students directly involved in the change process. Fullan (2001) speaks to the need for parent and community involvement in school change. He considers parents and other community members to be “crucial and largely untapped resources” who have a huge impact on schools and their success. Snowden and Gorten (1998) address the need for building level administration to be involved in change. “Seldom can a proposed change be successfully implemented without the understanding, support, and, frequently, the leadership of the building administrator.” Sarason (1991) calls the principal the “. . . crucial implementer of change.” This general attitude of inclusion is in and of itself a significant change for the role of superintendent. Establishing this constituency will also be critical while leading change. Schein (1992) addresses leadership during change and the importance of

culture and perpetual learning during this process of change in his Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning. He brings to the forefront the importance of the role of the leader in this culture, not the position, and the impact the superintendent has on the culture of the organization. Specifically, Shein stresses the important role of leadership as establishing strategies and implementation of those strategies.

While leading during educational change, many skills are needed. Stronge (1998) states that the desirable skills for leadership are technical skills, conceptual skills, and human skills. His focus on human skills stresses the need for leader to have an “. . . ability to work with and through others in a morally elevating way . . .” Debbie Abilock (2002) reports from ERIC Digest the “Mistakes Educational Leaders Make”. Of the fifteen categories identified, the first two are poor human relations skills and poor interpersonal communication skills. The majority of the other thirteen areas also fall under a general area of poor human relations. Important human relations issues vary tremendously, depending on the article referenced.

For educational leaders to effect change, they must empower their followers with confidence and tools for change. Sergiovanni's Community Leadership Theory builds on Selznick and Burns to stress the importance of establishing like values and goals for schools as communities, so that leadership is less about the person or position and more about “. . . leadership that is tender enough to encourage the heart . . .” (1996) This requires communication skills, especially listening skills, a sense of trust in the leader, a sense of vision which they can share, determining and delegating needed action, all the while keeping students as a first priority. Adaptive Leadership Theory by Heifetz (1994) supports Burns' view of meeting the survival and security needs of the community so that

the individuals then can and will engage in activities to support the community at large. He states the need to focus the community's attention and energy on the *cause* as the source of a problem rather than the *leader*. Leadership that is successful also must address the pacing of work and defining purpose, pacing the work as the community members are able to grasp and endure the necessary changes.

The topic of change has long been the subject of research. A tremendous amount of research exists in this area. Change in the schools is ever-present. It is the leader affecting change that is of special significance in school reform.

Leadership Strategies

Pragmatically, the question begged relates to exactly what a new leader can do to increase the rate of successful transition and change in the organization. The specific strategies to be employed are the subject of little research. Ann Hart (1991) states that "education scholars need to expand inquiry into deliberate strategies to promote desired outcomes during succession when expectations for change are high."

Brown (1965) and Kilmann (1984) have developed general strategies for change. The three strategies are: clinical strategy (relationships of subgroups), growth-centered strategy (assumptions on personnel development and decision making), and normative strategy (norms of the organization). These general strategies give way to more specific suggestions on changing an organization.

Any discussion of transforming an organization must then look at the culture of the organization. Schein (1992) focuses on the impact that leaders can have on the culture of an organization, especially through strategy formulation and implementation. He stresses the primary mechanisms of attention, reactions to crisis, role modeling, allocation

of rewards, and criteria for selection and dismissal, and secondary mechanisms of design of organization structure, design of systems and procedures, design of facilities, stories, legends and myths, and formal statements. Schein's Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning enforces the belief that "The most intriguing leadership role in culture management is one in which the leader attempts to develop a learning organization that will be able to make its own perpetual diagnosis and self-manage whatever transformations are needed as the environment changes." (1992) Cultural stability assists in the organization focusing on goals and establishing values. But perpetual learning supports a cycle of change.

Strategy formulation and implementation are part of Schein's work on organizational culture. (1992) He emphasized the need to develop strategies related to learning about the environment, gaining and utilizing disconfirming information to spur change, reducing anxiety by creating a path for change, acknowledge uncertainties and embrace errors, and to manage the change process. Schein addresses strategies that leaders employ. He outlines the critical roles of leadership in strategy formulation and implementation:

- (1) to perceive accurately and in-depth what is happening in the environment,
 - (2) to create enough disconfirming information to motivate the organization to change without creating too much anxiety,
 - (3) to provide psychological safety by either providing a vision of how to change and in what direction or by creating a process of visioning that allows the organization itself to find a path,
 - (4) to acknowledge uncertainty,
 - (5) to embrace errors in the learning process as inevitable and desirable, and
 - (6) to manage all phases of the change process, including especially the management of anxiety as some cultural assumptions are given up and new learning begins.
- (Schein, 1992)

Some research does exist related to strategies specific to a small group of leaders. Brunner (1997) provides ideas for success for women superintendents. These seven

gender-related “strategies for success” are largely attitudinal or philosophical, rather than specific actions to be taken.

Summary

Many theories abound related to leadership, change, and leadership strategies. Leadership characteristics and the situations within which they function have long received the majority of focus. Little has been published on the specific strategies employed that have proven successful for new leaders, specifically school leaders, during change. That is the basis for this study.

The methods and process of data collection are reviewed in Chapter III. The data collected and its analysis for this study are presented in Chapter IV. Data presented includes the strategies obtained from superintendent interviews as well as the responses to those strategies by a staff focus group and a community focus group. Chapter V is summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Through the theoretical framework of Transforming (Burns, 1978) and Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985) and Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning (Schein, 1992), the purpose of this study was to document effective strategies of new superintendents as they deal with change during transition into a public school district.

Case Study Procedures

During the course of this research, qualitative data were obtained, using both interviews and focus groups. Creswell (1994) describes qualitative research as evolving and emerging during the course of the study. He suggests that research questions that begin with the words “what or how” may be best suited to qualitative study. More specifically, Creswell indicates that case study is well suited to those questions related to exploring a process. Merriam supports the use of an explanatory case study as “an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena.” (2001) This study explores the process of a new leader in a school setting as they go about the business of change. Through this naturalistic inquiry method, data have been gathered from interviews and focus groups. Themes have emerged as respondents openly discuss the process employed during change. This information has been analyzed, to

verify information gained. The qualitative case study is best suited to the problems addressed in this study.

Data triangulation is one of four methods of achieving triangulation, according to Patton. He (1987) offers different ways of achieving triangulation, one of which is triangulation of data sources, data triangulation. Creswell (1994) supports triangulation in studies, “. . . based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods.” Through this study, triangulation is achieved primarily with three superintendent interviews, three staff focus groups, and three community focus groups. The researcher’s observations and notes will be used to support or negate data from the interviews and focus groups. With these structures in place, data collected will carry increased credibility.

Participants

As a critical component of this study was looking at leadership and change, superintendents considered were those who had recently, within the past three years, assumed a new leadership role in a public school. In the specified geographic region, seven superintendents met that criteria. Each was sent a letter, requesting participation. For added interest, it was determined that the first superintendents with an affirmative response from a small (under 1,000 students), medium (1,000 to 7,000 students), and large school (above 7,000 students) district would be selected. Once selected, each superintendent was asked to schedule an interview and sign an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B). Each selected superintendent then provided information to establish two focus groups. From a list of employees provided by the superintendent’s office, one focus

group was comprised of school employees who were in the school no less than four years, therefore having been witness to and impacted by the superintendent's strategies. These were randomly selected, with the modification that at least two administrators, two teachers and two support personnel would be selected. The superintendent's office also provided contacts for their parent-teacher association. That contact person selected at least six participants to serve in the second focus group, which was comprised of involved parents and community members, who likewise had been involved for over four years, to gain their perception of the superintendent's strategies. Once selected, each member of each focus group was contacted, given a brief overview of the study, and assisted in selecting a time for a scheduled meeting. At that meeting, each participant signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B).

Interviews

Formal data collection began in this study with the interview of three superintendents. The individual interview offers advantages of control over the topics discussed and the amount and quality of information that can be gained through this method. Superintendents, as most leaders, are more likely to be themselves and share information in a one-on-one setting as opposed to being part of a group of those working in their organization. Through individual interviews, Morgan states that another advantage "occurs when the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a person's opinions and experiences." (1997) This study largely is seeking to explain the superintendent's selected strategies during change and his/her perspective as to their effectiveness.

The interview process began with identifying the questions to be asked of superintendents. Looking at Schein's (1992) ideas of strategy formulation combined with my own interest in specific areas, the following general strategy areas were selected: leadership, instructional practices/curriculum, organizational framework/goals, communication, and overall school climate. To insure consistency and ease of interviews, an interview protocol was designed, according to Rubin and Rubin. (1995) (Appendix C) Creswell also encourages this practice, as it allows for smoother interviews and provides a means of note-taking. (1994) Kvale states that "The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world." (1996) The strategies provided by the superintendents, from their perspective, is then available to be incorporated into the two focus groups. All interviews were held in the superintendents' offices, as a convenience to them, and were 55-90 minutes in length. Interviews and follow-up were completed between February 21 and March 22, 2003. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Strategies were pulled from the transcriptions and researcher's notes. Superintendents were provided copies of these strategies and informal follow-up interviews allowed for clarification of any remaining questions. These clarifications were done through email and by phone, as clarifications were minimal.

Focus Groups

To further investigate the effectiveness of the superintendents' strategies, it was determined that questioning others in the school community would add other perspectives to the effectiveness of the superintendents' identified strategies. Focus groups of others in the district allowed for strengths in data collection.

While “less depth and detail” (Morgan, 1997) may be achieved in a focus group, this technique is a viable method of data collection and offers an opportunity for the moderator to witness interaction and varied perspectives on the given topic in an efficient manner. According to Morgan’s “rules of thumb” for focus groups, three to five groups per project are optimal. However, he also states that each researcher must determine what is most appropriate for their study. Morgan emphasizes that “Small groups thus work best when the participants are likely to be both interested in the topic and respectful of each other.” (1997) This study includes six focus groups from three different districts. One focus group from each district is comprised of school staff and one focus group is comprised of involved parents. Gaining information from those who have experienced the leadership change in their district with their present superintendent is key to the perception of effectiveness of the strategies employed. With this, these groups also meet Morgan’s support of participants who are both interested in the topic and respectful of each other. (1997) These procedures are based in research literature and have been followed closely, to insure the validity of the study.

Staff focus group members were selected from a list provided by the superintendent’s office. These lists contained employees who have been in the district for at least four years, as these employees were present during the entire transition process to the new superintendent. The only other selection criterion was that groups were comprised of a variety of positions in the district, with at least two administrators, two teachers, and two support personnel invited to participate. A second focus group from each district was comprised of involved parents from the school community. Six parents, each with at least four years of involvement with the school, were invited to participate in

the community focus group. These parents had children from a variety of grade levels. Focus groups met within buildings at each of the districts, with the interaction tape-recorded and later transcribed. I provided them a brief understanding of the study and the purpose of the focus group. Participants were provided with a written list of the strategies identified by their superintendents. (Appendix D) After discussing each strategy, providing explanation and clarification, participants were asked to rate each strategy as “effective”, “ineffective”, or “uncertain/NA”. They were encouraged to write any pertinent comments that they did not make earlier. Focus groups met in a variety of sites on each campus, as a convenience to those involved, and were 50-105 minutes in length. All focus groups were completed between February 27 and March 12, 2003. They were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Focus groups met only one time and no follow-up was provided.

