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## Abstract

This qualitative multi-site case study examined the role and impact of interim school superintendents during the search and selection process of successor superintendents in four upstate New York State school districts. The districts spread across three different Board of Cooperative Education Service regions. The study employed one-on-one interviews of forty-three participants to solicit their perspectives on the meaning and purpose, impact, and leadership style of the interim superintendents. The participants were categorized in three separate groups according to the perceived relationship and interaction their work role had with the office of superintendent. Three distinct frames emerged regarding the work of interims: a) People; b) Path; and, c) Practice. Findings indicate that the prevailing view of the interim is one who actively shepherds the district along a path through the transition between permanent superintendents by resolving existing issues of competing interests, managing day-to-day responsibilities, and readying the district for the successor superintendent. Furthermore, each of the four interim superintendents left the district in an improved state when compared to the state of the system they had inherited upon their arrival. Additionally, the school board members did not harbor any interest in the interim simply maintaining the status quo of the district. Finally, the interims reported an absence of any direct involvement with the school board in the search and selection process for the successor superintendent.

**Suggested Keywords:** interim, temporary leader, superintendent, transitional leadership, superintendent shortage, superintendent candidate pool.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

What role do interim school superintendents play in the theatre of educational leadership? For that matter, why are there interim superintendents at a time when some researchers (Bjork, Grogan, Johnson 2003; Glass & Bjork 2003; Kowalski 2003) dispute claims of a shortage of superintendents? And, how do interim superintendents impact the current and future pool of candidates aspiring to become superintendents?

The first question posed is easily answered on the surface. That is, interim superintendents are hired temporarily to execute the same legal and professional functions as other school superintendents. School districts typically seek interim superintendents when they have ascertained that there is insufficient time available to conduct a thorough search and selection process to hire a new superintendent to replace their outgoing superintendent. Fenwick (1993) and Martin (2006) each studied the role of interim school leaders and determined that the temporary leaders exert influence on the organization and extend themselves beyond merely serving as caretakers. In a study conducted in a related field, Farquhar (1995) examined short-term business executives and asserted that interim leaders “are more likely to be challenged by crisis, repair, and short-term operations than by long range concerns.” (p. 57)

The second question represents more of a challenge to answer due to conflict among perceptions of the supply and demand of the labor market involving public school district leaders. According to Paul Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, interim superintendents may comprise as much as 15% of the population of school superintendents in the United States at any given time (Fenwick,

2000). Interim superintendents are generally hired when a Board of Education either determines that it lacks sufficient time to conduct a search process or they decide that there are no qualified candidates for the vacant position (Kowalski, 2003). Regardless, research on the scope and impact of interim superintendents on the performance of school districts is scarce (Fenwick 1993; Murphy 1988).

The issue of retired leaders acting as interim superintendents recently emerged in the mainstream media of New York State as a result of an inquiry by the state's Office of Attorney General into the practice of "double-dipping" whereby a retired New York administrator, already collecting a state pension, is hired to serve as a temporary leader of a public school district which has requested a waiver allowing them to employ the individual. In fact, the Commissioner of Education for New York, Richard Mills, responded to the flurry of news articles with a moratorium on the granting of waivers pending an examination of the process. In his June 2008 report to the state's Board of Regents, Commissioner Mills proposed an emergency regulation to restructure the process whereby waivers are granted to districts seeking to hire retirees for interim superintendent positions.

The Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education, Johanna Duncan-Poitier announced one month later that the moratorium on the 211 waiver process had been lifted. Section 211 of the Retirement and Social Security Law of New York allows retirees between fifty-five and sixty-four years of age to receive a salary up to \$30,000 per year and section 80-5.5 provides a process for obtaining the Commissioner's approval for a district to hire someone exceeding the \$30,000 salary cap. Furthermore, Duncan-Poitier informed districts throughout the state that the procedures for reviewing requests under the proposed

regulation amendment would be strengthened. She cited two situations in which a waiver would be required:

1. The district is unable to find a non-retired qualified candidate after it has conducted a thorough and good faith search appropriate for the level of the position.
2. There is inadequate time to conduct a full search appropriate for the position and due to the critical nature of the vacancy, an interim appointment is necessary to assure the proper functioning of the district. (Duncan-Poitier, July 9, 2008, p. 1)

“Qualified” and “good faith” are the essential words embedded within the first justifiable reason for securing an interim superintendent according to Duncan-Poitier’s memorandum. There are no conceptual parameters or definitions regarding the interpretation of either term although districts are expected to provide evidence that they enacted a “thorough and good faith search appropriate to the position, considering prior experience with recruitment for that position in that geographic location.” (Duncan-Poitier, p.2) Clearly, certified does not mean qualified, since there is evidence of certified candidates within applicant pools who have been overlooked in favor of retired district administrators who were subsequently hired as interims. For example, the Board of Education in Ballston Spa, New York hired an interim superintendent for a one year term that eventually expanded to a three year period, citing “unsuccessful searches for a permanent superintendent” (Williams, 2008). Another newspaper covering the same story stated, “Capital Region BOCES helped the board conduct two searches. The first one was scrapped because board members didn't like the quality of the candidates,” (Hornbeck, 2008) as an explanation for the length of the interim superintendent’s stint in the post.

Employment of interim superintendents offers the prospect of mutually beneficial opportunities for both the interim superintendents and the school districts in a symbiotic relationship which could reinforce this hiring practice. The interim superintendent supplements his/her existing retirement income by receiving a per diem rate of pay that, when prorated, is often well in excess of one hundred thousand dollars per year. The district, on the other hand, is able to hire an experienced leader, who by virtue of already receiving retirement benefits, including expensive health care, receives a per diem fee that is appreciably less costly than hiring a candidate who requires pension plan contributions and expects a benefits package including health insurance coverage. Thomas Rogers, Executive Director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents volunteered that, "When they (school districts) hire a retiree they don't have the benefits cost, and often the retirees will work at less than market rates because they know they have a pension to fall back on." (Odato, 2008)

Kowalski and Sweetland (2003), foreshadowing the dilemma facing New York State, analyzed retirement policies of three different states (Ohio and South Carolina with few restrictions, and Indiana with far more restrictive conditions) involving school administrators. The researchers concluded that states with few restrictions on the income of retirees experienced a lessened demand for school administrators, since vacancies were appropriated to people who would otherwise, as retirees unable to obtain additional income in the pension system, not be in the candidate pool. At the same time, the practice of retired administrators securing positions paying them high salaries in addition to their pensions increased the likelihood that such policies would produce political turmoil

between taxpayers complaining of “double-dipping” at the public trough and the regulators developing and enacting the policy.

The Department of Education of New York does not collect data on the number of interim superintendents working in districts across the state. In fact, Fenwick (1993) reported that 64% of the thirty-three state departments of education that responded to a survey soliciting data on interim superintendents between school years 1981-1982 and 1992-1992 did not maintain records reporting on the use of interim superintendents. Yet, among those twelve states that gathered information on interim superintendents, Fenwick discovered a threefold increase in the practice during the ten year time period. As an indication of this occurrence, in one of the BOCES containing a district examined in this study, year-long interim superintendents were employed in thirteen percent of the component school districts during the 2007-2008 school year.

The employment of interim superintendents to fill a vacancy could understandably represent an obstacle to any appropriately certified candidates in the applicant pool seeking their initial superintendency, particularly if prior experience as a superintendent is considered a strong preference in the equation for determining whether one is “qualified.” The possibility for such a perspective adopted by decision makers toward entry level superintendents provides an interesting perspective and potential obstacle when one reads a quote from Commissioner Mills in his June 2008 report to the Board of Regents; “In some cases, such as the sudden departure of a leader, the failure of a search to locate a suitable candidate, or other special conditions, a school board *must* (italics added by the researcher for emphasis) turn to an experienced retired person for an interim appointment.” (Mills, June 2008, p. 1) The use of the word, *must*, in this context could appear as a justification for

a district to retain a retired district administrator rather than employ an entry level candidate. Presumably, such an interpretation could impact the current and future pool of superintendents.

On the other hand, a review of hiring practices of interim superintendents involving just six of the thirty-seven different BOCES in New York suggests that entry level superintendents (a person hired to their first superintendency) do not appear to encounter insurmountable odds of obtaining a position as an immediate successor to an interim superintendent. The data revealed that there were forty-six instances of interims being hired among the ninety-three districts represented within those BOCES during a five year period from school years 2003-2004 through 2007-2008. In six of these experiences, an interim superintendent was replaced by another interim superintendent. Five of the districts still retained the services of an interim superintendent at the conclusion of the time period 2003-2008. One interim superintendent was eventually hired as a full-time replacement in the district. Entry level superintendents were hired in twenty-five of the remaining vacancies whereas only nine of the districts hired superintendents with prior experience as a district leader.

In other words, 73% of the superintendent vacancies in this review which followed the intervention of an interim superintendent were filled by entry level superintendents without any prior experience serving as a superintendent. O'Connell, Brown and Williams (2005) found that 50% of newly hired superintendents in the state of New York emerged directly from the ranks of principals and therefore were absent experience as a superintendent. Unless an additional 23% of entry level superintendents were hired beyond the principals cited in the study above, such as people who rose from central office

roles, the private sector or alternative avenues, then the hiring rate of entry level superintendents may be higher in districts which had employed an interim superintendent at the time of their search for a successor superintendent. Further research is required to determine whether this figure exceeds the percentage of overall superintendent vacancies filled by entry level superintendents in New York.

The third question proffered in the opening of this introduction, regarding the function and impact of interim superintendents on the current and future pool of aspiring superintendents, is a difficult one to answer. The complexity results from a determination whether interim superintendents actually help entry level superintendents by preparing the district to more easily accommodate an inexperienced superintendent, or obstruct opportunities for entry level superintendents by filling a vacancy for which they had applied. The examination of factors contributing to that perplexing issue will be addressed through this study. A review of relevant literature on the state of the superintendency, interim leadership, and organizational dynamics during the interregnum will create a context and foundation for the research project. Formal leaders, representing school board members, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents from four separate school districts, one in each of three different BOCES across New York, will be interviewed along with five randomly selected staff members of the respective systems, the interim superintendents, the successor superintendents, and the District Superintendents of the respective BOCES to provide a context and perspective on this issue.



## Chapter II

### Literature Review

The employment of interim superintendents appears to be expanding (Fenwick 1993) at a time when the pool of superintendent candidates is shrinking at an alarming rate (Cooper, Fusarelli & Carella, 2000) while the professional literature is bereft of studies on the role and impact of interim leaders in education (Chapman 1988; Martin 2006; McWilliams et al, 2008; Murphy 1988; Waddington 2001). This study explores how interim superintendents may impact the applicant pool of current and future superintendents as school districts engage in the search and selection process for a successor superintendent.

Interim superintendents are defined here as individuals possessing superintendent certification hired temporarily to provide district level leadership during an interregnum. Each of the interim superintendents involved in the study are retired superintendents from outside the organization who serve one year terms. Their services were retained following the departure of a system leader that left the board of education with insufficient time to conduct a thorough search for a new executive. Entry level superintendents are defined as an individual hired for their initial superintendency as opposed to superintendents with prior career experience in the role. Successor superintendents are considered those individuals hired following the interim in the succession of district leadership.

A number of factors contribute to the increase in the use of interim superintendents. Fenwick (1996) reports that superintendents appear to exercise the mobility offered in the profession and evidence more of a career bound path than a place bound path. In a recent survey of 175 superintendents, selected by their peers across the country as examples of exceptional leaders, Glass (2001b) found that seventy-one percent of respondents “agreed

that the superintendency is in a state of crisis,” (p. 2) an opinion, shared by a survey of state education leaders (Glass, 2001c), that may promote the turnover that can lead to interim superintendent appointments. Esparo and Rader (2001) echoed the findings of Glass after analyzing the results of a nine state survey of school districts in the northeast region of the country on the subject of perceptions of factors contributing to the turnover of superintendents and the search for successors.

In addition, many district leaders are taking advantage of early retirement incentives offered in a number of states (Kowalski, 2003). The search process enacted by school districts normally extends well beyond the contractually framed notification dates required of superintendents resigning from their posts (Boring, 2003; Glass, 2001a). Other conditions that could prompt a school district to obtain the services of an interim would include death, debilitating health issues, deficient performance, political friction and policy differences.

Despite what appears to be an increasing utilization of interim superintendents, and the scope of their responsibilities as measured by the untold thousands of children who are enrolled in schools throughout the country under the direction of interim superintendents, there has been very little research on their role and impact (Fenwick 1993; Murphy 1988; Ortiz and Kalbus, 1998). According to Fenwick (p. 186), “...the interim superintendency is a significant event indicative of notable changes in the superintendent profession, specifically, and, more broadly, in educational leadership and governance.” However, the subject has been virtually overlooked in the last decade. There are even fewer studies that examine the effectiveness of the tactic as a transition between superintendents or on the pool of applicants. Concluding that an interim superintendent is merely a retired or former

superintendent who simply fills a year-long void in leadership in a district ignores the context and dynamics of the interregnum. The situation can be perceived analogously, albeit at a lower level of impact, with as much distinction as the difference between a long-term substitute teacher and a regularly employed teacher under contract. Interestingly, a search through various educational databases will yield far more studies on long-term substitute teachers than interim superintendents, yet one may assume that the breadth of the reach of an interim superintendent greatly exceeds that of the year-long substitute teacher, particularly when reflecting on the contention by Glass (2001a) that the hiring of a superintendent may be the single most significant decision a board of education exercises among the countless duties they perform.

The literature review will offer research relevant to several different areas contributing to interim superintendents and the impact they have on the district and its applicant pool during the selection and assimilation of the successor superintendent. After a summary of studies addressing the perception of the supply and demand of school superintendents and its relationship to interim superintendents, the reader will be provided with pertinent information involving interim educational leadership roles and responsibilities, with support from a body of work involving college and university interim leaders. From that platform, the study will proceed by presenting an insight into the dynamics of organizational socialization as it influences the temporary leader during the interregnum and welcomes the successor superintendent.

*The State of the Superintendency*

Cooper et al. (2000) employed the SPEAR (Superintendents' Professional Expectations and Advancement Review) in soliciting the opinions of a random sample of 2,979 superintendents across the country. The researchers realized a 57.7% response rate which resulted in 1,719 respondents. An analysis of the collected data revealed that although superintendents are generally satisfied with their present professional status and experiences, they harbor a significant concern about quality and quantity of the pool of successor candidates for the superintendency. Another nation-wide survey of superintendents, administered by the American Association of School Administrators at ten year intervals to maintain longitudinal data, echoed similar concerns about the level of stress facing system leaders (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000).

Jones (2000) reviewed recent national surveys conducted by the National Association of Elementary Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals on factors inhibiting principals from applying for superintendent positions. He viewed the topic through the two frames, internal development factors and external development factors, and explained issues that contributed to a decreased supply of superintendent candidates. Among the internal development factors he identified which negatively affected the recruitment, selection, and retention of superintendents were stress, inadequate salary, reduced salary differential between principals and superintendents and the heightened public scrutiny and accountability toward district leaders. The external development factors he identified as potential impediments to applicants were largely associated with the web of relationships between and among schools, the district, and the community.

A statewide survey distributed by the New York State Council of School Superintendents to 769 members presented information from 536 respondents that

predicted increased turnover and the perception that school systems experience difficulty recruiting and retaining exemplary district leaders (Rogers, Terranova & Volp, 2006). This note of concern regarding a potential leadership vacuum and a perceived shortage of candidates echoed the results of surveys administered to superintendents throughout the state by the same organization as far back as 1992 and 1995 (Volp, Whitehill & Davis, 1993; Volp, Davis & Barretta, 1995) Finally, a study generated by (Glass, 2001a) revealed that search consultants also expressed concern regarding their perceptions of the availability of highly qualified candidates when performing searches to fill superintendent vacancies.

While this is a survey of research on the subject of the pool of aspiring superintendent candidates, a cautionary note is being inserted for consideration at this point from opinions that offer a different perspective relative to the issue. Veneri asserted his judgment that, “Conclusions about shortages should not be based on general labor market statistics alone or anecdotal evidence alone.” (1999, p. 21) Instead Veneri suggested that labor shortages should be evaluated on a case by case basis and careful examination of the various factors that influence supply and demand. Kowalski (2003) also sounded an alarm in response to the view of many groups that there is a shortage of qualified candidates for superintendent vacancies when he questioned assumptions regarding the issue and advanced his opinion that perceptions and expectations, more than reality, may account for the dilemma. Stover (2002) also opined that the shortage may be a function of perceived quality and supply as opposed to simply an issue of quantity. Young and Creighton (2002) also expressed a note of caution in judging the supply of educational leaders due to perceptions as well as the complexity of the issue. Although these assertions lack the breadth and depth of research-

based findings supplied by those claiming a shortage of superintendent candidates, they nonetheless merit contemplation in conversations on the topic.

Notwithstanding Kowalski (2003), the prevailing thrusts of these surveys, crossing time periods and state boundaries, offer a picture of crisis, immense challenges, and stress that can conspire to produce an environment wherein the superintendent resigns to pursue and accept a position in another district. Glass reported that only 8.8% of superintendents spend their career in a single district. (Glass, et al., 2000) This element of mobility is compounded by what Glass refers to as “churning” districts where school board member conflict with district leaders promulgates an all too frequent succession of superintendents. According to Fenwick (1996), unexpected departures of superintendents due to resignations, controversy and scandal, debilitating illnesses and death, contribute to the employment of interim superintendents because the school system is left with an insufficient amount of time to conduct a search process for a successor. The average length of a superintendent search process, reported by Cooper et al (2000) as eleven months, leaves a leadership vacuum prompting the use of an interim superintendent.

### *Interim Leadership*

“Short-term leadership should be considered a legitimate subfield and not a junior version of executive leadership.” (Farquhar1995, p. 68)

Katherine Farquhar, at the time of her study (1995) was a board member and chair of a private school’s Head Search Committee, in addition to serving as a professor of public administration at American University. The convergence of those roles placed her in the unique vantage point of both participant and observer during a leadership transition at a private school involving the chief executive of the private school. She explored the

transitional period and sought to determine whether the interim leader simply maintains the organization or endeavors to exercise leadership in the form of decision-making and strategizing during the interim period. Farquhar reviewed literature on executive turnover in corporate environments and combined that with a single case study on interim school leadership and developed a model of the dynamics of short-term leadership (p. 64) for comprehending and projecting the effectiveness of the interim administration. The model was framed around the circumstances that precipitated the need for the interim leader, the focus or agenda of the interim leader, moderating factors such as title, organizational mandates, and the interim leader's role in the search for a successor, as they contributed to the outcomes of the interregnum. Farquhar suggested that the work of interim leaders has been viewed as "more of a management challenge than a leadership opportunity." (1995, p. 52). She concluded that the primary assessment of the interim leader's experience, using the model she developed on the interaction of moderating factors with the reason/s that prompted the vacancy and the agenda of the organization, should be measured by the performance of the successor's administration. Furthermore, she encouraged researchers to study how interim administrations affect organizations by searching for the actions and attitudes of interim leaders which produce success.

