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# Long Island Education Review



## LONG ISLAND'S PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH JOURNAL FOR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

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## About SCOPE

SCOPE Education Services is a not-for-profit, private, voluntary organization permanently chartered by the New York State Board of Regents to provide services to school districts. Founded in 1964 by school superintendents, it is a cooperative venture for sharing resources to deal with common concerns. It is governed by a Board of Directors of school superintendents and college representatives and serves as a regional School Study Council and School Board Institute.

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## **Future Themes for The Long Island Education Review:**

- Diversity in Schools for Curriculum and Hiring
- Leadership – Teachers and Others
- Ethics In Education
- CFE - Update, Perspectives

## **Editor's Perspective**



For decades, policy makers have talked about the need to significantly improve public education. Ironically, President Ronald Reagan started the movement with the report "A nation at Risk." Never did he think or would he have supported, an expanded Washington presence in the nation's classrooms. Today, however, three decades later, the federal government is spurred on by the national outcry for more rigorous academic standards and the means to force schools and students to meet them.

The Race to the Top initiative has been launched by the Obama administration, to invite all 50 states to compete for \$4.35 billion in additional educational funding to generate transformational reform. The first allocations were intended to support states facing budget shortfalls; however, the second allocation is targeted to stimulate positive change.

The design of this federal program allows Washington to reward states that can demonstrate a track record of leadership that aligns with the administration's aggressive reform agenda which includes – enforcing rigorous academic standards, creating data systems that track individual student performance, ensuring teacher quality and effectiveness, and turning around failing schools.

Indeed, New York State prepared for the competition well with a collective and focused effort unparalleled in recent years. Education Commissioner Steiner informed the Board of Regents that the State was "ready for the race."

- New York State passed landmark education reform legislation with support of broad coalition
  - Statewide principal and teacher evaluation system with 40% weight on student achievement established
  - Charter school cap raised from 200 to 460 (10% of NYS public schools)
  - Over \$20 million in capital funds dedicated to expanding the state's longitudinal data system
  - Educational Partnership Organizations authorized to manage persistently lowest-achieving schools
- Awarded \$696.6 million in federal Race to the Top competition
- Implementing bold Regents reform agenda based on compelling theory of action and educational needs

The policy changes that have already taken place in our State are encouraging. Now, we hopefully await improved results in student achievement.

This edition of the Long Island Education Review includes four articles concerning school district leadership. Superintendent Richard Simon discusses the transition into the position of superintendent, while Jane Eichman, Ed.D., reviews formal mentoring and training programs for the superintendency, Les Loomis, Ed.D., and I outline the overlap in the research on district leadership practices, and Robert Dillon, Ed.D., presents his findings relative to Superintendents' evaluations and the perceived importance of student achievement in the process. University/Secondary school partnership for improved supervision through collaborative leadership is the issue presented by Mary Ellen Freeley, Andrew Ferdinandi and Paul Pedota, while Lynn Marsh, Elsa Sofia-Morote, Jennifer McCormick and Thomas Franza have studied college student attitudes toward Technology usage. Our Opinion Center includes articles regarding Open Meetings Law and the Causes of High Achievement and Good Behavior, respectively.

*Kevin N. McGuire*, Editor

## Impact of Recent Open Meetings Law Changes on School Districts

By Douglas Gerhardt, Esq. and  
Karlee S. Bolaños, Esq.

Three significant changes<sup>1</sup> recently made to the New York State Open Meetings Law<sup>2</sup> apply directly to public bodies covered by the law. School districts should take particular note of these changes and ensure complete compliance. Failure to comply could risk the validity of decisions and possibly costs.

### **Overview/Refresher of New York's Open Meetings Law**

The Open Meetings or "Sunshine" Law went into effect in New York in 1977 with amendments following two years later. The purpose of the law is to afford the public the right to attend and listen to debate of public bodies making decisions which impact the populous. The law's legislative declaration characterized its purpose this way:

*"It is essential to the maintenance of a democratic society that the public business be performed in an open and public manner and that the citizens of this state be fully aware of and able to observe the performance of public officials and attend and listen to the deliberations and decisions that go into the making of public policy."<sup>3</sup>*

The Open Meetings Law (OML) requires public meetings to be open to the public. Exactly which meetings this applies to was clarified in the amendments to the law. Meetings are defined as: "the official convening of a public body for the purpose of conducting public business."<sup>4</sup> This has come to be interpreted as any time a quorum of a public body gathers for the purpose of discussing public business.<sup>5</sup> Such meetings must be open to the public, whether or not there is an intent to take action and regardless of the manner in which the gathering is characterized.<sup>6</sup>

As much as the law insists upon open meetings, the public does not necessarily have a right to speak. The Committee on Open Government, the arm of the New York State Department of State charged with overseeing and issuing advisory opinions on the OML, offered the example of a public body, such as the Town Board, which decides not to answer questions or permit the public to speak. The Committee determined the Board was not obligated to do so.<sup>7</sup>

This has often been a source of debate, particularly at school board meetings where members of the public feel strongly about an issue and wish to voice opinions or concerns. The Commissioner, while encouraging boards to permit debate and public speaking during has not indicated this is required.<sup>8</sup> Decisions by the Commissioner, Committee on Open Government and the courts have indicated when public bodies adopt rules regarding who may speak and when, such rules must withstand the test of reason. Rules will be overturned as impermissible if they are not reasonable.<sup>9</sup>

The OML also permits some meetings of public bodies to be closed. The law provides for "executive sessions" under limited circumstances.<sup>10</sup> Noteworthy here and sometimes forgotten is the fact that an executive session is not a separate meeting but rather a defined portion of an open meeting during which the public may be excluded. Only eight subjects<sup>11</sup> may be discussed in executive session and a detailed process for executive session must be followed.<sup>12</sup>

The law also seeks to ensure access to open public meetings. Public bodies must make reasonable efforts to ensure meetings are held in facilities that permit "barrier free physical access" for handicapped persons.<sup>13</sup> Beyond that, the law is not specific as to where meetings take place.

This general overview of the law provides appropriate context for changes just enacted and effective immediately.

### **Recent Changes**

The OML is not static. Opinions by the Committee on Open Government offer explanatory interpretations of the law and frequently open meetings issues find their way to court. Most recently, the legislature and governor became involved changing the statute itself. These changes directly impact public bodies, including school districts.

Public bodies have long been required to make meetings accessible to those with disabilities. However, the law has been silent with respect to size of the venue. In the past, situations have occurred where a large number of community members have sought to attend 'open'

meetings, but have been unable due to the size of the venue. Consequently, they have been unable to observe/participate in meetings which were otherwise 'open' to them.

Effective immediately, public bodies must make reasonable efforts to hold public meetings in a room that can accommodate members of the public who wish to attend.<sup>14</sup> This new requirement does not make the public entity a guarantor that every person wishing to attend will be able to do so. Rather, the requirement appears to require the public body reasonably anticipate the ability of the planned meeting place to accommodate reasonably anticipated attendance. It further appears to require the entity make reasonable efforts, if necessary, to provide a room of ample size to accommodate those who wish to attend that meeting.

By way of example, if a committee of a public body typically conducts its public meetings in a conference room that comfortably handles committee members and the handful of members of the general public who usually attend, the committee may, if undertaking a matter that has generated much public controversy and debate, consider scheduling its meeting on that matter in a larger venue (such as the principle board room of the public entity, school gymnasium or auditorium or the like).<sup>15</sup>

The new law is helpful in articulating the duty of public bodies and puts them on notice of new requirements to be met. Somewhat less clear are answers to questions which compliance would likely bring up. For example, would a public entity be required to re-locate a public hearing or meeting after it has been called to order if a larger than expected crowd attended? Would providing live audio/video feed to an adjoining room be sufficient? Would the answer to either of these questions differ if the meeting had not been called to order?

Additionally, moving a hearing or meeting would trigger compliance issues with public notice for such a meeting. Therefore, in such an instance, it may be advisable for affected boards to adjourn the public hearing or meeting to a future time and date (with additional notices made) that can safely accommodate the public. The lack of clarity on this issue, suggests further guidance from the New York State Committee on Open Government or the courts may be forthcoming.

The second significant revision to the OML, effective June 14, 2010, provides that if a court determines that a public body failed to comply with *any* of the requirements of the OML, the court may declare the actions or approvals undertaken by the public body void, in whole or in part, without prejudice to reconsideration in compliance with the requirements of the law.<sup>16</sup> In other words, failure to comply with the OML could result in nullifying decisions made at the invalidly held meeting. Additionally, under the new provision, if a court finds such a violation, it may require that the members of the public body participate in a training session concerning the obligations imposed by the OML conducted by the staff of the Committee on Open Government.<sup>17</sup>

This change in law makes it even more important to ensure adherence to all aspects of the OML. This includes: compliance with hearing and meeting notice requirements, executive session administration, quorum requirements, and documentation of any recusal or abstentions recorded in relation to any perceived or actual conflict of interest under Article 18 of the General Municipal Law.

The third significant revision to the Open Meetings Law, effective April 1, **2011**, relates to the ability to record public meetings.<sup>18</sup> This was an issue of some debate which eventually was clarified through case law and opinions by the Committee on Open Government. It is now crystallized in statute.

The historic general rule was that a public body had authority to adopt reasonable rules concerning its proceeding which included ensuring any recordings were not disruptive.<sup>19</sup> The rule was first established in the 1970s when recording a meeting could actually have been something of a distraction, given the size of the equipment.

Technological advances curbed that a bit and case law followed. In 1985, the Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court determined recordings were acceptable. In a case involving recording a school board session, the court noted the Education Law permits boards to adopt rules regarding its operations. It went on to note, however, this authority is "not unbridled. Irrational and unreasonable rules will not be sanctioned."<sup>20</sup> The court continued:

*"[t]hose who attend such meetings and who decide to freely speak out and voice their opinions, fully realize that their comments and remarks are being made in a public forum. The argument that members of the public should be protected from the use of their words, and that they have some sort of privacy interest in their own comments, is therefore wholly specious."*<sup>21</sup>

The *Mitchell* ruling and cases after it created the de facto rule for recordings - public bodies can adopt rules pertaining to the conduct of their proceedings, but generally, they must permit recordings so long as these are not distracting or obtrusive.<sup>22</sup>

Chapter 43 of the Laws of 2010 effectively codifies case law allowing any meeting of a public entity to be recorded, broadcast, webcast and photographed as long as it is not disruptive to the proceedings of the meeting.<sup>23</sup> Under the new law, public entities may adopt rules and regulations (consistent with recommendations from the Committee on Open Government) governing the location of the equipment and personnel used to photograph, broadcast, webcast or record those proceedings.<sup>24</sup> Any rules and regulations adopted by the public entity must be conspicuously posted during meetings and written copies made available upon request.<sup>25</sup>

Public entities adopting, considering, and devising rules in time for the law's effective date (April next year),

would be well served to review the *Mitchell* decision and those of the Committee on Open Government. Obtrusiveness and the distracting nature of the recording equipment will be important elements to any recording rules. The number, manner and placement of recording devices may also be considered in developing regulations. However, before taking on any of this work developing local regulations, it is advisable to contact the Committee on Open Government. It has indicated model rules will be available in the future “and prior to April, 2011.”<sup>26</sup> It has also stated: “if the public body fails to adopt written rules governing such issues, it would not be precluded from imposing reasonable procedures in order to effectuate the efficient functioning of government.”<sup>27</sup> The Committee further notes it expects to adopt model rules in the near future. School districts and others looking to develop rules, might consider waiting for the Committee’s model rules to be published.

### Conclusion

New York’s Open Meetings Law has ensured government functions under the watchful eye of interested members of the public. Open and forthright government dealings are critical to credibility. The OML has helped attain that. The new law fosters the underpinnings of the original statute enacted more than a generation ago. School districts will continue to benefit from openness as they comply with these and all provisions of the Open Meetings Law.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Chapters 40, 43 and 44 of the Laws of 2010.  
<sup>2</sup> New York State’s Open Meetings Law is commonly referred to as ‘The Open Meetings Law.’ Formally, this law is codified in New York State Public Officers Law Sections 100 *et seq.* The Open Meetings Law is different from FOIL – the Freedom of Information Law which governs what public documents must, as public records, be disclosed upon request.  
<sup>3</sup> NYS Public Officers Law §100.  
<sup>4</sup> NYS Public Officers Law §102(1).  
<sup>5</sup> *Opinion of Committee on Open Government*, OML-AO-4505 (October 25, 2007) citing, *Orange County Publications v. Council of the City of Newburgh*, 60 AD 2d 409 (2d Dept., 1978), *aff’d* 45 NY 2d 947 (1978).  
<sup>6</sup> *Id.* A simple example may be characterizing a meeting as a work session will not alone make the meeting closed to the public.  
<sup>7</sup> *Opinion of Committee on Open Government*, OML-AO-4292 (December 6, 2006).  
<sup>8</sup> *Appeal of Wittneben*, 31 Educ. Dep’t Rep. 375 (1992)). It has long been held that school boards can limit time permitted in for the public to speak. (*Matter of Kramer*, 72 St. Dep’t Rep. 114 (1951)).