Processing Data

Interviews and Focus Group Meetings were recorded while hand-written notes were taken. Tapes were transcribed verbatim. Strategies were pulled from the transcriptions and notes and formulated into a concise listing. Data collected from each transcription were initially reviewed individually and then across different categories. Through this second process of looking across districts and strategy areas, themes quickly emerged, that were not intentional or directly tied to the questions asked in the superintendent interviews. Data were re-written on colored note cards and coded to reflect the district (A, B, or C), origination of the data (superintendent, staff focus group, or community focus group), the area of the strategies it was related to (leadership, instructional practices/curriculum, organizational framework/goals, communication,

overall school climate), and then by emerging themes. Through the processing of the data, these cards were redistributed many times, related to the different categories. Collectively, the data were then compared to the theories of Transforming and Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) and Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning (Schein, 1992). Kvale's (1996) three steps of analysis were employed to gain meaning from the data: structuring the interview material using transcription, clarifying material, and analyzing properly.

Summary

The methodology described in this chapter provides an overview of the process employed to gain data obtained during the course of this study. Detailed procedures were explained to encourage replication of this study. The data were carefully coded and reviewed using a variety of comparative views, as well as theoretical perspectives. The data obtained is thoroughly presented and analyzed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data gathered through this study were analyzed individually and through cross-comparison, seeking themes across the data. Data were coded from the transcriptions of tape-recorded interviews of superintendents and focus groups.

Three schools were selected based on the tenure of their superintendent (2-3 years), their proximity (within the same county), and their student population (small, medium, and large). Superintendents were interviewed, asking that they identify strategies they employed during the transition into their current position. Two focus groups were then established, one comprised of staff and one comprised of community members, with the charge of discussing the identified strategies and rating each as effective or ineffective. The superintendents' initial interviews and follow-up questions along with the focus group interviews were compared, looking at the data from each district and the themes across identified strategies. These were viewed through the lens of Transforming Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978), Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), and Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning. (Schein, 1992) Analysis is presented first by district, then by general areas of strategies across the three districts, and finally by general emerging themes.

Data by District

Case study data

The following is a compilation of general information related to the three superintendents and their schools.

Table 1 Superintendents and their schools

Supt.	# of stdts in district	# of school sites in district	Exp. in admin(total)	Exp. as supt.	Years in current district
A	15,000	24	28 yrs	18 yrs	2.5 yrs
B	3,800	5	24 yrs	3 yrs	2.5 yrs
C	640	1	7 yrs	7 yrs	1.5 yrs

School District A

Superintendent A holds a doctorate degree in education and has 28 years experience in education administration, including 18 years as a superintendent in five districts. He has been in the current position 2.5 years. District A has approximately 15,000 students in 24 school sites, including elementary, middle school, intermediate high, and a single high school. Superintendent A was interviewed in his office in the central administration building, in the downtown area of his community, a suburban town. He sat at his desk with me in a chair across from his desk. He described the primary responsibilities of his current position to be setting the tone for the school, team management, and distribution of resources. Superintendent A appeared very confident and comfortable while discussing the strategies he used and considered effective to support change in his new school. Superintendent A provided 35 strategies across the five areas questioned. When asked what strategies he would revise in reflecting back, he indicated he would engage the community more and do more on-site visits. In closing, Superintendent A indicated that other suggestions for leaders in the course of change

would be to know the business, be human, develop good communication, always be honest, and find what fits your personality.

Focus Groups from School District A were held with participants seated around a table in an office in the administration building. Participants generally appeared comfortable and engaged. Focus group participants were given a brief explanation of the study, the focus group process, and provided a listing of Superintendent A’s identified strategies (Appendix D), to have a visual during the discussion, as the conversations were tape-recorded. The superintendent’s strategies were briefly reviewed. A brief explanation of each strategy was given as group members looked at the strategies in writing. Participants were encouraged to make comments as to their observations on each strategy, either verbally or by making notes. Additionally, each respondent was asked to rate each strategy as either “effective”, “ineffective”, or “uncertain/non-applicable”. The groups’ composition is indicated below.

Table 2 Focus Group Demographics for School A

Focus Group	Participants
Staff	1 teacher, 2 administrators, 2 support staff
Community	3 Parents with 2 Graduates, 1 HS child, 1 MS children, 1 Elem child

All participants in both groups appeared comfortable with speaking very openly and were very positive. Additionally, they appeared to be very informed and knowledgeable about the changes that had transpired in recent years in this school district.

The focus groups’ rating of each strategy and comments representative of the information gained are presented below. Responses from the two focus groups are compiled together, to further increase anonymity of individual comments.

Table 3 Superintendent A's strategies and Focus Groups rating of the strategies (8 respondents)

Leadership

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a sense of the culture 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Site visit very effective. He asked lots of questions. First things he did before he ever came to town was require us to send him a letter describing our school and our culture. He's very involved in. . .community groups.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the major problems 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Required us to send him a letter describing . . .any problems. Problems had developed in the past.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate expectations to principals 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Very helpful to us.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop "absolutes" - statements of required behavior 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Seen these and they are good.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model behavior that he expects from others 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>And he does!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with board 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>I understand there was a need for that. Problems had developed in the past.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define "site-based" management 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Each building had a different version of site-based. Conducted workshops to facilitate this. Definitely true. Did their own thing.</p>

Instructional Practices/Curriculum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a professional analysis 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>We were going in all different directions. . . It took some time to get us all going in the same direction. It seems like we are now. That was a good thing. Some of us take a little longer to learn, but once you learn it's wonderful.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate competency 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>He's very knowledgeable. In the buildings more than we've ever seen.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize structure -- All curriculum must be written, taught, tested 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>First class. Hasn't filtered all the way down to teachers. That was new. Different buildings taught whatever they wanted. He brought in people. . .their leadership in that area has helped a lot. Facilitated through him, we've come up with people who are pointing us all in the same direction as far as curriculum.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop expertise for others in the district 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Great team has been built for continuing. Included in professional development. . .it was a wonderful experience for me. Finances have basically opened up for all to see.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Compre- 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Not understood by all teachers. Major shift</p>

hensive Local Education Plan(CLEP Plan) as a real, working document

in emphasis for us. Everybody is involved in developing it or being accountable for it. I think that's a real key right there, giving it from the top down.

- Set expectations Effective-100% Anytime you're around him, you know he's reinforcing this kind of thing.
- Implement vertical Effective-100% Not well defined. The correct way. Previous Teaming vertical teams did not adequately address issues. Very, very grateful to hear him emphasize this.

Organizational Framework/Goals

- Share CLEP Plan Effective-100% Has also shared that with the district advisory council. It really was not a working document, but now the teachers are involved.
- Direct emphasis on Effective-100% Needs funding to be successful. Was only at North Central Accreditation (NCA) HS previously. Elementaries weren't NC before. Some teachers at first not happy with it, but they can certainly see now where it's tying into the whole picture.
- Hire others to adminis- Effective-100% Surrounded himself with top advisors. He's trative team who can follow definitely done that. He insists on his admin- and model istration being so strong. That is part of good leadership, to surround yourself with people who are strong and have a vision.
- Change organization Effective-100% Great changes! Involved bringing in a new of administrative team person here.

Communication

- Share "absolutes" Effective-100% Very effective.
- Insist on "getting it Effective-100% He certainly has made much more effort to out" raise and problems get much more information out to other solve issues people.
- Began TV station Effective-100% I've not seen this. Know they use it, proba- bly more in some buildings than in others.
- Insist on being direct Effective-100% Works well with groups. Open door. Best of and honest all! That's true.
- Employ web site Effective-100% Great! Greatly expanded. Enhanced greatly with new webmaster and site audits.
- Publish monthly Effective-100% Changed from doing internally to outside district newsletter production. A lot of us really look forward to that.
- Email weekly staff Effective-100% More lately, with budget constraints. Mainly memo to ESC staff. Not sure what this is. He does

- Establish email addresses for Board Members Effective-100% send regular updates regarding finances and legislative action. I don't get weekly. There's an all district button that you push and everyone that has email gets the message gets it. We always get a BOE report, too.
- Insist on minutes of Site Council Meetings Effective-100% Also goes to BOE. I get more information out of those site notes.
- Include Board Members on District committees Effective-100% Anyone is welcome to come to that, too.
- Establish District Advisory Council to meet quarterly Effective-100% Open to anyone. Anybody from the public is welcome to speak on any issue.

Overall School Climate

- Insist on "same message" in all communication Effective-100% When messages start disseminating through a large group, people hear what they hear.
- Establish expectations Effective-100%
- Communicate to all staff members through email Effective-100% Suggest using tv station because so many times you get the wrong message-intention with printed word.
- Hold "No Agenda" meetings in each building annually Effective-100% Hasn't this year. Last year very effective. No meetings this year.
- Support Principals Effective-100% He realizes that we are the first line of support. He doesn't have to deal with that stuff which is the way it ought to be.
- Address previous lack of trust Effective-88% New issues of lack of trust. This was appreciated. Lack of trust was felt when support staff were required to begin clocking in and out. Many of the staff performed above and beyond duties – now feel like they are not trusted. Maybe not lack of trust as much as lack of communication to staff. There was a committee before and it was a very hand-picked select few and the district really got to a point where they were distrustful. You had to be invited. He visited the sites. He would come over and have lunch so that he got to see all the kids. He also had a wonderful relationship with the PTA.

The eight respondents unanimously rated each of Superintendent A's 35 strategies as effective, with the exception of addressing previous lack of trust. From the responses given for this item, it would appear that support staff has experienced negative feelings in regard to lack of trust. Comments on all items did not vary dramatically, as to support.

Superintendent A initially identified the primary responsibilities of his position as setting the tone for the school district, team management, and distribution of resources. When looking at the strategies he identified, these certainly fall close to those responsibilities. The superintendent appeared very knowledgeable, confident, and comfortable sharing his philosophy and experiences. He discussed the need to establish a strong team, align its roles and responsibilities with his expectations, and then provide resources for that team. Superintendent A's vision of how to accomplish this appeared clear and analytical. His strategies for leadership are largely relationship oriented, supportive of Burns' (1978) and Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory. Burns discussed leadership as "a stream of evolving interrelationships in which leaders are continuously evoking motivational responses from followers and modifying their behavior." This can be seen in Superintendent A's discussion of "managing the team", especially in the strategies of getting a sense of the culture, modeling behavior, communicating expectations, supporting principals, etc. Examples, in his words, of his focus on relationships and establishing the importance of what the district is doing are:

"The district team which is where most of my time is spent, but also with the individual administrators out at the sites. I try to stay in league with them as much as I can."

"I have always believed that no matter how tough things are that telling the truth is going to work in your behalf."

"I believe the greatest teaching tool we have is modeling the correct values, so I try to model those things."

"We tried to make the things that we had to do what we wanted to do for the

kids.”

“We talk more about the vision. . .”

Both focus groups from School District A were overwhelmingly supportive of the superintendent’s strategies. Thirty-four of the 35 strategies were deemed effective by 100% of those involved in the focus groups. The one strategy not receiving an effective rating by one of the eight respondents related to trust, and the support employees feeling that the initiation of requiring a time-clock has undermined trust. These focus groups were overwhelmingly supportive of the superintendent, both in his role and the identified strategies. Their comments evoke Bass’ definition of transformational leadership. (1985) The respondents were very vocal in their feelings of trust, admiration, and respect for Superintendent A. One component of Bass’ transformational leadership is charisma. This superintendent appeared to evoke charismatic feelings in those involved in the focus groups. Those interviewed appeared to have strong emotions and identification with the superintendent. Sample comments demonstrating the feelings of followers are:

“I trust his judgment”

“He has been great about keeping us posted on what’s going on.”