Chapman (1988) concludes that most interim leadership positions are found in educational institutions and adds that literature on the attendant roles and expectations is scarce. His claim of scant evidence on the subject still exists 20 years later with an exploration of relevant professional literature producing few studies and many questions.

In 1995 *Human Resource Management* devoted a special issue to leadership succession, which included several articles on interim leadership. Among these contributions,

Farquhar questioned whether temporary leaders were simply acting as placeholders or were they actually exercising leadership. Her interest emerged from previous work by Pfiffner (1988) that claimed interims were more consumed by management tasks than leadership opportunities. After analyzing transitions in the business world and reviewing relevant studies Farquhar (1995) determined four issues that prompted interim leadership appointments: “a succession crisis; an ongoing executive search; a limited time frame; and a crisis driven mandate” (p. 53) . Farquhar identified the interim leader’s likely path, from a response to crisis or confusion arising from the predecessor’s exit, to an effort to return the organization to equilibrium, and finally, the preparation of the organization for the executive successor. Her work resulted in a model depicting essential aspects of interim leadership, beginning with the circumstances prompting the exit of the previous executive; focal points of short-term leadership, factors regulate the environment and finally, a variety of indicators of impact.

Martin (2006) engaged in a qualitative study that relied on interviews of five individuals who had served as university presidents and also served multiple times as interim university presidents. He sought their perceptions of the role and organizational value of the interim position compared to common beliefs and practices evidenced in literature related to interim leaders. His study of interim university presidents identified four different roles associated with interim leaders. A *caretaker* assumes that the job rests with maintaining the direction of the institution without endeavoring to initiate change, thus leaving it to the successor. The *strategic leader* accepts responsibility for sustaining the direction and mission of the institution while the school seeks a successor. The *consultant* views the role as identifying the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the



university and offering sage advice to those responsible in hiring the successor regarding organizational congruency between candidates and the institution. Lastly, the *preparer* perceives their role as working with the university community to increase the value of the institution and enhancing the health of the organization, thus making it more attractive to potential successor candidates.

Waddington's (2001) two-site case study on the perceptions and leadership of interim university presidents suggested that an interim leader shouldn't assume that the leadership style they have exercised over the course of their career will successfully sustain them during their temporary post. Rather, Waddington found that the university's agenda and pressing organizational issues, political, social and financial are all factors in shaping the necessary leadership response and largely determine what leadership style would prove to be most successful. Chief among these sources of influence is the reason the university president had departed and subsequently triggered a leadership succession.

McWilliam, Bridgstock, Lawson, Evans, and Taylor (2008) embarked on an extensive review of relevant literature and analyzed qualitative data gathered in a national collaborative research effort and concluded that success as an interim leader required "an exemplary case of risk management." This research team called attention to what they perceive as the paradox of interim leadership. They explained that the interim leader simultaneously experiences "both presence and absence" (p. 305) in a manner similar to what Hall (1995) had referred to as "virtual permanence" (p. 85) when the interim leader simultaneously serves in an 'acting' role while performing 'real' and significant functions and responsibilities.

*Organizational Dynamics of the Interregnum*

A key finding of Farquhar's work (1991) investigating forty-three different leadership transitions involving interims in federally funded legal aid service agencies regarded the transfer of loyalty that is commonly associated with the manner in which employees move during the interregnum from the predecessor to the successor. It is not unusual for the predecessor to be perceived negatively. A concern for job security and the resulting anxiety leads to confusion and ambivalence among employees. Workers begin posturing maneuvers designed to protect their interests and prepare themselves for the leadership change.

Among the taxing challenges facing interim superintendents is the need to be sensitive to the emotions of employees, such as the task of healing the organization in the aftermath of the departure of an executive either beloved by many or a leader reviled by many. That is, Murphy (1988) and Farquhar (1991) found that in the former, people felt abandoned, rejected, sad, and anxious, while in the latter, people felt anger, and betrayal. Theus (1995) discovered that emotions and uncertainty were increased during *unexpected* departures. Chapman (1988) acknowledged that employees may experience fear of change initiated by an interim leader who follows a departed leader who was held in high esteem.

Kathryn Theus (1995) conducted a single case study of a university that *experienced* a tumultuous executive transition spawned by a scandal involving the president of the institution. She investigated the dynamics of the reactions to the crisis induced change in leadership through interviews of key participants at the cabinet level of the university. Her study addressed the potential impact experienced by interim leaders when they inherit the reigns of an institution after unexpected departures precipitated by political friction, organizational disarray, or controversy. Theus categorized responses selected by interim

leaders operating in such conditions in three different processes; sense-making, enactment, and communication. She defined sense-making as a reflective process whereby an individual examines all prospective possibilities prior to engagement or enactment as a proactive form of communication. Enactment is associated with the conscious or unconscious cultural influences that effect decision-making patterns of leaders. Communication was simply considered the conveyance of ideas and ideas, in varying forms, between and among people. Theus offered evidence which suggested that the systematic exercise of the structures emerging from the three areas of sense-making, enactment, and communication would likely increase successful leadership transition by emphasizing the importance of monitoring general communication processes during times of turmoil.

Douglas Hall (Hall, 1995) found himself as the Acting Dean of the School of Management at Boston University following the sudden resignation of the dean. What made this particular situation unique was the fact that Hall, as Professor of Organizational behavior and Director of the Executive Development Roundtable at B.U., was well versed in executive development, transition, and succession planning. Hall maintained a journal throughout this odyssey and captured his reflections, “using subidentity theory as a way of understanding the experience.” (p. 71) Hall’s personal journey led him to a number of suggestions regarding interim leadership. First, the interim must receive a strong sense of role clarity from those people making the hiring decision. Second, a clear organizational strategy would serve as a significant guide for the interim leader. Third, the interim’s participation in planned succession events would likely advance and expedite a smooth transition in leadership. Among the most interesting products of Hall’s personal reflections

was the notion of “virtual permanence” which he described as follows, “When it is happening, the interim period does not feel interim or temporary. It feels (and is) very real.” (p. 85)

Chapman, Chapman, and Lostetter (1988) declared that “The acting or interim leadership position has been neglected in terms of selection, role identification, and status.” (p. 81) Chapman and his colleagues reviewed literature on the subject of interim leadership and identified five phases of interim leadership that influence organizational dynamics within the transitional period. Phase 1 is referred to as the period of rising expectations and was characterized by various constituents petitioning the interim leader and seizing the opportunity to suggest and advocate changes to the system while the organization is in transition. Phase 2 is simply entitled “reality” and referenced as the general realization of the interim of the challenges that the previous leader could not successfully address either. Phase 3 is termed “trivialization” and was explained as those daily items and issues that “keep the institution moving, but do not move the institution.” (p. 82) Phase 4 occurs as the pages of the calendar are turned and the anxieties and expectations of long-term organizational needs conflicts with and squeezes out the energy and attention directed at short-term routines. Phase 5 is considered one of accommodation, with the interim leader moving conceptually toward a direction of going with the flow at an operational level as opposed to against the flow at the institutional level.

Boyne and Dahya (2002) developed a theoretical framework to examine how executive succession influences the performance of public organizations. Among the three primary concepts forming the model they created, is the area of motives of the executives. The researchers identified a trio of motives; “pragmatist, altruist, and egotist” (p. 184).

Pragmatists lack personal motives and instead acquiesce to their political masters and defer to organizational priorities. Altruists seek to provide services that promote the interests of the public and sustain expected standards of performance and provision. Egotists exhibit a tendency to influence policies in the direction of their own interests. The researchers went on to assert that “the impact of executive succession may vary positively with the extent of the difference in motives between the old and the new leader” (p. 186). They conclude their study of leadership succession in public organizations by offering that, “the direction and extent of succession effects are likely to be the product of a combination of motives, means and opportunities” (p. 195).

Ortiz and Kalbus (1998) employed a case study to analyze the succession process of an elected county school superintendent that involved an interim superintendent performing leadership responsibilities during the transition. These researchers contend that succession is a process, not an event. Central to that assertion are the social, psychological and political interactions which occur between the interim superintendent and the employees of the district, particularly those in key roles that frequently traffic with the superintendent. They explain how the dynamics of the pre-arrival factors and the energy and effort of the interim mix to produce an environment of significance as a prelude to the entry of the successor.

In summary, available research on interim superintendents is very scarce, and there is a degree of dispute regarding the supply of, and demand for, superintendents, with two different points of view. One such perspective contends that there is a decreasing amount of qualified candidates for vacancies while the opposing camp suggests that the numbers of certified candidates are sufficient. The difference seems to rest on the interpretation of the

word “qualified,” with one group asserting that qualified means measuring up to the specific or high standards of those exercising hiring decisions, while the other group asserts that the receipt of certification affirms proper qualifications for the position and inherent responsibilities.

The research on organizational dynamics related to temporary leadership at the district level is also limited. Efforts to construct background and context are reliant on studies involving either interim university presidents or examples from the private, business sector. Similarly, the breadth and depth of studies focusing on the impact of temporary leadership on the organizational culture in public schools is lacking.

Farquhar (1991) states, “The data suggests the net effects of interregna are both transitory and far reaching.” (p. 209) The number of students and staff members presently attending school each day throughout the country in districts under the leadership of an interim superintendent who exercises responsibilities considered “far reaching” beckons the attention of scholars regarding the impact of this temporary position. This study can contribute to the field by extending previous research involving interim superintendents. One such researcher, Murphy (1988), suggested, “Research should explore the perceptions of others who work directly with interim superintendents, specifically other central office persons, principals, and teachers. Additional meaning and understanding of the role could result.” (p. 85) Murphy considered the perspectives and opinions of people representing these varied positions as a potentially important contribution to the study of interim superintendents.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### Purpose of the Research

The intent of this study was to investigate the role and impact of the interim superintendent on the school district during the selection and assimilation of the district's next superintendent.

#### Research Questions

1. How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the following elements of an interim superintendent during an interregnum?

- a) Meaning and purpose,
- b) Organizational value,
- c) Leadership style

2. How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the impact of an interim superintendent on the following processes during the interregnum?

- a) The district's search process,
- b) The district's selection process,

#### Research Design

The intent of this qualitative inquiry was to conduct an exploratory, multi-site case study on the role and impact of the interim superintendent on the school district during the selection and assimilation of the district's next superintendent. A case study was selected

as the research design because of the richness and diversity of information expected by collecting perspectives from many different people across four different sites sharing their views and interpretations of a single event over an extended time. The case study presents the opportunity to capture the “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Wilson (1979) notes that a case study can “use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyze situations....by presenting “documentation of events, quotes, samples and artifacts” (p. 448).

Information was collected from a school district in each of three different BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) in upstate New York State that employed year-long interim superintendents during the 2006/2007 or 2007/2008 school year. There are thirty-seven regional BOCES in New York State created by the state legislature to provide shared educational programs and services to public schools. Data collection involved interviews of the interim superintendent; the BOCES District Superintendent; the successor superintendent; as well as the leaders of key constituent groups (president of the local parent and teacher associations, as well as bargaining unit leaders representing teachers, civil service employees, and administrators), and five randomly selected members of the general staff at each site. Personal one-on-one interviews were chosen to extract information central to the research questions. Seidman (2006) contends that “stories are a way of knowing” and interviews offer the researcher the chance to extract stories, which are “essentially a meaning-making process” produced by the respondent providing “details of experience, reflecting on them, and giving them order, and thereby making sense of them...” (p. 7) In addition, two individuals who have each served multiple districts as



interim superintendents were also be interviewed to obtain their vantage point on the scope of this study.

The interview data were collected and subsequently examined by applying Statistical Package for the Social Sciences PASW Text Analytics for Surveys. This software exercised a domain analysis that reviewed replies from the forty-three participants and classified the free-text responses by identifying and organizing groups of terms and words with shared meanings. The data were subsequently converted into information as the researcher ascribed titles to categories and themes and presented operational definitions that framed the conceptual parameters of the study. An audit trail is provided (see appendix I and appendix J) as a chain of evidence for others wishing to replicate the research. That is, the audit trail offers examples of how responses were classified with reference to the research questions forming the backbone of the study. In addition, a link is provided (appendix H) to demonstrate the relationship between the interview questions for participants and the respective research questions.

### Population and Sample

This study addresses the role and impact of interim superintendents on the school district during the search and selection process of a successor superintendent as perceived by the interim district leaders, their successor superintendents, school board president, teachers' union president, CSEA (Civil Service Employees Association) president as well as randomly selected members of the general staff. These positions represent the population of this investigation. The districts examined in the study are located within three different upstate New York BOCES. These three BOCES span ninety-three school districts which collectively provide educational services for over 100,000 learners in grades K-12. Of 69

school districts within the three BOCES in the study, eleven had interim superintendents during either 2006/2007 or 2007/2008 school years.

The study focused on four of the eleven interim superintendents as research participants. One outgoing superintendent left a rural district prematurely, before the initial three-year contract had expired, for a higher paid position as a superintendent in an affluent suburban system in the region. The other three outgoing superintendents left amid discord in the district and friction with the school board. One of the four interim superintendents had multiple experiences as an interim leader, having previously served as a temporary district leader in a school system other than the one involved in the study. All of the interims had extensive experience as a school superintendent prior to retiring and serving as an interim superintendent.

The districts selected were all K-12 school systems which had a year-long interim who was appointed from outside of the school system. The aggregate populations of the four districts totaled 7,800 students, over 600 teachers, 400 support staff members, and twenty-five school board members. All four of the districts contained each of the roles and titles selected for inclusion as research participants.

#### Audience for the Study

The number of expected retirements among existing superintendents, coupled with political and economic factors that have contributed to a decline in the average tenure of superintendents with a district, which begets more frequent and sometimes unexpected transitions, has resulted in a significant increase in the employment of interim superintendents. (Fenwick, 1996) For instance, in one of the participating BOCES, thirteen percent of the component school districts were served by interim superintendents during

the 2007-2008 school year. Given the growing number of interim superintendents and the significant influence of a district leader on education as measured by the number of learners and staff within the realm of responsibility of the district leader, one can imagine that members of any school community considering interims, particularly people who serve in district-wide leadership roles that frequently interact with the interim, may be interested in acquiring information relevant to the role and impact of interim superintendents.

### Sampling Procedures

The intent of this purposeful, single-stage sampling technique, was “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p.61) The goal was to create a narrow and defined domain that would increase clarity through the scope and depth of participation.

Interim superintendents were identified as those individuals who filled temporary superintendent positions in a school district during the 2007-2008 school year. This study involved four school districts, selected through purposeful sampling, within three different BOCES in upstate New York: BOCES 1 (23 districts, 40,000 students) BOCES 2 (31 districts, 43,000 students); and BOCES 3 (15 districts, over 17,400 students). These three BOCES encompass 69 component school districts serving approximately 100,000 students. The four districts chosen for this study were recommended by the district superintendents of the respective BOCES.

The current superintendent of each identified district was personally contacted by the researcher to secure his or her support. The current superintendents were then asked for

permission to contact specific members of the school community with requests to participate in the study with attendant assurances of confidentiality. The people who served as interim superintendents were also asked to participate in the study. Additional research participants were selected based on specific characteristics, the formal role and title they each held within the district during the interregnum. Each of these roles was included in every one of the school districts, no matter their size, within the sixty-nine systems comprising the three BOCES. The aforementioned roles in the respective organizational charts typically place them in positions that likely traffic with the interim superintendents more frequently than other staff members, thus offering a keener insight on the impact of the interim superintendent. These positions include: president of the union representing teachers, president of the union representing support staff, president of the Board of Education, president of the union representing administrators, president of the parent group formally recognized by the district, the district business manager, and the secretary to the superintendent.

In addition, five representatives of various employee groups in each district were randomly selected from the district employee lists using a random numbers table, and requested to be interviewed to offer a form of external verification of the data collected from key constituent leaders regarding perceptions of the role and impact of the interim superintendent. Due to retirements, changes in roles and titles, and declined requests, replacements had to be identified through the same random numbers technique until a sufficient number of able and willing participants were identified at each site.

Finally, two former interim superintendents were randomly selected from a list provided by the three BOCES District Superintendents of people who had served as interim

superintendents at multiple school districts. They were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on the role and impact of interim superintendents during the search and selection process of successor superintendents.

### Characteristics and Number of Participants

There were forty-three participants representing three concentric circles of the study. At the core of the study, the Inner Circle was represented by the four interim superintendents, two multiple-interim superintendents, four successor superintendents, and four school board members. The Second circle was comprised of seventeen people who each held key positions during the interregnum as elected representatives of constituent groups that are central to the operation of any district and populate the next ring around the primary subjects of the study. This group consisted of five central office staff members, five principals, and seven union presidents. The normal duties of these Second Circle participants would typically generate interactions with the interim at significant intersections of decision making, negotiations, budget development and many other political transactions that would afford them a unique perspective on the role and the impact of interim leaders. The remaining twelve subjects, with the exception of a representative of a formal parent group (e.g. Parent Teacher Association), were randomly drawn in a proportionate sample from certified and non-certified staff among the employee list of people who worked in the district during the interim's service time. The employee lists were provided by the participating districts. This last group allowed the researcher to collect the views and opinions on the role and impact of the interim from people one more ring removed from the primary subject of the study.

All participants were provided with the appropriate informed consent form supplying information on the study's intent, processes, and any potential risks involved in the study. It detailed conditions for voluntary participation, confidentiality policies, and contacts for information about participant's rights and the research in general. All participants were assured that names and identifiable characteristics of the setting and subjects would be kept confidential and replaced with pseudonyms to promote candid and accurate responses to solicitations of information during interviews. Data were reported in aggregate form to avoid revealing identities by position. Surveys were coded by group; either key positions or general staff, rather than specific titles.

#### Validity

Attrition of participants was expected in the form of retirements or departures. The interim superintendents were therefore the first person at each site to be invited as a participant. The inability to secure the participation of an interim superintendent would subsequently eliminate the site from the study because they represent a focal point of the study. Other participants who were unable or unwilling to participate in the study at any point were replaced by whoever held that key post, if the individual was also active within that district during the year under examination. There were four instances where people in targeted positions were no longer with the district.