<sup>9</sup> *Opinion of Committee on Open Government*, OML-AO-4141 (February 24, 2006) and *Mitchell v. Garden City Union Free School District*, 113 AD 2d 924, 925 (2d. Dept., (1985)).

<sup>10</sup> Public Officers Law §105(1)

<sup>11</sup> Public Officers Law §105(a)-(h): “(a) matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed; (b) any matter which may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer; (c) information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense which would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed; (d) discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation; (e) collective negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law [the Taylor Law]; (f) the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation; (g) the preparation, grading or administration of examinations; and (h) the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition of securities, or sale or exchange of securities held by such public body, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof.”

<sup>12</sup> Executive session is beyond the scope of this article and not fully discussed. Questions regarding proper use of executive session can be directed to the authors or counsel.

<sup>13</sup> Public Officers Law §103(b).

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 40 of the Laws of 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Similar examples are suggested by the Committee on Open Government in its explanation of the new law at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/coog/index.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 44 of the Laws of 2010 (NYS Public Officers Law §107(1))

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 43 of the Laws of 2010 NYS Public Officers Law §103(d).

<sup>19</sup> *Opinion of Committee on Open Government*, OML-AO-4044 (September 30, 2005) citing, *Davidson v. Common Council of the City of White Plains*, 244 NYS 2d 385 (1978).

<sup>20</sup> *Mitchell v. BOE of Garden City* 113 AD 2d 924, 925 (2<sup>nd</sup> Dept., 1985).

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Mitchell* has been cited more recently by other courts. See for example, *Peloquin v. Arsenault*, 162 Misc.2d 306 (Supreme Court, Franklin County, (1994))

<sup>23</sup> Chapter 43 of the Laws of 2010.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> Committee on Open Government website, <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/coog/index.html#mission> (searched and retrieved May 16, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

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# OPINION CENTER

## *The Causes of High Achievement and Good Behavior: Cause - Effect Confusion*

By Thomas F. Kelly, Ph.D.

### *Our current evaluation processes miss the point*

We have been using two forms of educational accountability/assessment for at least 60 years. Teacher evaluation and state and standardized tests have been used all across the country. During that time there is no evidence of clear improvement in student achievement nationally.

Deming tells us chronic problems are caused not by the workers, but by the system. It is not the teachers who need to be fixed. It has also been said that trying to improve student achievement by testing them is like trying to fatten cows by weighing them. It is not the students who need to be fixed. We must recognize the futility of current assessment processes and look into the system for an alternative assessment solution.

**There is a cause – effect equation** that illustrates the relationship between effective instructional programs, personal relationships, high achievement and good behavior.

$$\begin{aligned} EP + PR &= HA + GB \\ \text{(Causes)} &= \text{(Effects)} \end{aligned}$$

Effective Programs + Positive Relationships = High Achievement + Good Behavior

This is a structural formula for school improvement. The left side of the equation indicates the causes for the effects on the right side. Problems with achievement and/or behavior have their causes and their solutions within the instructional programs and relationships that exist in the classroom/school.

This is extremely important. The present system tends to see low achievement and discipline problems as the “fault” of the students. Yet, anyone who works in schools has seen the same student who achieves well in one class do terribly in another.

The same holds true for discipline problems. We can see the same student who is a chronic discipline problem in one teacher’s class and never a discipline problem in another’s. Discipline problems can be caused by negative teacher – student relations and/or ineffective programs. Frustrated students who consistently fail invariably become discipline problems.

Looking for solutions on the right (effect) side of the equation is useless. This is cause-effect confusion. The good news is that we can control the left (cause) side of the equation. Improvement on the left side will always cause improvement on the right. The great fallacy of the reform movement is that we have been trying to change effects when what we need to change are the causes.

For most students, the power of effective programs is probably the ultimate cause for not only high achievement and good behavior, but also positive relationships. There are some teachers who may have less than dazzling personalities but get along with their students quite well. What these teachers invariably do have is an effective program. Students engaged in learning are not discipline problems.

While it is true that some students come into school so disruptive that an effective program by itself will not initially engage them in learning, at least at the outset, that is true for only a very small minority. For those few, establishing a positive relationship is of primary importance in order to get them into the effective program. Once they are effectively engaged in the program, they will no longer be discipline problems.

I am convinced that, ultimately, effective instructional programs are the solution to low achievement. It is also clear that they contribute mightily to positive relationships between teachers and students, students and students and parents and teachers.

Thus the cause - effect equation has an alternate form that also is valid for the overwhelming percentage of students and teachers:

$$\begin{aligned} EP &= HA + GB + PR \\ \text{(Cause)} &= \text{(Effects)} \end{aligned}$$

While relationships can be either a cause, effect or both, effective programs, by themselves, cause high achievement, good behavior and positive relationships for the overwhelming majority of students. This generally holds true even for most “disturbed” students once they get into these effective programs.

Deming tells us that chronic problems in organizations are not caused by the people (workers) but the system. Teachers are not causing low achievement. Achievement is an effect caused by the program. For example, if we want to improve reading achievement test scores, we must improve the reading program that causes them. Any real improvement in the reading program will cause improvement in the effect, student achievement and test scores for that program.

By following Deming’s quality principle of commitment to continuous reading program improvement, we will see continuous improvement in student reading achievement. By applying this continuous assessment and improvement process to all learning programs we will see improvement in achievement by all students in all programs. We must move from dependence on conventional teacher observation and evaluation and student tests to improve student achievement to continuous instructional program evaluation and improvement. We must recognize the need to assess the system. It will only be through dealing effectively with assessment of systemic problems and methods that we will be able to overcome them. While self assess-

ment of individuals can improve the individual, only self assessment of the system can improve the system. Until systemic obstacles to improvement are addressed, even the ability of individuals to improve their own performance will be limited by those systemic obstacles.

**PROGRAM OBSERVATION CHART**

The chart below provides a structure that can replace present ineffective practices. Across the top are listed the curriculum/program components recommended in a school reading program. Observations can involve a 60 – 90 second walk through by supervisors looking for the presence of specific program elements. When components are found to be present, the chart is marked for that teacher. As time goes by, the elements of the program can be implemented and recorded on the chart.

Professionals can make their own program charts with the components needed for any and all subject areas. As more elements of program effectiveness are put in place, student achievement will increase and test scores will rise.

**The following program elements are recommended for reading program assessment.**

1. SE: STUDENTS ENGAGED consistently in learning.
2. ID: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT DIFFERENCES are consistently and effectively addressed by the program
3. PP: A PLACEMENT PROCESS exists to place students at appropriate reading skills levels
4. LT: LEARNING TOOLS are available to all students at all times
5. RM: RECOGNITION MEMORY only is required. Rote memory is never required.
6. EsC: ESSENTIAL CURRICULUM is identified and prioritized. Students demonstrate mastery of essential curriculum
7. EnC: ENRICHMENT CURRICULUM is used as needed when essential curriculum is mastered
8. ICD: IRRELEVANT CURRICULUM DELETED from program
9. CP: A COORDINATION PROCESS exists for each student’s program between grades and schools
10. TSA: TEACHER SELF ASSESSES program effectiveness continuously
11. TIP: TEACHER IMPROVES PROGRAM continuously
12. TSS: TEACHER SHARES SUCCESSFUL program practices and materials
13. MP: MONITORING PROCESS exists for teacher assessment of student progress. It also facilitates students assessment of their own work

**PROGRAM/ CURRICULUM ELEMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR SCHOOL READING PROGRAM**

| Teacher Name | 1 SE | 2 ID | 3 PP | 4 LT | 5 RM | 6 EsC | 7 EnC | 8 ICD | 9 CP | 10 TSA | 11 TIP | 12 TSS | 13 MP |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 2            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 3            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 4            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 5            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 6            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 7            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 7            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 9            |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |
| 10           |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |        |        |        |       |

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# ***Supervision Through Collaboration: A University / Secondary School Partnership***

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## **Abstract**

Effective teaching involves engaging students and staff in learning activities that promote a positive self-image as well as academic success. This article describes the year long collaboration between a university and a struggling urban high school in the areas of administration, curriculum, school counseling and strategies utilized to promote positive changes in the delivery of instruction and counseling services that result in improvement in student learning and student self-image and the improvement of how the school is viewed by its students, their parents, and the community.

## **Overview of the Project**

In 2007, the St. John's University School of Education and a New York City Vocational High School entered into a collaborative effort to change the direction of a persistently struggling school to a school that would successfully meet the academic standards mandated by the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2001). This is an inner city school with a population of approximately 1500 students that did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). The student body is 70% Black or African American, 80% are male, 20% of the entire population are Special Education students, 75% are at or below the poverty level, and 90% meet eligibility for the free or reduced lunch program.

The recently appointed principal of the school reached out to St. John's in an effort to help (a) bring about positive change in the areas of teaching and learning, (b) improve how teachers and students interact with each other and (c) clarify the role of the school counselors. In order to effectively and successfully ascertain the needs of the school it was decided by the consultation team (CT) to have a retreat for the school's administrative team. The university faculty who comprised the CT were former administrators and teachers in New York City who had the expert knowledge and hands-on experience to understand the school's needs and to guide and support change. It was clear from the outset that in order for the CT to have any chance of success individuals in the school not only had to trust the CT but trust each other.

The primary purpose of this retreat was to initiate a conversation where ideas could be expressed in an open and safe environment. This exchange of ideas allowed the CT to better understand the issues, to see how the school leadership viewed the issues and each other, and to establish trust among all participants (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). The fact is that trust alone cannot guarantee success, but in any environment where individuals do not trust one another there is no chance to improve (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

The CT did a great deal of listening at the initial meeting to gain an understanding of the school's needs. In addition, the individual presenters from the university exhibited concern, consistency, integrity, an environment for open communication and a willingness to share ideas which promoted trust among all the participants (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). At the conclusion of the two day meeting school administrators understood that establishing and maintaining trust was important if the school was to change from failing to succeeding (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Tarter, Sabo and Hoy, 1995; Tarter, Bliss and Hoy, 1989). From their post retreat comments it was evident that they believed:

- . each individual was competent to perform all that was required in his/her position
- . each individual had each other's best interest at heart,
- . they could depend on each other for help and support,
- . an individual was honest and authentic in reviewing situations, and
- . all parties would be willing to share information with each other.

Furthermore from participants feedback, the CT gained an understanding of the issues and did express genuine concern and a willingness to work with the school leadership. It was also clear that the quality and duration of the CT's professional development program would be an important factor in improving teaching practices as well as having a positive impact on student learning (Hirsch, Koppich, Knapp, 2001).

## Development and Implementation of a Plan

On the first visit to the school, the CT looked at characteristics that would define an effective school (Taylor, 2002):

- . a mission statement that was known and shared by all,
- . a safe and orderly environment,
- . high expectations for all,
- . a high level of instruction and high levels of student teacher interaction,
- . the use of data to evaluate student progress, and
- . parental involvement.

Through informal observations and conversations, it was apparent that there was a need to change the way teachers viewed students both as individuals and academically, as well as raise the teachers' respect for student ability and by extension raise the expectation of students' performance (Elmore, 1996). In an attempt to accomplish this the CT began to work with the Departmental Assistant Principals who were responsible for supervision, in reviewing classroom observation practices and procedures. To this end, a two hour workshop was conducted by the CT on the "pre" and "post" observation processes to review procedures that would support change in professional practices and would increase the quality of classroom instruction and student learning. For example, the use of prior teacher observations to build skills in a professional development approach as well as to document areas in continued need of improvement for marginal teachers was discussed and modeled. Additionally, the CT emphasized that a positive climate among the staff would help to insure that people would work in their departments to identify and solve problems (Blasé and Blasé, 2001). Furthermore, individual meetings were conducted with supervisors who requested support from the consultants or whom the principal identified as needing direct CT intervention.

In particular, one assistant principal of a major subject area sought additional consultation time. She was eager to improve her supervisory practices and invited CT members to join her in a classroom observation (with the teacher's agreement) and then to observe her conducting a post observation conference. Based on those experiences, it was recommended that she utilize an observational rubric with her teachers to ensure that everyone was "on the same page" regarding the expectations of the lesson as well as to foster teacher reflection.