“Best of all is insisting on being direct and honest!”

“He’s very open and honest.”

“I think that is part of good leadership, to surround yourself with people who are strong and have a vision.”

Overall, School District A appears to be a school that has undergone significant change, especially related to specific strategies put in place by the superintendent. The strategies which received the strongest follower support are those related to the superintendent’s establishing structure and organization of district personnel and instructional practices and his direct leadership and open communication.

School District B

Superintendent B holds a doctorate degree in education and has 24 years experience in education administration. She is in her first job as a superintendent and has been in the position 2.5 years. District B has approximately 3,800 students in 5 school sites, including 2 elementary, 2 middle level, and one high school. She was interviewed in her office in the central administration building, in the downtown area of her community, a small suburban town. Superintendent B sat in a chair facing my chair. She described the primary responsibilities of her current position to be the head teacher, head learner, head cheerleader, and head coach. She feels that a large part of her job is to run interference for staff, and ultimately students, so they can get what they need to do their jobs. Superintendent B appeared very comfortable while discussing the strategies she used and considered effective to support change in her new school district. When asked what strategies she would revise in reflecting back, she indicated she sometimes trusts too much and if she knew then what she knows now, she might have been able to accomplish what she set out to do more quickly. In closing, Superintendent B indicated that other suggestions for leaders in the course of change would be to know that leaders must expect change and sometimes cause it. The need for change must be assessed, but sometimes is discovered as it unfolds. Leaders need multiple ways to find out information, as people often tell a leader what they think they want to hear, rather than honestly responding to questions or issues.

The Staff Focus Group from School District B was held in an office at the high school, with participants seated around a table. Participants generally appeared very comfortable and engaged. Staff seemed very knowledgeable and aware of the changes

under the current superintendent. The Community Focus Group for District B was held in an office in the district administration building. Participants appeared comfortable and engaged. Focus group participants were given a brief explanation of the study, the focus group process, and provided a listing of Superintendent B’s identified strategies (Appendix D), to have a visual during the discussion, as the conversations were tape-recorded. The superintendent’s strategies were briefly reviewed. A brief explanation of each strategy was given as group members looked at the strategies in writing. Participants were encouraged to make comments as to their observations on each strategy, either verbally or by making notes. Additionally, each respondent was asked to rate each strategy as either “effective”, “ineffective”, or “uncertain/non-applicable”. The groups’ compositions are indicated below.

Table 4 Focus Group Participants for School B

Focus Group	Participants
Staff	2 teachers, 2 administrators, 1 counselor, 1 support staff
Community	4 parents with 3 HS children, 3 MS children, 5 Elem children

All participants in both groups appeared comfortable with speaking very openly, and in general, they were also very positive. Additionally, they appeared to be very informed and knowledgeable about the changes that had transpired in recent years in this school district. The superintendent’s strategies and both focus groups’ ratings of each strategy as well as comments representative of those obtained are listed below. Responses from the two focus groups are compiled together, to further insure anonymity of individual comments.

Table 5 Superintendent B's strategies and Focus Group ratings of the strategies (10 respondents)

Leadership

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to determine culture and needs 	<p>Effective-90%</p>	<p>That was one of the things I was very impressed with it. She did listen. She was upfront about I'm trying to determine needs, I'm going to do what's best for all students, but it's good to know what's going on. She heard us, we had a say. She needs to be in the buildings more to really know what's going on. She did an excellent job at that. It made me feel better that she was there and allowed me to do that (talk).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let everyone know who I am and what I stand for 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>That came through loud and clear. I thought so. Not in buildings enough.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set expectations 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>Have been somewhat vague or non-quantifiable. She sets expectations that are good for the kids. People who do their jobs don't have a problem with that. She always brings it back around to why we're doing this is because it's for the students.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model behavior, say and do must match 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>I know she does that. I do, too. I think this is a great leadership tool.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet weekly with administrative team, modeling leadership behavior, so they can turn-key that into their buildings/ departments 	<p>Effective-70%</p>	<p>Last part is up to administrator. Effectiveness depends on the building administrator. I'm not sure how effectively it gets back to us. I think she's doing it. I have seen a change in the communication patterns since she's been here. I haven't seen it everywhere. I think that's important. I'm in three buildings and I would say that's not filtering down in one of the sites.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with individual administrators on leadership issues 	<p>Effective-50%</p>	<p>More group meetings. She's very good at keeping confidentiality. I know there was an administrator problem in our building and I emailed her. She's really good at keeping it confidential.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate commitment and competency 	<p>Effective-100%</p>	<p>I see her competency in that she's delegating things out and making sure those things get done.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take-in information and find trends 	<p>Effective-90%</p>	<p>Her survey she did with teachers and the community. She's very accountable to us. She goes back and says this is what we've done, this is what we still have to do.</p>

Instructional Practices/Curriculum

- Assemble central office staff who knows curriculum Effective-80% That would be who's in charge of curriculum.
 - Lead comprehensive planning (CLEP Plan) Effective-100% Wow! Extensive planning, interviewing, follow-up! She did such a good job of that. She took such a lead. I didn't know we had one before. What she did made not only the teachers feel like a vital part and the community feel like a vital part. Not just people who have kids here, but business leaders. It's much more our school now. She took the surveys to make this plan, not "I know what's best for this school." You can tell she spent hours on it, with the people she worked with to prioritize what we said was important.
 - Emphasize instruction Effective-100% She tries. She's still trying to teach, in meetings, I think.
 - Specify clear expectations Effective-100% Needs to follow-up. I think she did a really good job of that. Just really laid all the expectations out there and what people could expect. That's a little threatening, specifying her expectations. A real threat to some teachers. It makes life so much easier if you know what's going on in the beginning.
 - Encourage peers teaching peers, especially teachers teaching teachers Effective-90% She took groups of teachers from each school and said okay we want you to teach this. Sometimes it does come off better if somebody from your own school does. The teaching each other thing helps our relationship an awful lot. There are people I've had to go ask how to do things that I would otherwise have never spoken to. Think that's a good thing.
 - Emphasize principals as instructional leaders in their buildings Effective-70% Good emphasis, hard to turn into action. Well, if we don't see this, I don't know that it's her fault. I think he's trying to be an instructional leader. I think the effectiveness of that has a whole lot to do with the personality of your administrator in your building. There needs to be more accountability. Would love to see some evaluation input from parents.
-

Organizational Framework/Goals

- Talk to others to determine trends/goals Effective-100% With a survey she did with teachers and with the community and then putting together teams that come together and plan things out.
- Use information with school community to determine direction Effective-80% Uncertain how much the community was or is considered when making decisions. Have appreciated that the communities have a lot of input.
- Match trends to get vision/mission/CLEP Effective-90% She took the survey to make this plan.
- Relate everything to CLEP and never let it die Effective-90% That's great because I think too often in education we do a thing for a year or two and think, oh, pitch it out the door.
- Emphasize CLEP as a working document and a work in progress Effective-90% It's her CLEP rather than just a state mandate.
- Establish organizational framework with a good match between superintendent/Board/district Effective-70% The board seems to support her.
- Clarify Board's role as driving the vision Effective-90% I've seen more of that. Every time I would ask a question, it would be what does the board policy say about that?

Communication

- Listen Effective-100% She is a good listener but hard to read. For me, that makes me somewhat apprehensive when "speaking my mind" since I have a difficult time interpreting her reaction.
- Be real, open and honest Effective-90% I feel like if she tells me something, that's what it is. I feel like I could go into her office and close her door and tell her anything.
- Show people who you are and that you care about them Effective-100% I think she knows everybody's name in the district. She would listen to me and it would stay there.
- Be consistent and positive Effective-100%
- Employ web site and email to communicate Effective-100% Could use more, like posting school closing on web site. That has definitely been a big deal. That's a very informative site.
- Publish quarterly district newsletter Effective-100% I love that. I think that's great because a lot of times things just go to parents and everything affects voters and the taxpayers.

- Establish email addresses for administrators and Board Effective-90%
 - Do annual surveys to gain information Effective-80% Good follow-up. She continued to follow-up on that survey to see if anything had improved. She took the surveys from parents and students and teachers.
 - Communicate the same information to all stakeholders Effective-70% Very difficult to do since people don't all hear the same thing.
-

Overall School Climate

- Model at all times what you expect from others Effective-100% She does that. She set those expectations out there.
 - Make first meeting set the stage Effective-100% I feel more ownership of the vision and direction of the school district since she's been in charge. It's wonderful to be treated as a competent professional! I think this is so effective. People who are immediately intimidated can rise to this. . .or some people just left. The first meeting did set the stage.
 - Be transparent, let them see who you are, so they'll be more comfortable Effective-60% She did that (played a song at a professional development meeting) and just some of the things that she presented, this was just her. I thought, boy, she's just really let us know some ways that she can present herself in different formats. Difficult to read.
 - Treat people as you want them to be, and they will be Effective-100% Very respectful of all groups. It's really nice to be respected as a profession, an adult that can understand the realities of situations.
 - Clearly state expectations to all groups of the school Effective-90% Somewhat vague. Absolutely. She did a really good job of that.
 - Meet in buildings Quarterly (Sup's On) Effective-80% I know at our school, she talks and she would stay however long we needed her to stay, and you could say whatever you wanted. Need more casual interaction in buildings.
-

The 10 respondents unanimously rated 15 of Superintendent B's 36 strategies as effective. The remaining 21 items ranged from five to nine group members rating the

item as effective. All of the strategies of Superintendent B received at least 50% of the respondents rating them as effective.

Superintendent B provided 36 strategies in the five areas questioned. She initially identified the primary responsibilities of her position as being the head teacher, head learner, and to run interference for students and staff so they can work. When looking at the strategies she identified, these certainly fall close to those responsibilities. The superintendent appeared very knowledgeable, confident, and comfortable sharing her philosophy and experiences. She discussed the need to listen, set expectations, and then accountability. Superintendent B's vision of how to accomplish this appeared clear and analytical. Her strategies for leadership are largely relationship oriented, supportive of Burns' Transformational Leadership Theory. (1978) Burns discussed transforming leadership through seeking to appeal to higher ideals and values. This can be seen in Superintendent B's discussion of listening to others, learning from others, and the treatment of others. Examples, in her words, of her focus on relationships and establishing the importance of what the district is doing are:

"I believe firmly that what I say must match what I do."

"I think it's my role to get whatever it is that they need to do their job."

"I believe that if you treat people as you want them to be, they'll live up to your expectations."

"I started with an information sheet, this is who I am, this is where I live, this is what you can expect from me, here's what I expect from you."

"I think being honest and open and getting information to people whether it's good or bad information is extremely important."

Both focus groups from School B were overwhelmingly supportive of the superintendent's strategies. Of the 36 strategies, 16 were deemed effective by 100% of those involved in the focus groups. Ten of the strategies not rated by 100% of the focus groups as effective were not rated ineffective, but rather indicated the rater(s) being

uncertain or unfamiliar with the strategy. Strategies identified by at least one member of a focus group as ineffective related to being open and transparent. One such rater made the following comment: “She is a good listener, but hard to ‘read’. . . I have a difficult time interpreting her reaction.” Others supported this idea, not that the superintendent is seen as dishonest or closed, but rather that she is an excellent listener who is quite reserved in her reaction. These focus groups were overwhelmingly supportive of the superintendent. Overall, their comments support Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) leadership theories. Burns idea of meeting lower level needs, as in Maslow’s Hierarchy, can be seen, as well as meeting Bass’ definition of transformational leadership. The respondents were very vocal in their feelings of being appreciated and secure, and having trust, admiration, and respect for Superintendent B. Sample comments demonstrating the feelings of followers are:

“I feel like if she tells me something that’s what it is.”