The study began approximately six months after the departure of the interims and their year-long experience. The proximity in time between the event and the study, and the use of historical information and artifacts, such as district newsletters, newspaper articles, and minutes of Board of Education meetings as prompts, helped to mitigate the prospect of memory lapse and lessened retention. Anonymity of participants was assured to minimize

any discomfort among respondents. Participants were assigned numbers and referred to by pseudonyms. The school systems were given fictitious names as well. Data were reported in aggregate, by position, to avoid identification by district.

To avoid selection bias, the researcher limited the recruitment of subjects to formal leaders of representative groups within the school district who occupy positions which typically and frequently interact with the superintendent. The expansion of subjects to include representatives of the general staff served to seek external verification and was done randomly.

The use of multiple data sources, the creation of a chain of evidence, and the opportunity for participants to review the written transcripts of their recorded interviews were employed to strengthen the construct validity of the study. The recorded responses and respondent validation increased accuracy of recording responses, and produced rich contextual descriptions and details to enhance validity. The use of coding software to identify themes and patterns attempted to minimize potential threats to internal validity. The use of multiple case study sites served as a buttress against external validity concerns. In addition, the researcher asked the doctoral chair and a colleague of the researcher with an earned doctorate to review data collection methods to assure consistency and thereby help thwart threats to the validity of the study.

Cross case synthesis increased the reliability of the study. A case study protocol guided data collection efforts and, combined with a case study database, served to support reliability measures. The resulting detailed audit trail (see appendix H and appendix J) and chain of evidence (see appendix I) maintained by the researcher was attendant to issues

associated with credibility and transfer of findings. This detailed audit trail would permit an independent auditor to examine the data for consistency in procedure and technique.

### Instrumentation

The primary tools employed to extract information and serve as the platform for the study were one-on-one interviews conducted by the researcher with the participants. These individual interviews averaged less than an hour in duration and were scheduled to occur on-site, within the school district of the participant, in a location of their choice. The first seven interviews were audio-taped with the researcher taking notes. After it appeared that the practice of taking notes inhibited the length of responses (the interviewees were perhaps sympathetic to the task confronting the interviewer and the rate at which the researcher took notes) the researcher opted to accelerate the data collection effort and switch to recorded interviews without notes. The notes were then transcribed word for word. This tactical shift revealed richer and extended responses as measured by the resulting transcripts. Five of the interviews were conducted and recorded over the telephone to accommodate the requests of participants who cited scheduling conflicts that inhibited their ability to participate. Two interviews were conducted through electronic means to accommodate the requests of the participants. Each of the participants was afforded the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interview to insure accuracy.

In addition, a review of available documents supplemented the collection of data and assisted in offering a context and guide for the study. These sources included newspaper articles, district correspondence, information from district websites, and archived school board minutes.



The interview protocol, specific to each of the varied participant groups, was prepared by the researcher following an extensive review of relevant literature, in particular, case studies of interim leaders (Fenwick, 1993; Martin, 2006; Murphy, 1998; Waddington, 2001) which mined information through interviews and proposed specific areas of further research. The interview questions can be found in Appendices C-G. The direction and development of the solicitations framing the interview were specifically designed to elicit replies germane to the research questions central to this study. A mock interview with a retired school superintendent who had served as an interim superintendent in multiple districts presented an opportunity to pilot the instrument and produce constructive feedback on its form and scope.

### Data Analysis

The interviews and document review produced extensive data and a thick description of the context and issues at each site. The interviews were subject to audio recording and subsequently transcribed in printed formats. The participants were granted the opportunity to indulge in a review of their interview transcripts as a member check. A qualitative computer software program (PASW Text Analytics for Surveys from SPSS) was used to examine the data to identify common themes and categories (Creswell, 2009) emerging from the coding and sorting of the accumulated data. This data reduction and domain analysis process offered structure to the study and facilitated interpretation. The goal of the analysis was to sift through the collected, inert data and convert it to useful information. The resulting perspectives and attitudes of the participants were combined with document review of available artifacts, such as newspaper articles, minutes of Board

of Education meetings and district communiqués, and analyzed for inductive purposes in a descriptive study.

### Limitations

The study was limited to four school districts. One district was an urban setting while the remaining three would be categorized as rural. The small number of school districts involved, and the absence of a suburban system might hinder the ability to generalize the findings.

The study was conducted entirely within the state of New York and the inherent guidelines governing the employment of interim superintendents in the state as explained in the introductory portion of this research project. Other states may harbor employment structures which impact the relationship between schools and interim superintendents, specifically allowing the hiring of interim superintendents who are not retired and therefore may represent candidates who aspire to extend themselves beyond an interim status to become employed in the position full time. That prospect could possibly alter the motives and actions of such interim superintendents as opposed to interim superintendents who are retired and do not hold long-term aspirations with the district.

Additionally, it should be noted that each of the interim superintendents were employed in response to an unexpected departure of the outgoing superintendent which left the districts with insufficient time to conduct a search and selection process for another superintendent. This is noteworthy when one considers the work of Murphy (1988), Farquhar (1991), Theus (1995), and Waddington (2001), which produced findings regarding negative perceptions of the employees toward leaders prematurely or unexpectedly leaving the organization. Farquhar (1991) referred to this as a process of

“transferring loyalty” to the interim leader (p. 208) and also discussed a hypothesis of betrayal and abandonment, concluding that “the negativity may show how insiders react to the departure and adjust to a newcomer.” (p.207) As such, it must be noted that one superintendent opted out of his contract with a small rural district to accept a position with a larger suburban school system at a much higher salary. The remaining three outgoing superintendents left their posts in what could be described as a mutually agreed upon divorce between the superintendent and the board of education with each citing irreconcilable differences.

Finally, all of the four interim superintendents participating in this study were white males. The absence of female interim superintendents and interim superintendents of color in the research project might limit the prospects of generalizing findings and conclusions.

## CHAPTER IV

### Data Analysis

“Our expectations... We didn’t know how, but we knew what. We weren’t exactly sure what we expected. I guess our focus was directed toward what we thought was the greatest need.

What are the long-term impacts of interims and do they really work out? We’re okay with how everything went, but I wonder how it goes with other districts because it seems like quite a few districts have interims.”

School Board Member: District D

#### *Purpose of the Research Project*

This qualitative research project endeavored to examine the meaning and purpose, impact, and leadership style of the interim superintendent relative to the school district during the search for, and selection of, the district's next superintendent. This chapter will present data attendant to the research questions in the order in which the research questions appeared in Chapter One of this study.

Information was gathered from four school districts, representing three different Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York State, which had each retained the services of an interim superintendent for a minimum of one school year during the 2006/2007 or 2007/2008 school year. Data collection focused on interviews of the interim superintendent; the successor superintendent; as well as the leaders of key constituent groups, randomly selected members of the general staff at each site; and two individuals who have each served as an interim superintendent in more than one school district. The questions driving the interviews were developed in a differentiated format

attendant to unique properties and distinct roles of the interviewees (Appendices C-G). The subjects were then classified into three groups according to the degree their roles were perceived to interact with the interim superintendent.

### *Definition of Qualifying Terms*

The study revolved around the data collected from interviews of forty-three participants. The participants were classified into three distinct groups to examine and disaggregate their perceptions of the meaning, purpose, impact, and leadership style of interim superintendents. The subsequent data were analyzed for contrast and comparison.

The Inner Circle was comprised of people with responsibilities that trafficked most frequently with the office of the superintendent and, thereby, the interim superintendent. The Inner Circle is represented by four interim superintendents, four school board members, and two interim superintendents who each served more than one school district as a temporary leader. In addition, the successor superintendents of each of the four districts were interviewed for their opinions on the role and impact of the interim superintendents that preceded their arrival in office.

The Second and Third Circles can be viewed as concentric rings around the Inner Circle in terms of the distance between the roles and responsibilities of the respective groups and the work of the superintendent. The Second Circle was composed of individuals in formal leadership positions which would typically, but less frequently, intersect with the superintendent. Second Circle members include seven union presidents, five building principals, and five central office personnel. The Third Circle is comprised of staff members who are farther removed from the direct and daily activities of the superintendent. The Third Circle included eight teachers, three members of the support staff, and one president

of a parent-teacher association. The perspectives and attitudes of the participants were integrated with document review and then analyzed for inductive purposes within this descriptive study.

Several key concepts embedded in the interview questions warrant definition to clarify the data presented and create a proper context. For purposes of this study, organizational culture was interpreted in the simplistic explanation author Terry Deal offered when he echoed Marvin Bower in *Corporate Cultures*, "The way we do things around here." (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) Another question solicited opinions of interviewees on the "condition" of the school district. This question was open-ended and sought the respondent's general perception of the school system without any confining parameters that might limit their responses. Leadership style was framed around the work of Martin (2006) who researched the role of interim college presidents and identified (Caretaker, Strategic Leader, Consultant, and Preparer) attributes which emerged from a review of the literature on the subject. Dr. Martin granted permission via email for the use of his work to be incorporated into the construction of the interview questions on leadership style asked of every participant (see Appendices C-G). Martin describes the distinguishing characteristics of each of the four interim leadership roles. The *Caretaker* is considered a leader who assumes their primary responsibility is to maintain the status quo of the district, absent of precipitating change, and handing the reigns of leadership over to the successor. The *Strategic Leader* seeks to sustain the course and mission of the district while the school system searches for a replacement leader. The *Consultant* interprets the role of the interim leader as serving as a counsel to the district, proffering the wisdom borne of experience as a superintendent, in terms of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school

system so it can obtain a successor matching perceived organizational needs. The *Preparer* accepts responsibility for increasing the value of the district through improvements designed to enhance the attraction of candidates for the successor superintendent.

Table 1 illustrates the diversity of roles among people representing the core of the study. The twenty-nine members of the Second and Third Circles averaged thirteen years of experience with their respective districts. Three of the four successor superintendents were entry level leaders who had never previously worked as a superintendent. The remaining successor superintendent was serving his second district in the office of superintendent after working three years in that role with another school system. The two participants who had worked as interim superintendents in several different districts, both leading more than a handful of separate school systems, had lengthy educational careers that each included more than twenty years as a superintendent.

Table 1.

*Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Participants*

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District	<u>IS</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>SB</u>	<u>CO</u>	<u>PR</u>	<u>UP</u>	<u>TE</u>	<u>ST</u>	<u>PA</u>	<u>MI</u>	<u>Total</u>
District A	1	1	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	9
District B	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	0	0	10
District C	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	0	0	0	11
District D	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	11
Independent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total	4	4	4	5	5	7	8	3	1	2	43

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IS = Interim Superintendents (Inner Circle)

SS = Successor Superintendents (Inner Circle)

SB = School Board Members (Inner Circle)

CO = Central Office staff (Second Circle)

PR = Principals (Second Circle)

UP = Union Presidents (Second Circle)

TE = Teachers (Third Circle)

ST = Support Staff (Third Circle)

PA = Parents (Third Circle)

MI = Interim Superintendents with experience at multiple sites

Independent = the two multiple interim superintendents unaffiliated with the four districts

*Collected Data Attendant to Research Questions*

1. How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the following, with respect to the interim superintendent during an interregnum?

a) Meaning and purpose,



- b) Impact on the school district,
- c) Leadership style

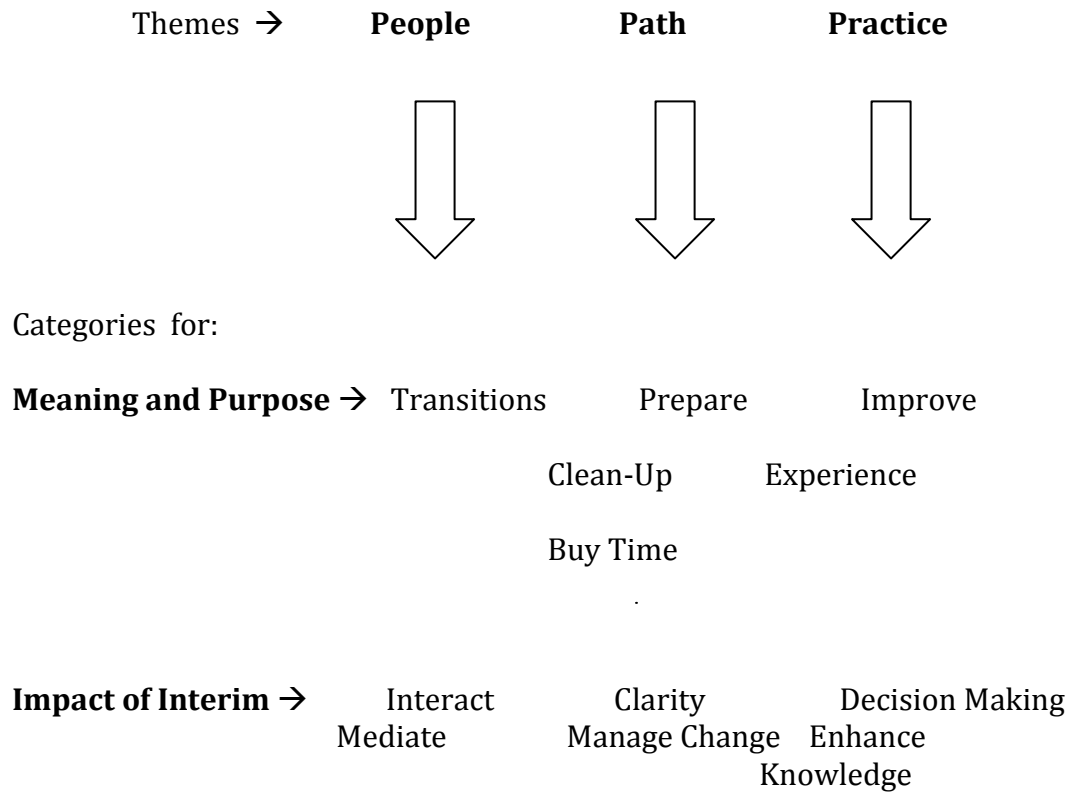
2. How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the impact of an interim superintendent on the following processes during the interregnum?

- a) The district's search process,
- b) The district's selection process

The data reduction process of interview responses to questions related to the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent yielded six different coded categories; Transition; Clean-Up; Prepare; Buy Time; Improve; and Experience. *Transition* involved those responses associated with maintaining a bridge across the leadership stream from outgoing superintendent to successor superintendent. *Clean-Up* referred to the replies related to ameliorating existing conflicts or negotiating controversial issues. *Prepare* included those remarks which interpreted the interim superintendent as one who actively readies the district for the successor superintendent beyond simply transitioning. *Buy Time* included responses whereby the interviewee perceived that the function of the interim superintendent was passive, to simply occupy the office and keep the seat warm while the district pursues the successor superintendent. *Improve* was the title granted to those responses grouped together because the interviewees felt the role of the interim superintendent was to leverage improvement within the district. *Experience* emerged as a category when respondents perceived the value of the interim superintendent was derived from the vast prior experience in district leadership they brought to the system.

Minutes of school board of education meetings were also examined and coded, as well as district newsletters, as a means of comparison with the interview data regarding the perceived meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent. The interpretation of the document review was consistent with the overall perceptions that participants expressed in the interviews. The review of documents served to reaffirm the perceptions of the respondents toward the interim superintendent as expressed in the interviews.

These six coded categories for meaning and purpose were all subsumed beneath three primary focal points which represented the repository of collective perceptions of the purpose, role, and impact of the interim superintendents as registered by the forty-three respondents. The three themes were People; Path; and Practice. (figure1.) *People* involved the previously mentioned category of transitions and the multiplicity of interactions the interim superintendent manifested in attending to the emotional, social, and psychological interests and needs of staff members during the interregnum. *Path* referred to the three aforementioned categories of *Prepare*, *Clean-Up*, and *Buy Time* and was largely devoted to steps enacted to produce a political environment within the district conducive for the successful entry of the successor superintendent. *Practice* referred to the two categories previously identified as *Improve* and *Experience*, which dealt with efforts borne of the interim superintendent's prior experience and expertise and employed in the instructional realm, such as initiatives, sponsorships, management, and validation.



*Figure 1.* Relationship of Themes to Coded Categories: Meaning and Purpose; Impact of the Interim Superintendent

Research Question 1.a asked: *How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent during the interregnum?*

Table 2 presents the six most frequently referenced categories associated with the meaning and purpose of interim superintendents that emerged from a transcript analysis of interviews with respect to the perceptions of the members of the Inner Circle.

Transition, Clean-Up and repair are the most prevalent categories cited in responses.

Table 2.

*Meaning and Purpose of Interim Superintendents: Perceived by 14 Members of the Inner Circle as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interviews*

Roles	<u>IS</u> (4)	<u>SB</u> (4)	<u>SS</u> (4)	<u>MI</u> (2)	# tallies per category (% of total tallies)
Category					
Transition	4 (29%)	3 (21%)	4 (29%)	3 (21%)	14 (25%)
Clean Up	8 (62%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	13 (23%)
Prepare	9 (69%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	13 (23%)
Buy Time	1 (13%)	6 (75%)	0	1 (13%)	8 (14%)
Improve	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	0	2 (40%)	5 (9%)
Experience	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)	0	4 (7%)
Total Tally	24	17	7	9	57
% of Total Tally	(42%)	(30%)	(12%)	(16%)	(100%)

IS = Interim Superintendent

SB = School Board member

SS = Successor Superintendent

MI = Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendent at multiple sites

The data in Table 3 subsume the six categories associated with the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendents as perceived by Inner Circle members beneath the three themes evolving from the analyzed data: People, Path, and Practice. A review of the data from Inner Circle members indicate that Path received an overwhelming percentage of responses, followed by People and then Practice.

Table 3.

*Themes of Meaning and Purpose of the Interim Superintendent Emerging from Perceptions of the 14 Members of the Inner Circle*

Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>
	Transition (14)	Prepare (13) Clean Up (13) Buy Time (8)	Improve (5) Experience (4)
% of total tally	14/57 (24%)	34/57 (60%)	9/57 (16%)

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 4 presents the six most frequently referenced categories associated with the meaning and purpose of interim superintendents that emerged from a transcript analysis of interviews with respect to the perceptions of the members of the Second Circle.

Table 4.