Upon her analysis of the data with her staff, one area of the rubric became the focus of her future work with her department, namely student engagement. Since the assistant principal identified this as a need common to her teaching staff, the CT created a PowerPoint presentation focused on student engagement that she could use at a

subsequent departmental meeting. The CT suggested that at a future department meeting she ask one teacher who was demonstrating success with student engagement to present some strategies that were found to be successful. Additionally, they recommended that she review Wehlage's and Stronge's work on engagement as well as Wehlage's model.

As with all other building supervisors, the assistant principal was encouraged to think of the department meeting as a vehicle for teacher growth and learning. For example, the CT provided a PowerPoint presentation on differentiated instruction with the suggestion that the teachers include a demonstration of a strategy at one meeting and then solicit feedback from those who utilized it at the next meeting. The CT recommended having staff share their thoughts on how the strategy may be adapted, tweaked or enhanced to meet the specific needs of their students. The supervisors agreed that this approach would lead to "hands on" experiences with differentiating instruction and provide teachers with ownership of the instructional strategies.

Using a qualitative note-taking approach subsequent visits centered on observing the interactions between students and staff as they entered the building, traffic flow, behavior in the hallways prior to class and after the late bell, disruptions to the instructional program, bell to bell instruction, and the rapport between students and teachers in their subject classrooms. The CT met frequently with the principal debriefing their observed concerns as they emerged and brainstormed with him to seek solutions that he was comfortable with and that would be viable within the desired culture of his building which would focus on teaching, learning, and student success.

Another area for development involved assisting the principal to view himself as the authority figure in the building; building confidence in himself in his roles as instructional leader, manager, change agent, communicator, and "team leader" for program assessment and implementation (Shellard, 2003; Fullan, 2002; Glickman, 2002 and Supovitz, 2000).

Evidence of the CT's success in the area of principal development was realized at the wrap-up meeting at the conclusion of the 2007-2008 school year. Most obvious to the CT was the much improved level of cleanliness of the building, the quiet and sense of order that pervaded the hallways, and the principal's confidence in himself as the building leader all of which create an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. The principal was emerging as a thoughtful, reflective and inquisitive professional. His priorities shifted from focusing on a school in need of restructuring to one that was now completing a Comprehensive Education Plan for 2008-2009. Of particular note was the way the principal handled a specific situation one morning and then used that situation as a teachable moment with his assistant principal. Not only was the resolution student-focused, but the principal modeled an important lesson for his protégé.

The principal presented four key questions that he hoped to use to move the school further forward: What should our students learn? How will we know they have learned it? What do we do if they did learn it? What do we do if they did not learn it? He realized that these questions led directly to the issues of measurement and accountability. A number of measurable suggestions were made by the CT as planning for the next school year got underway:

- . Develop student leaders and give them the opportunity to take ownership of their school.
- . Motivate students to want more from their school experience. This starts with the teachers; teachers must raise the bar; teachers must “own” the mission and the vision.
- . Have each stakeholder school-wide identify one specific goal that they would hold themselves accountable for accomplishing.
- . Encourage teachers to use a huge K/W/L chart on the side of a classroom wall to demonstrate clearly to the students what they Know, Want to learn, and record when they Learned it (with evidence).
- . Develop a syllabus and/or a calendar of lessons for teachers of regents courses to assure continuity and consistency across courses and within a department.
- . Have each A.P. identify one teacher that they would work with closely for improvement over a year and give new teachers a “buddy teacher.”
- . Create a school-oriented visual that could be duplicated, distributed and prominently displayed to document “where we were”, “what we’ve accomplished” and “where do we go next.”
- . Enhance outreach/recruitment of students by bringing guidance counselors from feeder schools in for lunch, sending parents and students to the feeder schools, having the Spotlight students and Honors students visit the schools, and hosting community events. All agreed that there were many ways to rebuild the reputation of the school by using a small focused positive steps.
- . Introduce a new school wide initiative called “Win the Day.” The guidance department will identify a cohort of students who will receive personalized mentoring in order to help “win their day” by attending all of their classes including the first and last periods of the day, coming to school daily on time, completing all assignments, and monitoring their own classroom behavior.

Through a partnership with the guidance department, all staff members will be challenged to set personal goals to “win their day as well.”

### **Emphasis on the Role of the School Counselors**

In order to address the principal’s concern regarding the school counseling program, a St. John’s University professor from the department of school counseling joined the CT team. This school’s counseling department consisted of eight counselors, six female and two male, all full-time employees, and an Assistant Principal of Guidance (APG). The consultant viewed the Assistant Principal of Guidance (APG) as someone who was respected by both the counselors and the principal and who was open to the consultant. The consultant met with the APG to share ideas and work with her to try to have her on board with the goal of looking at problem areas and creating solutions.

The school counseling CT’s first order of business was to determine who was requesting the consultant, what that person saw as the problem(s) to be addressed and the nature of the problem(s). In this particular case, the consultation was triadic (Dougherty, 1995) in nature. The triad was made up of the consultant, the help seeker (principal) and the client (school counseling department) with the ultimate beneficiary of this engagement being the students. The first goal was to determine the relationship between the principal and the counselors; since the principal requested the consultant, it was very possible that the counselors were not in favor of this. As noted earlier, the consultant had to establish the degree to which the parties trusted each other. For this collaboration to be successful there had to be an honest and trusting working relationship among the professionals (Sebring & Bryk, 2000); the consultant needed to explore and identify this relationship.

There was a major issue that surfaced early in this particular consultation. From the initial meeting with the principal and then with the school counselors it was clear the two did not see the counselors’ work the same way. The principal recognized that the counselors were doing a good job but thought they could do a “better job.” The counselors thought they were doing a good job but also thought they were overworked in terms of the paperwork required and that they were underappreciated by the principal. They were also unsure of what the principal meant by “their being able to do a better job.”

There was no disagreement between the principals and the counselors regarding the counselors’ work meeting an acceptable standard or attaining quality acceptance by the department as a whole, with some variance among individual counselors. The principal was looking for the counselors to take their work to a higher level; that is, to become substantially engaged with their students through meaningful and frequent personal contact. In conjunction with the counselors the consultant identified areas for quality improvement and set markers to determine if in fact there was measurable improvement.

Along with establishing the degree to which the principal and counselors would work with each other it was imperative that a trusting relationship be established between

the consultant and the counselors. This can be somewhat difficult because, as in this case, consultants not based in the school are perceived as outsiders is not based in the school (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 2006). After all it was not the counselors who thought changes needed to be made, it was the principal, resulting in an understandable hesitation on the counselors part to work with the consultant. A meeting between the consultant and the counselors as a group provided a forum to clarify why the consultant was there, the agenda, and to bring to the surface counselor concerns. The consultant allowed the counselors to do most of the talking which involved venting. By the end of the hour-long meeting the counselors understood the consultant was there to do things “with them” and not “to them” and the consultant came away understanding the counselors’ views of the principal, the school, and the quality of their work.

It became clear early on that there were some positives to build on and some obstacles to overcome. The positives included counselors’ admitting that things could be better, viewing the consultant as a positive change agent, and respecting the leadership of the Assistant Principal of Guidance (APG) who showed a willingness to work on improving things. In addition, and especially important for the consultant to note, several counselors did show genuine interest in trying to improve things.

There were three primary obstacles. First, while all the counselors agreed there is always room for improvement, a few counselors did not display enthusiasm for actually exploring steps to make changes, holding steadfast to the idea that there was already too much paperwork and too many tasks to complete. Second, it was thought the principal did not appreciate the work done by the counselors. Third and most disturbing to the counselors was the belief that decisions were made top-down in an arbitrary way with little and often no input from the counselors. This made the counselors feel marginalized. That type of feeling is a significant obstacle to improving staff relationships (Brewster & Railsback, 2003).

### **Establishing a Connection with Counselors**

Giving voice to the counselors by allowing them to express their concerns was the first step. This countered their expressed feeling of being marginalized and was an important step in trust building (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The starting point involved engaging the entire counseling department in a conversation about the school, their work, and offered a forum for ideas and issues to be raised without criticism or the consultant discounting any proposals. The consultant came away from the meeting with two issues of concern: (a) the need to improve attendance and (b) students were failing too many courses and therefore were not able to graduate.

Where possible, the consultant tried to put two counselors together on one project to support each other, knowing that creating support among staff fosters team-building

and acts as an incentive to keep working on the project (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Uline, Hoy, & Mackley, 2003). The consultant met individually with those counselors who agreed to take on a project. He asked each counselor to respond to three questions before the logistics of the project were designed. Is the project positive, possible, and supported? That is to ask: was the project positive for the students? was it realistically possible to complete? and was it supported by the principal and the assistant principal? There had to be a yes answer to each of these questions. For obvious reasons any “no” answer would be an obstacle that had to be overcome. It was very important for the decision makers to be kept current on all that was taking place. The consultant met with the principal and the assistant principal and informed them of the progress. Both expressed positive thoughts and presented no obstacles to continuing. This allowed for the consultant to move to the second phase: establishing consultant credibility.

At the next consultant-counselors meeting there was a shift in focus from talking about problems to owning solutions. As a follow-up to the individual meetings that took place the consultant asked the counselors to identify projects they might want to explore with the consultant. Two counselors said they had projects in mind and wanted to talk about them. The consultant worked with the two counselors to begin clarifying their projects and developing a plan of action. An hour is not sufficient time to talk through and establish two projects, but it is enough time for the consultant to demonstrate to any reluctant counselors that the process is easy, and some energizing projects can come out of the discussion. This meeting was a starting point for further conversations. Watching the interaction put the other six counselors at ease about doing a project themselves. At the end of the meeting, two additional counselors asked the consultant if they could meet with him and start to develop their own project.

### **The Consultant Establishes Credibility**

Up to this point the counselors experienced the consultant in expressed terms and not manifest terms. The counselors had never actually witnessed any defining action that offered them a chance to believe the consultant can “do” as well as talk. An overnight retreat was arranged for the consultant and counselors with the agenda and events organized by the consultant. This gave the consultant an opportunity to show the counselors that he was a capable professional. This was an important perception for the counselors to embrace. Through demonstration, the consultant can break through any resistance based on doubts about his ability. There are many levels of resistance (Parsons & Meyers, 1984), this could be one of them. Written feedback indicated all eight counselors thought the retreat was worthwhile. They reported that they learned some strategies about school counseling, they saw the consultant as less of an outsider, and they believed it had a positive impact on team building.

### **Committing to a Project**

Within two weeks of the retreat, the consultant met individually with each of the eight counselors. Three dominant issues were identified. First, there were too many students doing very poorly academically with no strategies in place to address this problem. These students were vulnerable to leaving school without a diploma or any marketable, vocational skills. The consultant and the counselors agreed that it would be beneficial to meet with the students to find out what they thought their needs were. This was a student-focused approach. It was decided that the consultant would attend a group session and demonstrate specific techniques that would engage students.

Second, there was no acknowledgment of student success in either the academic domain or demonstrated positive social responsibility. It was decided that a peer support plan would be developed. Students who were passing all their courses would be given awards in their homeroom or in the subject class in which they excelled. In addition to the counselor, it was suggested the principal also be present. Furthermore, the student receiving the award would be asked to identify another student who might be close to achieving this academic milestone and work with that student in an effort to produce positive results.

The third more difficult problem involved how to stop gang influence and intimidation in and outside the school. This problem remains in the discussion stage at this time and is a system wide issue that will require the involvement of numerous stakeholders including students, school officials, parents, the community, and law enforcement.

### **Changes That Influence School Climate**

All parties agreed that the school has to work on changing its climate to become much more positive. There were several simple suggestions that should be implemented. Each counselor should make no less than two positive phone calls home each week to inform the parent(s) that the student has demonstrated a positive behavior. That behavior might include, but not be limited to, improved attendance, improved grades, greater participation in a class, or completed homework on time. One source of this type of information would be obtained from counselor-teacher conversations which are presently limited. This strategy would support students as well as increase professional collaboration.

Another easy to implement idea is to have a "word of the week." The word, chosen by the A.P. for English in consultation with teachers and students, would be announced on the public address system, posted on a bulletin board, hung at the school entrance on a display and used in English classes throughout the school. Words cannot be negative, cannot be slang, or street derivations of words. Some words that might be considered include: integrity, honor, commitment, motivation, and achievement. This is another strategy that may add to a positive school environment.

Finally, having teachers and counselors being visible in the halls between classes may help to reduce incidents of violence and negative behavior. Teachers should stand at the classroom door and greet students; this would afford teachers the opportunity to provide positive feedback to students. Likewise, counselors should make themselves accessible and engage students in between classes. Increasing staff-student interaction may promote better student outcomes. A goal of these small school wide projects, and creating a positive climate in the school is to offer students a better chance of succeeding.