“It’s real nice to be respected as a professional, an adult that can understand the realities of situations.”

“She talks and she would stay however long we needed her to stay, and you could say whatever you wanted.”

“I think she’s very good at keeping confidentiality.”

“I feel more ownership of the vision and direction of the school district since she has been in charge. It’s wonderful to be treated as a competent professional.”

Overall, School District B appears to be a school that has undergone significant change, especially related to specific strategies put in place by the superintendent. The strategies which received the strongest follower support are those related to the superintendent’s overall leadership, listening to others, and establishing structure for instructional practices.

School District C

Superintendent C holds an education specialist degree in education and has seven years experience in education administration in three districts. He has served as a Head

Master in a private school and a principal/superintendent in a dependent (K-8) school prior to his current superintendency. He has been in the current position 1.5 years. District C has approximately 640 students in one school site, consisting of elementary, middle school, and high school buildings. He was interviewed in his office in the superintendent's building, in the central part of his campus. District C is located in a rural community, with only one retail outlet in the school district. Superintendent C sat at his desk with me in a chair across from his desk. He described the primary responsibilities of his current position are "to be everything" in a school this size. Delegating responsibilities to others and supporting principals are a critical part of his position. Superintendent C appeared very comfortable while discussing the strategies he used and considered effective to support change in his new school. When asked what strategies he would revise in reflecting back, he indicated he believes hiring may have the biggest impact on school climate. He also expressed a few strategies or changes that he felt did not go well, and those have been discontinued. In closing, Superintendent C indicated that other suggestions for new leaders in the course of change would be to know the school you are going into, making certain it is a "good fit" with your personality.

Superintendent C provided 21 strategies in the five areas questioned. The Staff Focus Group from School District C was held in the high school media center, with participants seated around a table. Participants generally appeared comfortable and engaged. However, a few members appeared quite apprehensive. The Community Focus Group for School District C was held in an office in the elementary building. Participants appeared comfortable and very interested. Focus group participants were given a brief explanation of the study, the focus group process, and provided a listing of

Superintendent C's identified strategies (Appendix D), to have a visual during the discussion, as the conversations were tape-recorded. The superintendent's strategies were briefly reviewed. A brief explanation of each strategy was given as group members looked at the strategies in writing. Participants were encouraged to make comments as to their observations on each strategy, either verbally or by making notes. Additionally, each respondent was asked to rate each strategy as either "effective", "ineffective", or "uncertain/non-applicable". The groups' compositions are indicated below.

Table 6 Focus Group Participants for School C

Focus Group	Participants
Staff	2 teachers, 2 administrators, 2 support staff
Community	3 parents with 2 Graduates, 2 HS children, 2 MS children, 3 Elem children

Most participants in both groups appeared comfortable with speaking. Some members seemed apprehensive and gave little or no verbal feedback. Others were very open, expressing both positive comments and concerns. Additionally, they appeared to be very informed and knowledgeable about the changes that had transpired in recent years in this school district. Responses from the two focus groups are compiled together, to further insure anonymity of individual comments. The focus groups' ratings of each strategy as well as comments representative of those obtained are listed below.

Table 7 Superintendent C's Strategies and Focus Groups Rating of Strategies (8 respondents)

Leadership

- Communicate to every- Effective-88% Communication has been a priority focus. Seen evidence of that through the teachers, but not sure I've see that from the superintendent. This needs to go on more often. Think an effort's being made. See that he's involved.
- Meet with principals routinely, at least weekly Effective-100% See some of the changes in the buildings.

- Enforce accountability Effective-63% Need to remember school's accountability for students. Absolutely.
- Schedule face-to-face conversations when issues arise Effective-88% Virtually all issues are handled face-to-face. Eliminates he said/she said. Not sure I've witnessed this to a great degree. He listens to them and acts on their concerns. He called me the next day because he felt like he didn't get enough time with me. I talked to him on the phone 45 minutes. He does.

Instructional Practices/Curriculum

- Establish North Central process for school improvement Effective-38% Will provide a focus for the personnel. Ineffective if funding is not there. Has proven to be an effective strategy. There were some good things there.
- Assess weak areas of curriculum Effective-88% What are we doing to improve? It would be nice to know what are our strengths and what are our weaknesses.
- Involve teachers in process of curriculum development Effective-75% Could involve them more. Teachers need to be more involved in creating a more uniform curriculum.
- Survey parents/students/teachers as to needs/strengths Effective-50% What happened to the surveys filled out last year? Let people know the outcome of these surveys. This is ineffective if some form of public evaluation is not given. He has done some surveys. I don't know what became of it.
- Compare information gained to test results Effective-88% Make public. We're all having to focus more on testing. Isn't this information that a parent would get to see?

Organizational Framework/Goals

- Implement CLEP Plan that has meaning Effective-38% Unaware of exactly what this is. Not too sure that many of our personnel know what this is. Don't remember seeing a copy. Not enough done to publicize this. Would like to know if plan 4-5 years ago and what has improved and what wasn't done.
- Direct emphasis on North Central Accreditation Effective-50% Good idea for future. Absolutely.
- Meet with teachers/committees related to curriculum Effective-75% Probably need more involvement. That was North Central.

Communication

- Communicate one-on-one with staff and students Effective-100% Could use more. My own students feel very free to go over there and talk to him.
- Filter information to staff through principals Effective-100% Superintendent needs communication with teachers. Effective only when principals follow through. Important that principals maintain their relationship with faculty/staff. He does keep in touch with principals very well.
- Implement email for every staff member Effective-100% Very effective. How did we get along without it! Good idea, but time consuming. I still don't have it. Generally it's probably been good. We have some bugs to work out. Some still don't have email and some don't have computers. They have to leave their classrooms to go use email.
- Publish monthly district newsletter Effective-88% Make sure they arrive on time or it's a waste of time. Great PR tool. Publish info before. More of a report than way to know upcoming events. Needs to come out before things happen.
- Implement computerized grade book, which provides parents with weekly progress reports Effective-100% Lets parents know about problems early. Have to be up to date. A few bugs to work out. This may prove to be the most effective strategy of all. Has helped immensely. Just one tool and not effective I the grades are not kept current. Does take time. I like the program. This has been an effective tool. Think it's a really good idea. You have to really stay up on grading. It's a good thing. That is an excellent tool. You have to put those grades into the computer. And they have to be up to date. I was thrilled when I heard we were going to do this. I will be angry if we lose it.

Overall School Climate

- Get to know people as people Effective-88% Could work on this. My own students feel very comfortable to go over there and talk to him.
- Hire people who share the same message Effective-88% Need people willing to work with other staff members to accomplish what is important. Absolutely.
- Communicate clear Effective-88% I think again through the principals.

expectations

- Be responsive to all in the school community Effective-75% Superintendent very easy to speak to. Open. More needs to be done to reach out to parents and involve them in the process. Think he is very effective at that.

The eight respondents unanimously rated four of Superintendent C's 21 strategies as effective. The remaining items were rated as effective by 3-8 group members. Comments vary and at times contradict comments of others.

The superintendent identified the primary responsibilities of his position are "to be everything." He appeared comfortable sharing his philosophy and experiences. He discussed the need to hire a strong team and work closely with the administrators on his team. Superintendent C's vision of how to accomplish this appeared to rely in interaction, especially with principals. His strategies for leadership are largely related to establishing structure and communication. Burns (1978) discussed transforming leadership "as an influence process between individuals." This can be seen in Superintendent C's discussion of communication, access to others in a small school, and his attempts to employ North Central as a structure for the organization. Examples, in his words, of his focus on relationships and establishing the importance of what the district is doing are:

"I expect them [principals] to talk with me . . . I can walk right over there and talk to them."

"I get to know most of the kids. I know all of the teachers. I know my maintenance crew. . . I like that."

"What I liked about this [North Central Accreditation] is you really get your teachers involved. They come in and they make the plan."

"When they come up with the idea, they're more willing to work on it to make sure it works because they've invested some of their reputation. . . I like doing it that way."

". . . if I walk in and say we're going to fix geography and here's the way we're going to do it, it probably won't get done. But if I come to them and say . . . What do you think we need to do? That's always been the most successful."

Both focus groups from School District C were supportive of most of the superintendent's strategies. Of the 21 strategies, five were deemed effective by 100% of those involved in the focus groups. Eleven of the strategies not rated by 100% of the focus groups as effective were not rated ineffective, but rather indicated the rater(s) being uncertain or unfamiliar with the strategy. Many of the strategies related to North Central Accreditation for School C were rated down, because this was discontinued due to budget constraints. However, most agree that this is a positive strategy, simply not implemented effectively because of funding. Strategies identified by at least one member of a focus group as ineffective relate to involving and informing others and establishing academic structure and subsequent accountability. One such rater made the following comment: "More needs to be done to reach out to parents and involve them in the process." Others supported this idea, not that the superintendent is seen as closed or unapproachable, but rather that there don't appear to be sufficient avenues of sharing information with teachers and parents. Overall, the focus groups seemed to express some doubt on the strategies of two-way communication, while scoring the Superintendent C very high in areas of communicating one-on-one and filtering information down to staff, through principals and email. These mixed responses imply that the strategies of this superintendent have not completely met the goals of transformational leadership. The comments of followers would suggest that groups in this school have not fully moved to focus on the higher-order needs in Maslow's Hierarchy, as in Burns philosophy. (1978) Bass' definition of transformational leadership also does not appear to be fully achieved. (1985) While repeatedly indicating that Superintendent C is very supportive one-on-one, they do not seem to feel complete trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect, nor do they

appear to be more aware of the importance of task outcomes, such as survey results and plans to identify curriculum needs. Sample comments demonstrating the feelings of followers are:

“I do see that he’s involved. I know with my own students, they feel free to go over there and talk to him. He listens and acts on their concerns.”

“[filtering info through principals is] effective only when principals follow through to all members of the staff.”

“I talked to him on the phone for about 45 minutes and he was very concerned, which made me feel better.”

“This [surveys] is ineffective if some form of public evaluation is not given.”

“Teachers need to be more involved in creating a more uniform curriculum.”

Overall, School C appears to be a school that is in the midst of change, with mixed reviews of strategies related to the implemented changes. The strategies which received the strongest verbal support are those related to the superintendent’s one-on-one communication.

Data by Strategy Area

The three superintendents involved in this study have a tremendous variation in their backgrounds and professional experience. However, in viewing the general strategy areas discussed with each superintendent, it would appear that they have a great deal in common, related to specific strategies which they value.

Leadership

Strategies of leadership shared by all three superintendents are in the areas of communicating, especially establishing expectations. The superintendents also discussed meeting routinely with others in their school community, specifically other administrators and the school board. Two of the three superintendents verbalized the importance of listening to others to help understand the new school’s culture and modeling expected behavior. While speaking generally, the three were in agreement as to the importance of

establishing a strong administrative team with competence, who support the superintendent's philosophy for the district. Some of their comments on these issues are:

“So my job is really to manage the administrative team and share with them my expectations.”

“I had to . . . let everybody know who I was, where I was coming from, and what they could expect from me and what I would expect from them.”

“Communication is the most important . . . I expect them to talk to me.”