*Meaning and Purpose of Interim Superintendents: Perceived by 17\* Members of the Second Circle as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interviews*

Roles	<u>UP</u> (7)	<u>PR</u> (5)	<u>CO</u> (5)	# of tallies per category (% of total responses)
Issues				
Transition	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	8 (33%)
Clean Up	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)	6 (25%)
Prepare	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	0	3 (13%)
Buy Time	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	3 (13%)
Improve	0	1 (50%)	1 (59%)	2 (8%)
Experience	0	2 (100%)	0	2 (8%)
Total Tally	7	11	6	24*
% of Total Tallies (29%)	(46%)	(25%)		(100%)

\* some respondents identified more than one category

The data in Table 5 subsume the six categories associated with the meaning and purpose of interim superintendents as perceived by the members of the Second Circle beneath the three themes evolving from the analyzed data: People; Path; Practice. Half of all responses were classified as Path, followed in order of frequency by People and then Practice.

Table 5.

*Themes of Meaning and Purpose of the Interim Superintendent Emerging from Perceptions of the 17 Members of the Second Circle*

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Theme Category	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>
	Transition (8)	Prepare (3) Clean Up (6) Buy Time (3)	Improve (2) Experience (2)
% of total tally	8/24 (33%)	12/24 (50%)	4/24 (17%)

---

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 6 presents the six most frequently referenced categories associated with the meaning and purpose of interim superintendents that emerged from a transcript analysis of interviews with respect to the perceptions of the members of the Third Circle.

Table 6.

*Meaning and Purpose of Interim Superintendents: Perceived by 12\* Members of the Third Circle as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interviews*

Roles	<u>T</u> (8)	<u>SS</u> (3)	<u>P</u> (1)	# of tallies per category (% of total responses)
Transition	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	5 (36%)
Clean Up	0	0	0	0
Prepare	0	0	0	0
Buy Time	4 (50%)	3 (37%)	1 (13%)	8 (57%)
Improve	0	0	0	0
Experience	1 (100%)	0	0	1 (7%)
Total Tally	8	4	2	14* (100%)

\* some respondents identified more than one category

T = Teacher  
 SS = Support Staff  
 P = Parent



Table 7 subsumes the six categories associated with the meaning and purpose of interim superintendents as perceived by the members of the Third Circle beneath the three themes evolving from the analyzed data: People; Path; Practice. The most frequently cited theme was Path, with over half the total responses, followed in order by People, and then Practice.

Table 7.

*Themes of Meaning and Purpose of the Interim Superintendent Emerging from Perceptions of the 12 Members of the Third Circle*

Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>
	Transition (5)	Prepare (0) Clean Up (0) Buy Time (8)	Improve (0) Experience (1)
% of total tally	5/14 (36%)	8/14 (57%)	1/14 (7%)

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 8 subsumes the six categories associated with the meaning and purpose of interim superintendents as perceived by the members all three Circles beneath the three themes evolving from the analyzed data: People; Path; Practice. A quick review of the data show that all three of the Circles value the three themes of Meaning and Purpose in the same order, as measured individually and in aggregate: Path, People, and then Practice.

Table 8.

*Themes of Meaning and Purpose of the Interim Superintendent Emerging from Perceptions of the Members of the Three Circles*

Circle	Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>	Total
Inner (10)		14 (24%)	34 (60%)	9 (16%)	57 (100%)
Second (17)		8 (33%)	12 (50%)	4 (17%)	24 (100%)
Third (12)		5 (36%)	8 (57%)	1 (7%)	14 (100%)
Total		27 (26%)	54 (57%)	14 (17%)	95 (100%)

Inner Circle = Interim Superintendents; School Board Members; Interims who have served more than one school district

Second Circle = Union Presidents; Principals; Certificated Central Office Staff

Third Circle = Teachers; Support Staff; Parents

Research Question 1. b. asked, *How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the Impact of the Interim Superintendent on the School District during the interregnum?*

The data reduction process of interview responses to questions related to the perceived impact of the interim superintendent yielded six different coded categories;

Interactions; Clarity; Mediate; Manage Change; Decisions; Enhance; and Knowledge.

*Interactions* accounted for those responses which noted interpersonal communications, meetings and cooperation. *Clarity* referred to those remarks associated with vision, focus, direction or orientation. *Mediate* was a category which accommodated responses referring to healing, conflict resolution and amelioration of issues. *Manage Change* was a category forged from perceptions implying actions of the interim superintendent with respect to monitoring and facilitating the change process. *Decisions* represented a classification of opinions involving the interim superintendent's exercise of decision making skills. *Enhance* was the title granted to those responses grouped together because the interviewees felt the role of the interim superintendent was to leverage improvement within the district.

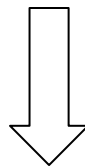
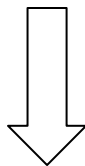
*Knowledge* emerged as a category when respondents perceived the value of the interim superintendent was derived from the vast prior experience in district leadership they brought to the system. These seven coded categories were then subsumed beneath the three themes of interim superintendents evolving from an analysis of the narratives of the forty-three participants: People; Path; and Practice (figure 2 for a relationship among these reference points). A document review of the minutes of school board of education meetings and district newsletters were also examined for their relationship with the perceived impact of the interim superintendent. This analysis was largely parallel with the trend of responses offered by participants in their respective school districts.

Themes →

**People**

**Path**

**Practice**



Categories for:

**Meaning and Purpose** → Transitions      Prepare      Improve  
Clean-Up      Experience  
Buy Time

**Impact of Interim** → Interact      Clarity      Decision Making  
Mediate      Manage Change      Enhance  
Knowledge

*Figure 2.* Relationship of Themes to Coded Categories: Meaning and Purpose; Impact of the Interim Superintendent

Table 9 presents the seven most frequently referenced categories associated with the impact of interim superintendents that emerged from a transcript analysis of interviews with respect to the perceptions of the members of the Inner Circle. The Inner Circle valued

Interactions, as measured by frequency of tallies, three times as much as each of the lowest three categories; Decisions, Enhance, and Knowledge.

Table 9.

*Impact of the Interim Superintendent as perceived by Inner Circle as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interviews*

Roles	<u>IS</u> (4)	<u>SB</u> (4)	<u>SS</u> (4)	<u>MI</u> (2)	# tallies per category (% of total tallies)
Interactions	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	13 (30%)
Clarity	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	0	8 (19%)
Mediate	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	8 (19%)
Manage Change	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0	5 (12%)
Decisions	0	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	4 (9%)
Enhance	1 (33%)	0	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	3 (7%)
Knowledge	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0	2 (5%)
Total tallies	12	10	13	8	43
% of tallies	(27%)	(24%)	(30%)	(10%)	(100%)

IS = Interim Superintendent

SB = School Board member

SS = Successor Superintendent

MI = Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendent at multiple sites

Table 10 represents coded responses from interviews of Inner Circle members regarding their perceptions of the impact of interim superintendents which are then subsumed under the themes evolving from data reduction: People; Path; Practice. Nearly

half of all responses were coded under People, followed in order by Path and Practice. The data indicates that the theme of People was the most frequently referenced by respondents, garnering just under one half of all replies.

Table 10.

*Themes of the Impact of the Interim Superintendent Emerging from Perceptions of the Inner Circle*

Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>
	Interact (13) Mediate (8)	Clarity (8) Manage Change (5)	Decision Making (4) Enhance (3) Knowledge (2)
# and % total	21/43 (49%)	13/43 (30%)	9/43 (21%)

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 11 provides coded data resulting from an analysis of responses from Inner Circle members to the question: What was the single most important contribution the interim superintendent made to the district? Responses classified under People and Path were

equal in strength and combined to account for just over eighty percent of perceptions, far outpacing replies associated with Practice. Those individuals who have served as interim superintendents multiple times appear to perceive working with People as their primary role.

Table 11.

*Impact of the Interim Superintendent as perceived by Members of the Inner Circle\* as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interview Question: "What was the Interim Superintendent's Most Important Contribution to the District?"*

Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>	Total Tallies
Interim Superintendent (4)	3 (42%)	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	7
Multiple Interim (2)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0	3
School Board Member (4)	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	1 (14%)	7
Total Respondents (10)				
Total Tallies	7 (41%)	7 (41%)	3 (18%)	17* (100%)

\* some people identified more than one theme

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 12 provides coded data resulting from an analysis of responses from Second Circle members to the question: What was the single most important contribution the interim superintendent made to the district? The data indicate that Central Office staff

members, working in closer proximity with the office of superintendent, place greatest emphasis on the theme of *People*, and no value on *Path*, whereas the Principals stressed *Practice* and the Union Presidents report equal tallies in *People* and *Path*.

Table 12.

*Impact of the Interim Superintendent as perceived by Members\* of the Second Circle as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interview Question: "What was the Interim Superintendent's Most Important Contribution to the District?"*

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Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>	Total Tallies
Principal (5)	3 (33%)	2 (22%)	4 (45%)	9 (100%)
Central Office (5)	3 (60%)	0	2 (40%)	5 (100%)
Union Presidents (7)	5 (38%)	5 (38%)	3 (24%)	13 (100%)
Total Respondents (17)				
Total Tallies	11 (41%)	7 (26%)	9 (33%)	27* (100%)

---

\* some respondents identified more than one theme

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 13 provides coded data resulting from an analysis of responses from Third Circle members to the question: What was the single most important contribution the interim superintendent made to the district? Although the collective data show little difference in total tallies, clearly, the data strikingly demonstrate that teachers harbor an emphasis on



the theme of Path, which eludes the interest or value of the other members of the Third Circle.

Table 13.

*Impact of the Interim Superintendent as perceived by Members\* of the Third Circle as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interview Question: "What was the Interim Superintendent's Most Important Contribution to the District?"*

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Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>	Total Tallies
Teachers (8)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	12 (100%)
Support Staff (3)	2 (67%)	0	1 (33%)	3 (100%)
Parents (1)	1 (50%)	0	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
Total (12)	6 (35%)	6 (35%)	5 (30%)	17* (100%)

---

\* some respondents identified more than one theme

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Table 14 provides coded data with associated themes evolving from an analysis of responses from members of all three Circles to the question: What was the single most important contribution the interim superintendent made to the district? The collective data from all three Circles reveal only slight differences between the three themes, though it is worth noting that members of the Second Circle, in positions of leading or implementing

instructional program, placed stronger emphasis in Practice than the members of the other two Circles.

Table 14.

*Impact of the Interim Superintendent as perceived by Members\* of all Three Circles as Interpreted and Coded from Narrative Responses of Interview Question: "What was the Interim Superintendent's Most Important Contribution to the District?"*

Theme	<u>People</u>	<u>Path</u>	<u>Practice</u>	Total Tallies
Inner Circle (10)	7 (41%)	7 (41%)	3 (18%)	17 (100%)
Second Circle (17)	11 (41%)	7 (26%)	9 (33%)	27 (100%)
Third Circle (12)	6 (35%)	6 (35%)	5 (30%)	17 (100%)
Total Respondents (39)				
Total Tallies	24 (39%)	20 (33%)	17 (28%)	61* (100%)

\* some respondents identified more than one theme

People = Responses which involved people, interactions, feelings

Path = Responses which involved direction, orientation, purpose

Practice = Responses which involved instructional programs, skills, concepts

Tables 15 – 19 address the leadership cycle, streaming from the departure of the outgoing superintendent, through the time period of the interim superintendent, and the arrival of the successor superintendent: all through the individual lenses of staff members regarding the general condition and organizational culture of the school district. The data

contained in the tables evolved directly from specific questions attendant to the headings of each column.

The respondents were offered the simplistic definition of organizational culture as, “The way we do things around here.” (Deal and Kennedy, 1982), and the condition of the district was deliberately left open-ended for their candid opinion on the overall status of the district at the respective transitional junctures in the leadership cycle.

Respondent replies to the question, “What was the most memorable contribution of the interim superintendent?” formed the basis for assessments in the left-most column of tallies. Perceptions of the leadership of each of the superintendent roles were extracted from replies to questions that simply asked participants to describe the general leadership style of each outgoing, interim, and successor superintendent within their district.

All responses to the questions explained above were evaluated by the researcher on their own merit, and within the context of the interview (through verbal or non-verbal cues), and subsequently recorded by the researcher to be positive (+), negative (-) or neutral (=) and reported as such in the tallies. The row listed as *Outcome* across the bottom of the tables lists the category (+, -, or =) with the highest percentage of responses in each column to show the dominant perception of the respondent group.

Table 15 provides data on Second and third Circle members of School District A and their perceptions of the leadership transitions from outgoing superintendent to interim superintendent to successor superintendent. The data portray a dramatic trend in perceptions among participants as District A moved along the continuum of leadership from one superintendent role to another, progressing from the negative of the outgoing superintendent to the positive of the interim superintendent and the neutral of the

successor superintendent, experiencing improvement from the beginning of the interregnum to the end. Further discussion of this trend appears in the next chapter of this study.

Table 15.

*Second and Third Circle Dominant Perceptions of the Leadership Cycle: from Outgoing Superintendent to Interim Superintendent to Successor Superintendent: District A*

Int Contr Condition Organ Cult < Organ Cult > Out Interim Succ Supt  
Participants

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Principal A	+	-	-	+	-	+	+
Principal A	+	-	-	+	-	+	=
Union Pr A	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
Union Pr A	+	=	-	+	=	+	=
Teacher A	+	-	-	+	=	=	=
Cent Off A	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
Outcome	83% +	83% -	100%-	83%+	50%-	50%+	50%=

+ = positive remarks  
 = = neutral remarks  
 - = negative remarks

Int Contr = most memorable contribution of the Interim Superintendent  
 Condition = condition of school district when the Interim Superintendent arrived  
 Organ Cult < = status of organizational culture before arrival of Interim Superintendent  
 Organ Cult > = status of organizational culture when Interim Superintendent left  
 Out = perception of Outgoing Superintendent  
 Interim = perception of Interim Superintendent  
 Succ Supt = Successor Superintendent

Table 16 provides data on the Second and Third Circle members of School District B and their perceptions of the leadership transitions from outgoing superintendent to interim superintendent to successor superintendent. These data display a strong and positive progression within District B as the school system moves through the continuum

of leadership, with discernible improvement in perceptions during the era of the interim superintendent.

Table 16.

*Second and Third Circle Dominant Perceptions of the Leadership Cycle: from Outgoing Superintendent to Interim Superintendent to Successor Superintendent: District B*

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Respondent	<u>Int Contr</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Organ Cult &lt;</u>	<u>Organ Cult &gt;</u>	<u>Out</u>	<u>Interim</u>	<u>Succ Supt</u>
Cent Off B	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Principal B	+	=	-	=	+	+	+
Union Pr B	+	+	+	-	=	=	+
Teacher B	=	=	-	=	+	-	-
Supp Staff B	+	+	=	+	=	+	+
Teacher B	+	-	-	+	-	=	+
Teacher B	+	=	+	-	=	+	=
Outcome	86%+	(43%+ 43%= )	57%-	43%+	(43%+ 43%=)	50%+	71%+

+ = positive remarks  
 = = neutral remarks  
 - = negative remarks

Int Contr = most memorable contribution of the Interim Superintendent  
 Condition = condition of school district when the Interim Superintendent arrived  
 Organ Cult < = status of organizational culture before arrival of Interim Superintendent  
 Organ Cult > = status of organizational culture when Interim Superintendent left  
 Out = perception of Outgoing Superintendent  
 Interim = perception of Interim Superintendent  
 Succ Supt = Successor Superintendent

Table 17 provides data on the Second and Third Circle members of School District C and their perceptions of the leadership transitions from outgoing superintendent to interim superintendent to successor superintendent. The data indicate a noticeable improvement in perceptions among the respondents when viewed from the beginning of the leadership cycle to the ending of the leadership cycle.

Table 17.

*Second and Third Circle Perceptions of the Leadership Cycle – from Outgoing Superintendent to Interim Superintendent to Successor Superintendent: District C*

---

Int Contr Condition Organ Cult < Organ Cult > Out Interim Succ Supt

Respondent



---

Principal C	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
Union Pr C	+	=	-	+	-	+	=
Supp Staff C	-	+	=	=	+	+	-
Cent Off C	+	=	-	+	-	+	+
Teacher C	+	-	-	=	-	+	+
Teacher C	+	=	-	=	+	+	=
Cent Off C	+	+	+	=	+	+	+
Teacher C	+	=	=	=	=	=	+
Outcome	87%+	50%=	63%-	63%=	50%-	87%+	50%+

---

+ = positive remarks

= = neutral remarks

- = negative remarks

Int Contr = most memorable contribution of the Interim Superintendent

Condition = condition of school district when the Interim Superintendent arrived

Organ Cult < = status of organizational culture before arrival of Interim Superintendent

Organ Cult > = status of organizational culture when Interim Superintendent left

Out = perception of Outgoing Superintendent

Interim = perception of Interim Superintendent

Succ Supt = Successor Superintendent

Table 18 provides data on the Second and Third Circle members of School District D and their perceptions of the leadership transitions from outgoing superintendent to interim superintendent to successor superintendent. The data exhibit a positive trend in perceptions as the district progresses along the continuum of leadership cycle, with favorable remarks increasing as time passed and leaders changed.

Table 18.

*Second and Third Circle Perceptions of the Leadership Cycle – from Outgoing Superintendent to Interim Superintendent to Successor Superintendent: District D*

---

Int Contr Condition Organ Cult < Organ Cult > Out Interim Succ Supt

Respondent

---

Teacher D	-	=	=	-	+	-	=
Supp Staff D	+	-	-	-	=	=	+
Principal D	-	-	-	-	-	+	+
Supp Staff D	+	-	-	+	-	+	+
Union Pr D	+	-	-	=	=	=	=
Cent Off D	+	+	=	+	-	+	+
Parent D	+	=	=	+	-	=	+
Teacher D	+	=	=	-	+	+	=
Outcome	75%+	50%-	50%=50%-	50%-	50%-	50%+	63%+

---

+ = positive remarks

= = neutral remarks

- = negative remarks

Int Contr = most memorable contribution of the Interim Superintendent

Condition = condition of school district when the Interim Superintendent arrived

Organ Cult < = status of organizational culture before arrival of Interim Superintendent

Organ Cult > = status of organizational culture when Interim Superintendent left

Out = perception of Outgoing Superintendent

Interim = perception of Interim Superintendent

Succ Supt = Successor Superintendent

Table 19 offers a summary of the perceptions of the impact of the interim superintendent on the four participating school districts from the perspective of respondents from all three Circles. The data reveals an overwhelmingly positive reference to the most memorable contribution of the interim superintendent to the district. Additionally, the data report an increase in positive perceptions on the condition of the school district at the time of the

departure of the interim superintendent when compared with the condition at the time of the departure of the outgoing superintendent. With the exception of District D, the same observation can be made when comparing the perceived status of the organizational culture of the districts.