### **Impact of the School-University Collaboration**

As a result of the collaboration, the school's yearly "Quality Review" from the New York City Department of Education cited the following findings:

What the school does well:

- Students assessed to be in greatest need are first to receive support to improve their progress and performance.
- Staffing and scheduling decisions are based on strong evaluations of individual student's performance and the nature of the program and intervention that they are most likely to require.
- Systems and structures are being implemented which enable the school to function effectively on a day to day basis.
- The Principal's high expectations are raising the expectations of the whole school community so that goals established are becoming challenging, but achievable.
- There are effective and consistently applied procedures in place to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness.
- The entire Administrative team has a clear vision for procedures and systems to effect change.
- School leaders track the outcome of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes.
- There is support and professional development from a university to help meet the needs of teachers and students.

The annual Quality Review also cited a few areas in need of improvement which included: (a) further develop a school wide approach to the objective collecting and interpreting of data; (b) ensure that teachers use data to plan and provide differentiated instruction; (c) further develop effective partnerships with outside entities to support the academic and personal growth of students; and

(d) improve the consistency with which teachers record information about individual students and their classes as a whole and evaluate their progress against targets set for improvement.

As a result of these findings, the CT plans to focus on the major area in need of improvement – the use and interpretation of data – as we continue our work with the school's staff into the next school year. A professional development program is planned for the entire staff during the summer to increase staff understanding of why data is important and how it can be used to drive instruction and support student achievement. All collaborators are committed to the school's motto "failure is not an option" and eager to see continued improvement for the benefit of the students.

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# College Students' Attitude Towards the Frequency of Types of Technology Used For Online Learning

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the perception of students regarding the frequency and preference of types of technology used for online learning. Differences were compared between two groups of students, currently taking online classes, those who previously completed an online course and those who had not. An independent samples *t* test revealed that there were no significant differences between the two groups regarding their attitudes towards frequency of use of the types of technologies used during online learning. In addition, a frequency analysis revealed that most of the students felt that certain forms of synchronous learning technology should never be used during an online course. Differences were revealed with regard to the technology preferred for personal communication during online courses. A discussion of student familiarity with some types of technology followed.

## **Purpose**

Many colleges and universities are offering online learning courses as part of their undergraduate and graduate programs. An estimated 12.2 million students were enrolled or registered in an online college level credit course during the 2006-2007 academic school years (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). Online learning can take many forms; delivery systems of information can vary and the use of different types of technology can be required for participation. Online learning can provide flexibility, individualized learning, and may be offered at a lower cost than learning that occurs face-to-face (Griffiths & Graham, 2009). Technology used during online learning is also being used in face-to-face classroom environments. This present study will build on the information regarding students' attitudes toward online learning technology.

The purpose of this study was to examine students' attitudes towards the types of technology used during online learning. There were three types of technology examined in this study; asynchronous learning technology (blackboard environment, internet discussion groups, internet one-way audio only and online tests), synchronous learning technology (fax, internet chat groups, internet two-way audio only, internet one-way live video and one-way audio, internet one-way live video and two-way audio, internet two-way live video and two-way audio, personal information manager general, simulations, telephone/voice mail, videoconferencing), and personal communication

technology (communication via email, electronic portfolios, databases, traditional mail correspondence and web blogs).

This study was intended to answer two questions: Is there a difference between students who previously completed an online course and students who have not with regard to which types of technology they feel should be used in an online course and with what frequency? Is there a difference between the student groups with regard to the preference of the technology they feel should be used in an online course and the frequency of that use?

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Asynchronous Learning Technology***

Individuals learn differently and process and understand information at different rates. Self Determination Theory (SDT) (as cited in Lapointe & Reisetter, 2008) supports the idea of interpersonal involvement to help students learn. According to SDT when students learn they need to meet their psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence; asynchronous learning can be used to meet these needs. Asynchronous learning can take the form of discussion groups which, when carefully structured, can promote on-task discussions that increase the students knowledge about the task (Vonderwell, Liang, & Alderman, 2007; Teo & Webster, 2008). In addition, discussion groups have been used successfully to build collaborative student- to- student and student- to- teacher learning environments (Cox & Cox, 2008). Timely, appropriate feedback from instructors, along with the amount of course-related contact, has been found to impact student attitudes toward asynchronous learning environments and their decisions to remain with or to drop out of a distance learning course (Tello, 2007).

### ***Synchronous Learning Technology***

Synchronous learning provides a real time learning experience for students. This type of methodology facilitates immediate reactions and comments which offer online students the opportunity to interact when working together with other students in group assignments or projects. Synchronous learning has been accepted by students because it is easy to use, efficient, and affords the ability for students to learn from each other while creating a sense of classroom community for online students. These features of

synchronous learning technology help maintain the students interest in online learning (Maushak & Ou, 2007).

In the online environment, synchronous learning allows full interactive communication between students as well as between students and faculty members. Students are able to “share data in real time resulting in a learning environment that closely mimics a face-to-face classroom experience” (Rybarczyk, 2007, p. 31). Student involvement is an important aspect for active and engaged learning and synchronous learning demonstrates an increase in student participation and understanding. Synchronous learning is most valuable when frequent feedback and communication with other students, as well as the faculty member, is required. Student success is evident when faculty members utilize the correct educational tools to accomplish the specific goals and learning outcomes of the course. The information and expansion of technology has made synchronous learning a resourceful method and financially feasible for students to complete degrees while maintaining a work and a home life.

Regardless of the positive aspects of synchronous learning, the characteristic time restriction for assignments or lectures in synchronous learning can place limitations on sufficient discussion and thoughtful feedback (Park & Bond, 2007). Technology related problems and inefficient network connections have a negative influence on communication between classmates as well as the faculty member. “In addition, to some students who had a language barrier, it was more challenging to communicate with their peers without face-to-face interactions. Sound problems like noises and repeats created more difficulties for them” (Park & Bond, 2007, p.259).

### ***Personal Communication Technology***

Inside the long distance learning paradigm, courses are taught in a myriad of ways. Whether the pedagogy methodology is synchronous or asynchronous, personal communication is a concern for students. Personal communication in long distance learning plays a significant role in creating a sense of connectedness and classroom community for the enrolled students. Woods (2002) states that, “both quality and frequency of interpersonal and group communication are critical factors in the relative success of online distance courses and programs” (p. 382). Without personal communication, students begin to feel disconnected and isolated with regards to the rest of the class. The students’ sensitivity toward personal communication is imperative with regard to the level of satisfaction with the online learning experience.

According to Gregory (2003), personal communication is an essential component for moving an online course from simple communication to an educational experience comparable to a traditional classroom environment. Advances in technology have made online learning a forceful power in education; it provides an interactive approach for reaching students with time and distance barriers. Technology plays an active role within higher educa-

tion. Heiman (2008) reports, “internet technology has a powerful potential for knowledge innovation, increasing efficiency, and improving the educational system” (p. 245). The need for personal communication and human interaction regarding online learning is imperative on the part of the faculty member in creating an encouraging social and academic environment.

### ***Methods***

The data for this present study was obtained from a previous study conducted by Thomas Franza Jr. (2006). Franza (2006) developed a survey to measure student and faculty attitudes on the use of technology for online learning courses. The original study was entitled, “Web Based Distance Learning Training and Technology Needs as Perceived by Faculty and Student: A Contrast between Web Based and Traditional Classrooms.” The participants from the original study involved 272 students enrolled in an online course for the 2005 Spring and/or Summer semester in a private co-educational college located on Long Island, New York (to see complete survey see Appendix B, pages 145-147, Franza, 2006).

The data for this present study contained responses from 57 students who were taking online courses at the time of the original survey, 40 reported that they had previously completed an online course, 17 reported that they had not. Of the 40 students who reported that they had previously taken an online course, 17 were randomly selected; using SPSS, for this study.

Twenty- two questions from the original survey were used in this study. These questions asked the respondents to indicate which tools they felt should be used in an online course and with what frequency measured by a five point Likert Scale (1=Never, 2=Once or twice/semester, 3=Monthly, 4=Weekly, 5=Daily). For this study, items were validated using a factor analysis with an absolute value of .50; from this factor analysis 3 variables; asynchronous learning technology, synchronous learning technology, and personal communication technology, were developed. Based on results of the factor analysis, 4 items were included to measure how often students felt types of technology should be used for asynchronous learning, 10 items were included to measure how often students felt types of technology should be used for synchronous learning, and 5 items were included to measure how often students felt types of technology should be used for personal communication during an online course. Three of the original 22 items were omitted as they either did not load or loaded in two places (*see Tables 1, 2, 3*).

Chronbach’s alphas were computed to determine the reliability of each of the three variables created. Results of reliability for each variable; technology for asynchronous online learning (64.2%), technology for synchronous online learning (94.8%), and technology for personal communication (82%), indicated reliability of the measurement. An independent samples *t* test and frequency analysis were performed to contrast the frequency and preference of use for

specific technology between both groups of students; those who previously completed an online course and those who had not.

### Results

*Question one:* Is there a difference between students who previously completed an online course and students who have not with regard to which types of technology they feel should be used in an online course and with what frequency?

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate if there was a difference between students who previously completed an online course (indicated as "P" in the below tables) and those who had not (indicated as "NP" in the below tables) with regard to how often they felt specific types of technology should be used in asynchronous learning, synchronous learning, and personal communication during an online course. Results revealed that there were no significant differences between the students who previously completed an online course and those who had not with regard to how often they felt specific types of technology should be used in asynchronous online learning  $t(27) = 1.734, p = .094$ , synchronous online learning  $t(27) = -.104, p = .918$ , and personal communications  $t(24) = .629, p = .535$ , during an online course.

*Question two:* Is there a difference between the student groups regarding their attitude toward preference of technology used and the frequency of that use during an online course? Frequency distributions for the three variables were computed for each group, students who previously completed an online course and those who had not. Frequency distributions revealed the percent of use that the

students felt each type of technology, within each variable, should be used during an online course.

### Asynchronous Learning Technology

Percentage of the students' attitude towards how often each type of asynchronous learning technology should be used during an online course are indicated in Table 1. Results revealed that both groups of students; 52.9% of those who previously completed an online course and 50% of those who had not, felt that the blackboard learning environment should be used on a weekly basis. Of the students in both groups; 82.4% of those that previously completed an online course and 43.8% of those that had not, felt that internet discussion groups should be used on a weekly basis.

Students; 37.5% of those who had previously completed an online course and 66.7% of those who had not, felt that internet one-way audio only should never be used; additionally 37.5% of those students who previously completed an online course felt that internet one-way audio should be used at least once or twice a semester. Both groups of students; 43.8% of students who previously completed an online course and 56.3% of those that had not, felt that online tests should be used on a monthly basis.

Students who had previously completed an online course, compared to students who had not, were more likely to feel that internet discussion boards and online tests be used on a weekly basis. Students who had not previously completed an online course, compared to students that had, were more likely to feel that the blackboard learning environment be used once or twice a semester and that internet one-way audio only never be used (**Table 1**).

**Table 1** Asynchronous Learning Technology (Previous online course N=16, No Previous online course N=13) Percentage of students' attitude towards how often asynchronous learning technology should be used during an online course.

|                             | Never<br>1  | Once or twice/semester<br>2 | Monthly<br>3 | Weekly<br>4 | Daily<br>5 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Blackboard learning         |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                           | ----        | ----                        | ----         | <b>52.9</b> | 47.1       |
| NP                          | ----        | 6.3                         | ----         | <b>50.0</b> | 43.8       |
| Internet discussion         |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                           | ----        | ----                        | ----         | <b>82.4</b> | 17.6       |
| NP                          | 6.3         | 6.3                         | 31.3         | <b>43.8</b> | 12.5       |
| Internet one-way audio only |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                           | <b>37.5</b> | <b>37.5</b>                 | ----         | 18.8        | 6.3        |
| NP                          | <b>66.7</b> | 20.0                        | 6.7          | ----        | 6.7        |
| Online tests                |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                           | ----        | 12.5                        | <b>43.8</b>  | 37.5        | 6.3        |
| NP                          | 6.3         | 12.5                        | <b>56.3</b>  | 12.5        | 12.5       |

### Synchronous Learning Technology

Percentage of the students' attitude towards how frequent each type of synchronous learning technology should be used during an online course are indicated in Table 2. Results revealed that 41.2% of students who previously completed an online course and 33.3% of those that had not; felt that internet chat groups should be used on a weekly basis during an online course. Of the students who previously completed an online course 43.8% felt that internet two-way audio only should be used once or twice a semester, whereas 53.3% of the students who had not previously completed an online course felt that it should never be used. Of the students who previously completed an online course 43.8% felt that simulations should never be used; whereas of the students who had not previously completed an online

course, 26.7% felt that simulations should not be used and 26.7% felt that it should be used monthly. Telephone and voice mail was a technology that 40% of students who previously completed an online course felt should never be used, whereas of the students who had not previously completed an online course, 25% felt that telephone and voicemail should be used monthly, 25% felt it should be used weekly, and 25% felt that it should never be used.

The frequency results revealed that most students from both groups felt that a fax, internet one-way live video and one-way audio, internet one-way live video and two-way audio, internet two-way live video and two-way audio, personal information manager general, and videoconferencing, should never be used during an online course (**Table 2**).

**Table 2** Synchronous Learning Technology (Previous online course N=14, No Previous online course N=15)  
Percentage of students' attitude towards how often synchronous learning technology should be used during an online course.

|  | Never<br>1  | Once or twice/semester<br>2 | Monthly<br>3 | Weekly<br>4 | Daily<br>5 |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Fax  |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 43.8        | 37.5                        | 6.3          | 6.3         | 6.3        |
| NP   | 56.3        | 6.3                         | 18.8         | 6.3         | 12.5       |
| Internet chat groups                               |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 11.8        | 11.8                        | 29.4         | <b>41.2</b> | 5.9        |
| NP   | 13.3        | 20.0                        | 26.7         | <b>33.3</b> | 6.7        |
| Internet two-way audio only                        |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 37.5        | <b>43.8</b>                 | -----        | 12.5        | 6.3        |
| NP   | <b>53.3</b> | 20.0                        | 13.3         | 6.7         | 6.7        |
| Internet one-way live video<br>and one-way audio   |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 43.8        | 31.3                        | 6.3          | 12.5        | 6.3        |
| NP   | 73.3        | 13.3                        | 6.7          | -----       | 6.7        |
| Internet one- way live video<br>and two- way audio |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 37.5        | 37.5                        | 6.3          | 12.5        | 6.3        |
| NP   | 66.7        | 13.3                        | 6.7          | 6.7         | 6.7        |
| Internet two-way live<br>video and two- way audio  |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 37.5        | 31.3                        | 12.5         | 12.5        | 6.3        |
| NP   | 60.0        | 13.3                        | 6.7          | 13.3        | 6.7        |
| Personal information<br>manager General            |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 46.7        | 20.0                        | 20.0         | 6.7         | 6.7        |
| NP   | 40.0        | 6.7                         | 33.3         | 6.7         | 13.3       |
| Simulations  |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | <b>43.8</b> | 25.0                        | 12.5         | 12.5        | 6.3        |
| NP   | <b>26.7</b> | 20.0                        | <b>26.7</b>  | 20.0        | 6.7        |
| Telephone/ voice mail                              |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | <b>40.0</b> | 6.7                         | 20.0         | 26.7        | 6.7        |
| NP   | <b>25.0</b> | 12.5                        | <b>25.0</b>  | <b>25.0</b> | 12.5       |
| Videoconferencing                                  |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P  | 50.0        | 31.3                        | 6.3          | 6.3         | 6.3        |
| NP   | 66.7        | 6.7                         | 13.3         | 6.7         | 6.7        |

### Personal Communication Technology

Percentage of the students' attitude towards how often each type of personal communication technology should be used during an online course are indicated in Table 3. Results revealed that, 80% of students who previously completed an online course and 56.3% of those who had not; felt that e-mails should be used on a weekly basis. Frequency results revealed that an equal percent of students, 28.6% who previously completed an online course felt that either electronic portfolios be used on a monthly basis or on a weekly basis, while 33.3% of students who had not previously completed an online course felt that they should be used on a monthly basis. Of the students who previously completed an online course 37.5% felt that online data bases should be used weekly; whereas 40% of students who had not previously completed an online course felt they should be used monthly. Both groups of students; 50% of those who previously completed an online course and 60% of those who had not, felt that traditional mail correspondence should not be used.

Students who previously completed an online course, compared to students who had not, were more likely to feel that e-mails, electronic portfolios and web logs/blogs be used on a weekly basis and that traditional mail correspondence be used on a once or twice a semester basis. Students who had not previously completed an online course, compared to those that had, were more likely to feel that online databases be used on a monthly basis. Differ-

ences in the realm of personal communication technology revealed that most students who had previously taken an online course preferred the use of web logs/blogs, opposed to those students who had not previously taken an online course (**Table 3**).

### Educational Importance of Study

The educational importance of this study is that it provides insight to students' attitude with regard to how often certain types of technology should be used in online learning. The results of this study indicate that students who had previously completed an online course were more likely to recognize and appreciate the types of technology used in asynchronous learning, synchronous learning, and personal communication and how often that technology should be used in an online learning environment. Students who had previously completed an online course felt that the technology used in all three areas; asynchronous learning, synchronous learning, and personal communication, be more frequently used compared to students who had not previously completed an online course.

This study revealed that students were more likely to prefer technology used in asynchronous learning. One could hypothesize, based on SDT theory (as cited in Lapointe & Reisetter, 2008), that students are more likely to use learning techniques used in asynchronous learning because these techniques support their psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The frequency re-

**Table 3** Personal Communication Technology (Previous online course N=12, No Previous online course N=14)  
Percentage of students' attitude toward how often personal communication technology should be used during an online course.

|                  | Never<br>1  | Once or twice/semester<br>2 | Monthly<br>3 | Weekly<br>4 | Daily<br>5 |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| E-mail           |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                | ----        | ----                        | ----         | <b>80.0</b> | 20.0       |
| NP               | ----        | 6.3                         | 6.3          | <b>56.3</b> | 31.3       |
| E-portfolios     |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                | 21.4        | 14.3                        | <b>28.6</b>  | <b>28.6</b> | 7.1        |
| NP               | 26.7        | 13.3                        | <b>33.3</b>  | 13.3        | 13.3       |
| Online databases |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                | 18.8        | 12.5                        | 18.8         | <b>37.5</b> | 12.5       |
| NP               | 13.3        | 6.7                         | <b>40.0</b>  | 33.3        | 6.7        |
| Traditional mail |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                | <b>50.0</b> | 18.8                        | 12.5         | 12.5        | 6.3        |
| NP               | <b>60.0</b> | 6.7                         | 13.3         | 6.7         | 13.3       |
| Web Logs/Blogs   |             |                             |              |             |            |
| P                | 37.5        | 12.5                        | 12.5         | 31.3        | 6.3        |
| NP               | 53.3        | 20.0                        | 13.3         | 6.7         | 6.7        |

sults revealed the highest percent of responses for students in both groups were those that felt a fax, traditional mail, internet one-way live video and one-way audio, internet one-way live video and two-way audio, internet two-way live video and two-way audio, personal information manager general, and videoconferencing, should never be used during an online course.

According to the review of the literature, the preference of synchronous learning technology is accepted by students as it is easy to use, efficient and affords the ability for students to learn from each other while creating a sense of classroom community for online students. However, our research indicates that most of the students felt that certain forms of synchronous learning technology (fax, internet one-way live video and one-way audio, internet one-way live video and two-way audio, internet two-way live video and two-way audio, personal information manager general, and videoconferencing) should never be used during an online course. Differences in the realm of personal communication technology revealed that most students who had previously taken an online course preferred the use of web logs/blogs, opposed to those students who had not previously taken an online course.

Future research should examine if there is a relationship between the students' knowledge or lack of knowledge regarding the use of technology and preference of technology when enrolled in an online course. The findings of this study should not be overlooked concerning the further advancement and progression of online learning courses.

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# FORMAL MENTORING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR NEW SUPERINTENDENTS IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

By Jane A. Eichman, Ed.D.

## **Abstract**

Research found in the literature reveals that formal mentoring is an increasingly important aspect of the educational profession due to an ever more complex organizational environment. The corporate world provides mentoring opportunities for employees. Likewise, twenty states currently provide some type of mentoring programs for new superintendents. However, little research currently exists regarding formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents in the state of Illinois.

The foci of this quantitative study were to examine whether formal mentoring programs are provided for new superintendents in the state of Illinois and to determine what specific subject areas should be included in these programs. This study adds to current research that suggests a need for formal mentoring and training programs for superintendents in order to assist in successful progression in the educational process and to play a vital role in the administrative preparation of new superintendents.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to conduct research in order to determine whether formal mentoring and training programs are provided for new superintendents in the state of Illinois. The goal was to research mentoring programs from multiple perspectives. Of particular interest to the researcher was a study of the literature related to mentoring programs provided for employees in the corporate world and mentoring and training programs provided for new teachers, new principals, and new superintendents in the field of education. No formal comparative research was conducted or was a comparative study included as part of the research questions.

This study was selected because of the importance of formal mentoring for new superintendents. Formal mentoring programs for new superintendents provide a necessary progression in the educational process and play a vital role in the administrative preparation of new superintendents.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The state of Illinois does not offer a formal mentoring program for all new superintendents or for experienced superintendents new to the state. As a result, new superintendents in Illinois often enter the superintendent position devoid of essential training activities and adequate professional development opportunities that could be an asset to them as they embark on a new administrative career. The school superintendent often heads one of the largest businesses in the community, particularly in rural areas. Where school districts with multiple buildings have a ready-made community of principals, there is only one superintendent in the district (Beem, 2007).

School district superintendents are faced with a myriad of decisions and responsibilities. Veteran superintendents have the advantage of relying on past experiences when confronted with numerous decisions and responsibilities. In contrast, new superintendents are unable to draw on past experiences when faced with important school district decisions and the turbulence and lack of predictability of the day-to-day rhythms of administrative life (Livingston, 2007). Many new superintendents are left to thrive on their own as they wade through budget documents, contracts, and school board relationships (Beem, 2007). Without the availability of a formal mentoring and training program, some superintendents may be left to fend—or to flounder—on their own.

## **Significance of the Study**

Literature is replete with information regarding the implementation of formal mentoring programs that the corporate world provides for employees and that school districts provide for new teachers, new principals, and new superintendents. Beem (2007) contends that in the 1990s, teacher mentoring programs proved that supporting first-year teachers yielded better instructors and provided increased teacher retention rates among school districts. That success led to mentoring programs for new building principals. Now mentoring programs are trickling up to superintendents, who by definition are the instructional leaders of their school districts. This study seeks to add to and extend

the expanding body of knowledge regarding formal mentoring programs for new superintendents. In addition, the research seeks to reiterate the increasing importance of providing formal mentoring opportunities for new superintendents in the state of Illinois.

## ***Review of the Literature***

### ***History***

The term *mentor* originates from Homer, the ancient Greek poet, and his epic poem, *The Odyssey*. When the great warrior, Odysseus, departed for the Trojan War, he left the education of his son, Telemachus, in the hands of his trusted friend, whose name was Mentor (Reese, 2006). The term *mentor* refers to one who acts as a guardian, a trusted counselor, or a teacher (Christ, 1989).

According to Little (1990), mentoring burst onto the educational scene in the early 1980s as part of a broad movement aimed at improving education. Since that time, policymakers and educational leaders have pinned high hopes on mentoring as a tool for reforming teaching and teacher education. Due to an awareness of various problems faced by beginning teachers, policymakers realized the logic of providing on-site support and assistance to novices during their first year of teaching.

### ***Mentoring in the Corporate World***

Ensher and Murphy (2005) state:

*Some of the top U.S. companies such as IBM, Cisco, Disney/ABC, and NBC/Universal utilize some type of mentoring programs. The fact that these organizations, like many others, are required to remain at the cutting edge of technology, prepare for executive succession, build strong organizational cultures, create shareholder wealth, and attract and retain top talent underscores the importance of mentoring for their continued success. (p. 263)*

Various companies have taken advantage of the benefits of mentoring programs in their organizations, with 60% of *Fortune's* 100 best companies utilizing formal mentoring programs (Branch, 1999). "Moreover, the existence of a formal mentoring program is now being used as criteria against which the 'best companies to work for' are judged" (Branch, 2004, p. 132). Zachary (2005) states, "Today more organizations are embracing mentoring than ever before, because it adds value for organizations, individuals within the organization, and others with whom they interact . . ." (p. 8).

### ***Mentoring Programs for New Teachers***

Historically, little attention has been paid to the development or mentoring of education's prime resource—its teachers. However, Huling and Resta (2001) report a dramatic increase in teacher mentoring plans since the early

1980s. Moir and Gless (2004) contend that new teachers are faced with myriads of problems and an overwhelming lack of support. As a result, they can easily become disillusioned. Their initial excitement often becomes quickly buried by feelings of doubt, frustration, and discouragement.

The first year of employment is often recognized as a critical period in a new teacher's career. Frustrations can escalate as beginning teachers are expected to perform the same duties as more experienced teachers (Thompson, 1995). Teaching is one of the few professions in which new teachers are expected to assume the same responsibilities as veterans in the field (Danielson, 1996). It is not uncommon for some new teachers to ultimately begin to question their reasons for entering the field of teaching. Breaux and Wong (2003) stress that school districts should commit the time and resources necessary to effectively train and support new teachers, "in whose hands we so trustingly place our children" (p. vi).

### ***Mentoring Programs for New Principals***

Just as novice teachers sometimes struggle with experiences of inadequacy, beginning principals often harbor similar feelings and frustrations. Even when principals are at the beginning of their administrative careers, they sometimes believe they should know more and be able to do more than they are currently able to do. [Numerous] states are trying to improve the quality of training provided for principals (Gates et al., 2003). "[M]any new principals still find themselves questioning how best to tackle the multiple challenges of the job. . . . [W]here principals once found themselves thrust into the position without much preparation, today's administrators are often given ample opportunities to work closely with veteran principals before assuming the job" (Franklin, 2005, pp. 1-2).

### ***Mentoring Programs for New Superintendents***

A school district superintendent holds a highly prestigious position in public education. Carter and Cunningham (1997) stress the importance of a need for support in the early years of the superintendency. Despite such statements, a review of the literature did not reveal a formal mentoring program for new superintendents in the state of Illinois. Recognizing that a need for mentoring exists, some professional organizations, such as the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), have stepped up to fill in the gap by providing workshops, training activities, and mentoring opportunities for new superintendents. These are provided on a voluntary basis.

Illinois legislation aimed at the adoption of a formal mentoring program for new superintendents was drafted in May, 2008 in the form of Senate Bill 2500. Senate Bill 2500 was approved by the House of Representatives and sent back to the Senate for concurrence (Alliance Legislative Report 95-69, IASB, 2008). At the time of this research project, however, Senate Bill 2500 had not been signed into law.

## **Method**

### ***Population***

The population identified for this study included all individuals employed as public school district superintendents in the state of Illinois during the 2007-2008 academic school year. The researcher contacted the IASA and requested a list of all public school district superintendents in the state of Illinois. The list yielded a total of 868 public school district superintendents.

### ***Instrumentation***

The researcher developed and implemented a self-administered, three-page survey instrument, which consisted of three parts. Part I of the survey instrument was comprised of personal and employment information. Part II of the survey instrument consisted of items designed to gather data relative to the individual respondent's superintendent mentoring and training experience.

Part III of the survey instrument addressed recommended subject areas that might be included in formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents. Twenty specific subject areas that often require a superintendent's knowledge and understanding were listed. Using a 5-point, Likert-type response scale, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they thought the individual subject areas should be included in formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents. Utilizing a principal components analysis, the 20 individual subject areas were empirically categorized into five subject-area groups, as follows: Law and Policy, Finance, Community Relations, Technology Skills, and Employee Relations.

### ***Data Collection***

Survey data were collected over a five-week period. The survey packets that were mailed to the 868 members of the defined population consisted of a cover letter, a Participant Consent Form, a survey instrument, and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. In order to ensure confidentiality during the data collection process, each school district superintendent was assigned an identification number. By the end of the five-week period, 559 surveys (64.4%) were completed and returned. Data gathered from the 559 returned survey instruments were entered into a *Statistical Package for Social Sciences 14.0 (SPSS) Graduate Student Pack* data file for analysis.

### ***Results***

A summary of the superintendent survey results for this research study includes the following data:

- 99.1% reported that their current school district did not require a formal mentoring program for superintendents new to the district.
- 89.7% reported they had never been involved in formal mentoring.

- 53.2% reported they had never been involved in informal mentoring.
- 70.5% did not have a mentor prior to becoming a new superintendent.
- 29.5% had a mentor prior to becoming a new superintendent.
- 74.5% wished that a mentor would have been available to them as a new superintendent.
- 60.7% believed they might have benefited from a mentor of the same gender.
- 89.0% believed they might have benefited from a mentor from the same type of school district.
- 50.0% believed that the state of Illinois should require a formal mentoring program for new superintendents.
- 5.4% received mentoring in a state other than Illinois.

New superintendents in some geographical areas have access to experienced superintendents and other social networking opportunities. Some state affiliates of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) operate mentoring and training programs for new superintendents or those working in the state for the first time. Most of these programs are optional rather than required, and they vary widely from state to state. Some of these programs are highly structured; others are quite informal (Beem, 2007).

### ***Discussion***

New superintendents enter a role in which they have no previous experience on which to rely. Despite this lack of experience, they are still expected to be competent and knowledgeable in their duties and responsibilities as the chief executive director and school district leader. Unfortunately, a superintendent often portrays the image of the Lone Ranger in the world of school administration (Daresh, 2001). Due to the fact that only one superintendent position exists within a school district, there is no one else within the district with whom the new leader can communicate—or commiserate—on a superintendent level.

Results from this research study point to a definite need for a formal superintendent mentoring and training program throughout the state of Illinois. New superintendents embark upon highly visible leadership positions in school districts where there is much to learn and where the responsibilities of the job are extremely demanding. They could benefit from the support and guidance that a formal superintendent mentoring and training program could provide. Based on the results, however, it appears that a large percentage of superintendents in the state of Illinois enter their new district administrative positions with inadequate preparation and a lack of formal mentoring.

Johansen (2006) emphasizes that new teachers often have the advantage of being mentored by colleagues within their own buildings. In contrast, however, new superintendents find themselves hired to fill the top position in their district. As a result, there are no other similar positions available for collaboration. "In few locations do [superintendents] have an experience equivalent to the internship of a

doctor or social worker; they are plunged immediately into the full responsibilities of [the role]" (Danielson, 1996, p. 6). Wong (2002) states, "In every aspect of the real world, people are trained. Even local businesses . . . train their new workers. The military spends more time training, supporting, and retraining its troops than we do for our teachers [or our principals or superintendents]. Compare this with many schools where training is nonexistent" (p. 57). Although formal mentoring and training programs may not address all of the needs of a new superintendent, they can be a valuable asset to new superintendents who face the challenges and responsibilities of new administrative careers.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The need for formal mentoring programs for new superintendents is validated by the findings of the survey results for this study. In contrast, no evidence was found in the literature that the state of Illinois provides a formal mentoring program for new superintendents. Current mentoring opportunities in the state of Illinois appear to be a variegated menu of informal activities and in-service trainings.

The timeliness and importance of this research study are reinforced by the current and predicted shortages of qualified candidates who are willing to pursue school district superintendent positions in the future. Beem (2007) states,

*The superintendency may be the final frontier for formal mentoring programs. In the 1990s, teacher mentoring programs proved that supporting first-year teachers yielded better instructors who stayed [in the profession] longer. That success led to programs for building principals. Now mentoring programs are trickling up to superintendents, who by definition are the instructional leaders of their school districts. (p. 11)*

The successful implementation of a formal mentoring and training program for new superintendents could be a useful tool for school districts and educational leaders as they train and prepare new superintendents for their administrative roles and responsibilities, address potential administrator shortage problems, and search for effective ways to retain qualified new superintendents not only within their local school districts, but also throughout the entire state of Illinois.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

Recommendations for future research could focus on the following areas:

- Conduct a study to determine the correlation between a new superintendent's participation in a formal mentoring and training program and his or her retention within the same school district.

- Conduct a study to determine the requirements, qualities, and expectations for individuals who serve as mentors to superintendents in formal mentoring and training programs.

- Conduct a longitudinal study to determine how new superintendents learn as a result of their participation in formal mentoring and training programs.

- Conduct a study to research the availability and accessibility of formal mentoring and training programs for female and/or minority superintendents.

- Conduct a study that would concentrate on the marketing of a hypothetical, custom-designed, formal mentoring and training program for new superintendents.

The recommendations for future research are important because they may add credence to the examination, consideration, and implementation of formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents in the future. The outcomes of such studies can be used to promulgate the effectiveness of formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents in the state of Illinois.

A definite need for formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents exists. New superintendents must be knowledgeable in a plethora of subject areas in order to effectively and responsibly manage their respective school districts. In addition, the need for new superintendent mentoring and training programs is exacerbated by the fact that superintendents have no other individuals at the same administrative level within their respective school districts with whom they can collaborate.

The literature and the data results from this study strongly support a need for formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents. Furthermore, a review of the literature reinforces the fact that a need for formal mentoring and training programs for new superintendents will continue to live on and be a pressing issue in the next century.

### ***Disclaimer***

Since the completion of this research study, the state of Illinois has passed legislation that now requires mentoring for new superintendents. The original intent of the law, according to Hendren (Telephone Interview, 2010), was to require statewide mentoring for all new superintendents. On July 23, 2009, Public Act 96-0062 was passed and became effective. The act stipulates that school district superintendents who begin serving on or after July 1, 2009, and who have not previously served as a school district superintendent in the state of Illinois, are required to participate in a two-year superintendent mentoring program established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

The implementation of the required superintendent mentoring program, however, is contingent upon the General Assembly appropriating funds to the ISBE for this purpose. Even though the law is now on the books of the state of Illinois, superintendent mentoring is not a requirement at

the present time because funds have not been appropriated. Superintendent mentoring will not be required until the state of Illinois is financially on its feet again. When the state does become financially stable, it is predicted that the ISBE will conduct budget hearings and strategically ask superintendents to attend and testify as to the need for the superintendent mentoring program.

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# Transition to the Position of Superintendent of Schools

By Richard A. Simon

A carefully planned transition into the position of superintendent of schools is critical to the ultimate success of a superintendent in making a positive difference in a school district. Diagnosing who the key players are and identifying the major issues that need addressing as well as understanding the history and culture of a district are but a few of the challenges that face incoming superintendents. The purpose of this paper is to identify successful strategies that superintendents use to make this transition.

Five sitting superintendents were interviewed, two in their first year, two in their second year, and one in the third year. Three of the five are in their first superintendent position while the other two are in their second superintendent position. Two of the districts are small, with enrollments of approximately 2,000 students, one is a medium size district with 3,400 students, and two are somewhat larger with enrollments of over 5,000 students. All of the districts are suburban with student achievement measures placing the districts near or at the top of their respective regions. Each interviewee responded to a set of questions about their transition experiences and two provided copies of formal written transition plans.

All of the subjects emphasized the importance of developing a plan for transition. Two of the superintendents noted that they had consulted the book *Entry: How To Begin A Leadership Position Successfully* by Barry Jentz with Joan Wofford. One of the superintendents noted that he had not had a plan going into his first superintendent position and as a result of some issues had a plan and used the book *Entry* for his second superintendent position. One of the first time superintendents, stated she had been guided by the book *Entry* since this was her first position. She developed a five page plan that she frequently adjusted, using the document as a "Draft" that she did not share with the Board. As a contrast, one superintendent made his entry plan a formal public document. The plan ran ten pages long and included five specific goals each with a series of objectives and activities. Another of the subjects stated that he had read the book *First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels* by Michael Watkins. Finally, one of the first time superintendents developed a written plan and sent it to the Board of Education for comments. She noted that the Board was "blown away" that she had even created such a plan.

Developing a formal entry plan is a must for incoming leaders. "Bad beginnings follow from an informal, ad-hoc, hit-the-ground running approach to entry" (Entry p. 6). All of the interviewees emphasized that the process of creating the plan, thinking through the steps and key activities, was very valuable. This is consistent with the findings of Barry Jentz and Jerome T. Murphy in their article "Starting Confused: How Leaders Start When They Don't Know Where to Start" in the June 2005 issue of Phi Delta Kappan. The authors state, "To avoid bad beginnings, we believe that new administrators must hit the ground learning, rather than running. Entry requires that they build relationships with stakeholders and develop a process for learning" (p. 738).

Identifying and meeting the key constituents and "players" in each district and community was a consistent recommendation from each of the subjects. Approaches included both formal, structured meetings with specific interview questions to informal, social type meetings. No matter what the structure, the interviewees emphasized that listening to the hopes and desires of each person was key to developing a full picture of the district and the start to developing important working relationships. One of the subjects found that her initial plan to create a set morning with time for interested community members or staff to visit her without an appointment evolved into a practice that she continues to use and has, at least in part, defined her superintendency.

In addition to individual meetings with each Board of Education member, the incoming superintendents also used formal training or structured retreats to establish relationships with members of the Board of Education. Specifically, one of the superintendents had representatives from the New York State School Board's Association run a two-day retreat that included establishing protocols for Board-Superintendent relations. Another of the superintendents designed and led his own retreat in the hope of getting his Board to work more effectively as a group. Specifically, this superintendent utilized a number of activities contained in the book *So Now You're The Superintendent!* by John Eller and Howard Carlson. Topics covered in the retreat included phone call communication, email communication, face to face communication, emergency communication standards, and goal setting parameters.

Each of the superintendents began their term at the beginning of the summer and noted that this made it possible to schedule meetings with a variety of important constituents. The subjects identified key constituents as all of the leaders of the various bargaining units, parent organizations, administrators, clergy, civic association leaders, retired staff, and Board members. One of the superintendents noted that his decision to seek advice from a previous superintendent who had served the district for a long period sent a very positive message to the community. Another of the superintendents felt he had learned a great deal from inviting former Board of Education members to meet with him. Finally, one the superintendents starting his second superintendent position noted that he had failed to meet with parent leaders in his first position and this had created a number of problems. He made sure to avoid this problem with his second position.

The subjects all agreed that the entry interviews alone did not give them the complete picture of the culture of the district. Each cited additional steps and sources that they found helpful. Suggestions included reviewing past newspaper articles about the district, doing on-line search for blogs and other platforms that addressed issues and/or people in the district.

One of the important decisions each superintendent had to make involved establishing a regular approach to communication with the Board of Education. Each described a formal process to keep the Board informed of developments in the district. All but one of the subjects sends a "Friday Packet" home to each Board member with information gathered during the week. The other subject noted that he had inherited a practice of sending the packet home on Thursday night and found that the process worked particularly well. He noted that this gave him the opportunity to use his administrative staff to respond to questions that Board members had more immediately, i.e. on Friday rather than having to wait over a weekend. One of the other superintendents indicated that he decided to send a "Friday Packet" only every other week as he found he was spending too much time on the notes that he composed for the Board. All of the superintendents saw this process as a means to move issues along, often sharing proposals with the Board in the packet and stating that the proposal would be implemented unless one or more of the Board responded in writing with a concern.

One of the subjects learned during entry interviews with the Board that the previous superintendent had often used electronic communication to deliver "bad news." While electronic communication is time efficient and is delivered at the same time, the incoming superintendent heard loud and clear that the Board felt this approach had had a negative impact on the culture of the district. The new superintendent therefore made regular phone calls to Board members a high priority.

All of the superintendents used the entry process to assist them in setting goals for the first year. The interviews they conducted with constituents served as a valuable source of information and played a key role in setting priorities. One superintendent developed a list of possible Board/district goals

from the entry interviews and then worked with the administrative team to organize and streamline the list into a final list of approximately 15 possible goals. The proposed goals were then presented to the Board at a public work session and each Board member was given a number of points to allocate to one or more of the proposed goals. This point allocating process was developed in response to learning through some of the entry interviews that historically the Board had taken literally months of debate to reach any agreement on what goals to select. The interviews also revealed that the Board often ended up with numerous goals, many of which went uncompleted. By getting the Board to agree to the point process, a set of goals was agreed to at the first meeting and the total number of goals was kept to a manageable six goals.

One of the superintendents also faced a Board that wanted a long list of goals for the year. He took a different approach, getting the Board to agree that they would categorize the goals into areas such as curriculum, human relations, technology, etc. and that they would select only one from each area. The rest of the potential goals were placed on a "Parking Lot" list to be addressed only if time permitted.

All of the superintendents were asked what key change did they implement during the first year, how did they identify it, and what process did they use to achieve the change. One of the superintendents noted that he recognized that he needed to "slow the very big ship down" given the financial pressures all communities were facing. Specifically he heard throughout his entry activities that the district was entering dangerous waters so he has made his first year theme one of finding economies of scale rather than continuing to seek new initiatives. Another of the subjects arrived at a time that the district had no settled contracts with its bargaining units. She worked to reinforce the strong existing value of the worth of each individual staff member that previous Boards had supported. Specifically she successfully lobbied the Board to continue to pay a staff member's salary that was on extended medical leave beyond the contract requirements. She also learned during her entry activities that the district had not placed a lot of emphasis on the use of data. The new superintendent began to gradually shift the culture by emphasizing the use of data in making decisions.

One of the subjects learned during the entry process that it had been many years since the entire staff of the district had worked together on a conference day. Part of this was the large size of the district and part was a history of independence that each building felt. The new superintendent decided to design a conference day for his first year that brought everyone in the district together. He engaged key constituents in planning the content of the day and viewed this as an opportunity to establish his own mark on the district.

During the entry process one of the superintendents made his major goal to reduce the budget battles he had witnessed each year as he was aware of the negative impact of these battles. He used his entry plan to convince the Board to agree to a retreat to be held in Janu-

ary to set budget priorities and to establish a process that would minimize public rancor. Another of the superintendents inherited a culture in which individual Board members felt empowered to engage directly with the building administrators to resolve day-to-day management issues. The new superintendent made changing this part of her entry plan, using the Board retreat as an opportunity to better define the policy making role of a Board as well as setting parameters for her building administrators.

Each of the subjects was asked what advice they would give incoming superintendents to make a successful transition. All emphasized that building relationships with the various key constituencies was critical. While each went about this in their own way, they saw the first few months as a time to establish protocols and practice that structure the manner in which they interacted with people. The subjects also stressed the importance of honoring the traditions of the district. All of the entry plans included steps for the incoming superintendent to identify those traditions and practices that held both symbolic and practical importance. Using entry interviews provided a rich source of information to identify these key traditions.

A number of the superintendents saw the negotiation of the terms of their contract as a critical part of the entry process. One superintendent stated that he would only take the job with a unanimous vote of the Board. He also recognized that reaching agreement on his contract was the only real chance for him to negotiate as this was the time that the most Board members would be in support of him. In short, he stated that the transition to the job starts with the negotiating of the contract.

The subjects also emphasized that the incoming superintendents need to reign in the Board's anticipation and hope for sweeping changes. Some of the subjects felt particular pressure to bring change to the district. Each recognized that the entry process and the manner in which they established relationships with key constituents were more important than any tangible change they might make.

While each of the subjects shared unique and specific stories about their transition to the superintendent role, a number of themes emerged that can be used to make the chances of a positive transition and successful run as superintendent likely.

These are ten strategies to consider:

1. Develop a written plan of entry and use it as a means to establish and define the relationships that are crucial to the success of a superintendent.
2. Use the entry plan activities as a vehicle to identify and set the goals and direction for the district.
3. Be sure to engage past superintendents and Board members in the entry process as they often hold the key to the history and culture of a district and community.

4. Make time for everyone! Be proactive in seeking out advice. Leaving out a constituent group can cause serious harm.
5. Devote time to discussing and establishing communication protocols with the Board as this will define the manner in which you will operate.
6. Use the entry process as an opportunity to define who you are to the community.
7. Learn from failures, both your own and those who have been in the role before you.
8. Deliver bad news to your Board in person, not by phone or email. This offers you a chance to have dialogue about the situation.
9. Use data as a means to assist in the process of determining priorities for the district.
10. Use the entry process as a way to buy time to learn about the community and to determine the best path to follow.

Utilizing a formal, carefully crafted entry plan is both an opportunity to make the transition to the role of superintendent smooth and successful and a chance to engage the school community in a process that can produce the seeds for positive change. As Jentz and Murphy state in their Kappan article, "It can spark an organizational self-examination-something that all organizations periodically require-at a time when the passing of the baton to a new leader makes such an assessment both legitimate and possible." (p. 744)

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# District Leadership: Independent Efforts, Similar Findings

## The Research of Marzano/Waters and the 'Get to Great' Initiative

by Les Loomis, Ed.D. and Kevin N. McGuire, Ph.D.

The relatively recent focus on the quantitative impacts of school leadership has produced a number of academic inquiries and models 'in practice.' Two of these efforts share similar findings that are worth noting.

The **academic research** of Robert Marzano and Timothy Waters on effective school and district leadership and the difference it makes in student achievement has produced important findings. Marzano/Waters first conducted a meta-analysis focused on principals and then moved on to analyze superintendent and central office leadership. The New York Council of School Superintendents recently sent superintendents across the state a summary of these findings.

The **in-district improvement** initiative developed at the Rensselaerville Institute and known as *Get to Great* is an effort to guide individual school districts on effective, results-oriented leadership. As in many on-the-ground applications, this program utilizes experienced professionals to assist superintendents and their teams to develop local results leaders and to implement a district-wide system for improved student achievement. The approach builds on years of experience in taking a variety of organizations, including good school districts and failing urban schools, to greater achievement. Three years of work in 25 New York State school districts using this program has produced a substantial body of results that is a useful supplement in ongoing research.

While Marzano's and Waters' findings emerge from research and the *Get to Great* approach comes from experience, the two are very similar.

### **Does district leadership matter?**

Marzano and Waters found a .24 correlation between district leadership and student achievement. Explained in their words, "To interpret a correlation of .24, consider an average superintendent; that means that he is at the 50th percentile in terms of his leadership skills. Also, assume that this superintendent is leading a district where the average student achievement is also at the 50th percentile. Now, assume that the superintendent improves his or her leadership abilities by one standard deviation (in this case rising to the 84th percentile of all district leaders). Given the correlation between district leadership and student achievement of .24, we would predict that average student achievement in the district would rise to the 59.5th percentile."

Pretty impressive! It means that in theory, a skilled superintendent can improve student achievement by nearly 10%, if the focus on self-improvement is realized.

Similarly, professionals working in a planned program like *Get to Great* recognize the quantitative correlation of practical training and experience for developing leaders. They have found that the investment in leadership development to prepare superintendents and principals to lead for improved results typically translates into tangible results. Once established, this model can then be expanded beyond administrators to teachers and staff members, resulting in a focus on making behaviors in the district intentional to greater student achievement.

*The academic findings of Marzano/Waters can be favorably compared to the practical findings of Get to Great leaders in a wide range of local school districts.*

### **What are the specific leadership behaviors that are associated with student achievement?**

Marzano and Waters identified five district level leadership "responsibilities" or "initiatives" as having a statistically significant correlation with student achievement: ensuring collaborative goal setting; establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction; creating board alignment and support of district goals; monitoring achievement and instruction goals; and allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction.

#### **1. Collaborative goal setting:**

Marzano and Waters state: "Effective district leaders include all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing nonnegotiable goals for their districts."

The *Get to Great* initiative requires a leadership team involving central office, school, and teacher leaders to identify five or fewer measurable district goals that define student success. The team then suggests these goals to the board for their consideration and adoption. Often, board members observe the leadership team's development of the suggested goals.

#### **2. Nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction:**

"Effective district leaders ensure that the collaborative goal setting process results in nonnegotiable goals (goals that all staff members must act on) in at least two areas: student achievement and classroom instruction."

Similarly, the five or fewer district goals developed as part of *Get to Great* are exactly that - nonnegotiable targets for student achievement. Because these are stretch goals to be achieved within three years, participating districts also set yearly suc-

cess points to be reached, like an increase in the number of elementary students reading at grade level and a greater percentage of middle and high school students passing courses.

The *Get to Great* approach to instruction is both similar to, and different from, the Marzano and Waters concept of nonnegotiable goals for instruction. *Get to Great* establishes a common framework for teacher teams to use in pursuing greater student achievement. Each team designs and runs a “prototype” focusing on an area of significant student under-performance. Informed by a variety of assessment data, the teams do “whatever it takes” to hit the target. In this way professionals are not prescribing certain types of instruction, but rather prompting teams to identify what works and what doesn’t and to adjust instruction to accelerate results.

### **3. Board alignment with and support of district goals:**

“In effective districts, the local board of education is aligned with and supportive of the nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction.”

Board members who are participants in practical efforts like *Get to Great* help to shape and then adopt the five or fewer district goals. Superintendents are encouraged to invite them to the sessions where the consultant works with administrator and teacher leaders to identify the stretch targets for student success. Superintendents schedule sessions at board meetings where leaders and teachers present specific examples of the success they are achieving through their prototypes. Experienced leadership professionals have also joined superintendents in conducting board retreats, encouraging board members to focus their own leadership on becoming “stewards of greater results.”

### **4. Monitoring achievement and instruction goals:**

“Effective superintendents continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district’s actions.”

Monitoring and communicating achievement is an essential part of the on-the-ground practice called “tracking to success.” Districts set milestone points, usually every quarter, where they compare the results against the targets for each teacher team. They also compile the results at the school and district levels on high profile indicators like the increase in the number of students reading at or above grade level and the decrease in the number of students failing courses. Superintendents communicate these school and district results to the entire faculty and staff, each quarter, inviting teachers to lead beyond their classrooms by offering ideas on innovative practices to advance results. At the end of each year the district develops and communicates an annual dashboard comparing that year’s results to the district goals and to achievement in the previous two or three years.

### **5. Allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction:**

“High performing districts ensure that the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district’s goals.”

Dialogue with superintendents, principals, and teachers during *Get to Great* efforts results in locally articulated conclusions like ‘sharper focus’ and ‘tighter alignment’ for district instructional efforts, especially important in difficult financial times. The experience of *Get to Great* professionals identifies the two most essential resources as the time and energy of professionals, and that part of the leadership development process is to help leaders channel time and energy to make a greater difference. This should involve superintendents constantly coaching principals, and principals coaching teacher leaders. Local districts identify that *Get to Great* practices strengthen other initiatives, particularly work on professional learning communities and formative assessments.

### **Two other findings: defined autonomy and superintendent longevity:**

Marzano and Waters identify two other district leadership factors that make a difference in student achievement. “Defined autonomy means that the superintendent expects building principals and all other administrators to lead within the boundaries of the district goals.” Effective superintendents maintain a balance between direction and latitude for principals. This balance leads to higher student achievement.

Experiences using *Get to Great* practices suggest that in the districts that increased achievement substantially and quickly, the superintendent personally leads the effort and all the principals are engaged. The work sorts out principals who are not entirely committed or capable, and allows for additional leadership development for the individuals who need assistance.

The final research finding involves superintendent longevity. “Specifically, this finding implies that the longevity of the superintendent has a positive effect on the average academic achievement of students in the district. This positive effect may manifest itself as early as two years into a superintendent’s tenure.”

The superintendents who are interested in the improvements that *Get to Great* helps to develop tend to be those who are instructional leaders, are open to learning, and who are not reluctant to share their authority in order to raise achievement. Where dedicated superintendents are experiencing resistance, the *Get to Great* approach has helped to bring the board, administrators and staff together, thus decreasing conflict. Generally speaking, these efforts promote the positive impacts of leadership longevity.

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## Using Student Achievement in Superintendent Evaluations: Does it Result in Improved Student Achievement?

*A State Wide Description and Comparison of Superintendents' and School Board Presidents' Perceptions of the Extent to which Student Achievement was Utilized in the Evaluation of the Superintendent in 1989 and 2010 and Whether Such Evaluation Results in Improved Student Achievement*

- by Robert R. Dillon Ed D.

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to address these questions:

- 1) To what extent did the New York State superintendents and school board presidents perceive student achievement data as being utilized in the formal superintendent process in 2010?
- 2) To what extent did New York State superintendents perceive student achievement data as being utilized in the formal superintendent evaluation process in 1989 and 2010?
- 3) To what extent did New York State school board presidents perceive student achievement data as being utilized in the formal superintendent evaluation process in 1989 and 2010?
- 4) To what extent did the incumbent New York state superintendents and school board presidents perceive superintendent evaluation as leading to improved student achievement?

A survey instrument was developed and administered to one-third of the school districts in 1989. In 2010, a survey was electronically administered to school board presidents and superintendents. School board presidents and superintendents in New York State reported that student achievement was much more extensively utilized in the formal superintendent evaluation process in 2010 than it was in 1989, and that nearly nine out of ten school board presidents (87%) and eight out of ten superintendents (78%) perceived superintendent evaluation as having a positive impact on student achievement either to a limited or great extent.

Superintendent evaluation in New York State became a legal requirement a quarter of a century ago (Commissioner's Regulations, 1985). It came on the heels of a federal report, *A Nation At Risk* (1983), one of the more influential and critical federal reports that served as a catalyst for initiating a series of reforms intended to focus on fixing what the authors considered a broken and failing public school system. One area highlighted in *A Nation At Risk* was the need for accountability in the schools. During the first decade of the

new millennium the emphasis on accountability for the schools on the part of the federal government and its minions has broadened and deepened as evidenced by such federal legislation as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001 and Race to the Top, 2010). The major focus that NCLB advocates for measuring teacher accountability is the employment of standardized test results to ascertain the efficacy of accountability programs.

Race to the Top (RTT), a competitive federal grant program introduced in 2010 requires school districts, "to raise academic standards, to evaluate teachers based in part on how much their students are learning, to train teachers more effectively and to remove those who are not cut out for the job." (Ripley, 2010). As a result, states such as Louisiana, Tennessee, Illinois and Florida have responded to RTT mandates that heavily rely on student achievement in the evaluation of both teachers and principals, (McNeil, M., & Maxwell, L., 2010).

Virtually any experienced educator would acknowledge that the evaluation of teacher effectiveness utilizing objective data, particularly standardized achievement test results represents a major paradigm shift in American public education. An interesting nuance in this new paradigm is the emphasis on achievement growth rather than student achievement scores, per se, along with the expectations that all students will be proficient and achieve well regardless of socio-economic status, race, gender, and pre-test scores. This new paradigm views the schools as an all encompassing, integrated learning environment characterized by high academic expectations for all students on the part of teachers, as well as building and district administrators.

This overwhelming pressure for improved student achievement has now extended its focus from our school buildings to our district offices. School boards and superintendents are learning that they operate in a different and evolving environment. Boards of education, as well as superintendents, are responsible to ensure that academic improvement and growth must characterize all students regardless of race or socio-economic status (Rice, D., Delagardelle, M., Buckton, M., Jons, C., Lueders, W., Vens, M., et al., 2000).

Superintendents in the past have often acted as general managers and/or executives, and deferred to their assistant superintendents and building principals to provide instructional leadership to ensure that the students were learning ( Banks, P, & Maloney, R, 2007). Now the boards of education, in partnership with their superintendents, also must assume a much greater responsibility for student learning and academic growth, a responsibility for which many superintendents and school board presidents were, and still are, ill equipped to provide. If one scrutinizes the programs in which doctoral students enrolled during the half-century from 1950 to 2000, it is readily apparent that these programs provided little or no training in curriculum, instruction, learning and evaluation.

Unfortunately, a recent study conducted by the Council of New York State Superintendents reported that, “Fifty six percent of the responding superintendents did not think that their boards used available facts to make decisions and further stated that their boards were not focused on student achievement.” (Rogers,T., Fale, E., et al. 2009). This study went on to assert that “both superintendent skill, and board focus on student achievement are essential to success in leading a school district” (Rogers, T., Fale, E., et al 2009). However, as indicated, questions may be raised as to whether superintendents have the necessary skills, competencies and foci for carrying out these tasks.

A natural follow-up question that rises in this era of teacher and principal accountability is, “Are boards of education holding the superintendent of schools accountable for student achievement and student growth in their evaluation of the superintendent?” This question was directly and emphatically addressed by Dr. David Steiner, the New York State Commissioner of Education, who, in a July 2010 keynote speech at the Mid-Hudson’s Principal’s Academy held at the State University of New York at New Paltz, rhetorically asked why student achievement was not required to be included in the superintendent’s evaluation.

Although superintendent evaluation was ostensibly mandated in New York State in 1986, the criteria and methodology of the superintendent evaluation process often varied widely from district to district. The politics and culture of each district and board of education contributed to the range of differences in their responses. A doctoral dissertation titled “Superintendent Evaluation in New York State”( Dillon, 1989) utilized a survey instrument to examine incumbent superintendents’ and school board presidents’ perceptions

of the extent to which student achievement data was utilized in the public schools of New York state to evaluate school superintendents.

In 2010, a research team from the Department of Educational Administration, State University of New York at New Paltz, sought to replicate the 1989 study utilizing essentially the same survey instrument from 1989 with some slight modifications. The goal of the 2010 study was to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent did the New York State superintendents and school board presidents perceive student achievement data as being utilized in the formal superintendent process in 2010?
- 2) To what extent did New York State superintendents perceive student achievement data as being utilized in the formal superintendent evaluation process in 1989 and 2010?
- 3) To what extent did New York State school board presidents perceive student achievement data as being utilized in the formal superintendent evaluation process in 1989 and 2010?
- 4) To what extent did the incumbent New York state superintendents and school board presidents perceive superintendent evaluation as leading to improved student achievement?

Data concerning superintendents’ and school board presidents’ perceptions of the extent to which student achievement was utilized in the evaluation of superintendents in 1989 and 2010 is presented in **Table 1**.

***Analysis of Data***

Analysis of data in **Table 1** shows that in 1989 approximately two thirds of the responding superintendents and 40% of the responding school board presidents indicated that student achievement was not utilized in the evaluation of the superintendent. Barely thirty-six percent of the responding superintendents claimed that student achievement was used in the evaluation process, either to a great or limited extent, whereas 61% of the responding school board presidents responding indicated that student achievement was utilized in their superintendent’s evaluation to either a limited or greater extent.

**Table 1** *Is student achievement utilized in the formal superintendent’s evaluation process?*

|                         | <u>Great Extent</u> |    |             |     | <u>Limited Extent</u> |     |             |     | <u>Not At All</u> |     |             |     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----|-------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------|-----|
|                         | <u>1989</u>         |    | <u>2010</u> |     | <u>1989</u>           |     | <u>2010</u> |     | <u>1989</u>       |     | <u>2010</u> |     |
|                         | #                   | %  | #           | %   | #                     | %   | #           | %   | #                 | %   | #           | %   |
| Superintendents         | 3                   | 3% | 27          | 22% | 34                    | 33% | 66          | 55% | 65                | 64% | 28          | 23% |
| School Board Presidents | 6                   | 7% | 22          | 25% | 55                    | 54% | 50          | 57% | 41                | 40% | 15          | 17% |

In the current 2010 study, only twenty-three percent of the superintendents responding to the survey claimed that student achievement was not utilized in their evaluation, whereas an even fewer percentage of school board presidents (17%) selected the option “not at all”. Seventy-seven percent of the superintendents responding to the survey reported that student achievement was utilized in their superintendent evaluation process, to either a great or limited extent, whereas 82% of the board presidents responded that student achievement was utilized in their superintendent evaluation process to either a great or limited extent. It appears that in 2010, superintendents and board presidents are in much greater agreement regarding the extent of student achievement in the superintendent evaluation process than in 1989.

Sixty-four percent of superintendents reported that student achievement was not included in their evaluation process in 1989 yet in 2010 only twenty-three percent of the responding superintendents reported that student achievement was not utilized in their superintendent evaluation, a marked decrease of forty-one percent.

The perception that student achievement was part of the superintendent evaluation process to a great or limited extent has increased among the board presidents from sixty-one percent of responding board presidents in 1989 to eighty-two percent of responding board presidents in 2010. Forty percent of board presidents reported that student achievement was not included in their evaluation process in 1989 yet in 2010 only seventeen percent of the responding superintendents reported that student achievement was not a part of their superintendent evaluation, a decrease of twenty-seven percent.

In the 2010 study the researchers also asked, “Does the evaluation of the superintendent result in improved student achievement?” Responses to this question are found in **Table 2**.

**Table 2 Does the evaluation of the superintendent result in improved student achievement? (2010)**

|                  | <u>Great Extent</u> |     | <u>Limited Extent</u> |     | <u>Not At All</u> |     |
|------------------|---------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|                  | #                   | %   | #                     | %   | #                 | %   |
| Superintendents  | 15                  | 12% | 80                    | 66% | 27                | 22% |
| Board Presidents | 17                  | 20% | 58                    | 67% | 12                | 14% |

Analysis of the data in **Table 2** revealed that twenty-two percent of the superintendents responding to the survey claimed that the evaluation of the superintendent did not result in improved student achievement, whereas the corresponding figure for board presidents was 14 percent. Seventy-eight percent of superintendents responding to the survey indicated that the evaluation of the superintendent resulted in improved student achievement to either a great or limited extent, whereas, eighty-seven percent of the board presidents responding acknowledged that the evaluation of the superintendent resulted in improved student achievement to either a

great or limited extent. Further data analysis revealed that superintendents, in general, were less positive about superintendent evaluation resulting in improved student achievement than were school board presidents. For example, twenty percent of the school board presidents felt that the evaluation of the superintendent improved student achievement to a great extent, whereas only twelve percent of the superintendents shared this perception.

In closing, data seems to reveal that both incumbent school board presidents and superintendents in New York State report that student achievement is much more extensively utilized in the formal superintendent evaluation process in 2010 than it was in 1989, that the perceptions of the school board presidents and superintendents were more in agreement concerning the extent of student involvement in 2010 than they were in 1989 and that superintendents (78%) and school board presidents (87%) perceived superintendent evaluation as having a positive impact on student achievement either to a “limited” or “great” extent.

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