Review of focus group data supports the general leadership strategies identified by the superintendents. They indicate that communication has been a focus in all three schools, including listening. Community and staff groups in each school report the positive feelings established when they have communicated with the superintendent on specific issues. Two of the schools' focus groups spoke at length on the superintendents' strengths of setting expectations and modeling expected behavior. Staff focus groups in two of the schools cast some doubt on the issue of principals as instructional leaders, perhaps not communicating information from the superintendent on a consistent basis or enforcing accountability. Overall, focus group comments reinforce the leadership strategies superintendents set forth.

Instructional Practices/Curriculum

Strategies for instructional practices and curriculum shared by all three superintendents focused on including teachers and administrators in the process of assessing needs and strengths, gaining information from others, and using established processes, such as North Central Accreditation (NCA) and the Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP). Two superintendents discussed the need to have competency themselves and having others around them with a strong competency in instruction and curriculum. Some of their comments on these issues are:

“They [NCA] set guidelines for you . . . so many helps for you.”

“Be sure that you’ve got somebody who has some knowledge in the leadership positions within the central office.”

“I believe in a focused curriculum, I believe that it has to be written, taught, and tested.”

“You have to develop the expertise that you could demonstrate that you know what you’re talking about and people want to follow that.”

“When peers teach peers, it’s better I think than if I try to teach or another administrator tries to teach them.”

“What I liked about this [NCA] is you really get your teachers involved.”

Focus groups appeared split by district on the effectiveness of the strategies implemented in these areas. Support for strategy implementation that has assessed areas of curriculum was high. They agreed that this was mostly accomplished through structure of NCA and/or CLEP. However, beyond the assessment phase, School District C had relied heavily on NCA and due to financial constraints has dropped that program. This appears to have left others in the school community feeling uninformed as to the process for assessment and input. Community and staff groups in each school support the ongoing assessment of instructional needs and the importance of involving the community in that process. Overall, focus group comments reinforce the instructional strategies superintendents set forth.

Organizational Framework/Goals

Strategies of organizational framework and goals shared by all three superintendents focus on NCA and/or CLEP. The three superintendents spoke at length about the need for gathering information from all aspects of the school community, through a structured means, as set forth by NCA or CLEP. The superintendents spoke of vision and not coming-in to the district with a “fix”, but rather listening to others and arriving at an agreed vision. Two of the three superintendents stressed the administrative/Board of Education structure for the district. While speaking generally, all

three talked about the importance of matching the superintendent's goals and philosophies to that of the board and other administrators and the goals of the district.

Some of their comments on these issues are:

“Your board has to draw your vision, you've got to have them on board. It's not me coming in here with my vision, other than my vision matched what this district wanted.”

“Specific things that we did was I changed the organization of the administrative team.”

“As you look, know that a particular school is more suited to your type of personality than another.”

“I chose to do that through talking with people, getting the feel for what this district is about, getting the strengths, getting the weaknesses, determining the trends and basically what would be the goals of this district.”

“It was just a matter of using good research skills basically to pull it all together.”

Review of focus group data were again mixed on the strategies identified by the superintendents. In every instance, the respondents were very supportive of all strategies that involved others in the school community. However, in one school, several members of the focus groups were unaware of exactly what the CLEP Plan was or recall any involvement in that process. Two of the schools' focus groups spoke at length on the superintendents' inclusion. Staff focus groups in general were more knowledgeable of CLEP and NCA than community focus groups. Overall, focus group comments reinforce the organizational strategies superintendents set forth.

Communication

Strategies of communication shared by all three superintendents revolved around interaction with others in person and through various avenues of written correspondence. They discussed communication style, being open, direct, and honest. All three superintendents discussed publishing a district newsletter and technology, specifically email and web sites, as effective strategies for leaders. Superintendent A specified his

expected “absolutes”, a list of required behavior for all administrators which focus on communication. Superintendent B talked at length about the importance of annual surveys, to gather anonymous results across the district to determine the meeting of goals and determine needed changes. In School District C, a tremendous amount of time was spent discussing newly implemented computerized grade book software which provides weekly progress reports to parents. Some of their comments on these issues are:

“I treat those individuals with dignity and respect, just like I would the kids in the classroom, and I have information that I think they need, and they have information that I think that I need from them.”

“I think that the fact that through the years we have got to the point where I can send an email to just about everybody in the district [is critical].”

“One of the great advantages recently has been email . . . I do communicate that way frequently.”

“Day to day, it’s just as direct as you can make it, it’s as honest as you can make it. We use technology more, web sites, to make the information accessible in a lot of forms.”

“A lot of ‘absolutes’ dealt with that because there were many things that said this is the way we’re going to communicate.”

Focus groups strongly reinforced the importance of communication strategies established by the superintendents. They indicate that communication has been a focus in all three schools, especially one-on-one communication with the superintendent. Community and staff groups in each school report the efficiency of technological communication, despite the amount of time taken, the fact that not everyone is actually networked, that technology breaks down, and having to learn how to utilize those tools. They also support the district newsletter as an effective means of communication, especially for those who reside in the district but may not have children in the school system. Focus groups from Schools A and B spoke at length of the superintendents’ strengths of open and honest communication and having full confidence in them as a result of that. School C focus groups were overall very supportive of the school’s new

weekly progress reports as a means of communication, despite some “bugs” to work out. Overall, focus group comments reinforce the communication strategies superintendents set forth.

Overall School Climate

Strategies impacting overall school climate revolved around expectations and communication and treatment of others. All three superintendents stressed the need especially for establishing clear expectations. It was the consensus that having clear expectations improves morale, as people know what to expect. Two of the three superintendents verbalized the importance of having routine meetings in buildings, to allow staff to ask questions and give input on any issue. Superintendent C stressed that in his opinion, this was where the superintendent can have the greatest impact on the school. Superintendent A spoke freely of a lack of trust with the previous administration and his attempts to address that very directly. Some of their comments on these issues are:

“I believe in the ‘absolutes’, having everybody on board and giving out the same message helps people feel like they know how things are going to operate. I send out email to every staff member quite a bit.”

“The superintendent I think has more to do with that area [school climate] than any other area. I think you have more of a direct impact.”

“I think again if you’re honest and try to communicate with people, keep abreast of the issues, that pretty well takes care of it.”

“I think that the first time that you meet, you set the stage for the rest of how your interactions are going to be. They have to be comfortable with you as an individual.”

“You have to be careful and have lots of different ways of finding out what’s going on other than just asking people what they think.”

Strategies identified by the superintendents for overall school climate received support from the focus groups, in general. The reiteration of clear expectations was seen as an effective strategy. Again, those strategies that involve one-on-one communication were given the best ratings. In Districts A and B, the idea of the superintendent meeting

in each building with staff, with no established agenda, was well supported. Those areas which were rated the lowest involved directly addressing the previous lack of trust in School District A, being transparent so that others see who you are in School District B, and questioning the reality of being able to be responsive to all in the school community and including others in School District C. Overall, focus group comments reinforce the school climate strategies superintendents set forth.

When reviewing data from the three superintendents, the commonalities are surprising in some of the areas questioned. Three superintendents with three different backgrounds from three different sizes and types of schools put forth strategies with many commonalities. However, there is some variance in the perception of the level of effectiveness from followers in different districts.

Superintendent vs. Staff vs. Community Data

Another approach to reviewing the data gathered in this study revolves around the difference between the perception of strategies between superintendents and staff focus groups, between superintendents and community focus groups, and between staff focus groups and community members.

Superintendents vs. Staff

Obviously, the superintendents in the study believe that the strategies they set forth are effective and they have strived to utilize them in an effective way. When comparing their perception to that of certified and support staff, some differences do exist.

Superintendent A's strategies were rated by staff as effective by 100% of the focus groups, with the exception of one strategy. However, comments from some focus

group members did clarify their perspective on some issues. Overall, Superintendent A stressed open and direct communication, and this was reinforced by the staff. His “absolutes”, “No Agenda” meetings, and District Advisory Council were viewed very favorably. Staff view him as very involved, both in on-campus and community activities. His leadership and organizational strategies were reinforced by respondents, especially the administrative structure he imposed, clarification of site-based management, technology, and the shift in emphasis on NCA and CLEP. Areas which staff did not necessarily feel were completely in place were that new issues of trust have arisen with support staff and that CLEP, vertical teaming, and curriculum being written, taught, and tested has not filtered down completely to teachers, and therefore not clearly understood by staff implementing those concepts.

Strategies of Superintendent B were obviously well received, with most receiving an effective rating by 100% of the staff focus group members. Her honesty, modeling expectations, increasing technology, and leading the CLEP were seen as very effective strategies. Her making others feel ownership and that she listens and cares about them and the school were effective, according to staff. Sup’s On meetings and clarifying the Board of Education’s role were viewed as effective. Areas viewed as still lacking in full effectiveness were in inadequately “being transparent” to make people more comfortable, the time spent in buildings to gain information, and the carry-over of leadership strategies by principals.

School District C staff expressed some disagreement with the implementation of some identified strategies during their recent change. Reinforced strategies include utilization of NCA to establish structure, despite it being discontinued due to funding,

and technology, especially email and computerized grade book, although not everyone has immediate access to computers. Although some staff felt the computerized grade book has “bugs” to work out, they all felt it was a viable tool and should be continued. Some staff indicate that face-to-face interaction is very positive and that the superintendent is accessible, while others feel the need for more interaction and involvement. Several staff members were unfamiliar with the CLEP plan and felt more staff involvement was needed as well as sharing information from surveys. Staff members also questioned the effectiveness of principals sharing information and a lack of accountability.

Staff focus groups, in general, felt that the strategies established by new superintendents were effective and had been well implemented. Most comments to the contrary were in the minority.

Superintendent vs. Community

All superintendents in this study stress the importance of community involvement. From community input in establishing the direction of the school to parents being informed of student grades and school events, school and community interaction is key for successful superintendents.

The community focus group from School District A raved about the superintendent’s strategies which include parents in all aspects of the school. They felt that he was a strong leader who strongly expressed expectations, established a strong administrative team, attended many activities in both the school and community, has rebuilt trust and confidence, emphasized structured curriculum, expanded the NCA process to the elementary buildings, and expanded technology across campus. In this

group of involved parents from School District A's school community, there was total support of every leadership strategy Superintendent A employed during his transition.

Superintendent B's strategies were praised by the community focus group. They especially recognized her openness and listening to others, including the community in some technology training, and expanding the district's technological abilities. While most felt it was not her "fault", the strategy related to principals taking the role of instructional leader in the buildings has not "filtered down" to sites. Some respondents felt the community had been very involved in the planning and goal development process, others felt uninformed and that expectations were somewhat vague to parents. They also expressed a desire to have a survey, similar to the staff annual survey, which might include an anonymous evaluation of staff.

Focus Groups from School District C expressed support for many of the superintendent's strategies. They agreed that he is open, easy to talk to, and accessible and those who interact with him feel his support and concern. Despite teachers sometimes not having grades updated in the computerized progress report, they feel that it is an excellent communication tool with parents. They stress the need for including teachers more in curriculum development and reaching out more to parents, which would decrease parental apathy. Community members also felt that strategies related to surveying parents have not been very effective, due to the lack of feedback from those surveys.

Community focus groups, in general, felt that the strategies established by new superintendents were effective and had been well implemented. Most comments to the contrary were in the minority.

Staff vs. Community

It might be expected that staff and community would have considerable difference in the effectiveness of strategies for change, due to their very different perspectives and experiences. In general, that did not prove to be true, in this study.

Focus Groups from School District A were in total agreement that the strategies employed by their superintendent had been very effective. The only strategy not receiving full support was the issue of addressing previous distrust. One staff member felt that the initiation of a time clock for support staff had created new issues of distrust. Otherwise, both staff and community appear completely supportive of strategies identified by Superintendent A.