Table 19.

*Perceptions of all Three Circles on the Leadership Cycle – from Outgoing Superintendent to Interim Superintendent to Successor Superintendent*

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	<u>Int Contr</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Organ Cult &lt;</u>	<u>Organ Cult &gt;</u>	<u>Out</u>	<u>Interim</u>	<u>Succ Supt</u>
<u>Respondent</u>							

---

District A	83% +	83% -	100%-	83%+	50%-	60%+	50%=
District B	86%+	(43%+ 43%= )	57%-	43%+	(43%+ 43%=)	50%+	71%+
District C	87%+	50%=	63%-	63%=	50%-	87%+	50%+
District D	75%+	50%-	50%=50%-	50%-	50%-	50%+	63%+

---

+ = positive remarks  
 = = neutral remarks  
 - = negative remarks

Int Contr = most memorable contribution of the Interim Superintendent  
 Condition = condition of school district when the Interim Superintendent arrived  
 Organ Cult < = status of organizational culture before arrival of Interim Superintendent  
 Organ Cult > = status of organizational culture when Interim Superintendent left  
 Out = perception of Outgoing Superintendent  
 Interim = perception of Interim Superintendent  
 Succ Supt = Successor Superintendent

Research Question 1. c. asked, *How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the leadership style of the interim superintendent during the interregnum?*

Tables of data present information on perceptions of respondent groups regarding leadership style of interim superintendents. The four separate leadership roles used as a conceptual framework for assessing leadership style in this study were identified by Martin (2006) during the taxonomy of literature he conducted as he engaged in research on interim college presidents. Respondents were provided with the definitions and attributes of each of the four leadership frames and asked to select which of the titles reflected the work of the interim superintendent in their respective school districts.

Tables 20 through 28 offer the perspectives of the board of education members representing each of the four school districts and their view of the leadership style of the interim superintendent that worked in their school system. Not a single board of education member identified the interim superintendent as a caretaker.

Table 20.

*Inner Circle Perceptions of Interim Leadership Style by Group: School Board*

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District and Number of	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)
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Respondents	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>
District A (1)			X	X
District B (1)		X	X	
District C (1)		X	X	
District D (1)		X		X
Total Responses = 8	0 (0%)	3 (38%)	3 (38%)	2 (24%)

\* respondents selected more than one role to describe leadership style

Table 21 records self reported data on leadership style of the interim superintendents. While the dispersed tallies of the interim superintendents suggested that leadership style is situational, they were unanimous in perceiving their role as a Preparer.

Table 21.

*Inner Circle Perceptions of Interim Leadership Style by Group: Interim Superintendents\**

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District and Number of Respondents	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)				
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>	
District A (1)			X	X	
District B (1)		X		X	
District C (1)		X		X	
District D (1)	X	X	X	X	
Total (4)					
Total Tallies	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	Total = 10*

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\* respondents selected more than one role to describe leadership style

Table 22 offers the perspectives of the two individuals who have served as interim superintendents in more than one district and their views of the leadership style of the role. There is a noticeable absence of tallies in the Caretaker leadership style.

Table 22.



*Perceptions of Interim Leadership Style by Group: Multiple Interim Superintendents\**

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Number of Respondents	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)				
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>	
Multiple Interim A (1)		X		X	
Multiple Interim B (1)		X	X	X	
Total (2)					
Total Tallies	0	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	Total 5*

---

\* respondents selected more than one role to describe leadership style

Table 23 offers data on the collective responses of Inner Circle members to the interview questions soliciting their opinion on the leadership style of interim superintendents as the roles relate to those identified by Martin (2006). Clearly, Inner Circle members do not perceive interim superintendents to evidence the Caretaker role of

leadership. The data presented in tables 15 through 19 reflected the negative perceptions of respondents regarding the condition of their respective districts at the time of the arrival of the interim superintendents, which may account for the single tally in table 23 associated with Caretaker leadership. That is, the interim superintendents may have felt confronted with systems which needed leadership directed at improvement rather than maintenance.

Table 23.

*Inner Circle Perceptions of Interim Leadership Style*

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Number of Respondents/ Tallies	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)			
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>
10/23	1 (4%)	8 (35%)	6 (26%)	8 (35%)

---

\* respondents selected more than one role to describe leadership style

Table 24 offers the perspectives of Second Circle members from the four different school districts and their view of the leadership style of the interim superintendent that worked in their school system. While the summary data show a nearly equal dispersion across the four leadership styles, it's worth noting that the Strategic Leader role is the only

category which is not represented by the highest percentage of tallies by any of the three work groups.

Table 24.

*Second Circle Perceptions of Interim Superintendent Leadership Style: by Work Group\**

Respondents	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)				
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>	
Central Office (5)	1 (17%)	3 (17%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	(100%)
Principal (5)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	(100%)
Union Presidents (7)	4 (44%)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	(100%)
Total Respondents (17)*					
Total Tallies (23)	5	6	6	6	
% of Total Tallies	(22%)	(26%)	(26%)	(26%)	(100%)

\* some respondents identified more than one role

Table 25 supplies data on the Second Circle member perceptions of leadership styles of interim superintendents by district. The differences within each district may merely reflect differences in environmental conditions unique to the individual school systems. The summary data were spread fairly evenly across the spectrum of leadership styles.

Table 25.

*Second Circle Perceptions of Interim Leadership Style: by District\**

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Respondents	Interim Leadership Style (Martin, 2006)				
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>	
District A	0	0	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	(100%)
District B	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	(100%)
District C	2 (40%)	4 (60%)	0	0	(100%)
District D	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	(100%)
Tallies (23)*	5 (22%)	6 (26%)	6 (26%)	6 (26%)	(100%)

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\* some respondents selected more than one role

Table 26 features data on the Third Circle member perceptions of leadership style by work group. There appears to be an emphasis on Caretaker and Strategic leader roles when measured against the Consultant and Preparer roles. The remarks attributed to respondents referenced in this table reflected a belief that the interim superintendents were anchored in the central office tending to general district-wide policies and issues

rather than specific leverage points directly impacting the roles of individual staff members represented in the Third Circle.

Table 26.

*Third Circle Perceptions of Interim Superintendent Leadership Style: by Work Group*

Respondents	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)				
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>	
Teachers (8)	4 (50%)	3 (37%)	1 (13%)	0	(100%)
Support Staff (3)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	(100%)
Parent (1)	0	1 (50%)	0	1 (50%)	(100%)
Total Respondents (12)					
Total Tallies (15)	5	6	2	2	
% of Total Tallies	(38%)	(38%)	(12%)	(12%)	

\* some respondents identified more than one role

Table 27 presents data on Third Circle member perceptions of interim superintendent leadership styles by school district. There was a clear majority in the summary data that indicated an emphasis in Caretaker and Strategic Leader roles as opposed to Consultant and Preparer roles.

Table 27.

*Third Circle Perceptions of Interim Superintendent Leadership Style: by District\**

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Respondents	Interim Leadership Roles (Martin, 2006)			
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>
District A (1)	0	0	0	0
District B (4)	2 (50%)	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	0
District C (3)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0	0
District D (4)	0 (11%)	3 (33%)	1 (33%)	2 (22%)
Total Respondents (12)				
Total Tallies (16)*	5	6	2	2
% of Total Tallies	(38%)	(38%)	(12%)	(12%)

---

\* some respondents identified more than one role

Table 28 shows perceptions of all respondents by Circle membership across all districts. The striking difference within the data in Table 27 can be found in inverse relationship between emphasis of Inner Circle members and those of the Third Circle. The highest percentage of tallies in the Inner Circle (Preparer) contrasts sharply with the

lowest percentage of tallies among Third Circle members, whereas the highest percentage of tallies in the third Circle (Caretaker) are in the area of lowest tallies of the Inner Circle.

Table 28.

*Comparison of Perceptions of Interim Leadership Style: by Circle*

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Circle	Interim Leadership Style (Martin, 2006)				Total
	<u>Caretaker</u>	<u>Strategic Leader</u>	<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Preparer</u>	
Inner Circle	4%	35%	26%	35%	(100%)
Second Circle	22%	26%	26%	26%	(100%)
Third Circle	38%	38%	12%	12%	(100%)

---

Inner Circle = Interim Superintendents (4); School Board Members (4);  
Interim Superintendents who have served multiple districts (2)

Second Circle = Certified Central Office Staff (5); Principals (5) Union  
Presidents (7)

Third Circle = Teachers (8); Support Staff (3); Parents (1)

Research Question 2.a. asked, *How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the role of the interim superintendent in the search process for a successor superintendent?*

The interview data revealed that none of the four interim superintendents were involved in the district's search process for a successor superintendent beyond a cursory "meet and greet" function with the candidates. Furthermore, each of the four school board members reaffirmed this very limited involvement of interim superintendents in the search process. The interview responses from both school board members and interim superintendents appeared to imply there was a vague and awkward relationship between representatives of the two groups that could best be described as, "We'll (school board) ask you something if we have any questions," and the interim superintendents were willing advisors, if and when asked for their input.

One of the four interim superintendents expressed disappointment with the absence of his direct involvement in the search process. He felt a compelling desire to be involved on the basis of his experience in the office of system leader, knowledge of the context of the environment, and the investment he had made in leading and preparing the district for the successor superintendent.

Research Question 2. b. asked, *How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the impact of the interim superintendent on the selection process for a successor superintendent?*

Since the selection process follows the search process, from which the interim superintendents were largely excluded, it's no surprise that the interims were likewise only passively involved with the selection among candidates for the successor superintendent. With little explanation or rationalization, the Inner Circle participants simply indicated that the role of interim superintendent was not a factor in the selection process. There was no mention of any direct presence or involvement of the interim superintendents in the



selection process. The most frequently cited word which interim superintendents and school board members elected to use in their responses to interview questions asking about the role of the interim superintendent in the search and selection process was, “limited.”

In summary, Chapter 4 featured coded data resulting from data reduction practices performed on the transcript analysis of forty-three people representing four different school districts which were recently led by interim superintendents. In addition, two individuals who have served multiple school districts as interim superintendents also provided their perceptions on the role of interim superintendent. Chapter 5 will discuss findings in greater detail and offer recommendations emerging from the data analysis.

## Chapter V

### Summary of Findings

#### *Background of the Study*

One perception of the role of the interim superintendent can be found in the words of the authors of *Career Crisis in the Superintendency? The Results of a National Survey*.

“Already we see the rise of the interim superintendent – someone placed in the position for three months to one year to give the district and school board time to select a permanent candidate. An increasing number of school districts are either between superintendents or have made interim appointments as they struggle to define their needs, locate acceptable candidates, and settle on a choice. The choice of an interim superintendent puts the district ‘on hold’ and often leads to the appointment of interim principals and other staff, leaving it up to the permanent leaders, whenever they arrive, to quickly make hard personnel and program decisions.”  
(Cooper, Fusarelli, Carella, 2000. p.38)

The view expressed above by researchers Cooper, Fusarelli and Carella implies that interim superintendents are caretakers with the primary responsibility centered on maintaining the status quo within a school district as opposed to engaging in a more active and decisive leadership role.

This qualitative multiple site case study sought a more intimate investigation of the role of the interim superintendent in light of the increased incidence of school districts employing people in this temporary system-wide leadership position as reported by Fenwick (1993, 2000). As such, the study examined the meaning and purpose, impact, and leadership style of four interim superintendents and the roles they exercised, as perceived by key leaders and members of the general staff, during the interregnum while their respective districts searched for and selected a successor superintendent. A review of relevant literature provided a platform to plot a direction for the research and develop

interview questions designed to extract information attendant to the following research questions of the study.

*The Research Questions and the Nature and Analysis of Data*

The bulk of the data collected during the research emerged from confidential one-on-one interviews with forty-three different participants representing a variety of roles within four separate public school districts in upstate New York which had recently experienced the work of an interim superintendent. Participants were categorized into three distinct groups that reflected the degree to which members traffic with the office of the superintendent. The Inner Circle was comprised of four interim superintendents, four school board members, and two people who had served as interim superintendents in more than one school district. The Second Circle was composed of seven union presidents, five building principals, and five certificated central office staff members. The Third Circle was populated with eight teachers, three support staff members, and one parent group officer. Four successor superintendents were also interviewed to obtain their perceptions on the meaning and purpose, impact, and leadership style of the interim superintendent. Document review of board of education meetings and district correspondence buttressed the data collection and reaffirmed the perceptions shared by respondents in their interviews.

A data reduction process employing computer software (PASW Text Analytics for Surveys, from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) identified classification codes and the researcher then ascribed three subsequent themes mined from the interview transcripts and documents. The data were conveyed in a series of tables in Chapter IV and

then converted to the narrative that follows in this chapter in the evolving form of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Research Question 1.a: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent during the interregnum?

The data reduction process of interview responses to questions related to the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent yielded six different coded categories; Transition; Clean-Up; Prepare; Buy Time; Improve; and Experience. *Transition* involved those responses associated with maintaining a bridge across the leadership stream from outgoing superintendent to successor superintendent. *Clean-Up* referred to the replies related to ameliorating existing conflicts or negotiating controversial issues. *Prepare* included those remarks which interpreted the interim superintendent as one who actively readies the district for the successor superintendent beyond simply transitioning. *Buy Time* included responses whereby the interviewee perceived that the function of the interim superintendent was passive, to simply occupy the office and keep the seat warm while the district pursues the successor superintendent. *Improve* was the title granted to those responses grouped together because the interviewees felt the role of the interim superintendent was to leverage improvement within the district by facilitating or initiating instructional programs or strategies. *Experience* emerged as a category when respondents referenced the vast prior experience in district leadership which they interim superintendent brought to the system.

These six coded categories were all subsumed beneath three primary focal points which represented the repository of collective perceptions of the purpose, role, and impact

of the interim superintendents as registered by the forty-three respondents. The three themes were People; Path; and Practice. (figure 1, p. 43). *People* involved the previously mentioned category of *Transitions* and the multiplicity of interactions the interim superintendent manifested in attending to the emotional, social, and psychological interests and needs of staff members during the interregnum. *Path* referred to the three aforementioned categories of *Prepare*, *Clean-Up*, and *Buy Time* and was largely devoted to steps enacted to produce a political environment within the district conducive for the successful entry of the successor superintendent. *Practice* referred to the two categories previously identified as *Improve* and *Experience*, which dealt with efforts borne of the interim superintendent's prior experience and expertise and employed in the instructional realm, such as initiatives, sponsorships, management, and validation.

Research Question 1.b: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the impact of the interim superintendent on the school district during the interregnum?

The data reduction process of interview responses to questions related to the perceived impact of the interim superintendent yielded seven different coded categories; Interactions; Clarity; Mediate; Manage Change; Decisions; Enhance; and Knowledge. *Interactions* accounted for those responses which noted interpersonal communications, meetings and cooperation. *Clarity* referred to those remarks associated with vision, focus, direction or orientation. *Mediate* was a category which accommodated responses referring to healing, conflict resolution and amelioration of issues. *Manage Change* was a category forged from perceptions implying actions of the interim superintendent with respect to monitoring and facilitating the change process. *Decisions* represented a classification of

opinions involving the interim superintendent's exercise of decision making skills. *Enhance* was the title granted to those responses grouped together because the interviewees felt the role of the interim superintendent was to leverage improvement within the district.

*Knowledge* emerged as a category when respondents perceived the value of the interim superintendent was derived from the vast prior experience in district leadership they brought to the system. These seven coded categories were then subsumed beneath the three themes of interim superintendents evolving from an analysis of the narratives of the forty-three participants: People (coded categories: Mediate; Interactions); Path (Clarity; Managing Change) and Practice (Decision Making; Enhance; Knowledge).

Furthermore, the impact of the interim superintendent was also examined by analyzing how respondents replied to the questions, "What was the most memorable contribution of the interim superintendent?" "How would you describe the general condition of the school district at the time the interim began work in your district?" "How would you describe the organizational culture of the district before the arrival of the interim superintendent? At the time the interim superintendent departed?" and, "How would you describe the leadership style of the outgoing superintendent, the interim superintendent, and the successor superintendent?" formed the basis for assessments of comments. The respondents were offered the simplistic definition of organizational culture as, "The way we do things around here." (Deal and Kennedy, 1982), and the condition of the district was deliberately left open-ended for their candid opinion on the overall status of the district at the respective transitional junctures in the leadership cycle.

All responses to the questions explained above were evaluated by the researcher on their own merit, and within the context of the interview (through verbal or non-verbal

cues), and subsequently recorded by the researcher to be either positive, negative, or neutral, and reported as such in the tallies.

The study also explored the leadership cycle within each of the four school districts, streaming from the departure of the outgoing superintendent, through the time period of the interim superintendent, and the arrival of the successor superintendent: all through the individual lenses of staff members regarding the general condition and organizational culture of the school district. The data evolved directly from specific questions attendant to the headings of each column.

Research Question 1.c: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the leadership style of the interim superintendent during the interregnum?

The four separate leadership roles used as a conceptual framework for assessing leadership style in this study (caretaker, strategic leader, consultant, and preparer) were identified by Martin (2006) during the taxonomy of literature he conducted as he engaged in research on interim college presidents. Respondents were provided with the definitions and attributes of each of the four leadership frames and asked to select which of the titles reflected the work of the interim superintendent in their respective school districts.

Martin describes the distinguishing characteristics of each of the four interim leadership roles. The *caretaker* is considered a leader who assumes their primary responsibility is to maintain the status quo of the district, absent of precipitating change, and handing the reigns of leadership over to the successor. The *strategic leader* seeks to sustain the course and mission of the district while the school system searches for a replacement leader. The *consultant* interprets the role of the interim leader as serving as a

counsel to the district, proffering the wisdom borne of experience as a superintendent, in terms of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school system so it can obtain a successor matching perceived organizational needs. The *preparer* accepts responsibility for increasing the value of the district through improvements designed to enhance the attraction of candidates for the successor superintendent.

Research Question 2.a: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the role of the interim superintendent in the search process for a successor superintendent?

Research Question 2.b: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the impact of the interim superintendent on the search process for a successor superintendent?

Data regarding the role of interim superintendents in the search and selection process for a successor superintendent flowed out of interview questions which simply asked school board members and interim superintendents about the extent of involvement of the interim superintendents in the proceedings.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented in the order in which the research questions appeared in Chapter I.

#### *Finding Associated with Research Question 1.a*

Research Question 1.a: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent during the interregnum?