Staff and community from School District B gave overall support to the strategies identified by their superintendent. Strategies that rated especially high from both groups were in areas of the superintendent's modeling expectations, leadership of the CLEP Plan, her being open and honest, making others feel supported, and that she cares for and is committed to both individuals and the school. Areas of minimal discrepancy were principals assuming the role of instructional leader, clearly stating expectations to and including all stakeholders in the planning process, and allowing others to "see who she is" so they feel comfortable with her.

School District C focus groups supported many of the superintendent's strategies. Both staff and community members agreed that he is open, easy to talk to, and accessible and those who interact with him feel his support and concern. Some teachers expressed some difficulty with district technology and computerized progress reporting, but all agreed that it is an excellent communication strategy. Focus groups also had some

minimal difference of perspective on the strategies related to the level of involvement of parents and staff. While communication strategies were rated high as to effectiveness, many comments of concern did relate to the level of interaction with the superintendent.

By comparing data obtained from transcripts and research notes of superintendent interviews and focus groups, a variety of perspectives can be achieved. The data do support implementation of most identified strategies in this study. Specific data were not reported separately for staff and community focus groups for two reasons. The first was to help provide anonymity for the relatively low number of participants. Secondly, and bigger in support of this mode of reporting, is the fact that there was no significant difference in the data obtained in each school between staff and community focus groups. Therefore, separation of data would serve no real purpose.

Emerging Themes

Through coding of all data collected, the data can be viewed from many different perspectives. In doing that in this study, analysis revealed some emerging themes. These themes were not the result of responding to specific questions or intentional direction in the interviews. However, they are surprisingly strong in their correlation. The emerging themes were related to human factors, people, and plans.

Human Factors

Superintendents and focus groups spoke at length about what superintendents have done with other human beings in their organization. These fall neatly into three areas: interaction, involvement, and mentoring.

Interaction. Superintendents and focus groups described strategies that really were about *how* the superintendent interacts with others. They talked about *how* they

listened to others, trying to obtain information on culture and needs, being responsive to those in the school community. They talked about *how* they are easy to talk to, available, open, direct and honest. They talked about *how* they treat people with respect, “as you want them to be”, as professionals, showing that they care, keeping confidentiality, by knowing peoples’ names. They talked about *how* they made others feel better, trusted, as “a part”, important. They talked about *how* they established structures for interaction, such as District Advisory Council, “No Agenda” Meetings, Sup’s On, face-to-face meetings. One component of the human factors that emerged from these data is interaction, how superintendents interact with others.

Involvement. All those interviewed spoke about the importance of involving all stake holders in the school community in the process of leading a school. They talked about the importance of the *superintendent being involved*, talking to people, attending school and community functions, sharing information with the staff and community, being visible, being available, in setting and modeling expectations, in gaining information from staff as to “what’s going on”, in creating the vision and direction for the district. They talked about the *teachers and staff being involved*, in curriculum development, in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the district, in creating ownership through inclusion, feeling comfortable sharing their views, serving on committees for CLEP and/or NCA. They talked about *parents being involved*, in long-range planning, in assisting in the identification of district needs and direction, through surveys and feedback from those surveys, by providing them information as to district goals and performance, seeking more ways to reach out to parents. They talked about the *community at large being involved*, through receipt of district newsletters, by using

information gained on community surveys to determine local culture and educational interests, through electronic communication, and reducing apathy through the process of involving all stake holders in the school community.

Mentoring. Data from all districts included comments about people being a role model and supporting others. The *superintendent mentoring* through modeling expectations, establishing a listing of required administrative behavior called the “absolutes”, modeling leadership behavior, meeting with groups and individuals to share leadership expectations, emphasizing instruction. The *principals mentoring* through serving as instructional leaders in their buildings, by relaying information from the superintendent to staff, by encouraging varied instructional strategies, through the support of the philosophy and structure established for the district. The *teachers mentoring* in their classrooms, by teaching each other, by following established guidelines, through their ownership of the district vision. The perpetuation of leadership is dependent upon mentoring.

More words and comments were devoted to human factors than to any other general topic in this study. This emphasizes its importance.

People

Apart from the human factors, an emerging theme was that of people immediately involved in the school setting. There are three sub-groups of people continuously discussed: chain of command, predecessors, and the right people.

Chain of Command. *Central office* must establish a strong administrative team, establish a working relationship with the Board of Education and clarify their role, clearly define expectations, support principals, communicate and teach, insist on accountability.

Building administration must be the instructional leader, link all activities to district goals, model expectations, maintain relationships with staff, and relay information from central office. Having an effective organization is tied to the chain of command within that organization.

Predecessors. In the three schools, predecessors were described as having *politics*. There were undercurrents and the development of bad feelings and “hand-picked” committees. Predecessors were described as *lacking trust*. They pushed unexplained mandates and didn’t share financial information and had favorites and ineffective communication. Predecessors *lacked structure*. They didn’t share important goals or establish district vision and had ineffective technology and curriculum accountability. In all three schools, predecessors were discussed by some of those interviewed. They were typically used as a contrast for what was wrong before and what is better now.

The Right People. The *right* people are those whose personality and philosophy match those of the district. The *right* people are those who can follow and model the district vision. The *right* people are those who care about students and will work with staff. The *right* people model leadership. The *right* people are strong and have a vision. The *right* people are responsible and do their jobs. The importance of hiring the *right* staff, especially administrative staff, was a theme in all three school districts.

All of the data reflect a theme of people being a critical area in a discussion of change and strategies for change. Superintendents and focus group participants found people as very important to the school, whether discussing the chain of command, the predecessors, or the right people in the district.

Plans

Repeatedly the theme of plans arose. Plans are needed from several perspectives: having accountability, using the structure of the NCA and/or CLEP to plan, planning technology, and the need for vision in all plans.

Accountability. Everyone interviewed mentioned accountability of established plans in one way or another. Accountability from *above*. To address problems as they happen, to communicate results, to insist on meeting expectations, to share required behavior for administrators, to be accountable for what they say, to be fiscally responsible, to enforce policies. Accountability with *curriculum*. To do the right thing for kids, to have continuity between and within buildings, to communicate with parents, to be written, taught, and tested. Accountability can be *threatening*. For those who don't agree. For those who don't do their jobs. For those not following expectations. Accountability means *follow-up*. With information gained and with sharing information and with seeking information from a variety of sources. Accountability was repeatedly stressed as the key to truly make change happen and last.

North Central Accreditation (NCA) and/or Comprehensive Local Education Planning (CLEP). In each district, lengthy discussion revolved around the structure of a plan necessary to provide organization to the district. NCA and/or CLEP *involves* all aspects of the school community in establishing a vision and goals. NCA and/or CLEP *involves sharing* the information with stake holders in the school community in gaining awareness and compliance. NCA and/or CLEP *involves understanding* expectations and accountability, both necessary to establish change.

Technology. Technology was a major area of discussion in each district that was needed as part of a plan. *Access* is a technology issue, as all parties must have computers and software and compatibility. "*Bugs*" are a technology issue, as learning takes time and electronics break down and usage demands must be regulated and reasonable. *Effectiveness* is a technology issue, whether email or computerized grade book or web site or tv station. Without exception, everyone interviewed expressed the impact of technology.

Vision. Aspects of vision needed in a plan were varied from general to specific. Vision in *organizational structure*, including administrative structure and goals. Vision in establishing *expectations* for the entire school community. Vision in defining a consistent *direction* for the organization. Vision in *professional development* and training staff. Vision in *instruction*, curriculum and teaching students. The need for leaders with shared vision was a shared theme from the schools.

Each group interviewed in this study discussed different aspects of having a plan for the district. Accountability, CLEP/NCA, technology, and vision were consistently mentioned as critical for their district.

Emerging themes from this study are those that have evolved without prior knowledge or planning. In viewing the obtained data from a variety of perspectives, these themes consistently rise to the fore front. In the three schools, data included three interviews with superintendents, three staff focus groups, and three community focus groups. All emphasized human factors, people, and plans.

Summary

Strategies identified by superintendents in these three school districts were overwhelmingly supported by the focus groups as effective in leading change. Strategies that were deemed effective by at least 50% of the focus group participants were identified as effective, in general, in that district. The similarities of strategies between districts were surprising. Because of this, a strategy that did not obtain 50% support in one district might well receive overwhelming support in another district. This involved only two strategies out of the 92 provided. In reporting effective strategies, those that were extremely close in wording were reduced combined. The 75 identified strategies deemed effective are listed in Table 8.

Table 8 Superintendent Strategies Deemed Effective by Superintendents and Focus Groups

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get a sense of the culture Identify the major problems Communicate expectations to principals Develop statements of required administrative behavior Model behavior that expected from others Meet with board Define "site-based" management Listen Let everyone know who the superintendent is and what he/she stands for Set expectations Meet weekly with administrative team, modeling leadership behavior, so they can turn-key that into their buildings/ departments Meet with individual administrators on leadership issues Demonstrate commitment and competency Take information and find trends Communicate to everyone Enforce accountability Schedule face-to-face conversations when issues arise
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<p>Instructional Practices/ Curriculum</p>	<p>Get a professional technology analysis Demonstrate competency Organize structure – all curriculum must be written, taught, tested Develop expertise for others in the district Established Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP Plan) as a real, working document Set clear expectations Implement vertical teaming Assemble central office staff who knows curriculum Emphasize instruction Encourage peers teaching peers, especially teachers teaching teachers Emphasize principals as instructional leaders in their buildings Assess weak areas of curriculum Involve teachers in process of curriculum development Survey parents/students/teachers as to needs/strengths Compare information gained to test results</p>
<p>Organizational Framework/Goals</p>	<p>Direct emphasis on North Central Accreditation Hire others to administrative team who can follow and model Change organization of administrative team Talk to others to determine trends/goals Use information from school community to determine direction Match trends to get vision/mission/CLEP Relate everything to CLEP and never let it die, emphasize CLEP as a working document and a work in progress Establish organizational framework with a good match between the superintendent/Board/district Clarify Board’s role as driving the vision Meet with teachers/committees related to curriculum</p>
<p>Communication</p>	<p>Share required administrative behavior Insist on “getting it out” – raise and problem solve on issues Began TV station Insist on being open, direct, and honest Email weekly staff memo Establish email addresses for Board Members Insist on minutes of meetings for Site Meetings Include Board Members on District committees Establish District Advisory Council to meet quarterly Listen Show people who you are and that you care about them Be consistent and positive Employ web site and email to communicate Publish monthly district newsletter</p>

	Do annual surveys to gain information Communicate the same information to all stake holders Communicate one-on-one with staff and students Filter information to staff through principals Implement email for every staff member Implement computerized grade book, which provides parents with weekly progress reports
Overall School Climate	Insist on “same message” in all communication Establish expectations Communicate to all staff members through email Hold routine meetings with no pre-set agenda in each building Support Principals Address any lack of trust Model at all times what you expect from others Make first meeting set the stage Be transparent, let them see who you are, so they’ll be more comfortable; get to know them Treat people as you want them to be, and they will be Clearly state expectations to all groups of the school Hire people who share the same message Be responsive to all in the school community

Theoretically, many correlations were found. Yukl (1994) defines transformational leadership as “the process of building commitment to the organization’s objectives and empowering followers to accomplish these objectives.” All of the superintendents interviewed would be considered transformational leaders, on some level. Each of them provided strategies that were employed to build commitment to the school and empower all in the school community to accomplish the district objectives. Their continued discussions of involving others and the NCA and/or CLEP Plan is confirmation of meeting this definition of transformational leadership. Burns (1978) includes Maslow’s Hierarchy in leadership. By meeting the lower-level needs, such as safety and security, of individuals in an organization, their focus shifts to the higher-level needs of the “better good for all.” Each of these superintendents spoke at length of strategies that responded

to the needs of those in the organization and a large number of the strategies, those tied at creating a sense of structure and competency, are tied to these needs. Bass' focus on the level of impact being related to the leader's impact on followers can also be seen in this study. (1985) Especially in Schools A and B, and to a lesser degree in School C, followers express tremendous trust, admiration, and respect for their superintendents, which, according to Bass creates an increase in motivation to do more than they would have otherwise. Bass continues that leaders transform by making followers more aware of the importance of task outcomes, encouraging followers to move beyond their own interests for the sake of the organization, and activating higher-level needs. Superintendent strategies identified in this study, especially communication and overall school climate strategies, certainly comply with Bass' ideas of transformational leadership.