Members of the school community who participated in the study perceived the most significant purpose of the interim superintendent to be that of actively shepherding the



district along a path through the transition between permanent superintendents by resolving existing issues of competing interests, managing day-to-day responsibilities, and readying the district for the successor superintendent. The theme that best describes these replies is Path. Interestingly, when asked later to identify the most significant contribution of the interim superintendent during the interregna, respondents most frequently expressed comments associated with the theme of People. The resulting dissonance may merit additional research to explore contributing factors.

Table 8 (p.48) provides evidence of the collective opinions of members of all three circles of participants. The data indicate that the theme of Path (classified codes: Prepare, Clean-Up and Buy Time) was the predominant perception of the meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent (57%) followed by People (classified code: Transitions) with just over a quarter of the total responses (26%) and Practice (classified codes: Improve, Experience) with the lowest number of tallies (14%). Each of the Circles produced the same rank order of the three themes, with Path highest, then People, and finally Practice. However, a closer look at the responses offers a subtle difference in perceptions. The highest percentage of tallies within the theme of Path were registered by Inner Circle members (interim superintendents, school board members, and interim superintendents who had served multiple districts), while the highest percentage of tallies within the theme of Practice originated with Second Circle members (union presidents, principals, and certificated central office staff), and the highest percentage of tallies within the theme of People were reported by Third Circle members (teachers, support staff and parent).

Perhaps the most descriptive example of the responses related to the theme of Path comes from a principal from District C:

“His (the interim superintendent) biggest contribution was extending the teachers’ contract another year to spare the next superintendent the trouble of being new and immediately jumping into negotiations. And, I think the board would probably see it that way too – ‘Hey, he came in and negotiated and put that aside so the new superintendent could start fresh, without that hanging over his head.’ I think that was most important to them to build in that year cushion. As I think about it now, looking back, I guess one of the key responsibilities for an interim is quickly assessing the issues within the system and decide which program or policy is central to the district, you know, essential, a core value, and which program or policy is a baby of the outgoing superintendent – together with the reasons and motives of the previous superintendent’s departure - and ultimately decide what stays, um, whether you raise that baby or not or leave it on the doorstep of the next superintendent to adopt, and what goes and why – all in terms of preparing the district for the new superintendent, making it a better, smoother transition so the person has a fair chance at success.”

#### *Conclusion Associated with Research Question 1.a*

Far from merely being caretakers, interim superintendents serve an important and active role as a bridge spanning successful transitions within the leadership stream separating outgoing superintendents and successor superintendents when districts lack sufficient time to search and select a permanent superintendent. They guide progress and may prevent the system from grinding to a halt during the interregnum. The words of the interim superintendent of District A characterize this view.

“The public usually perceives the interim superintendent as a caretaker. I worked hard to change that image with an agenda to get things done. I told the board that I’m not the kind of guy to sit around and mind the stove. I wanted to improve the district so they’d be able to recruit better candidates.”

#### *Recommendations Associated with Research Question 1.a*

The role of the interim superintendent should not be perceived as simply a placeholder. Nor should this role be viewed as a position that blocks opportunities for aspiring superintendents. Instead, further research should be conducted to examine the performance rates of entry level superintendents who follow interim superintendents compared to that of entry level superintendents who follow outgoing superintendents.

Both national and state-wide organizations should collect and monitor data on interim superintendents. Fenwick's study of interim superintendents (1993) revealed that very few states maintained any information on the number of districts employing interim superintendents. Likewise, this research project encountered an absence of data collection on interim superintendents in New York by either the State Department of Education or the New York Council of School Superintendents.

*Additional Finding Associated with Research Question 1.a*

Interview data indicated that not one school board of education representing the four participating districts involved any stakeholder group in the process to select an interim superintendent. Each and every staff member interviewed in this study stated that not only were they not involved in the search and selection of an interim superintendent, but they were unaware of the involvement of anyone other than the members of the board of education in the decision making process. Moreover, the following quotes are indicative of the majority of replies of members of the Second and Third Circles to the interview question seeking information on how the decision to hire an interim superintendent was communicated to the school community.

“They just did it. I found out through the grapevine, by word of mouth across the district. I think they said something at a Board meeting, since they had to decide on it and make it public – but I don't remember any announcement via email or newsletter or anything like that.” A certified

member of the central office staff of District A.

“I really don’t know exactly. It just happened and I can’t remember what form it took. I’d say it was probably word of mouth.” A member of the support staff of District B.

“There was never any process of timeline that people were aware of. They just announced that we were going to get an interim and the district was going to wait and hire the next superintendent to start the next summer.” A union president of District C.

“I have no idea since I don’t recall ever receiving any communication on the process or decision.” President of the parent-teacher organization of District D.

#### *Additional Conclusion Associated with Research Question 1.a*

The position of interim superintendent, albeit perceived as a temporary post, nonetheless is accompanied by considerable influence that impacts many staff members, children, and taxpayers over the course of an extended time period yet the vast majority of staff members representing the four districts participating in this study provided interview responses which reflected a sense of detachment from the process whereby the interim superintendent was hired.

#### *Recommendations Associated with Research Question 1.a*

The process of hiring an interim superintendent, for that matter, the process of hiring a superintendent, represents a subject for further study. The absence of representatives of employee groups could be perceived as indifference to the interests of the greater community, yet this absence may not deter the board of education from hiring an effective candidate. One could hypothesize that the involvement of various constituent groups may expand the politicization of the process and lead to a consensus decision or convergence of

the means which might dilute the effectiveness of the search and selection process through appeasement.

*Finding Associated with Research Question 1.b*

Research Question 1.b: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the impact of the interim superintendent on the school district during the interregnum?

The interim superintendents involved in this study left a strong and positive impact on the districts they served as measured by participant responses to several different questions involving perceptions of the school district during the leadership cycle from outgoing superintendent to interim superintendent to successor superintendent. Each of the four interim superintendents left the district in an improved state when compared to the state of the system they had inherited upon their arrival.

Another interesting indicator of this progress can be seen in the significant difference that exists between the largely negative perceptions of the outgoing superintendents and the strikingly positive perceptions of the successor superintendents. If preparing the district for the successor superintendent is truly a primary meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent, as cited earlier in this study, then they have certainly met that objective. It should be noted, as previously referenced in this study (p. 33) that prior research projects produced findings which suggest that the reason for the outgoing superintendent's departure may influence the perspective employees have, upon reflection, of the performance of the departing leader. The transfer of loyalty and potential sense of betrayal and abandonment that Farquhar (1991) and others refer to may also have been evidenced in this study as well. Farquhar explains this view by pointing to the data which

demonstrated that informants involved in her study attributed positive comments to the interim leader at twice the rate they did for the outgoing leader.

As an aside, it should be noted that three of the four successor superintendents in this study were first-time superintendents while the remaining successor was entering a second superintendency. This apparent high rate of entry level superintendents following on the heels of interim superintendents is consistent with the figures presented earlier in this study (pp 9-10). This prospective hypothesis, that interim superintendents pave the way for entry level superintendents by mitigating obstacles that might otherwise prove overwhelming to inexperienced superintendents, warrants further research designed to identify the rate of entry level superintendents in overall vacancies versus the rate at which entry level superintendents are hired after interim superintendents bridge the breach of leadership between outgoing and successor superintendents. The interim superintendent of District B offers his insight into the work of the interim in ameliorating burdensome issues which may be left in the wake of an unexpected departure of a superintendent that prompts hiring an interim:

“For the most part, interims arrive because the previous superintendent left other than to retire – so there’s usually some issue that the interim has to understand up-front. That means there’s generally more of a need or emphasis for healing on the part of the interim than you would expect from someone starting out on their initial three year contract.”

As a follow-up to this quote referencing the emphasis on healing, according to data illustrated in table 14 (p.), each of the three Circles registered their highest percentage (39%) of overall remarks on the impact of the interim superintendent under the theme of People, although there was not significant differences when compared to the other two themes; Path (33%) and Practice (28%). The lowest percentage recorded in the data

collection and analysis on this topic (18%) was apportioned by Inner Circle members to the theme of Practice (18%), whereas members of the Second Circle, those people responsible for interpreting and implementing policy, identified Practice (33%) as a much higher area of impact by the interim superintendent.

Perhaps the most revealing point of leverage attributed to the interim superintendent during this study rests with the leadership cycle and the perceived impact of the interim superintendent recorded by participants. Table 19 clearly portrays a very positive impact by the interim superintendent when one begins with data on the participant perceptions of a) the leadership style of the outgoing superintendent, b) the general condition and c) the organizational culture of each district when the interim superintendent arrived, and move along the continuum to c) the most memorable contribution of the interim superintendent, d) the organizational culture at the time the interim superintendent left the district, and c) the leadership style of the interim superintendent.

The data collected on perceptions of the participants show that none of the four school districts welcomed the interim superintendent to an environment that was more positive than negative. This is reinforced by the very negative perceptions of the organizational culture found at the four districts as the outgoing superintendent departed. In contrast, the opinions of the participants display a significant increase in positive remarks describing the condition, organizational culture and leadership associated with the work of the interim superintendent. Again, returning to the quote of the interim superintendent of District B, it appears that the need for interim superintendents arises out of an unexpected departure of the outgoing superintendent for reasons such as contentious political friction between the superintendent and board of education, death or illness of the superintendent,

financial or legal problems associated with the superintendent, or the superintendent simply departed for a “bigger and better” job, leaving the staff and community feeling spurned, among a number of other possible causes of unrest and turmoil. In fact, each of the outgoing superintendents of the districts involved in this study became detached from their respective districts for reasons listed in the examples above.

#### *Conclusions Associated with Research Question 1.b*

The interim superintendent serves as an impartial mediator often unfettered by the potent bonds that can evolve as a consequence of the superintendent with long term aspirations or a standard three year employment contract, interacting in a dynamic political environment of unions, taxpayer coalitions, interest groups and boards of education and worried about longevity in the position. This point is reflected by comments from several interim superintendents, but reiterated in the following quote from Multiple Interim 2:

“You have a very different relationship with the board. You don’t hold hands. You don’t have to care and feed the board. You’re not as reliant on the board. I’ve found that I have more freedom as an interim. I can take risks, which is always dicey for traditional superintendents. I can pull on my experience and see red flags and respond to them differently than a superintendent that is worried about their livelihood, loss of income, impact on their family...”

Similarly, the opinion of a member of the school board of District B offers an insightful view of the interim superintendent as a leader focused on addressing issues without the weight of simultaneously working on developing political capital for the long term:

“Most interims come with a vast wealth of experiences from their full time careers, as well as their interim experiences in other districts. The interim’s perspective can help a board see their current position and situation as a district more clearly. More importantly, the interim can share with the board a non-discriminating view of the district’s strengths



and weaknesses. That provides a unique opportunity for the school board to round out the list of skills/styles that the next superintendent should have in order to be a good fit.”

The interim superintendent represents a vital reservoir of experience for the successor superintendent and may serve in some capacity as a mentor if they overlap for a period of time with the successor superintendent.

The successor superintendent of District D captures this perception with the following words:

“I would be dismayed if the possibility of hiring interim superintendents is eliminated because the relationship between the interim superintendent and the successor superintendent is a critical determinant in the success of the successor superintendent, especially if that superintendent is in their first superintendent’s position.”

#### *Recommendations Associated with Research Question 1.b*

The role of interim superintendent should be viewed as an opportunity for school districts in leadership transition, particularly those identified as underperforming and designated as in need of improvement, to employ successful veteran superintendents as temporary system leaders who can address important issues with impunity and prepare the district for a successor superintendent who can arrive with fewer crises awaiting them.

A school board member from District D summarizes this vantage point with the following quote:

“We felt that an experienced short term leader would be preferable to someone who would have to absorb the flack from tackling these tough issues while trying to develop the trust and relationships necessary to sustain them long term.”

State Departments of Education, BOCES District Superintendents, and state-wide superintendent organizations should: formally partner in promoting the role of interim

superintendent as an opportunity for retired system leaders; provide training for retired superintendents for this unique role; develop and maintain a clearinghouse for school districts and interim superintendents; and, create a formal mentoring program that matches retired superintendents and successor superintendents.

Research Question 1.c: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the leadership style of the interim superintendent during the interregnum?

The four separate leadership roles used as a conceptual framework for assessing leadership style in this study were identified by Martin (2006) during the taxonomy of literature he conducted as he engaged in research on interim college presidents. These roles are: caretaker; strategic leader; consultant; and, preparer.

Martin describes the distinguishing characteristics of each of the four interim leadership roles. The *Caretaker* is considered a leader who assumes their primary responsibility is to maintain the status quo of the district, absent of precipitating change, and handing the reigns of leadership over to the successor. The *Strategic Leader* seeks to sustain the course and mission of the district while the school system searches for a replacement leader. The *Consultant* interprets the role of the interim leader as serving as a counsel to the district, proffering the wisdom borne of experience as a superintendent, in terms of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school system so it can obtain a successor matching perceived organizational needs. The *Preparer* accepts responsibility for increasing the value of the district through improvements designed to enhance the attraction of candidates for the successor superintendent.

Respondents were provided with the definitions and attributes of each of the four leadership frames and asked to select which of the titles reflected the work of the interim superintendent in their respective school districts.

*Findings Associated with Research Question 1.c*

The school board members, in positions of authority and wielding the power to hire the interim superintendent did not necessarily harbor any interest in simply maintaining the status quo of the district. Not a single school board member perceived the leadership style of the interim superintendent as a Caretaker, while every one of the four interim superintendents in the study viewed themselves as a Preparer.

*Conclusions Associated with Research Question 1.c*

The board members appeared to seek the change in leadership as an opportunity to move the district forward and ready itself for the eventual arrival of the successor superintendent. This prospect may be viewed as both an advantage and disadvantage. That is, a district may benefit from the contributions and leadership of an interim who assumes a proactive posture, while another district could exploit a leadership transition to bring in someone who would seize the opportunity to wreak havoc throughout the district by doing the board's bidding at the expense of building the organization.

*Recommendations Associated with research Question 1.c*

The BOCES District Superintendent, search consultant, or the school board in instances where the district is unaffiliated with BOCES, should act to insure an appropriate and productive match between the needs of the district and the skill set and experience of the interim superintendent.

*Findings Associated with Research Question 1.c*

There was an inverse relationship between the perceptions of the Inner Circle, closest to the interim superintendent, and the Third Circle, most distant from the interim superintendent, regarding leadership styles of Caretaker and Preparer. The more removed the group was, the more passive they perceived the interim superintendent, with 38% of Third Circle responses associated with the Caretaker category. Conversely, Inner Circle registered a paltry 4% in the Caretaker category. The opposite was true for the Preparer category where 35% of Inner Circle responses were found and only 12% of Third Circle replies were subsumed. The distance factor was underscored when Second Circle responses were disaggregated. Although principals did not report a single comment on the interim as Caretaker, 44% of the responses of union presidents identified the leadership style of the interim as Caretaker.

#### *Conclusions Associated with Research Question 1.c*

The exclusion of involvement among constituent groups in the process of hiring the interim superintendent might have lessened staff member understanding of expectations and direction related to the role and responsibilities of the interim superintendent. Perhaps the limited time available to hire an interim superintendent before the departure of the outgoing superintendent compressed the process and excluded stakeholder participation, since each of the four districts involved the constituent groups in the selection process of the successor superintendents. Maybe the interim superintendent did not leave the office enough, or discounted the need to invest time in getting to know staff members and demonstrate beliefs through overt actions, a possibility in light of the following statement offered by the interim superintendent of District D:

“There wasn’t the time to develop effective long term relationships, nor the need since I was only going to be there a year, originally, and

then it became two years. If I was going to be there longer, like a regular superintendent, I would've spent more time nurturing better working relations with the staff, particularly the teachers.”

#### *Recommendations Associated with Research Question 1.c*

The process to select an interim superintendent should be an abbreviated process mimicking that of the permanent superintendent. The BOCES District Superintendent or any other agency or individual involved in facilitating the process should provide a group of candidates to the board and that governing body should then invite and engage representatives of constituent groups to indulge in the decision making process by interviewing and offering feedback on the candidates to the board of education prior to any hiring. Such involvement could increase awareness between the interim and stakeholders and acquaint all parties with expectations and responsibilities of the role of interim superintendent.

The final two research questions have been combined in this chapter because they are so closely related. For instance, the degree of involvement of the interim superintendent with the search process is a strong predictor of the rate of involvement in the second phase of the process, that being the selection stage. Additionally, since the responses from both school board members and interim superintendents indicate that there was at best limited involvement of the interim superintendent in the search and the selection process, there was little to report on these two research questions. In retrospect, the interview questions should have included a follow-up to the question, “What role, if any, did the interim superintendent play in the search process of the successor superintendent? How about the selection process?” A question designed to elicit an explanation of why the interim lacked a

voice in the process considering their awareness and investment in the leadership of the district, would have added an important dimension to this study.

Research Question 2.a: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the role of the interim superintendent in the search process for a successor superintendent?

Research Question 2.b: How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the impact of the interim superintendent on the selection process for a successor superintendent?

#### *Findings Associated with Research Question 2.a and 2.b*

It was apparent from the data collected in the interviews of all of the participants that staff members were completely unaware of any involvement of interim superintendents with the search process. This clearly implies that the search process, with respect to the role of the interim superintendent, was shrouded in mystery and lacked transparency, at least in the eyes of representatives of the various constituencies participating in this study.

In addition, both the group of interim superintendents and the group of school board members reported that there was either no direct involvement of the interim superintendents in the search process, or at the most, interactions limited to a “meet and greet” perfunctory role.

#### *Conclusion Associated with Research Question 2.a and 2.b*

None of the four school board members in the study explained why the interim superintendent’s role in the search and selection process for the successor superintendent

was limited. Instead, the board member responses to questions on the subject were simple and blunt. For example, the one word response of a board member to the two questions on the subject: What role, if any, did the interim superintendent play in the search process of the successor superintendent? How about the selection process?

“None.” School board member, District D.

The role of the interim superintendent was not viewed by school board members as a viable component in the process to search for and select a successor superintendent to assume responsibilities in the district and context in which the interim superintendent had operated in as a system leader.

*Recommendation Associated with Research Question 2.a and 2.b*

Given their intimate understanding of the school district’s educational, political, and financial environment, and the absence of political affiliations and aspirations involving future roles, it would seem that the interim superintendent would offer a less partial, voice of reason in the process to search for and select a successor to the office. Future research can be directed at exploring why board members largely excluded the interim superintendent from being an active participant in the search and selection process for a successor superintendent,

*Additional Finding Associated with Research Question 2.a and 2.b*

The school board members representing each of the four participating districts were unanimous in asserting that the pool of candidates for the successor superintendency was deeper and more competitive than the applicant pool of people who aspired to the position during the previous search conducted for their former superintendent.

*Conclusions Associated with Research Question 2.a and 2.b*

Interim superintendents appear to influence the pool of candidates in two areas: 1. they serve as a buffer between the outgoing and successor superintendents, healing, mitigating, and leading, thus making the district more appealing; 2. their reputation and experience attract the attention and interest of regionally based applicants aware of the prior work and career of the interim superintendent. Two quotes, each from a participating school board member, support this finding.

“I honestly believe that we had a much deeper and more competitive field of applicants the second time, after the interim that is. I think the stature and reputation of the interim in the region enhanced our district and made us more alluring. School District C.

“I suspect that because people knew the interim and respected him, we were able to attract more applicants and somewhat better applicants too, in the second pool of candidates. School District D.

#### *Recommendations Associated with Research Question 2.a and 2.b*

Interim superintendents should be encouraged by the school board and anyone they retain to facilitate the search and selection process to accept an active role as a consultant to the decision makers because they have an understanding of the district and an awareness of what skill set and experience might best be needed for the role.

Interim superintendents should be considered by the state department of education and BOCES district superintendents as viable mediators, not only in districts with an unexpected vacancy and insufficient time to conduct a search and selection process, but also in troubled school districts with vacancies and time for a search and selection process where a deeper and more qualified pool of candidates would be welcomed. Interim superintendents are very experienced, politically unaffiliated, and capable of addressing sensitive and controversial issues that may prove insurmountable to a superintendent new



to the district and desirous of building political capital with constituent groups often in competition with one another.

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## Appendix A



Office of the Dean

# Sage Graduate School

March 27, 2009

Michael James Mugits  
12 Forest Way  
Gansevoort, NY 12831

**IRB PROPOSAL # 08-09-022R**  
**Reviewer: Samuel W. Hill, Chair**

Dear Mr. Mugits:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and has approved the revisions of your project entitled "The Impact of Interim Superintendents on the Selection and Assimilation of their Successors." Good luck with your research.

When you have completed collecting your data you will need to submit to the IRB Committee a final report indicating any problems you may have encountered regarding the treatment of human subjects.

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Samuel W. Hill, PhD  
Chair, IRB

SWH/nan

Cc: Ray O'Connell

## Appendix B

### Cover Letter for Research Participants

**Introduction:** This research study is being conducted by Michael Mugits, a doctoral student at Sage Graduate School in Albany, New York. The purpose of the study is to explore the role and impact of the interim superintendent on the school district during the selection and assimilation of the district's next superintendent. The research project involves obtaining the perspectives of key staff and stakeholders within districts that employed an interim superintendent during the 2007-2008 school year. You have been selected to participate in this study because of your leadership role representing a formally acknowledged constituent group within the school community and the view your position offered on the role and impact of the interim superintendent during the search and selection process for a successor superintendent.

**Procedures:** You will be interviewed by Michael Mugits, who will solicit your perceptions regarding the role and impact of the interim superintendent as your school district experienced transition in district leaders; from the previous superintendent, through the year-long term of the interim superintendent, and finally, to the arrival and assimilation of the current superintendent. The interview will be scheduled at the convenience of the participant. The interview is expected to consume 30 -45 minutes and will be subject to audiotape to insure accuracy. Participants may request a hard copy of the transcribed interview if they so desire.

**Confidentiality:** All information will be treated with strict confidentiality. Information collected through the interviews will only be identified by pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. In addition, the data will be reported in aggregate form rather than by individual position as another measure to preserve confidentiality. At no time will any other participant in the study have access to the information gathered from others. Information (tapes, transcripts, documents) will be kept secure. Recordings from the interviews will be erased, and computer drives will be cleansed so all identifiers will be destroyed at the completion of the study. Only those directly involved with the study will have access to the information and must abide by the same standards of confidentiality.

**Risks/Discomforts:** Risk and discomfort is minimal, with the exception of any recollections involving negative or unfortunate professional experiences during the time period. Inform the interviewer of any discomfort and the subject will be changed. You will have the opportunity to opt out of responding to any question which you do not want to answer and you may end the interview at any point you desire.

**Benefits:** While there are not any direct benefits to participants, it is expected that your participation will contribute to the literature and research associated with this important educational issue and thereby assist the staff and stakeholders of other districts which may employ interim superintendents in the future.

**Compensation:** Participants will not receive any compensation for assisting the study except for the altruistic appeal of contributing to the advancement of research directed at an issue of importance to colleagues in other school communities.

**Participation:** Participation in the study is voluntary. You may exercise the right to withdraw at any time by simply notifying the researcher.

**Questions Regarding the Research:** Please contact the principal researcher, Michael Mugits or his advisor, Dr. Ray O'Connell at Sage Graduate School in the Educational Leadership program.

**Questions Involving Rights of Research Participants:** If you have questions that you would rather not ask the researcher, you are free to contact Samuel Hill, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Sage Graduate School.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and agree to participate in the study of my own free will.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions for Interim Superintendents:

1. How many years had you served as a school superintendent prior to becoming an interim superintendent?
  
2. Have you previously served as an interim superintendent in addition to the position examined in this study?
  - a. Where?
  
  - b. When?
  
3. What differences, if any, do you see between the role of school superintendent and interim school superintendent in terms of:
  - a. Planning and strategy?
  
  - b. Public Relations?
  
  - c. Decision making?
  
  - d. Budget?
  
  - e. Personnel?
  
  - f. Board relations?
  
  - g. Other?

4. What expectations did the school board articulate for your role during discussion related to the interim superintendent post?

5. What was your entry plan for the district and how did you communicate it to the school community?

6. How did staff members perceive your role as an interim superintendent? On what evidence do you base this opinion?

7. What steps did you take to gain the trust and confidence of the staff when they knew that you were a temporary leader?

8. What was the relationship between your preferred leadership style and the organizational culture of the district you served as an interim superintendent?

9. When reflecting on your experience as a district leader, what do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of a district employing an interim superintendent?

10. What advice would you have for anyone else who might be interested in serving as an interim superintendent?

11. What was your greatest accomplishment as the interim superintendent in the district you served?

12. What was your role, if any, in the search process for a successor?

- a. Were you comfortable in this role?
- b. Would you have preferred more or less involvement in the process?

13. What was your role, if any, in the selection process for a successor?

- a. Were you comfortable in this role?
- b. Would you have preferred more or less involvement in the process?

14. Which of the following roles best describes your experience as an interim superintendent in this district? Please explain.

- a. The *caretaker* = assumes that their job rests with maintaining the direction of the institution without endeavoring to initiate change, thus leaving it to the successor.
- b. The *strategic leader* = accepts responsibility for sustaining the direction and mission of the institution while the school seeks a successor.
- c. The *consultant* = views their role as identifying the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the university and offering sage advice to those responsible in hiring the successor regarding organizational congruency between candidates and the institution.
- d. The *preparer* = perceives their role as working with the university community to increase the value of the institution and enhancing the health of the organization, thus making it more attractive to potential successor candidates.

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions for School Board Members:

1. Please describe the condition of your school district as it was at the time you opted to secure the services of an interim superintendent?
2. Why did your school board decide to hire an interim superintendent?
3. How did you communicate this decision to the staff? public?
4. Did anyone express concern about the viability of a leader who was serving in a temporary capacity?
5. What process did you undertake to hire an interim superintendent?
6. What were your expectations of the interim superintendent regarding the following:
  - a. Planning or district strategy?
  - b. Public relations?
  - c. Decision making?
  - d. Budget?
  - e. Personnel?
  - f. Board relations?
  - g. Other?



7. How did the leadership style of the interim superintendent compare with the organizational culture of the school district?

8. How would you describe the general leadership styles of:

a. the former superintendent?

b. the interim superintendent?

c. the current superintendent?

9. What role, if any, did the interim superintendent play in the search process of the successor superintendent? How about the selection process?

10. Which of the following roles best describes your perception of an interim superintendent in this district? Please explain.

a. The *caretaker* = assumes that their job rests with maintaining the direction of the institution without endeavoring to initiate change, thus leaving it to the successor.

b. The *strategic leader* = accepts responsibility for sustaining the direction and mission of the institution while the school seeks a successor.

c. The *consultant* = views their role as identifying the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the university and offering sage advice to those responsible in hiring the successor regarding organizational congruency between candidates and the institution.

d. The *preparer* = perceives their role as working with the university community to increase the value of the institution and enhancing the health of the organization, thus making it more attractive to potential successor candidates.

11. Please explain how the pool of candidates that you reviewed when selecting your present superintendent compared, in quality and quantity, with the applicant pool you examined when you filled the position of the leader who served prior to the interim superintendent.

12. What advice would you offer any other school board considering the appointment of an interim superintendent?

13. What was the most important single contribution that the interim superintendent made in your district?

a. Why was this contribution so important?

b. How did the interim superintendent make the contribution a reality?

14. In retrospect, what were the advantages and disadvantages of working with an interim superintendent?

15. How would you describe the condition of the school district now?

16. Can you think of any issues or concepts regarding the role of an interim superintendent that you feel warrant further study or examination?

## Appendix E

### Interview Questions for Successor Superintendents

1. Did you serve as a superintendent of schools prior to accepting your current position?
  - a. If yes, where?
  - b. How long?
  - c. If you served as a superintendent prior to this position: How did the transition from the interim to you as the successor compare to previous transitions?
  - d. If you haven't previously served as a superintendent, how many different superintendent positions had you applied to before accepting this position?
2. Why did you decide to accept this position?
  - a. Did the fact that this district had an interim superintendent influence your decision? Please explain.
3. What role, if any, did the interim superintendent serve in the search, selection and/or transition process?
4. What impact do you feel the work of the interim superintendent had on your assimilation process within the district as a successor?
5. What were the most pressing issues that confronted you upon your arrival in this district?

6. Have you contacted the interim superintendent since you started work here?

a. Why?

b. If not, what is the most important question you would ask of the interim superintendent?

7. What has been the most frequently communicated memory or experience staff members have shared concerning the interim superintendent?

8. Would you ever consider serving as an interim superintendent? Why? Why not?

9. Are there any other comments you would like to offer about the role, organizational value, or leadership of an interim superintendent?

## Appendix F

### Interview Questions for Staff Members and Parent Representatives

1. What is your role with the district?
2. How long have you served in that capacity?
3. Why did the school district decide to hire an interim superintendent?
4. Were you involved in the decision and/or process to hire an interim superintendent?
5. How did the school board communicate the decision to hire an interim superintendent?
6. How would you describe the condition of the district at the time the interim superintendent began work here?
7. Which of the following roles best described the interim superintendent in this district?  
Please explain.
  - a. The *caretaker* = assumes that their job rests with maintaining the direction of the institution without endeavoring to initiate change, thus leaving it to the successor.
  - b. The *strategic leader* = accepts responsibility for sustaining the direction and mission of the institution while the school seeks a successor.
  - c. The *consultant* = views their role as identifying the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the university and offering sage advice to those responsible in hiring the successor regarding organizational congruency between candidates and the institution.
  - d. The *preparer* = perceives their role as working with the university community to increase the value of the institution and enhancing the health of the organization, thus making it more attractive to potential successor candidates.

8. How would you describe the organizational culture of the school district before the arrival of the interim superintendent?

9. How would you describe the organizational culture of the school district at the time the interim superintendent departed?

10. How frequently did you interact with the interim superintendent?

11. How frequently did you interact with the superintendent who served before the interim superintendent?

12. How would you describe the leadership style of:

a. the outgoing superintendent?

b. the interim superintendent?

c. the current superintendent?

13. After reflecting on the experience, what advantages or disadvantages, if any, are there to hiring an interim superintendent?

14. What was the most memorable contribution, positive or negative, of the interim superintendent to your district?

15. What impact, if any, do you feel the interim superintendent had on the search, selection, and transitional process of the current superintendent?

16. What advice, if any, would you have for someone in your role in another district considering an interim superintendent?

17. Are there any other comments you would like to offer about the role, organizational value, or leadership of an interim superintendent?

## Appendix G

### Interview Questions for Individuals Who Have Served Multiple Interim Superintendent Positions

1. How many different school districts have you served as an interim superintendent?
  - a. Where?
  - b. How long?
  - c. Can you describe the process by which you became the interim superintendent in the districts where you worked in that capacity?
  
2. How long did you serve as a “traditional” superintendent of schools?
  
3. What differences, if any, do you see between the role of school superintendent and interim school superintendent in terms of:
  - a. Planning and strategy?
  
  - b. Public Relations?
  
  - c. Decision making?
  
  - d. Budget?
  
  - e. Personnel?
  
  - f. Board relations?
  
  - g. Other?
  
4. What expectations did the school board articulate for your role during negotiations for the interim superintendent post?



5. What was your vision for the district and how did you express it to the school community?
  
5. How do you feel the staff members perceived your role as an interim superintendent?
  
6. How did you attempt to gain the trust and confidence of the staff when they knew that you were a temporary leader?
  
  
7. What was the relationship between your preferred leadership style and the organizational culture of the district you served as an interim superintendent?
  
  
8. When reflecting on your experience as a district leader, what do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of a district employing an interim superintendent?
  
  
9. What advice would you have for anyone else who might be interested in serving as an interim superintendent position?
  
  
10. What was your greatest accomplishment as the interim superintendent in the district you served? On what evidence do you base your opinion?
  
  
11. What was your role, if any, in the search process for a successor?
  - a. Were you comfortable with the role?

b. Would you have preferred more or less involvement in the process?

12. What was your role, if any, in the selection process for a successor?

a. Were you comfortable with the role?

b. Would you have preferred more or less involvement in the process?

13. Which of the following roles do you feel best described your experience as an interim superintendent? Please explain.

a. The *caretaker* = assumes that their job rests with maintaining the direction of the institution without endeavoring to initiate change, thus leaving it to the successor.

b. The *strategic leader* = accepts responsibility for sustaining the direction and mission of the institution while the school seeks a successor.

c. The *consultant* = views their role as identifying the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the university and offering sage advice to those responsible in hiring the successor regarding organizational congruency between candidates and the institution.

d. The *preparer* = perceives their role as working with the university community to increase the value of the institution and enhancing the health of the organization, thus making it more attractive to potential successor candidates.

## Appendix H

### Relationship between Research Questions and Interview Questions

This list connects the specific interview questions which solicited respondent perceptions of attendant research questions of the study.

**1. How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district view the following, with respect to the interim superintendent during an interregnum?**

**a) Meaning and purpose,**

Appendix C: Questions of Interim Superintendents

Questions: 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 4, 5, 9, 10

Appendix D: Questions of School Board Members

Questions: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 6e, 6f, 6g, 14, 16

Appendix E: Questions of Successor Superintendents

Questions: 4, 5, 6a, 6b, 8, 9,

Appendix F: Questions of Staff Members and Parents

Questions: 3, 4, 5, 13, 16, 17,

Appendix G: Questions of Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendents at

Multiple Districts

Questions: 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 4, 6, 9, 10,

**b) Impact on the school district,**

Appendix C: Questions of Interim Superintendents

Questions: 6, 11

Appendix D: Questions of School Board Members

Questions: 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

Appendix E: Questions of Successor Superintendents

Questions: 2, 2a, 4, 5, 7, 9,

Appendix F: Questions of Staff Members and Parents

Questions: 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17,

Appendix G: Questions of Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendents at

Multiple Districts

Questions: 5, 9, 11,

**c) Leadership style,**

Appendix C: Questions of Interim Superintendents

Questions: 7, 8, 14

Appendix D: Questions of School Board Members

Questions: 7, 8a, 8b, 8c, 10, 16

Appendix E: Questions of Successor Superintendents

Questions: 4, 5, 9,

Appendix F: Questions of Staff Members and Parents

Questions: 7, 8, 9, 12a, 12b, 12c, 16, 17,

Appendix G: Questions of Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendents at

Multiple Districts

Questions: 7, 8, 9, 14,

**2. How do interim superintendents, people in key leadership positions, and members of the general staff within a school district perceive the impact of an interim superintendent on the following processes during the interregnum?**

**a) The district's search process,**

Appendix C: Questions of the Interim Superintendents

Questions: 12, 12a, 12b,

Appendix D: Questions of School Board Members

Questions: 9, 11, 16,

Appendix E: Questions of Successor Superintendents

Questions: 3, 9,

Appendix F: Questions of Staff Members and Parents

Questions: 15, 16, 17,

Appendix G: Questions of Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendents at

Multiple Districts

Questions: 12, 12a, 12b,

**b) The district's selection process**

Appendix C: Questions of the Interim Superintendents

Questions: 13, 13a, 13b,

Appendix D: Questions of School Board Members

Questions: 9,

Appendix E: Questions of Successor Superintendents

Questions: 3, 9,

Appendix F: Questions of Staff Members and Parents

Questions: 15, 16, 17,

Appendix G: Questions of Individuals who have served as Interim Superintendents at

Multiple Districts

Questions: 13, 13, 13b,

## Appendix I

### Audit Trail Sample 1

Participant responses were examined and classified by their association to a specific research question: meaning and purpose of the interim superintendent; impact of the interim superintendent; leadership style of the interim superintendent; role of the interim superintendent in the search process; and, role of the interim superintendent in the selection process.

District	Role	Meaning and Purpose	Impact
A	Inter Supt	prepare for suc Supt (2) give the next Supt a chance Bd - get them out of frying pan Bd "get us off the lists" They BoE had no entry plan IS buys time for the district IS -"Not a caretaker"	Bd looks to IS in crisis clear way for next Supt look for opportunities for change bring clarity to organization just another Supt change restructured admin order improve district – better candidates use same skills as Supt
A	Succ Supt	IS helped me w/ transit IS didn't influence decision IS left everything in good shape IS Diff than Supt because of time IS come in, clean up, set stage	IS had similar urban exp we worked well together – comm. IS gave me history of concerns relationships diff due to time frame
A	Sch Bd	There was "lots of tension" sch bd vs. teachers, contentious not enough time for search take advantage of experience like diff blind date going steady	not sure of comm of IS hire no concern hiring IS didn't have many expectations contacted BOCES for IS info admin restructuring – major change get IS who can relate to district
B	Inter Supt	access skills/experience don't leave anything hanging Be fair to next Supt most = stability in transition straighten things out for next Bd Bd wanted healing Bd wanted IS steady the	uncomfortable w/ initiating new we talked about healing – steady healing - IS - other than retire worked in district before sch bd, unions cut you slack a little - wait until next Supt here grade level reconfiguration

		district	
<b>B</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	IS had no impact on decision "keep the ship afloat" IS good if it's a good match	no major problems when I started IS left dist in good situation for me provided needed stability
<b>B</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	we didn't want to be rushed tap IS prior know/skills impartial view of district + and -	district relatively sound position IS worked here b4 - no concern
<b>B</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	IS provided stability in transit Bd remained in control w/ IS gave us time	Open door policy, listened well made sound decisions get IS who is best "fit" eased fears/concerns in transit
		we got time and participation	
<b>C</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	less ownership no entry plan don't plan long term Bd wanted focus and direction	focus on immediate issues not enough time to dev sch bd reg mtgs w/ admin and unions model eff leadership practices resolved teacher contract negot "fresh eyes" different outlook
<b>C</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	IS advant because I knew him I haven't asked him for help Trans w/ IS better than w/out IS	he left people happy universally accepted by staff better hand-off in trans w/ IS
<b>C</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	not enough time for search same expectations as reg Supt knew he's need input as new IS stay in touch w/ bd stay on path he kept us moving forward he smoothed things over	we were in very good shape I don't rem - comm IS hire no concern hiring IS contacted BOCES for IS info get IS w/ exp in similar district
<b>D</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	prep for suc Supt (4) patience - plant the seeds develop conditions for change straighten things out for next make climate comfor for suc preparing things ready to go no entry plan took up things - left no baggage sort everything out before Suc	act like I did as Supt before preparing sch bd for suc Supt tackle tough issues, spare Succ short time-frame dictates a lot



		Bd wanted IS to "settle" climate	
D	<b>Succ Supt</b>	IS is advant because I knew him I stay in touch w/ IS = mentor IS = wealth of knowledge/skills relation IS/Suc critical esp new S	he repaired board relations
D	<b>Sch Bd</b>	Bd had removed prior Supt we need more time for search expect act like any Supt would didn't know how, but knew	big divide btwn sch bd – teachers too much "mess" for new Supt I don't rem - comm IS hire challenge too great so hire IS
D		Bd - not sure what to expect IS preparing for the next Supt quire a few districts have IS's	contacted BOCES for IS info get right IS w/ understand w/ Bd persisted in right direction some would perceive "short-timer"
E	<b>M IS 1</b>	act like sitting Supt same expectations as reg Supt doing what you did b4 as Supt focus on real issues w/ou polit gives Bd chance time 4 decision new set of eyes open/honest no contract renew add something, make dist better	exercise same decision making can't shy away from tough issues meet reg w/ key people visit district b4, do homework  be reassuring, reduce anxiety short time - arms distance
E	<b>M IS 2</b>	make it clear I act as reg Supt preparing dist for next Supt  make it easier for next Supt restoring comfort level in transit	look, listen, learn patience and accommodation negotiated contracts/tough issues  lots want to wait for next Supt right direction, right reasons all about relationships + people healing - IS - other than retire

<b>District</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>Search Process</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	<p>I had an agenda to get things done</p> <p>I validated their roles</p> <p>had instr audit conducted</p> <p>it was a good fit</p> <p>consultant and preparer</p> <p>No sitting around minding the stove</p>	<p>limited role</p> <p>could've been more involved</p> <p>preferred input - knew context</p>
<b>A</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	<p>made himself consistently avail</p>	<p>IS involved in screening</p>
<b>A</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	<p>like a permanent Supt</p> <p>stretch beyond the short term</p> <p>made decisions like real Supt</p> <p>consultant and preparer</p>	<p>screening - nothing beyond that</p> <p>much stronger pool of Supt cand's</p>
<b>B</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	<p>earn ability to make decisions</p> <p>make decisions of lasting impact</p> <p>real visible, look, listen, learn</p> <p>congruence in most areas</p> <p>strategic leader and preparer</p>	<p>decline to be involved</p> <p>developed 2-3 pags of rec's</p> <p>I'd help but not say who to hire</p>
<b>B</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	<p>staff thought he avoided initiating</p> <p>staff = IS "sat in limbo"</p> <p>relation w/ Bd biggest diff</p> <p>same skills - Supt and/or IS</p>	<p>IS not significant role in process</p>
<b>B</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	<p>IS make day-to-day decisions</p> <p>Contact Bd beyond daily decision</p> <p>fit was very good</p> <p>up front and assertive</p> <p>strategic leader and consultant</p>	<p>limited role</p> <p>large # apps, very competitive</p>
<b>C</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	<p>sound leadership in transit</p> <p>challenge to know people, issues</p>	<p>served as conduit</p>

		short-term view - i.e. budget relied on admin and supervisors must be good fit or big problem strategic leader and preparer "oversee" things	it was just right I wouldn't advise IS to be involved  I was fine with my role
<b>C</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	he turned the district around	he played a very small role
<b>C</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	wanted outside perspective expected to b more informed IS better fit than expected IS style in btwn prior Supt and Suc strategic leader and consultant IS invested in his job	asked him for opinions sometime much deeper and more competitive
<b>D</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	same as when I was Supt clarify protocol for interactions sb sprint, not marathon felt it was a good fit - style – need all roles at different times as IS lot of differences in Supt - IS plan the plan - delayed change until new Supt	really wasn't involved distance - let Suc Supt start fresh I was satisfied w/ my role
<b>D</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	he came in as Supt not IS	IS = greeter and facilitator
<b>D</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	act as if "real" Supt needed bridge built - Bd - T's check w/ Bd on big picture issue It was a pretty good fit had a "can do" attitude strategic leader and preparer never left view of what mattered	an advisor, willing to help if ?'d better, deeper pool  candidates knew, respected IS
<b>E</b>	<b>MI S 1</b>	skills are the same (3) depends on needs/time of dist more PR if prior Supt left w/ -'s	acted as advisor I was okay w/ that role didn't prefer any more

involvement

not burdened w/ politics of Bd  
have to comm w/ Bd more  
closely  
be visible, communicate a lot  
situational leadership  
same as Supt but far less time  
free/flexible no contract  
renewal  
strategic leader and preparer

E

**MIS 2**

depends on needs/time of dist  
use same skills as I did as  
Supt  
more freedom - diff relations  
w/ Bd  
adaptive leadership style  
BOCES DS helps w/ good  
match  
strategic leader, consult,  
preparer  
either a caretaker (no) or all  
rest

nothing to do w/ it at all

I was comfortable w/ that role

I'd say no to any involvement

<b>District</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Selection Process</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	I wasn't really involved I could've helped them I wanted to be consulted
<b>A</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	BOCES DS facilitated
<b>A</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	I stayed out of politics I was comfortable w/ role I let them know what I felt
<b>B</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>Sch Bd</b>	limited role
<b>C</b>	<b>Inter Supt</b>	I really wasn't involved I was comfortable w/ role
<b>C</b>	<b>Succ Supt</b>	

**C**      **Sch Bd**

**D**      **Inter Supt**      Served as advisor to bd  
didn't want assoc w/ Suc  
It was the right balance

**D**      **Succ Supt**

**D**      **Sch Bd**

**E**      **MI S 1**      not much of a role in  
process  
Okay w/ that role  
wouldn't sit watch train  
wreck  
BOCES DS should have  
say

**E**      **MI S 2**      offer input if relevant  
Okay w/ that role  
don't undermine Bd or DS

## Audit Trail Sample 2

Themes of People – Path – Practice:

### Circle 2 and 3 Respondents

Explanation of codes = Using the first respondent below A3a3, as an example: the capital letter refers to School District (A); the first number (3) indicates which research question the responses were associated with (impact of the interim superintendent); the lower case letter (a) refers to the Circle of the respondent (a for Circle 2, b for Circle 3); the second number (3) identifies the individual as the third respondent of the district for that Circle. In this case the first respondent is from District A; reflecting on the impact of the interim superintendent; a member of Circle 2; and the third person interviewed from that particular group.

#### A3a3:

1. Develop programs and improve the condition of the school district – which I think made it more appealing for candidates.
2. He was a change agent and autocratic. Driven to accomplish much in a brief period. Took the vision out of his briefcase and directed an army of employees and consultants.
3. The advantages – it brings extensive experience and skill. The interim can do the dirty deed, if needed, and leave town. The disadvantages; as a “short-timer” those in the organization who disagree can take a “wait and see” attitude (question the permanence of the changes).
4. Organizational overhaul and reorganization. Instill hope.

#### A3a4:

1. He hired consultants to come in and see where the district was and where it needed to be. Then, he worked hard over the two years to lead us to those goals.
2. He also connected us with BOCES better to form a partnership in some of these programs, which also helped move us along in the right direction.
3. Direct and to the point. He once said, during a discipline hearing I was at as the CSEA President, “You don’t move the problem, you deal with the problem.” He was kind and caring in both personal and professional levels.
4. During our discussion the interim shared his personal experiences with the same issue in his own family and said he understood the nature of the problem. We were facing a section 75 (dismissal) proceeding but he (the interim) gave him an opportunity to get back on his feet and pick his chin up. I remember he (the interim) said, “I’m going to be compassionate now.”

#### A3a5:

1. He seemed interested in promoting strengths and addressing weaknesses. He offered advice and direction. He went beyond just maintaining.
2. Altering the organizational culture and laying the groundwork for future work.

A3a6:

1. He came in, assessed the district, decided where we were good and where we were bad, made lots of changes, hired lots of staff and worked hard to improve the perception of our district.
2. If he said something, he meant it. He stood by what he said.

B3a1:

1. He facilitated that transition.
2. He was collaborative, also very careful to make sure any changes were thoroughly discussed with the administrators to carry on after he left.

B3a2:

1. Straighten out any wrinkles, and prepare for the next superintendent.
2. Empathic, permissive, maintaining harmony important.

B3a3:

B3b1:

1. He didn't make any big changes and he didn't do anything that got in our way. We were doing more than treading water.
2. I don't know, it seemed like he was there but not really there.

B3b2:

1. They had the impression that he was keeping a steady course for the district.
2. We moved ahead but I think he just kept us on a straight line until we got a new superintendent.
3. He was a very kind person, a real gentleman, and everyone really seemed to love him.

B3b3:

1. He got involved in several very important decisions and situations that helped us maintain progress. We never really stepped backward on anything. He moved us forward.
2. He leveled off the high anxiety that I think people had about the transition. He was very nice, patient and acted in a way that left people feeling comfortable – which is important in the climate of the district.

B3b4:

1. It appeared that he was trying to help maintain a direction without trying to create any more unsettled feelings about change.

C3a1:

1. A potential extension to the teacher's contract to give that person transitioning (the next superintendent) some more time and being able to build that cushion so the next person has more time.
2. He really helped us analyze, you know, where are we in Reading, what are our next steps, he was really helping us in a variety of areas and guiding us in a forward direction.
3. He gave us a lot of guidance in professional learning communities where we felt we had fallen down a little and he gave us some advice to pick us back up. He was out in the classrooms. He did all of the things that you would hope a sitting superintendent would do.



4. He'd come over and sit down and talk about programs and the things we should be talking about, which was good.
5. And the interim was really able to knock that in perspective for a whole lot of people on a variety of levels whether it be teachers – they were kinda spinning about it, or administrators wondering where we were on it – he just sorta simplified it and explained it as collaborating, staff talking with each other about educational issues and brought it back away from what it had become, which was a very personal piece linked to the outgoing superintendent – and with his departure it kinda stained the concept a little, you know, “This was his vision and he up and left us and..... you know? The interim got it away from that and showed how it went beyond the previous superintendent, that the previous superintendent didn't own the concept. He's (the outgoing superintendent) not here anymore so let's see it for what it is.
6. He was fatherly, or grandfatherly, in that way, which really helped put things behind us all.
7. The interim's biggest contribution was extending the teachers' contract another year to spare him the trouble of being new and immediately jumping in to negotiations. And, I think the board would probably see it that way too – “Hey, he came in and negotiated and put that aside so the successor superintendent could start fresh, without that hanging over his head.” I think that was most important to them to build in that year cushion.

C3a2:

1. Nothing really changed, yet, he helped resolve some issues too. He assisted me in addressing some of those loose ends.
2. He contributed to making the atmosphere less adversarial.
3. He didn't mind intervening and helping out – but on the other hand, he really didn't introduce any new programs or practices that altered the district.
4. His impact was more on the climate of the organization rather than long-term issues involving the instructional program or practices.
5. He (the interim) proved to be more democratic.
6. He was almost paternalistic. He was participatory and much more willing to listen.
7. We (the union and administration) were deadlocked on an issue and getting nowhere when the interim stood up and said, “this is bullshit!” and moved like he was walking out of the room. That got everyone's attention and we agreed to take another look at the subject and we worked at it until we reached resolution. That sparked us to renew our commitment to solve the problem together.

C3a3:

C3a4:

1. He clearly accepted more ownership than simply preparation.
2. The interim was a good communicator, affable personality, and a wise man. People were comfortable following him.
3. He had a good feel for working with people and he respected their feelings. He was a collaborator, dedicated to bringing closure – get ideas and people together and then make decisions.
4. The interim came in and pressed their feet to the fire by explaining how important it was to be timely and provide structure to the district.

C3b1:

1. He came in and saw issues we'd been dealing with and he worked us through them, I think, in the right direction. He maintained our direction and moved us forward.
2. Very, very approachable and very, very visible. He was always walking around, stopping by the playground or cafeteria and chatting with people or just asking how things were going – you know – “What can I do to help you?”
3. He made it a point to know people's names and show interest.
4. Since we were in a state of turmoil, I'd have to say that it was his ability to help us move forward and heal. He let us go ahead and teach and that made a difference and helped settle the situation down.

C3b2:

1. The interim seemed mainly to be concerned with keeping things going, not making any changes, but not letting us slip backwards either.
2. He made an attempt to get to know everyone, which made the staff feel included.

C3b3:

1. He moved us ahead while he was here, without taking us off course at all.
2. The interim came in and continued progress toward our goals. He (the interim) didn't distract us with any pet projects or new programs, yet he still focused us on our goals.
3. He always treated people in a positive manner. That stands out above the other good qualities.

C3b4:

1. He kept things going on a steady level in the same direction we had been going. He didn't interrupt or disrupt anything. He helped by lending a steady hand and using his experience.
2. There were no real changes and he had little impact. He was very comfortable taking on sensitive issues. He was personable and very concerned that things went smoothly while he was here.
3. He maintained the status quo. We didn't have to jump through any hoops and we didn't take any steps backwards.

D3a1:

1. His presence here was negative impact. I would say that it left a negative impact.
2. I think the interim superintendent came in with a plan perhaps. He was making changes, sweeping changes that didn't seem necessarily to be wanted.
3. He was just somebody new – coming in and changing programs and um, changing what we were doing in our department for example, without knowing what we were doing in our department.

D3a2:

1. Working with the Board of Education to modify their mind set with regard to their role as Board of Education members. No more micro-managing!

D3a3:

1. Decisive. Goal oriented.
2. I do think he was a good salesman and he could sell programs, and I for one enjoyed my experience with the interim. Ah, as far as his, let's see, as far as his contributions, let's see. He could get you fired up and motivate you but I'm not sure he was the best completer of a task.

D3a4:

1. He seemed to act like he was the real superintendent instead of someone just filling a seat. He brought in some needed change and that improved things, even if it did upset some people, and that progress probably helped us find better applicants for the job.
2. He was pretty goal oriented so we, the district, seemed to get through with a lot. That ruffled some feathers naturally.
3. He (the interim) certainly tried the best he could and you always saw him out and about. He was visible and involved.
4. He pushed and pulled us through and cleaned up some messes, tied up some loose ends. He got people thinking.
5. The interim superintendent was far more personal and outgoing. It was always more than a simple, "Hi." He kept up with you and asked questions.
6. He was involved and pretty thoughtful. He thought of others. It didn't matter what your position was or how long you were here. He was focused and, like I said earlier, he was goal oriented. He could make decisions. He seemed well suited for a people environment.
7. Well,... it would have to be the annual summer barbeque he put on for the 12 month staff. He seemed to really like it and was sincere in having that for us. It made us seem more important and more a part of the overall team. I remember that because it brought people together and reminded us that we all work as a team together.

D3b1:

1. He focused on making a connection with the community because of all the problems facing us. He focused so much on training, well, on caretaking and training the new Board, making, maybe elevating them in the communities eyes that I think the strategic leader part may have suffered (nervous laughter). The teachers and the staff were kind of left to their own devices and as you know in education, if your administrator isn't going to lead you, (sigh) there's no one else.
2. I can't say that I agreed with him all of the time but he let you know where he stood. He was a strong leader, again, I didn't always agree but he had a direction. He was clear and decisive. I think that was hard for the interim – to be clear and decisive and still get to know you – that was difficult.
3. He was decisive in odd ways, he would be decisive when he hadn't asked for any input and maybe indecisive when he had asked for a lot of information. We never got a good feel for him and communication was not a strong suit for him.
4. He was absolutely fantastic with the support staff. He was. They spoke very highly of him. One of the secretaries tells how he healed some of the wounds in scheduling and vacation, that kind of thing with them. I think they felt very recognized by him.
5. With the teaching staff he certainly wasn't as popular, but in an odd way that drew us together and forced us to really evaluate what we were looking for so that was good.

D3b2:

1. He brought some stability to the system.
2. He cared about people and really tried to do what I think was the right think – in the best way he knew how.

3. Actually, I met more with the interim than the superintendent before him. He (the interim) was more personal.
4. I think the interim helped hold staff a little more accountable. I think that was his style, much more than the retiring superintendent. Which is the way I think it should be, not just some people, but everyone.

D3b3:

1. It seemed like he was moving and shaking up the school – so I wouldn't think he was a caretaker. People had some level of anxiety about changes he was bringing in.
2. I'm not saying he was good or bad, just that he was making people think and making decisions instead of sitting around keeping time until the district hired a new superintendent. He was making changes and trying to improve the school at the same time.
3. He evidently left a mark. People spoke about him a lot after he left so he got people thinking – some liked him and some didn't. That tells me he was active and involved and made decisions. He stirred up the school and raised the level of energy at least.
4. He made changes and decisions.
5. He stimulated people and got them thinking, whether they agreed with him or not.

D3b4:

1. He tried to start many new things here. Change isn't always accepted well and there were some hard feelings with this. Personally, I enjoy change and thrive off it. I appreciate the fact that he tried to start new ideas and concepts.
2. Friendly, quick moving on ideas and change, striving to enhance the district.
3. Helping us realize that change isn't easy for many teachers and how to best implement change.