Schein's Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning (1992) can also be seen in the strategies identified by superintendents, as many of the strategies impact the organizational culture. Many of Schein's critical roles of leadership in strategy formulation and implementation can be seen in the effective strategies in this study, especially those tied to communication, school climate, and establishing a management structure.

These effective strategies identified by superintendents, supported by focus groups of followers, and presented in this study, provide new superintendents with considerable variety as they lead change. The human factor cannot be removed from leadership, in this study or in implementation. All strategies will probably not prove effective for all new superintendents. They have proven effective for others.

Data collected through this study have been presented, analyzed and reported here, looking at a variety of comparisons. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Superintendents who are new to a district face a truly daunting task. The required breadth of knowledge is extensive and the demands for interaction with a multitude of individuals and groups begin with their first day in the district. Additionally, external and internal demands for reform face the new superintendent. How can one person manage these immense expectations? That is the essence of this study.

Summary

The study included three superintendents, who identified strategies they employed during the course of their transition into their current position. The study also included two focus groups from each of those school districts, headed by the respective superintendent. One focus group was comprised of staff members (support, teachers, and administrators) and the other was comprised of involved community members (parents). Data collection, presentation, and analysis focused on the effectiveness of the identified strategies in each district.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies that have proven effective for new superintendents. The data collected were viewed from the theoretical base of Burns' (1979) and Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory and Schein's (1992) Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning.

Data Needs & Sources

Data needed for this study involved three groups of data. Three superintendents were selected and interviewed, to identify effective leadership strategies they had employed during the transition into their current position. To view these strategies from different perspectives, two focus groups were established. Data were obtained from a staff focus group and a community focus group as to the effectiveness of each strategy. This data were accompanied by the researcher's notes and observations, to support transcribed data.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two qualitative methods, long interview and focus groups. Informal follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify some data and respond to questions of the superintendents. Three superintendents in three school districts were interviewed. They provided names of current employees, from which a staff focus group was formed. A total of seventeen staff members participated from the three districts. They also provided contacts for their Parent-Teacher organizations. Those members assisted in forming a second focus group, a community focus group. A total of eleven parents participated from the three districts.

Superintendents were interviewed in their offices, using open-ended questions to allow for maximum input. These interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Strategies were pulled from the transcriptions and researcher's notes. Superintendents were provided copies of these strategies and informal follow-up interviews allowed for clarification of any questions. These clarifications were done through E-mail and by phone.

Focus groups were held in various sites within each school district. Respondents were asked to discuss each strategy provided by their superintendent, as to their observations which would support or negate the effectiveness of each strategy. They were provided with a listing of their superintendent's strategies. (Appendix D) After discussion was completed, they were asked to rate each strategy as effective, ineffective, or uncertain/non-applicable. These group meetings were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Those transcriptions, along with any written notes members made on their strategy sheet, were compiled to identify strategy effectiveness.

Data Presentation

Theoretical literature was reviewed prior to the collection of data and continuously used as a background for data as it was gained. Transforming Leadership Theory (Burns, 1979) and Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory (1985) were key in defining the effective strategies of superintendents in this study, as the leaders' impact of followers was seen. Schein's Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning (1992) also served as a guide in viewing strategy formulation and implementation.

Strategies from superintendents were compiled by district and formulated into tables, allowing for concise review of the data. These were expanded as the focus group responses were added to these tables. Additionally, representative comments from the data to support given points have been included in the presentation of data.

Data Analysis

Data collected from each transcription was initially reviewed individually. It was coded to reflect the district (A, B, or C), origination of the data (superintendent, staff focus group, or community focus group), address each area of strategies (leadership,

instructional practices/curriculum, organizational framework/goals, communication, overall school climate), and then by emerging themes. Collectively, the data were then compared to the theories of Transforming and Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1979; Bass, 1985) and Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning (Schein, 1992). Kvale's (1996) three steps of analysis were employed to gain meaning from the data: structuring the interview material using transcription, clarifying material, and analyzing properly.

Findings/Discussion/Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify effective strategies employed by new superintendents, as they lead change in their district. The theoretical lens of Burns' (1978) Transforming Leadership Theory, Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory, and Schein's (1992) Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning were used in analysis of the data obtained.

Effective Strategies

To maintain the focus on the purpose of this study, effective strategies were identified and presented. Seventy-five strategies were identified by superintendents and supported by at least 50% of the followers included in focus groups. The superintendents' strategies and those that were deemed effective were surprisingly similar among the three districts.

Schein's Strategy Formulation

Schein's Cultural Leadership Theory of Perpetual Learning (1992) can be seen in the strategies identified by superintendents, as many of the strategies impact the organizational culture. They also focus on the need for perpetual learning, as leaders must

continue to gather information and learn about the culture in their organization. Many of Schein's critical roles of leadership in strategy formulation and implementation can be seen in the effective strategies in this study, especially those tied to communication, school climate, and establishing a management structure.

Transformational Leadership

The three superintendents interviewed in this study would be considered transformational leaders, to varying degrees. Each of them provided strategies that were designed to build commitment to the school and empower all in the school community to accomplish the district objectives. Burns (1978) inclusion of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in transforming leadership can be seen in strategies that responded to the needs of those in the organization. A large number of the strategies, those directed at creating a sense of structure and competency, are tied to these needs. Bass' expansion of Burns' theories can also be seen in the effective strategies identified in this study. (1985) Bass' description of the level of impact a leader makes correlating to the leader's impact on followers can also be seen in this study. Focus groups' expressions of trust, admiration, and respect for their superintendents translate, according to Bass, into an increase in motivation to do more than they would have otherwise. Effective strategies identified in this study validate the Theory of Transformational Leadership.

Recommendations

The role of a new superintendent is nothing short of overwhelming. The demands are immense and the support is questionable. Replication studies to verify the strategies in this study would further the pragmatic support superintendents need. The limitations of this study are specified in Chapter I. From these limitations many follow-up studies can

be seen: (1) A larger sample, both in superintendents and focus groups, would be helpful in determining generalization of the strategies. (2) A more diversified population would be of interest. (3) Examining deeper the cultural impact on effective strategies would provide more in-depth information. (4) Investigating the culture of the school each superintendent left prior to this position and comparing that culture to the current school's culture would provide an interesting view of culture and succession. (5) Assessing strategies of well established superintendents attempting to manage reform is yet another study. (6) Rather than school size being a variable, the number of years of experience in a superintendent role might offer a different view. (7) A study designed to assess strategies of other leaders, those not in education, could be compared to the results obtained here.

If I were doing this study over, I might consider several changes. I would prefer larger focus groups. Organizing focus groups by position in the district (administration, teachers, support) might offer some different insights. A more randomly selected group in the community focus group might offer different insight. At some point, I might like to revisit these same districts, to review strategy effectiveness after several more years in place. Any of these studies would further the literature in this area and serve as a tool for superintendents managing school districts.

It is my recommendation that those brave individuals who choose to move into the office of superintendent, especially for the first time, seek research to guide them in the management of their new school community. It is my belief that this study is very pragmatic, offering me and others moving into a leadership role with strategies to improve the chances of success. While there is a body of research that suggests

theoretical strategies, I have found no published document which provides such specific ideas for new leaders as this study. A leadership role is, in many ways, an on-going research project. The effective management of public schools may well be the pivotal point in addressing many social issues in our country.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval Form

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 2/5/2004

Date: Thursday, February 06, 2003

IRB Application No ED0326

Proposal Title: LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN THE COURSE OF CHANGE

Principal
Investigator(s):

Kaylin Martindale Coody
11529 S. Mingo
Bixby, OK 74008

Deke Johnson
310 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix B

Letter to Superintendent

Informed Consent Form for Superintendent

Letter to Focus Group Participants

Informed Consent Form for Focus Group

September, 2002

Dear Superintendent:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The purpose of my dissertation is to identify leadership strategies employed by superintendents when new to a district. As you have been in your current position for under three years, you are an excellent source of information for my dissertation!

I will be calling you in the coming weeks to schedule a time and place at your convenience to interview as to strategies you have employed during your recent change as an educational leader. The initial interview will consist of a few probing questions and related topics. I ask that your office assist me in preparing a list of administrators, teachers, and support staff who have been employed for at least five years. From this group, a randomly selected focus group will be formed, to discuss the strategies you identify. A follow-up interview will be scheduled with you, to clarify any remaining questions. All sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts will be analyzed to determine the major themes that emerge from the data. The information will be reported in a narrative case study.

Data will be reported in such a manner that the actual people and places involved in this study cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subject. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. All transcripts and tapes will be stored under lock and key. Other than myself, the dissertation advisor is the only other person who may have access to the interview tapes and transcriptions. All source data will be destroyed two years after the study is completed. Confidentiality safeguards including the use of pseudonyms for sites, settings, and respondents.

Please read and sign the enclosed Informed Consent Form and return these to me in the enclosed envelope. I look forward to visiting with you soon!

Sincerely,

Kaylin Coody

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(Superintendent)

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study conducted by Kaylin Martindale Coody. The data collected during this study will be used to complete the requirements necessary for the completion of a doctoral program of study in the Educational Leadership program at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. The purpose of the research is to determine strategies employed by leaders during transition to a new position.

By agreeing to participate in this study, I agree to do the following:

- 1) participate in a personal interview;
- 2) provide a list of employees to serve in a focus group;
- 3) participate in a follow-up interview to clarify information and provide additional information, if needed.

I further understand:

- 1) interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim;
- 2) all data collected during the study will remain confidential and that access will be limited to the researcher and the dissertation advisor; however, due to the limited sample in this study, the opportunity for individuals or schools being identified through the questions/answers does exist;
- 3) all source data will be destroyed two years following the satisfactory completion of the Ed.D. program by the researcher;
- 4) prior to presentation in final form, all data will be encoded and pseudonyms will be used in all text and graphical representations of the data;
- 5) this research project is being conducted with the intent of contributing to existing research and knowledge regarding leadership practices and the influence of leadership strategies.

This project is conducted as part of an investigation about superintendents' leadership strategies in the course of change. The purpose is to report these strategies in a dissertation format.

I understand that participation in the interviews is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the dissertation advisor.

Should I wish further information about the research study, I may contact Kaylin Coody at telephone numbers (918)366-2241 or (918)369-3633. I may also contact the

dissertation advisor, Dr. Deke Johnson, School of Educational Leadership, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, telephone number (405)744-9899. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, University Research Services, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, telephone (405)744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date _____ Time: _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed _____
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Date _____

Signed _____
(Signature of Dissertation Student)

February 23, 2003

Dear School Employee:

Your superintendent has agreed to participate in my research study, as I complete my doctorate degree, and has given his support for other employees to also participate. The purpose of my dissertation is to identify leadership strategies employed by superintendents when new to a district. As a part of gathering valid information, I will also conduct a focus group in your district, made up of individuals who were in the district during the transition to your current superintendent. It is my understanding that you have been in the district for at least five years, so you are an excellent source of information for my dissertation!

I will soon schedule a meeting. I really need your feedback to complete my dissertation! There will be at least six employees for this group. This session will last no longer than one hour. It will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, but your name will not be used in any way during this research. The transcripts will be analyzed to determine the major themes that emerge from the data. The information will be reported in a narrative case study.

It is very important to understand that you are not being asked to support or criticize your superintendent. We will discuss the strategies he/she has provided to me. We will be discussing your reaction to these strategies.

Data will be reported in such a manner that the actual people and places involved in this study cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subject. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. All transcripts and tapes will be stored under lock and key. Other than me, the dissertation advisor is the only other person who may have access to the interview tapes and transcriptions. All source data will be destroyed two years after the study is completed. Confidentiality safeguards including the use of pseudonyms for sites, settings, and respondents.

I look forward to visiting with you soon! If for any reason you cannot attend, please call me immediately, so that I can attempt to replace you in this group.

Sincerely,

Kaylin Coody
Day 366-2241 Home 369-3633

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(Focus Group Member)

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study conducted by Kaylin Martindale Coody. The data collected during this study will be used to complete the requirements necessary for the completion of a doctoral program of study in the Educational Leadership program at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. The purpose of the research is to determine strategies employed by leaders during transition to a new position.

By agreeing to participate in this study, I agree to do the following participate in a focus group meeting.

I further understand:

- 1) interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim;
- 2) all data collected during the study will remain confidential and that access will be limited to the researcher and the dissertation advisor; however, due to the limited sample in this study, the opportunity for individuals or schools being identified through the questions/answers does exist;
- 3) all source data will be destroyed two years following the satisfactory completion of the Ed.D. program by the researcher;
- 4) prior to presentation in final form, all data will be encoded and pseudonyms will be used in all text and graphical representations of the data;
- 5) this research project is being conducted with the intent of contributing to existing research and knowledge regarding leadership practices and the influence of leadership strategies.

This project is conducted as part of an investigation about superintendents' leadership strategies in the course of change. The purpose is to report these strategies in a dissertation format.

I understand that participation in the focus group is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the dissertation advisor.

Should I wish further information about the research study, I may contact Kaylin Coody at telephone numbers (918)366-2241 or (918)369-3633. I may also contact the dissertation advisor, Dr. Deke Johnson, School of Educational Leadership, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, telephone number (405)744-9899. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, University Research Services, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, telephone (405)744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date _____ Time: _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed _____
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Date _____

Signed _____
(Signature of Doctoral Student)

Appendix C

Superintendent Interview Protocol

Focus Group Protocol

Superintendent Interview Protocol

Briefing

- 1) Define study/situation
- 2) Specific definitions for this research
 - communication: written or verbal interaction about the educational philosophy, changes, or perceptions of those involved
 - effective: a positive result tied to a specific action or strategy
 - instructional practices: the selected curriculum and the means by which it is delivered
 - leadership: the ability of administrators to encourage those in the organization to increase effectiveness in their work area
 - organizational framework: the established goals to support the organizational mission
 - school climate: the general positive or negative feeling of stake holders in a school
 - school community: all persons on campus as well as those in the immediate surrounding area with interests in the school and its success
 - strategies: specific behaviors planned to increase knowledge, understanding, and support of identified changes
- 3) Purpose of the interview
- 4) Use of tape recorder/taking note/informed consent
- 5) Any questions

Interview Guide

- 1) Supt specific questions
 - How many students in this school?
 - How long have you been here?
 - What previous administrative positions have you held?
 - Tell me about yourself and your position in this school district.
- 2) In talking about specific strategies you employed as a new superintendent here, what kinds of strategies did you use to support change related to
 - leadership
 - instructional practices/curriculum
 - establishing organizational framework/goals
 - communication
 - overall school climate
- 3) Looking back, what strategies would you revise or work differently to achieve change?
- 4) Is there anything else that you can think of that would be important to this study or leadership in the course of change?

Follow up questions:

- What do you mean by...?
- Could you give me an example?
- Why do you think that is?

- How do you interpret that?
- And how do you think that worked?
- Who did you include in that?

Focus Group Protocol

Briefing

- 3) Define study/situation
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- 3) Purpose of the interview
- 4) Use of tape recorder/taking note/informed consent
- 5) Any questions

Interview Guide

- 1) General information about this study.
- 2) Explain function of the focus group.
- 3) Respond to any questions.
- 4) Each of you have the list of strategies which I have discussed with your superintendent. Please remember that are discussions are not on how well your superintendent did or did not do. The focus is on the strategy – has it been an effective strategy or not.

(Discuss each strategy of the appropriate superintendent)

- 5) Following brief discussion and clarification of each strategy, individual focus group members will rate each strategy as effective, ineffective, or uncertain/not applicable.

Appendix D

Strategies of Superintendent A for Focus Groups

Strategies of Superintendent B for Focus Groups

Strategies of Superintendent C for Focus Groups

Superintendent A's Strategies

		Effective	Ineffective	Uncertain/NA
Leadership	Get a sense of the culture	_____	_____	_____
	Identify the major problems	_____	_____	_____
	Communicate expectations to principals	_____	_____	_____
	Develop "absolutes" – statements of required behavior	_____	_____	_____
	Model behavior that he expects from others	_____	_____	_____
	Meet with board	_____	_____	_____
	Define "site-based" management	_____	_____	_____
Instructional Practices/ Curriculum	Get a professional technology analysis	_____	_____	_____
	Demonstrate competency	_____	_____	_____
	Organize structure – all curriculum must be written, taught, tested	_____	_____	_____
	Develop expertise for others in the district	_____	_____	_____
	Established Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP Plan) as a real, working document	_____	_____	_____
	Set expectations	_____	_____	_____

Organizational Framework/Goals	Implement vertical teaming	_____	_____	_____
	Share CLEP Plan	_____	_____	_____
	Direct emphasis on North Central Accreditation	_____	_____	_____
	Hire others to administrative team who can follow and model	_____	_____	_____
Communication	Change organization of administrative team	_____	_____	_____
	Share "absolutes"	_____	_____	_____
	Insist on "getting it out" – raise and problem solve on issues	_____	_____	_____
	Began TV station	_____	_____	_____
	Insist on being direct and honest	_____	_____	_____
	Employ web site	_____	_____	_____
	Publish monthly district newsletter	_____	_____	_____
	Email weekly staff memo	_____	_____	_____
Establish email addresses for Board Members	_____	_____	_____	
Insist on minutes of meetings for Site Council Meetings	_____	_____	_____	

Overall School
Climate

Include Board Members on District committees

Establish District Advisory Council to meet quarterly

Insist on "same message" in all communication

Establish expectations

Communicate to all staff members through email

Hold "No agenda" meetings in each building annually

Support Principals

Address previous lack of trust

Superintendent B's Strategies

		Effective	Ineffective	Uncertain/NA
Leadership	Listen, to determine culture and needs	_____	_____	_____
	Let everyone know who I am and what I stand for	_____	_____	_____
	Set expectations	_____	_____	_____
	Model behavior, say and do must match	_____	_____	_____
	Meet weekly with administrative team, modeling leadership behavior, so they can turn-key that into their buildings/departments	_____	_____	_____
	Meet with individual administrators on leadership issues	_____	_____	_____
	Demonstrate commitment and competency	_____	_____	_____
	Take information and find trends	_____	_____	_____
Instructional Practices/ Curriculum	Assemble central office staff who knows curriculum	_____	_____	_____
	Lead comprehensive planning (CLEP Plan)	_____	_____	_____
	Emphasize instruction	_____	_____	_____
	Specify clear expectations	_____	_____	_____

Organizational Framework/Goals

Encourage peers teaching peers, especially teachers teaching teachers

Emphasize principals as instructional leaders in their buildings

Talk to others to determine trends/goals

Use information with school community to determine direction

Match trends to get vision/mission/CLEP

Relate everything to CLEP and never let it die

Emphasize CLEP as a working document and a work in progress

Establish organizational framework with a good match between the superintendent/Board/district

Clarify Board's role as driving the vision

Communication

Listen

Be real, open and honest

Show people who you are and that you care about them

Be consistent and positive

Employ web site and email to communicate	_____	_____	_____
Publish monthly district newsletter	_____	_____	_____
Establish email addresses for administrators and Board Members	_____	_____	_____
Do annual surveys to gain information	_____	_____	_____
Communicate the same information to all stake holders	_____	_____	_____
Model at all times what you expect from others	_____	_____	_____
Make first meeting set the stage	_____	_____	_____
Be transparent, let them see who you are, so they'll be more comfortable	_____	_____	_____
Treat people as you want them to be, and they will be	_____	_____	_____
Clearly state expectations to all groups of the school	_____	_____	_____
Meet in buildings quarterly (Sup's On)	_____	_____	_____

Overall School
Climate

Superintendent C's Strategies

		Effective	Ineffective	Uncertain/NA
Leadership	Communicate to everyone	_____	_____	_____
	Meet with principals routinely, at least weekly	_____	_____	_____
	Enforce accountability	_____	_____	_____
	Schedule face-to-face conversations when issues arise	_____	_____	_____
Instructional Practices/ Curriculum	Establish North Central process for school improvement	_____	_____	_____
	Assess weak areas of curriculum	_____	_____	_____
	Involve teachers in process of curriculum development	_____	_____	_____
	Survey parents/students/teachers as to needs/strengths	_____	_____	_____
	Compare information gained to test results	_____	_____	_____
Organizational Framework/Goals	Implement CLEP Plan that has meaning	_____	_____	_____
	Direct emphasis on North Central Accreditation	_____	_____	_____
	Meet with teachers/committees related to curriculum	_____	_____	_____
Communication	Communicate one-on-one with staff and students	_____	_____	_____

Overall School
Climate

Filter information to staff through principals

Implement email for every staff member

Publish monthly district newsletter

Implement computerized grade book, which provides
parents with weekly progress reports

Get to know people as people

Hire people who share same message

Communicate clear expectations

Be responsive to all in the school community

VITA 2

Kaylin Martindale Coody

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN THE COURSE OF CHANGE

Major Field: Educational Leadership

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on February 25, 1954, the daughter of Merle and Gale Martindale.

Education: Graduated from Jenks High School, Jenks, Oklahoma, in May, 1972; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech & Hearing from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, in May, 1977; received Master of Arts in Speech Pathology from the University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in December, 1979. Completed the requirements for the doctor of Education degree with a major in Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 2003.

Experience: Employed as a Speech Pathologist by Bryan County Special Education Coop, Durant, Oklahoma; Developmental Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma; J. D. McCarty Center for Handicapped Children, Norman, Oklahoma; Private Practice in Bixby, Oklahoma; and Bixby Public Schools, Bixby, Oklahoma, 1977-91. Employed in educational administration as Director of Special Services and Director of Student Services at Bixby Public Schools, Bixby, Oklahoma, 1991-present.

Professional Memberships: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Oklahoma Licensure Board for Speech Pathology & Audiology, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council for Exceptional Children, Oklahoma Directors of Special Services, Tulsa Area Directors of Special Services, Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration.