

PRACTICES USED BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHEN UNDERGOING A TRANSITION
IN SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to examine the practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. The case study was conducted in four school districts, two districts with internal superintendent selections and two with external superintendent selections thus allowing a comparison of leadership succession. This research addressed the practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership. An analysis of succession plans, and the processes that districts progress through once a leader has announced their departure, was examined in this case study. Document review and interviews were used as data collection techniques. Findings from the data emerged in a three step process: individual data collection technique, site and cross-site. No formalized written succession plans were found in place for internal or external candidates. Factors that appeared to influence the decisions made at the time of the succession included (a) the issues facing the district at the time the current leader announces their departure (b) the current Board of Education members and their philosophy on succession at the time (c) the culture of the district and size. Although the findings from this study are not generalizable to other districts, the findings indicate that there are not formalized or standardized plans that are used when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership.

Suggested Keywords: Succession Planning, Superintendent Transition, Succession Process.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Succession in leadership is considered essential in providing stability for an organization. However, public education, as an organization historically overlooked the fact that superintendent turnover is part of the cycle of change. Carlson stated “All enduring organizations must cope with succession,” but districts typically do not cope with succession in a formal manner. (1961, p.210) Although superintendents are seen as the leaders in school districts, little research has been done on their role in the organization. With an increasing turnover rate among these leaders, it is important to understand their function and how to replace them while furthering a district’s vision.

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast districts that have selected leaders both internally and externally. Superintendent succession within the last two to six years in each of the four schools selected was chosen. An analysis of succession plans, and the processes that districts progress through once a leader has announced their departure, was examined in this case study.

Statement of the Problem

Vision and the ability to lead are critical to the success of the superintendent and the organizational health of an educational institution (Endeman, 1993; Nanus, 1992). Superintendents however often leave before educational reform has been institutionalized, halting progress driven by the districts vision, and threatening an organization’s stability. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), state that a typical superintendent’s term is limited to three years. This

high turnover rate makes it essential for districts to plan ahead. The formalization of succession planning within an organization is critical to sustain the vision and direction of the district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine the practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. The case study was conducted in four school districts, two districts with internal superintendent selections and two with external superintendent selections thus allowing a comparison of leadership succession in the selected districts.

Research Questions

This case study examined the practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. These questions guided the inquiry:

1. What is the nature of the leadership succession process in the district?
2. What role did the primary stakeholders play in the leadership succession process?
3. What attributes do school districts value when they identify/groom future leaders?
4. In what ways do search consultants impact the results of the process?
5. What issues do the stakeholders feel the District was facing when it was in the process of looking for a new leader and how did that influence their personal decisions in the process?

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the study of succession in many ways. First, it informs participating school districts how they practice succession in comparison with other districts.

Second, it informs organizations such as the New York State Council of School Superintendents and the New York State School Boards Association in how they can assist districts in formalizing a succession plan. Third, it assists in defining the role of the search consultant for districts using them and the consultants themselves. Finally, it gives insight into the issues small schools face versus large schools.

Limitations of the Study

Due to many factors such as time, availability, willingness to participate, etc., this study was limited to four school districts with both internal and external succession. In addition, a lack of formal, written succession plans kept this researcher from using many paper documents as sources as originally planned. Due to these limitations, the study's findings can not be applied to other populations due to the complexity of each district as well as differences in organizational structure at each district.

Summary

Practices used in superintendent succession planning is an essential question and practice that needs to be addressed for all schools in New York State and beyond. In today's fast paced education environment we must stabilize and use every resource to effect student achievement and that includes placing a superintendent that is the correct leader for the district. This case study addressed the stakeholders' perceptions of the succession practices used to hire their superintendent. To study the problem, the researcher reviewed the literature on distributed leadership and shared decision making in the school environment.

Chapter II presents the review of literature. Chapters III describes the qualitative methodology and data collection techniques used in this study. Chapter IV presents the results of

the data analysis and in Chapter V the researcher discusses findings and recommendations. The final chapter presents a summary of and conclusion to the research project.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Related Literature

Leadership Succession

Leadership is the most important factor influencing school academic success after classroom teaching. The Council of Schools Superintendents – The 6th Triennial Study of the Superintendency of New York report has some startling statistics, including the fact that 220 superintendents retired in 2006, which is a rate of approximately 10% per year over a three year period. As of 2006, 60% of current superintendents were expected to retire by 2011. These retirements have had a deleterious effect on districts. Districts appear to compete to recruit and retain superior leaders, especially as superintendents leave small districts for larger ones.

Succession is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “the order in which or the conditions under which one person after another succeeds to a property, dignity, title or throne; the right of a person or line to succeed; the act or process of following and order.” Succession planning has several definitions including the identification of a person to succeed the departing leader or the continuance of an organizational culture or personality. In this light, succession planning can contribute to stability and consistency at time of leadership change.

According to Bennis (1994), the success or failure of all leadership is perceived by the quality of the leadership at the top. When a change in leadership occurs, whether it is in a small business, the corporate world, the armed forces, educational systems, churches, or the political world, the need for solid transition is beyond measure. The next leader selected to run the

organization needs to assert his or her leadership skills to meet the needs of the present as well as the future.

Sergiovanni and Starrat (1988) concluded that although superintendents are viewed as major leaders in school districts, there is actually little known about them. They further noted that what is known is largely a result of survey information, and there is a need for future descriptive studies of the role of the superintendent. Miller (1992) further noted that the contemporary superintendent has not been studied in depth and that research centering on the position is sparse.

Succession planning is defined as an essential practice in the business and health field – it provides good returns both financially and for the stability of the organization, and is not a long standing practice that is well defined in the educational field. Much has been written and researched about principal succession (Barker, 2006; Fullan, 1997; Hart, 1992) but very little is available in the area of leadership succession of the superintendent. Given the number of superintendents approaching retirement, it is clear that succession planning needs to become more common in this field (Barker, 2006; Leithwood 1994; Levitz 2008).

Researchers agree that leadership succession is not a simple step, but rather a complex, diachronic process (Stravrou, 2003). Leadership succession looks very different depending on the organization that is dealing with the succession. The body of literature reviewed in this study was subdivided into the following headings as per the research questions that guide this research project: Overview of leadership succession; Planning leadership succession; Stakeholders in the process of leadership succession; The process of recruitment, and the Impact of succession on organizational health.

Overview of Leadership Succession:

Leadership succession means different things to different organizations. In the world of business it is a process that is developed and fairly transparent. In the field of nursing and health care it is often a way to pass leadership from one person to the next in the best interest of the organization. However, in education it is often discussed, but not a great deal of research has focused on it until recently.

Health care and nursing appear to have the most substantial amount of research when it comes to the area of leadership succession. It is clear that they understand what leadership looks like, how to assess well developed leaders and how to identify employees who should be accelerated in their leadership development. Research by Pintar, Capuano & Rosser (2007) centered on Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network as it embarked on a journey to create effective leadership, development and succession approaches. This influential article argues that an organizational culture is required to sustain an organizational system of excellence. It is through the Venturer Program, and its creation, that the recruitment and retainment of high caliber clinical nursing leaders began. According to Pintar, Capuano & Rosser (2007):

This program consisted of large leadership development seminars and small learning sessions, and offered participants the opportunity to practice skills in project type work. The program was created to address an emerging need to develop skilled leaders able to create and then sustain an organizational culture of excellence and development. The program was also created because it was expected that the recruitment and retention of high-caliber clinical and nursing leadership would be more difficult in the coming years

as the demands of health care and opportunities for healthcare professionals increase.

(p.1)

In the field of business, leadership succession is broken down even further. Several articles focused on large corporations and leadership succession and many even focused on the succession of family owned farms. According to Gephardt (1978), “succession in organizations may be defined as the process whereby the particular incumbent of such a position changes. Succession therefore involves changes in the status of two or more persons; the predecessor and the successor” (p.556). It is in Gephardt’s work that the various accounts of succession, primarily in the business field, are broken down and explained.

The five different ways that succession usually occurs include death, retirement, forced removal, voluntary resignation and promotion. Organizational succession and status degradation is an outcome that is now discussed openly as a byproduct of Gephardt’s work. Status degradation is one when succession occurs not in a natural or predicted manner but one in which the leader has violated some rule or conducted business in a manner that is not accepted by the group. This causes a major issue in the organization and succession can take on a whole different approach with numerous issues needing to be dealt with.

The history of the superintendency dates back to as early as the 1900’s with it becoming essential in the 1960’s during a time that civil rights issues were being brought into the school and classroom (Sergiovanni, 1987). It was during this time that this leadership position, the superintendent, was the trained expert in the field who used ongoing research to bring new theories of learning and methods to the teachers and staff. School boards were formed to “oversee” the leadership and guide the school. Burlingame (1981) states that:

If conflict did arise, two explanations were generally offered. First, the superintendent lacked the personal skills necessary to convince the school board members that the educators knew best. The second explanation was that board members were so misguided, inept, or corrupt that they could not be convinced by the voice of professional reason. Those who favored the first explanation stressed the importance of personality and argued for superintendents who possessed high levels of “people skills.” Those who supported the second explanation suggesting that school superintendents should become familiar with local conditions before accepting positions and also should be willing to be fired on behalf of professional standards and practices. Fired superintendents often enjoyed admiration from their colleagues and were perceived as martyrs on behalf of teaching, children and learning (p.58).

Although a great number of articles cite the relationship between succession and leadership in education, very few to none support the notion of planned succession in the area of the superintendency. Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) performed a case study to examine the identification, development, succession and retention of leadership talent in different primary schools within English West Midlands. Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) state that “little information concerning leadership succession planning within educational organizations is presently available in the literature. Studies within the USA report on the success of an in-house mentoring program for leaders but actual succession plans do not exist” (p.273). Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) concluded that although recruitment of leadership talent from outside the organization is at times essential, it is clear, through their work, that many schools are now investing considerable resources to develop leadership within their own organization or school.

Due to the relatively low number of leaders for the role of superintendent, research has shown that many school districts are now looking beyond the education system for leadership (Gutheries & Saunders, 2001). The article, *Who will Lead the Public Schools?* in *The New York Supplement* by Gutheries & Saunders (2001), stated that the trend in recruitment practices for many school districts, has moved towards considering the appointment of professionals from outside the realm of public education. In Seattle, Washington in 2000, the local school district renewed its school leadership under the direction of a retired army general. Los Angeles, California utilized a former Governor of Colorado to head its vast school district. It appears that just as many retired non-educators are accepting positions in the field as are experienced administrators moving up through the ranks. Leaders in large urban areas are feeling pressure for accountability and change, and as a result are seeking alternative leaders to address not necessarily educational issues but more governing issues that deal with political and financial issues.

The career path and ladders for leadership are often associated with the size of the school district. Historically, larger districts have a greater chance and opportunity for internal movement into administrative positions that lead to the superintendency. Culture and environmental factors are today reinforcing the impatience with the current state of affairs and a willingness to participate in the educational leadership process. An aging work force also tends to magnify the problems associated with superintendent succession (Platts, 1987).

As mentioned in the Triennial Report, the statistics indicate that the incidents when a superintendent leaves school organizations are frequent. The report states that 220 superintendents retired in the three years preceding the study. Sixty percent more were expected to retire by 2011. The study also states that new superintendents are starting later in life and

leaving sooner (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2006). The vacancies formed by superintendents' succession are assumed to influence the workings of the districts. The literature supports such a statement both in respect to other organizations and within educational systems. As mentioned in the health care and business fields there is a well defined plan and approach to this process.

Carlson (1962) established a definition of an outsider as “those individuals who come from outside the district to succeed to the superintendency” (p.220). He also uses the term and defines the term “insider” for the individual who succeeds to the superintendency from a subordinate position in the same district.

There is an extensive amount of literature available about “leadership” and what it means as a theory (Senge, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1995; Fullan, 1997; Leithwood, 1999; Lyons and Freas, 2000). Understanding the theory or concept of leadership is essential to understanding the importance of the leadership theory and succession planning. According to Burns (1978), “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (p.12).

Planning Leadership Succession

Schamalzried and Fallon (2007), in their study, assess the degree to which local health departments were prepared to replace top executives. Close to 52% of responding local health departments rated having succession plans as being important. Close to 28%, reported that they had plans. Half of those that had plans were grooming a successor. There was a strong link in this study that showed the connection between succession plans and a successful transition with leadership. It should be noted that approximately 100 hospitals out of 225 responded to this survey.

As mentioned previously, succession planning in business looks different depending on the organization and the players in the business. Stavrou (2003) found that succession in owner-managed firms is rarely planned and is usually occurs upon the death of the owner. Stavrou (2003) states:

In addition to the different points of views from which research on leadership succession has focused, researchers also have explored the succession issues in different types of organizations. These organizations range from non-profit, to those that are largely and publicly held, to small and entrepreneurial firms, to finally family owned business. Leadership takes 25-30 years to change in owner-managed firms, while it takes less than 20 years, usually seven in public owned organizations. Recognizing the underlying psychological attitude of preparing for succession, the person leaving will have a better clarity for the purpose and need (p.341).

The research and literature in the educational field supports the succession of principals as leaders. Very little research deals directly with the succession that occurs at the senior level or superintendency. Northfield, Macmillan & Myers (2006) mention that the number of administrator turnovers and retirements has been increasing. They focus on the need for strategic leadership on the part of succeeding principals in order to develop and sustain organizational learning and the idea that school improvement is paramount. This article supports the subtopic question in this review as it addresses the need for succession planning by developing insights into the process and results of principal succession. It suggests that there is a need to examine how people participate in the succession event and how the event is affected. It also discusses the need to focus on how the people understand and participate in the process.

The authors of this article cite the work of Greenfield (in Hart, 1993) who regards succession as “a complex social process characterized by interactions among a school’s faculty and their new principal, and among the other principals and others” (p. ix).

The financial and organizational concerns linked with frequent turnover are great. Moore-Johnson, (1996):

The financial and organizational costs of such turnover were great. School board members must spend precious dollars meeting the terms of broken contracts and divert their attention from setting policy to finding new leadership. Children...feel confused and abandoned. Principals resent having spent time complying with directives from Downtown, and teachers firmly close their classroom doors, intent on ignoring the next plan for their improvement...With each change come abandoned programs and disillusioned staff members and children (p.60)

Stakeholders in the Process of Leadership Succession

It appears, from the literature, that in the field of education, the Board of Education seems to still be the guiding and deciding factor in many of the decisions that are made regarding the hiring of the superintendent.

Pintar, Capuano, and Rosser (2007) report on their study findings in which they talk about an interdisciplinary team composed of members from different divisions in the hospital such as Clinical Services, Human Resources, and Organizational Development. The divisions come together to organize and implement the succession plan. It is through this team approach that

they work to select the right candidates to move forward while continuing to promote others in the program. A distinction was required to define “high potential” and “high professional”. These terms were defined among all stakeholders and “high potential” individuals were asked to work in and for the organization at a high capacity or leadership role. A “high professional” usually was held at middle management levels.

Brooking (2008), reports from the study conducted in New Zealand that the supply and quality of candidates are just not there in education for principal succession. In addition, the findings of this study show that there has been a preference for male candidates in leadership positions. The Governors or boards of trustees in New Zealand who historically make appointments have shown a preference for male principals. In addition, since 1989, local school boards have complete discretion and autonomous power to appoint whomever they like as their leader (principal), regardless of qualifications or experience. Brooking (2008) states that, “Boards left to their own devices have shown a preference for male candidates, and have discriminated against women applicants in a number of ways”(p.42). Brooking (2008) goes on to state, “My research revealed that while many boards had put in place all the required H.R. appointment procedures and appeared to be working within them, at the decision-making point in the process, which is usually connected with the interview stage, it was quite common for factors other than those specified in criteria or person specifications to take over” (p.234).

Hart (1993) alleges that the most important group that is affected by the superintendent succession is the teachers. However, another group that is equally affected and should be included in the process is the secretarial staff that deals directly with the predecessor and successor.

The single act of choosing a superintendent can have both negative and positive consequences that are far-reaching for every member of the community (Burnett, 1998, Glass, 2001). With the legislation of No Child Left Behind, the stakes for schools and their leader is even greater. Carter and Cunningham (1997) state:

Today's instructional leaders need to be instructional leaders who are equally comfortable with elementary reading programs and working to close achievement gaps as they are discussing school bond practices and school board politics. This is the pivotal balance that all successful superintendents must learn to juggle (p.52).

Redman (2006) examined Gouldner's (1957) three variable study of cosmopolitan and local orientation theory in studying public school superintendents in the state of Texas. The variables that were explored included: commitment to job skills, loyalty to the organization, and reference group. This study examined the cause of superintendent succession and its impact on the orientation of the organization, and whether the size of the school district can predict cosmopolitan and local orientation in school superintendents, whether a school board president views inside or outside succession to be an important factor when hiring a superintendent. Significant findings from this study indicate that the school board presidents had positive feelings regarding their current superintendents and the current needs of their school districts. In addition, school board presidents in the same study did not see inside or outside source of succession to be an important factor in superintendent selection and satisfaction. In this study it was also found that there was no significant relationship found between commitment to job skills and loyalty to the organization whether they were hired from the outside or inside (Reman, 2006).

The Process of Recruitment

Since we know that education is not alone in coping with the generational change, it is very clear in all fields of the research, there needs to be a clear process of recruitment. Hall (1986), through his research, suggests that recruitment needs to come prior to the succession plan in the form of professional development and growth of current leaders.

In their research on Museum leadership gaps, Baldwin & Ackerson (2006) state,

While having a succession plan appeared to have all the allure of a home fire drill, there was no shortage of people willing to talk about leadership. It felt as though we had stumbled on a hot-button topic. Although few organizations were actually prepared to lose a leader—either through illness, accident, retirement or resignation—everybody seemed to have a stake in the topic of leadership. This eagerness for discussion made staying on topic difficult and sometimes impossible. It is difficult to ask who the next generation of leaders will be without also touching on questions of recruitment, retention and professional development, not to mention the merits of graduate versus on-the-job training (p.350).

Hall (1986) finds that there is a growing awareness surrounding the need to find better methods to nurture candidates internally. Hall refers to this as the Replacement Planning Stage. It is here that senior executives periodically review their top executives and those in the next-lower echelon and agree on two or three back-ups for each senior slot. Hall (1986), states that “Replacement is done on a regular time schedule, in advance of vacancies, for a large number of

positions. It is often done subjectively, without establishing clear job descriptors (and related skills and experiences required)” (p237).

Fink and Brayman (2006), cite that there is increasing evidence of a potential leadership crisis in many educational jurisdictions in Western Society. With such turnover there is the potential to undermine school improvement initiatives. They go on to state that “Investigations into leadership succession in the public sector are quite limited and the long tenure of most public service leaders encourages lack of interest in leadership succession” (p232).

Fink and Brayman also cite Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie & Hurwitz (1984) in which they find that leadership succession plans connect the identification, recruitment, preparation, placement, induction, and ongoing professional development of leaders. However, the literature in the educational field provides little guidance pertaining to successful leadership succession. In addition, little attention has been given to the issue of how leadership is set up. In addition, any information gathered has not been communicated over time to all stakeholders.

In *Succession Planning and Leadership Development In a Delaware School District*, Levitz (2008) bases her research on the premise that educational systems must develop not only strategies for recruitment, but also systems that will support leadership development. A great deal of her work centered around, and identified, the weaknesses in the field. Such weaknesses identify that there is not support for growth and improvement in the field of school leaders. Such weaknesses include a weakness in the curriculum of school leadership programs, lack of connection to real-world issues for potential administrators, and a lack of diversity on the field. Her findings support not only professional development in the area of leadership succession, but also a need for policies that support succession planning.

Platts (1988) early on in his dissertation states that:

From a descriptive perspective there are almost no research studies on how individuals become superintendents. Little is actually known about which experiences prior to assuming that role influence how the role is played. For some the position seems to capture them after long and faithful service in a district; others have the superintendency as a career goal and prepare themselves diligently to seek the office wherever it is available. In most respects, then, the superintendency is understudied. (p.2)

Dorman & D'Arbon (2003) found that there is not much evidence that Catholic schools have embraced succession strategies. There is a concern that there are fewer 'appointtable' applicants for the advertised positions. A great deal of documentation on the need for succession planning has been found but these studies have focused on the role of the principal and the impact of change in education on the nature of change-not on the recruitment. Numerous studies document the stresses that leaders face each day and recognize that they are common and disheartening/intimidating. There was a direct correlation between these stresses and lack of applicants. In this article it was discussed that the Church expects that leaders be of a faith community and practice their faith. Dorman & D'Arbon (2003) conclude that "leadership succession is a world-wide issue, then the development of an instrument that has been validated cross-nationally would be essential to the development of this field" (p.33).

The Impact of Succession on Organizational Health

Most of the research on this topic ironically mirrors education. Fullen (2003) states that “shared vision and creating maintains a culture has a positive impact on organizational health and sustaining change” (p.55).

Fink & Brayman (2006, p. 26), in their work on succession planning, state that plans can “help sustain school improvement” by communicating the districts vision to all parties.

Barker (2006) qualitative study finds that a successful transition from one leader to another is a critical, but a neglected, dimension of sustainable improvement. He recommends that more concern be given to the appointment of school leaders to manage their arrival induction and departure. It has been proven that change is a highly destabilizing process. Since 1992, successive leaders have ensured incremental steps towards new levels of performance and have avoided the run down of the improvement mission.

Harris (2004) considers the relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement by exploring the extent to which distributed forms of leadership can contribute to school improvement. The articles concludes that evidence suggests distributed forms of leadership can assist capacity building within schools, contributing to school improvement.

A great deal of research has been done surrounding sports and the succession of coaches and how this impacts the health of the team as an organization. Recent studies have employed multiple regressions methods to conclude that there is little impact on changes that are made in the professional arena of football, baseball and basketball (Jacobs & Singell, 1993).

But prior to the Jacobs and Singell study the research differed. In 1979, Allen, Paian and Loty conducted a multivariate analysis to examine the relationship of managerial succession to organizational performance among professional baseball teams. They concluded that:

Teams with no managerial succession performed better, in general, than teams with some form of managerial succession; Teams with inside successors performed better, during both the current season and the prior season, than teams with outside successors; Outside succession often occurs as the result of poor organizational performance; and Inside succession is less likely to disrupt team performance than outside succession.

(p.171)

In 1982, Brown attempted to replicate the study using professional football teams. He studied 26 teams in the National Football League for a period of eight years. He found a conditional relationship between succession and performance. With this finding, it may be possible to begin to assess the circumstances in which administrative change is likely to produce improved performance.

School climate is a term often used, but it has no formal definition. It is used both definitively and symbolically. Hoy and Miskel (1982) identify organization climate as “The set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of people in it” (p.185). Sergiovanni and Starrat (1988) used the metaphor of a barometer to describe school climate, “Climate provides a reading of how things are going in the school on the one hand and a basis for predicting school consequences and outcomes on the other” (p.83).

Findings from the work of Platts (1988) support the impression that the occasions when a superintendent leaves a school are frequent and these vacancies have shown that the appointment

of a new school leader have been shown to influence the organizational function of the school system.

With each turnover in leadership a new direction is often taken. The new leader brings his/her own insight, experience, and direction to the job. School leadership succession brings forth a period of apprehension by subordinates, disrupts the pre-existing line of communications, and disrupts the normal counterbalance of daily operations (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985).

Trotter (1993) found that education reform is not visible for generations of students and community members. Fullan and Steiegelbauer (1991) discovered that the total reform process requires at least 10 years. The vision of the superintendent and his or her ability to lead are essential to the success of the reform (Endeman, 1993). It has been found that superintendents often leave the district before education reform becomes institutionalized and since the average superintendent's term in one school district often is three years, it is difficult to institutionalize change (McAdoo, 1993).

Researchers (Bennis, 1989a; Bennis, 1989b; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Fullan, 1993; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Mathews, 1994) have offered blueprints for reform and have focused upon this process in the context in which it occurs for schools. Leithwood (1995) identified four external factors that affect a district's progress toward school improvement and growth: the community, the elected boards, mandates from governmental forces, and social trends.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology

This comparative case study focused on policies and procedures used by school districts when undergoing a transition of leadership succession. The design of this study was qualitative. Qualitative research was used to describe and bring meaning to problems. It was meant to answer complex questions. Qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, is “exploratory, and inductive and strives to understand how all parts work together to form a whole” (Merriam, 1988, p.16). Interviews were the primary form of data collection used throughout this study. Open-ended questions with the interview participants and documents on succession planning used by school districts when undergoing a transition of leadership succession, were collected and analyzed. Succession planning and how it is defined by the different organizations was determined in the initial investigation.

This study sought to compare and contrast districts that have selected leaders both internally and externally. Superintendent succession within the last two to six years in each of the four schools selected was studied. An analysis of succession plans, and the processes that districts progress through once a leader has announced their departure, were examined in this case study.

The participants of this study included four districts that have undergone succession of a superintendent within the last four to six years. The intention and purpose of this research was to study leadership succession planning in the districts identified. There was a focus placed on the succession planning process, recruitment, and selection of a superintendent in a holistic way. A qualitative research model was consistent with the nature of the research questions designed for

this study. It provided a design and methodology that allows for an understanding and interpretation of leadership succession planning. It also gave insight into the conditions in all four school districts when undergoing their leadership succession process.

The research in this case study sought to answer the following five basic questions:

1. What is the nature of the leadership succession process in the district?
2. What role did the primary stakeholders play in the leadership succession process?
3. What attributes do school districts value when they identify/groom future leaders?
4. In what ways do search consultants impact the results of the process?
5. What issues do the stakeholders feel the District was facing when it was in the process of looking for a new leader and how did that influence their personal decisions in the process?

Through examination of the above research questions this qualitative case study attempted to answer critical questions that can affect the organization's health.

Design

This was a qualitative study. Qualitative research is characterized by the ability of the researcher to seek out the “why,” not the “how” of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information. It requires the researcher to access and gather data in natural settings under investigation. Thus, a qualitative analysis helps the researcher to understand a problem with a focus on process. Through this type of analysis, the researcher attempts to explain why something is taking place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, culture, value systems and history. It is used to inform policy formation, communication and business practices.

The method used to conduct this research was a comparative case study. According to Creswell “case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity or process, of one or more individuals” (2009, p.13). Due to the nature of this research, the proposed case study was based on qualitative research and what it could reveal as the results of the research were assembled together. The researcher was the means through which all the documents, interviews and observable behaviors were collected and examined. This approach was based on Patton’s (1985) belief that:

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for the participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, and what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting...The analysis strives for depth of understanding (p.1).

Merriam (1998) states that the three sources for collecting data in a case study are: conducting interviews, observing and analyzing documents. Given this protocol it was essential that these techniques be employed to increase the validity of the study. The sources of data collection for this study were centered on interviews with the various stakeholders involved in the districts.

Setting

Upstate New York State served as the setting for this research. Schools experiencing leadership succession within the past four to six years received the highest consideration. During a period of initial research into schools that had undergone leadership succession in the chosen time frame, it was decided that the criteria would need to be narrowed in order to be able to make a solid comparison of data in this comparative case study.

The selection of the setting was purposeful, thus allowing for a rigorous comparative study of policies and practices that were used when undergoing leadership succession. Purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994 & Patton, 2002) is based on the belief that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight. Therefore, the setting of a sampling in this case study was key to the design of this research. A maximum variation sampling, which is a purposefully selected sample of persons or settings that represent a wide range of experience related to the phenomenon of interest, was initially selected to be more conceptually dense, and potentially help in establishing norms or phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Schools that had undergone leadership succession in the past four to six years were the first criterion investigated. It was decided that schools that recently made a leadership succession had not had enough time elapse from the search process and leadership succession to adequately respond to the research questions. Therefore, the four to six year criterion was established. The second criterion established in selecting the setting/sample was the size of a school. It was important to be able to make comparisons. The size of the school seemed like a natural way to add internal validity to the study. Then, the researcher could ask: did schools that are similar in

size have similar needs when undergoing leadership succession? Finally, the type of leadership succession, internal versus external succession was considered as another variable in the study.

Upstate New York State served as the setting for this research. Four schools that underwent leadership succession in the past four to six years were the first criteria. In addition, schools were selected based on the number of students in the school. Two schools were selected with student populations of 2500 or less and two schools were selected with a student population ranging from 2501-5000.

Participants

The desired research participants included four school districts in Upstate New York. The following Pseudonyms were used to describe the schools districts: District A- (a district with a population of 2500 or less students where an internal candidate was hired as the superintendent); District B- (a district with a population range of 2500 or less students where an external candidate was hired as the superintendent); District C- (a district with a population range of 2501-5000 students where an internal candidate was hired as the superintendent); and District D- (a district with a population range of 2501-5000 students where an external candidate was hired as the superintendent).

Participants selected for the interviews were chosen based on their role at the time of the succession. Current members of the designated target group were also interviewed. Such members included Board Presidents (past and present), Superintendents (past and present), Union Presidents (past and present) Parent Teachers Association Presidents(PTA)/Parent Teacher Organization(PTO) Presidents (past and present), and a Human Resource Director or district staff member heading up the succession search.

The researcher, in addition to maximum variation sampling, used network sampling. As Patton (1990) says, “this strategy involves identifying participants of ‘cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (p.182). When looking at potential school participants the researcher relied on experts in the field of hiring and recruitment to guide to potential school districts that have undergone leadership succession in the past four to six years.

Recruitment

As mentioned in the participants section of this document, the participants were initially identified through purposeful sampling. With assistance they were then narrowed to four key districts within the Upstate New York area that fit the prescribed criteria. Phone or e-mail contacts, followed by face to face meetings or phone calls were initiated. The researcher relied on each superintendent to make the initial contact with the participants in the school district that they represented. A letter of introduction (Appendix A) was given to the Superintendents.

Approval to conduct this research was granted from The Institutional Review Board at The Sage Colleges (Appendix B) on November 8, 2008. In order to initially protect stakeholders, each subject for the interview was solicited by the superintendent in the participating districts. A follow-up phone call or e-mail to schedule a face-to-face interview was then scheduled by the researcher. Interviews were conducted based on several interview questions (Appendix C). Each participant, who agreed to participate in the study, signed an informed consent form (Appendix D) indicating agreement to participate in the study. Confidentiality of the participants has been protected by this researcher by not revealing the names of the participants and by keeping the school districts identity confidential also. Specific

demographics have been kept ambiguous to assure that information can not be connected to specific districts.

A letter of thanks to each interview participant followed the interview. Data from the oral interviews was transcribed and then aggregated to compare recommended best practices for succession plans.

Data Collection Procedures

Although it is recommended that all three strategies of interview, observing and analyzing documents be employed to assure reliability, this researcher was only able to use two strategies. Observation was not a strategy that was able to be employed in the interviewing session. This approach was based on Patton's (2002) belief that:

Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective...By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. (p.306)

Relevant public documents revolving around the planning and the announcement of the superintendent departing the organization were to serve as a source of data. In reviewing the documents, the researcher wanted to identify the language used in succession planning as well as gather other key ideas or comments of succession planning. However, not many such documents were provided, which in the final analysis in it provided confirmation that there are not plans in place. .

Individual interviews served as the primary method for collecting data in this case study. An interview protocol was instituted during all interviews to maintain a consistent and constant approach to the qualitative research. The protocol used the following components: use of heading (date, place, interviewer, interviewee, start time and ending time); instructions the interviewer followed to assure that standard procedures were being followed throughout the interview process; five major questions were asked of each participant; at the end a concluding statement was shared. Time was given between the questions to record responses and for follow-up questions. Data collection occurred over a period of 4-5 months. Numerous visits to each site were made to conduct the interviews with the participants as well as to examine documents that pertained to the succession process.

Prior to the start of the study, the interview questions were pilot-tested with appropriate parties (e.g. district office personnel, Board members, etc) from districts not participating in the study. For the purpose of this case study, data was collected primarily through on-site or phone interviews of the participants stated above. Documentation, such as reports, newsletters, newspaper accounts, meeting agendas, district reports, and any other pertinent documents were to be collected and analyzed to help answer the stated research questions.

The primary source of data collection in this case study included interviews with current and former superintendents; current and former Presidents of the Board of Education; current and former Teacher Union Presidents; current and former Parent Teacher Organization/Parent Teacher Association presidents and Human Resource Directors or members heading up, or involved in, the succession search. In addition, a review of public documents such as; minutes from Board meetings, newspaper articles, policies the Boards of Education have established and related documents on the school's website, were to be gathered and analyzed for their relevance

to this study. All sources were used to develop an understanding and to create a comprehensive picture of the school district's superintendent succession planning.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research studies are designed to provide information data that represent words rather than statistics. In a qualitative approach, such as in a case study, the data analysis is the most important element. Since a case study is an intense, holistic description and analysis of a case, it is essential that conveying an understanding of that case become the greatest consideration in analyzing the data. Stake (1995) explains:

Keeping in mind that it is the case we are trying to understand, we analyze episodes or text materials with a sense of correspondence. We are trying to understand behavior, issues, and contexts with regard to our particular case....We try to find the pattern or the significance through direct interpretation, just asking ourselves "What did that mean?" For more important episodes or passages of text, we must take more time, looking them over again and again, reflecting triangulating, being skeptical about first impressions and simple meanings (p.78).

When doing a qualitative research case study it is essential to do ongoing data analysis throughout the process. Since the problem is clearly stated and the data is being collected in a manner to address the problem, the data shapes the final product. Without ongoing analysis, the data can become unfocused, repetitious and because of the sheer volume – overwhelming. Simultaneous data collection and analysis should occur in and out of the field (Merriam, 1998).

One of the primary data analysis strategies employed in this study was the constant comparative method of data analysis that was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Since

this was a study that compared the practices used in leadership succession, it was essential that the “researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another in the same set of data or in another set” (Merriam, 1998, p.159).

Galser & Strauss, (1967) developed the concept that theory should grow from the data itself.

“Theory should emerge...it should never just be put together” (p.41).

Development of categories and tentative hypothesis through the constant comparative method occurred throughout the process as the emerging theory began to develop. As with all data it was coded and categories were defined and refined. Classification schemes and themes, and concepts emerged during the process. The researcher created categories based on a subject’s district as well as their role in the district (i.e. Superintendent, Union President, Board Member, etc.)

The data analysis timeline was ongoing. Following content analysis of the data within the study framework, research participants from the participating districts were asked to review the data for accuracy and to make recommendations if inaccurate, on other avenues to verify data.

Chapter Summary

In this study, the researcher chose to use four school districts with varying ranges in student populations. This sample was indicative of both small and middle size schools that would benefit from a succession plan for leadership and continuous service. This chapter describes, in detail, the steps that were involved in the study. It yielded important information regarding formal succession planning in the four school districts and the impact on leadership development and succession planning in the educational arena. Participants have access to the results of the study and recommendations based on the research to create or improve their efforts in formal succession planning.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Findings

This qualitative case study looked at the phenomenon of succession planning on four school districts. The in-depth interviews and review of institutional documents have provided insight into the practices used by the various districts. It is a topic that many of the participants were interested in, and yet some of them found it difficult to articulate the practices that they utilize. While interviews formed the basis of this project, information was also reviewed from a wide variety of documents from each of the four districts.

These documents included mission statements, Board of Education Agendas and Minutes as well as Bargaining Unit Contracts. There were twenty-one various individuals interviewed between January 10, 2009 and April 24, 2009. This section of the study presents themes and findings which emerged to answer the study's research questions:

1. What is the nature of the leadership succession process in the district?
2. What role did the primary stakeholders play in the leadership succession process?
3. What attributes do school districts value when they identify/groom future leaders?
4. In what ways do search consultants impact the results of the process?
5. What issues do the stakeholders feel the District was facing when it was in the process of looking for a new leader and how did that influence their personal decisions in the process?

A description of each school district; District A, District B, District C and District D, provides the contextual setting and introduction for the study's findings. For each district,

the findings are presented by major themes of data source: document review and interviews. Findings that answer the five research questions then are presented for each district, and a district summary concludes the section. The chapter concludes with a crossing –site comparison. Triangulation of the data from the multiple sources, along with information taken from the literature review, exemplifies the qualitative nature of this research.

District A

District A, the smallest of the four districts, is one of the smallest towns in New York State. It was once home to the largest industrial employer in the area until about 15 years ago. Behind the small village lies a school district that has adjusted to changing job markets and demographics. The ultimate goal for this K-12 district of approximately 365 students, housed in one building, is that “every student will graduate and be prepared for college, career and citizenship.”

The school building is well maintained. It is recently undergone major renovations, including technology upgrades. The community is committed to education, demonstrated by numerous successful school budget votes.

The superintendent shared a written overview of the district’s home-grown administrators program. Aside from that, there was little written documentation providing a detailed succession plan. The researcher conducted six interviews in District A (APPENDIX A).

Nature of Leadership Succession

The document review consisted of school newsletters dating back to 2005, as well as a publication on the “Grow Your Own Administrators Program.” This program was not formally

written up, but rather a verbal procedure providing opportunities for teachers to come out of the classroom and explore administrative roles while taking corresponding coursework.

According to the current superintendent of the district, the President of the Board, and the former superintendent, this program began about fifteen years ago when the President looked at the history of the superintendent within this district. Experience showed that when the district looked for a leader outside itself it struggled. Stakeholders decided to begin this program, which was one of the first in the State. District leaders identified teachers interested in leadership roles and helped them hone necessary skills. The district did not want to be a stepping stone for people looking to move to larger districts. Stakeholders wanted consistency and an understanding of small district culture.

While Board members and superintendents had a great deal of knowledge regarding this program, current and former Presidents of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) felt the program was “hear-say.” They never reviewed a formal document outlining it. Therefore, this researcher finds it is more of a conceptual plan versus a formally written one.

Role Stakeholders Played in the Leadership Succession Process

The previous superintendent said that at the time of his succession, the community was happy with their predecessor, but admitted there should have been more input from the teacher’s union.

The Board President said he/she realized “they were lucky that they did not have to go outside to look for a candidate. The Board got together and decided that we wanted to stay in-house and we did not interview anyone else.” The current superintendent had been in the district for over 40 years as a student, student teacher, teacher and principal. The President continued saying, “it

was not a hard decision to realize that this individual was ready to move up to that position [superintendent].”

Financial issues were also a factor. When the major employer in the community departed, their building was left contaminated. The business was looking to cut expenses and filed a tax certiorari to have its assessment reduced from contributing the most tax revenue to nothing. The district was being “threatened” financially. It was clear this financial issue weighed heavy on everyone’s mind.

The current superintendent was the K-12 Principal and curriculum director at the time of succession. He/she felt that working in a small district provides several leadership opportunities saying, “you can make a name for yourself in a district like this.”

Both PTO Presidents said the process was flawed. The current President said there was no discussion of a plan. He/she was not involved in any part of the selection process and therefore assumed it was a natural function of the Board. The former President reiterated that there was no input from the PTO. The community was disappointed, not with the outcome, but with its lack of input.

Importance of Succession Plan in the Organization

All stakeholders said a succession plan was significant and important. Their reasons all stemmed from the idea that culture and community in a small district educational system are unique.

The current superintendent said succession planning was even more important than in a bigger district. “The community is smaller and less diverse so you have to understand the community in order to navigate.”

The former superintendent agreed, saying succession planning in a small district is imperative. It does not have to be like the grow your own administrator’s program; it just has to be *some* plan. “There’s a tremendous shortage of qualified administrators. You realize to get a match it is a puzzle; to pick that personality that will be able to get along with the teachers and get along with the Board and get along with the community – that’s a real challenge,” he/she said.

The current PTO President agreed. Although succession planning is valued and seen as important by all, the former PTO President said, “Although I think it is important, I am not necessarily sure it is possible...I just think that there is a lot of possible changes that can occur from day to day, and people’s goals change within themselves.”

Both Presidents also said the community and culture of this District made a difference. “We are looking for someone that has to be willing to be on call that maybe in the larger they may not be and that is just because it is our district’s culture,” said the current President.

For the most part, all stakeholders said this District had its own unique qualities and needs. Those needs include building renovations and the financial issues. There has also been recent conversation of merging this district with another. This District’s opposed. They were looking for a superintendent with a stake in their community.

Attributes School Districts Value when They Identify/Groom Future Leaders

Board members and superintendents shared specific steps and attributes they look for when identifying and grooming future leaders. Stakeholders all mentioned different attributes but all focused on a sense of commitment and dedication to the district.

The former superintendent said finding the right personality was key. This is the advantage of having a home grown program. He/she also looks for “someone with an analytical mind, a caring personality-the person needs to be a people person and has to be comfortable listening to various constituencies that they have to deal with.”

The current superintendent said, “it is one of the hardest things that you do. Whether you are hiring an administrator or you’re hiring a teacher; there’s just something about the person that speaks to the fact that they’re going to be good at x, y, z. It is hard for me to put into words because for me it is a gut feeling.” He/she also said the candidate needs good writing skills, a strong understanding of numbers and thick skin. The superintendent went on to say, “sometimes it can be developed but there are people who just have that naturally and those are the people who go the farthest.”

From the PTO perspective, the former President said he/she looks at the demeanor of the candidate. He/she looks for someone who presents themselves in a calm, confident manner, as well as someone with realistic thoughts and practical solutions.

The current President had a different perspective, saying the school board and administrators should have some guidelines set forth. If teachers follow these guidelines that they set out in the beginning of their journey, then they will be successful.

Finally, Board of Education members said the superintendent is the individual who guides them in identifying future leaders. They look for people who are involved in their school

community and bring new ideas. It would be their expectation to see these individuals at Board meetings. It is their hope that the individual who is looking for a leadership opportunity is very flexible and willing to learn.

Ways Search Consultants Impact the Results of the Process

Since this District has historically selected internal candidates, they have not used a consultant. The Board members said if they did use a search consultant they would first review how successful they were with other searches. One of the Board members emphasized that the search consultant had to understand that the candidate must have “a small school vision, a small school is totally a different animal...unless you live in the district, you don’t know what small schools are all about.” The other stakeholders did not feel they had enough information to comment.

Issues the District was Facing when They Were in the Process of Looking for a New Leader

The previous superintendent said the major issue the district was facing was the largest building project the school had undertaken since the original building in 1938. The current superintendent was in the middle of the building project in their previous role, so this was a natural succession in this area.

There was a lot of turbulence within the district. Students and teachers were displaced, classes were held in trailers and teaching in science rooms was without proper equipment. In addition the district “had just come off of a battle to keep the district whole and I think we needed an administrator who had been part of that and understood all of the ramifications.” These sentiments were echoed by the current superintendent.

The former PTO President also discussed the financial issues the district faced. He/she also talked about behavior changes in children as additional issues the district was dealing with. “The fact that the current superintendent had been there a long time certainly held some weight in choosing them.”

The current PTO President focused on the size of the school, saying it was too small for the number of students. The President wanted someone who knew the school, the families and the projected enrollment.

Finally, the Board of Education members both discussed the renovations and how that would impact the district. Someone, like their current superintendent, who had a history with the district and a good business sense were important factors.

Summary

This researcher found that this district had no formally written plan, but did have an internship program aimed at grooming internal candidates for leadership positions. The “Grow you Own Administrators” program was more of a verbal succession plan carried out by the leaders of the district in conjunction with the Board of Education. Not all stakeholders were familiar with this plan. PTO members claim it is only “hear-say.”

Information revealed in the interviews suggests this district relied more on top heavy decision making instead of shared decision making. The former superintendent and the Board of Education played the biggest roles in choosing the next leader. Parents felt as if they had little to no say in the process.

Despite the fact that shared decision making was not exercised in this district, all stakeholders discussed attributes they were looking for in a new superintendent. This researcher found that most of these attributes were task specific, mainly aimed at tackling the biggest issues at the time: new renovations and a struggle to keep the district together. As a result, all stakeholders were looking for someone who was very committed to the district, someone who willing to put in extra time, someone who would be a visible leader and someone who would work well with all parties. Administrators in this district were looking for someone with an analytical mind and a caring personality, while the Board was looking for a flexible leader who would be willing to learn. This district historically does not use search consultants and therefore had little to add in this area of study.

District B

District B serves approximately 2, 075 students from five neighboring towns. Students in grades 9-12 attend the high school, students in grades 6-8 attend a middle school and students in K-5 attend one of the three elementary schools.

This district consistently meets, and often exceeds, state standards for academic performance. As a result most students pursue some form of higher education. This District also provides a variety of extracurricular opportunities. It has produced numerous sports championships, award-winning musicians, accomplished artists, and community-minded individuals. It has, like all schools, been faced with major cuts in state aid. Residents are encouraged to provide input into the educational priorities and annual school budgets by attending public meetings in the spring.

The buildings are well maintained and continue to receive renovations. There is commitment to education, demonstrated by numerous successful school budget votes.

Nature of Leadership Succession

When asked to discuss the nature of leadership succession, the current superintendent said, “There are no formal plans in this district. The current leaders have had some informal discussion and the nature of that discussion has been almost a personal commitment to each other that we would not leave the district at the same time...we would try and stagger our retirement.” When asked if there was a plan prior to their arrival the superintendent said no.

The former Board of Education President concurred saying; there was “no written succession plan.” He/she went on to say that there are seven Board members; six are members of the business community. The President believed there needs to be a succession plan regardless of what level of administration.

As a district internal movement from assistant principal to principal roles is encouraged, if qualified. Historically there has not been internal succession to the superintendency in this district. “I’m not sure the seven of us would necessarily agree on any internal candidate and then we’d take that deep breath and say “okay...” – most likely we’d do a search process,” the former President said.

The current President agreed when stating “the Superintendent and the Business Agent work hand-in-hand with each other, so we understood it to be very, very difficult if both were to leave at the same time...we did put in place not so much a policy but an understanding that neither one would leave both at the same time.”

The former superintendent, who retired upon leaving, continues to consult in the field of education. He/she shared “there were no plans in particular for succession of leaders when I left.” In this case, he/she announced their retirement nearly ten months before a new superintendent would be expected to take over. The former superintendent was asked to develop

a profile for what the new superintendent should look like in terms of skills, and reiterated there was no documentation or procedure in place. It was more of a process involving the principals, Board of Education and the Teacher's Union President.

The current Director of Curriculum was interviewed because he/she were closely involved in the selection process. He/she said there is no formal plan, but informal conversations in support of a process that would create a smooth transition and cultural maintenance. "There's a history that can be shared and culture - history of the culture that can be shared."

The current Union President said there is no formal plan that they are aware of.

Role Stakeholders Played in the Leadership Succession Process

From all stakeholders' voices, a visual mosaic was unveiled regarding this process. The current superintendent said there is regular informal discussion of succession among the Central Office Group. Players have a formal discussion with the Board about a year before leaving. It was clear that no formal plan has evolved.

Contrary to what the former superintendent said, the current superintendent did not think the former played any role in finding a replacement. It was their understanding that prior to their arrival, the Board just appointed an interim.

The previous Board President reiterated that the only existing plan, barring emergency, is a notice period, written into contracts. Evaluations are done every six months, so there is constant feedback. This evaluation process was written into the current superintendent's contract by him/herself. It is during the May/June timeframes, when annual contracts change and stakeholders would discuss, "What will keep the superintendent here? If they leave what are we

going to do? But the conversation is between the seven of us; it is not written,” said the Board President.

The former Board President said of the succession process: “we knew the makeup of our Board of Education was changing, we knew the leadership was changing, so we needed to have leaders of the Board that could rally the seven people and reach consensus.” The President spoke of the process, explaining that the seven board members did the initial candidate screening and narrowed it down to about three people. On their committee, there were also members of the community, people from all grade levels, and various administrators. The District Office members then interviewed the candidates separately.

The current Board President said that he/she was not on the Board during the last superintendent succession and was unable to speak to the process. However, he/she did say if the process happened now, he/she thought that choosing an internal candidate was possible. In fact, an elementary school principal is currently being considered. “He is young; he has very good leadership qualities and capabilities. He’s been in our district for quite some time, not only as a teacher, but also as an administrator and it is quite possible that he may throw his hat into the ring.”

The President went on to say he/she would have no problem soliciting information from the community about what they are looking for. “Obviously we have done that before. The union has something to say there I wouldn’t want to exclude them. I think that they’re basically important at least to sit down and come to the table.”

The Director of Curriculum stated that “We hired the District Superintendent from our local BOCES who coordinated the search as many districts do.” From there, the individuals met with

specific groups of people and then mixed groups. The Director of Curriculum said this process was necessary because, “It is a difficult district.”

The current Union President did not hold that role when the superintendent succession occurred but expected to be part of the process if it were to happen now.

Importance of Succession Plan in the Organization

The current superintendent said, “I think the most important part is the historical perspective, there are many, many issues that happen in a school district and sometimes it is difficult to find the footprint and what took place.” He/she went on to say that a formal plan is most important, “so you do not ruin your reputation with the community with your credibility”

The former Board President brings his/her own career experience to the table when looking at succession, saying he/she makes a career succession plan every year in his/her profession. “It is never been used in my years, but I think it is critical. In the assignment of, ‘When I’m out of the office, this is the person,’ I just can’t buy this as a succession plan.”

The current Board President echoed that plans are important for the organization, especially coming from a medical background where they are often executed.

Director of Curriculum revealed that a succession plan “it is very important. And I think it is not only important for the transition of the person from the hiring process, but there needs to be some kind of succession plan once the person is there.”

The Current Union President voiced that it was important to have a detailed and defined succession plan process not only for the Superintendent, but also other key roles in the organization.

The final interview from this District was with the previous superintendent who discussed the importance of using available resources. “What I see in the next decade is the internal succession plan becoming very important, because we are in a situation currently where there is a dearth of qualified superintendents to take over school districts in general in terms of their skill sets, in terms of their longevity.”

He/she continued by discussing the importance of internal succession planning in order to sustain district programs. “If they’re coming from within they understand what programs are in place, they value those programs.” Political issues also arise when a candidate comes from the outside because they do not understand the district’s culture.

In regards to an external plan, this stakeholder suggested the creation of a profile, “in terms of not only their skills sets, but their personality, their potential influence within the community”.

In the end, the previous superintendent said it really comes down to the Board. Although students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders were also involved, the decision was “still funneled back to the Board of Education to make the final decision.”

Attributes School Districts Value when They Identify/Groom Future Leaders

“I think to me I look at it as leadership; it is management skills versus being leaders. Do they have the vision and the skills and the gumption or the moxie or whatever you call it to pull it off,” said the current superintendent. “Honesty, integrity and strength, those are the characteristics.”

The former Board President said that the current superintendent was not from the field of education when he/she came to the District. He/she had not been a superintendent. “We were

looking for someone... different than the current superintendent, because we needed somebody with different qualities at the time.” When hiring the former superintendent, they were looking for task specific attributes. The Board needed someone to help settle a long standing teacher contract. When hiring the current member, the Board was also looking for “someone to help us with a massive building project.”

The Board President shared that the chosen candidate must “have the talent and the skill to perform the job...there has to be some ability to identify and relate not only to the students, but also to the parents. In a school there are a lot of emotional concerns that come one’s way, so this individual is going to have to be able deal with those on a definitive basis, but they do have to *deal* with them.” This stakeholder emphasized the need for a leader who will take action.

The Union President looks for someone with a broad knowledge of the education field, who has a vision, and can lead the district. He/she said that any leader should have the ability to work with different stakeholders and that staff development opportunities should always be directed in that manner.

The final thought on this theme was from the former superintendent: “If the person is looking at the bigger picture than their classroom, if they have some type of a vision, if they are eager to experience new programs, if they immerse themselves in professional development, I think those are all indicators that they may become future leaders in the schools.”

Ways Search Consultants Impact the results of the Process

The current superintendent stated, “You need to know that there are outside consultants, there is BOCES, you can do it yourself, these are your choices.” Despite all these options, he/she went on to say that theirs “was not the smoothest search.”

He/she elaborated: “It is very manipulative when you watch the BOCES and who gets in and not that there are not good people but if you watch who gets the jobs you know that it is not necessary what took place.” Therefore, the current superintendent said he/she has more confidence in a private consultant because they do not have special relationships with possible candidates.

The former President of the Board did not think the process belongs solely with any one member. They saw pros and cons in using consultants. One benefit the President identified was that they are an experienced, independent party. “They are supposed to be trained to be able to spot anything unusual in an application, anything that doesn’t make sense from a growth perspective through a career; they can also provide some guidance on salary ranges and what’s going on in the rest of the region.”

The downside the former President identified was that outsiders do not always know the district. “You have a tendency to either overwhelm them, bully them or let them push you around.”

The current Board President said that the local BOCES would be on their resource list. “As far as a private one, I guess it is a matter of cost because now again you’re bringing in the economic situation, if it becomes costly.” He/she did admit that a consultant’s search scope would be greater than their own.

The Director of Curriculum said that search consultants do have a positive or negative impact on the process, depending on the circumstances. This sentiment was echoed by the Union President.

During the interview with the former superintendent the question was reframed to: *If you use search consultants what did you look for?* They said it depends “upon the size of the district; it also depends upon the culture and the skills of the board of education but on the flip side it also depends upon which of the private consultants might be available and also the personality of your district superintendent to work within that particular school district.”

He/she suggested discussing with the Board what they are looking for in the candidate and process. “The positive side of a District Superintendent doing a consultant search is that they have an overview and, I hope in all cases, have a very clear picture of the type of individual that they may want to put in front of the board of education as an applicant.”

Issues the District was Facing When They Were in the Process of Looking for a New Leader

The current superintendent said one of the major reasons he/she was hired was because of tough labor management issues. The district went through a period of time without a contract, making things hostile. The former superintendent was hired to bring peace, and he/she did. Still, there were some inconsistencies in the District. “I was brought to work on those inconsistencies,” said the current superintendent.

The former Board President said, “We needed somebody different from our previous superintendent, but we needed someone that could work with our community. So we were looking for qualities that were different.” Once again, this district was looking for task specific attributes, including a financial background because of the building project. “We needed a stronger educational leader from the standpoint of implementation of ideas. So we needed someone that could be given an idea and they’d run with it.”

The current Board President echoed the financial security that this superintendent has brought them. “I’d have to say in all honesty that there would probably be a sucking action, a large void, a black hole or whatever.” He/she continued by saying the current superintendent identifies with the community and brings them together to pass a budget.

The Union was looking for an individual that respected the teacher’s union as well as someone that was willing to listen to the stakeholders. There had been rough budget years and financial times and finding this stability was key.

An interesting ending to this section is when the former superintendent said, “I was very nice, I bent over backwards, and I mended and healed a lot of stuff in this district. I was the good person. It was time for me to go anyway. They need to tighten up the ship because what we did is we turned this place around but what you need now is (for lack of a better term), more of a hard-ass to come in and do what needs to be done.” This comment makes it clear there was a shift in what task specific attributes desired.

Summary

The researcher discovered many different definitions of what succession planning was, making it clear that there is not a formal plan written. What has developed from internal discussions between the superintendent and the Board is an unwritten commitment that the Central Office Team will not all retire at the same time. It should be made clear that this district did not hire or consider an internal candidate during the last succession process.

All stakeholders’ agreed that the plan is important in these current social, economic and political times to keep the history of a district alive and thriving. The discussion of leaders needs to come up more in this district as individuals begin to retire from key positions.

Consistent data throughout all the interviews included the need for a leader who has vision and people skills to lead this district. Someone who can interact and relate to all stakeholders was essential.

The researcher found many contradictions in District B regarding the influence of a search consultant upon the process. These included (a) size and culture of district, (b) BOCES versus private search consultant, (c) pool of candidates, (d) cost of services.

Consistent data throughout the interviews appeared when the discussion of what they wanted in a new leader. All parties, including the former superintendent felt that it was necessary to have a strong leader who had a solid business and financial sense and could work with groups to mend fences.

District C

District C is a combination of suburban and rural areas with 3,500 students in grades K-12 housed in three elementary schools, middle and a high school. There are a number of working farms, apple orchards and little commercial development.

It has more than a 90-year history of excellence in education. The community is deeply committed to strong, professionally run academic programs, evident in through its staff development structure. This District continues to work to develop and refine programs for its students, including a well articulated curriculum focusing on integrating reading and writing into core disciplines. Special area instruction starts in kindergarten. Overall there were not major issues in budget, curriculum or structure that were facing this District.

Nature of Leadership Succession

The document review consisted of a website, Board of Education Mission goals and Article 3 Section I of the Teacher's Union Contract (Appendix E). No formal written plan was provided.

The former superintendent said, "There was a rather involved process in place when I was interviewed." That included meetings with the BOCES Superintendent and then with committees made up of students, parents, teachers, administrators, representatives from the community. From there, the number of candidates was narrowed before interviews with the Board. "There was a rather structured process in place and when I left there was also a process in place."

The current superintendent said, "Our primary focus is supporting the leaders are who already part of the structure." While this stakeholder was Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, he/she put together an internship brochure to ensure there were clear guidelines for internal candidates interested in moving up. That has been in place for 6-7 years, and many have taken advantage of these internships.

The nature of the superintendent seems to be defined differently in this district. There is a three person team made up of Central Office staff, including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, which leads the district. They move the decisions forward in terms of curriculum, budget and personnel. In regards to this set-up, the current superintendent said, "there is certainly the potential for either of the two assistant superintendents to move into that role but not through a plan." In fact, the Assistant Superintendent that did apply for the superintendency was not chosen.

The interview with the long-standing Board President unfolded a history of the last thirty years. To create stability, the Board encourages multi-year contracts. "Board members come

and go and we like to have people trained if you will to handle this professional assignment.” He/she went on to say that from the “Board’s perspective, there is a model maybe not a formal model but a model is based on history. Two superintendents ago, a gentleman who retired in 1994, set up a model for us to use during his succession. We went through the process with his successor.”

This Board President presented an interesting thought on succession saying, “current procedures- are only on history, but we do have a model that we follow and the first model is in the Board Policy and how we govern ourselves and a structure is there for succession of Board members.”

The Union President said there is a plan, and that the Union is involved in the process. “We put together a committee within the district... They will water down the numerous applications they receive and they get it down to a working number. And then there is a discussion among the committee members as to whom they see as viable candidates and their charge is to pick three unranked to go through the next step.”

In addition, he/she said that shared-decision making is part of the culture. “In each building we have school councils...They’re not going to tell me what I’m teaching, but they do make decisions about for instance we were looking at changing our schedule...there are two documents, the contract and the shared decision making guidelines.”

Role Stakeholders Played in the Leadership Succession Process

Roles and responsibilities are defined by differently in each district. The former superintendent said he/she did have an active role in the succession process. “We had a committee set up to review applications as part of that....I was then asked to meet with the

candidates, each of them for a short period of time so that I could give some input into the final discussions.”

At the time of succession, the current superintendent was the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and had chosen not to apply. As a result he/she sat as a member on the interview committee. “The Board had its discussion in terms of the traits it was looking for in the successor to my predecessor...at that time I decided I was not going to apply.”

The current superintendent said the District approached the process differently. The District asked its consultant to use a unique search model. “The culture of this district is one of the important foundations of which we are built. We felt that we needed to be part of the initial screenings.”

Then the process took a twist. The Board was down to two candidates it was not necessarily happy with. The current superintendent said the Board discussed its options. “Part of the discussion was would they reopen, would they go back to some of the candidates. At that point they asked if I would consider it.”

The role of the current superintendent, in the process, changed. “It was very different. In the discussions with the Board...they knew me as a candidate, since I had spent 30 years with the District, and that they would move ahead the recommendation.” Then the Board members discussed what should happen next. Should they put in an interim superintendent, and re-open the entire search? “Or should we go through the whole process with me, but that would be silly since I structured the questions.”

The current Board President said that when the superintendent informed them of his retirement, they did not hide it. And they involved everyone in the process. The Board members

worked on a description of what they were looking for in a superintendent - in a public manner. The description document was put out for candidates to apply.

The teacher's union president said he/she also played a role. "Before it goes to the Board we will do a vetting process – we call the district they work in now and also call the district they worked in previously to get a sense if on paper the person looks good, on interview the person seems nice, but is this for real. Once they get down to their candidates we have the right to do the vetting process."

When one candidate did not check out, the union members went to the Board to express concern and were faced with conflict. "They called a special meeting of the committee and the Board President gets up and says, 'I have great news for you- so and so will be our superintendent.' We were all like 'What!? What are you talking about? Now I have nothing against so and so they have done a great job...but they hadn't even applied for the job! If they didn't want these three people then they needed to say we are reopening the search.'"

Importance of Succession Plan in the Organization

In this district an emphasis is put on culture when putting together a succession process. The former superintendent said, "I think it should be developed with different segments of the community." This way, the decision is driven by the community, not the politics of the school board alone.

The same theme appeared in the interview with the current superintendent. He/she said the Central Office Team structure will continue the integrity and vision of the district. "It is an implicit one, not a paper plan."

Even still, the Board President said that having a plan is necessary, “as it removes any doubt as to the district wants and what it expects, the new superintendent knows the criteria by which they were selected. We are a very open district and we are not hiding anything.”

The Union President had a different view. “We have a formal succession plan – the plan is you advertise, you have a committee, we look at resumes...It is the process. The process is what’s critical.”

He/she was hesitant to distinguish between internal and external candidates saying the process can not be that rigid. “If you want a legitimate person for that position who needs to be a valid candidate or be a valid Superintendent and to do the work he or she needs to do, then it is the process it is not predetermined internal or external. To me that’s a formula for disaster.”

Attributes School Districts Value When they Identify/Groom Future Leaders

“I think that a District owes internal employees an opportunity to rise to a different position, be identified to be eligible for an interview or other considerations, but I don’t believe that it is only an internal matter,” said the former superintendent. He/she went on to say, “I guess the word ‘drive’ comes to mind, because if you’re going to ultimately wind up in the superintendency you better be resilient and you better have a lot of drive.” That means people who have created results, who have unique experiences and have done extra coursework and workshops.

The current superintendent said, “I look for success in the classroom. We do believe that teaching is the most important thing we do and we want administrators who have internalized our [] framework that rubric in what goes into good teaching...We support leaders for education ...we want to see leaders grow.”

The Board President simply stated the District's looking for leaders who show a level of accountability; a level of involvement with people and an ability to relate to students. He/she looks at the candidate's knowledge of the community and State Standards "We want someone that will set a standard that is hard to match. Leadership is important. Someone that is open and visible."

In terms of what the Union looks for in future leaders, they say it is "the best candidate and the best candidate will emerge through process that is a vigorous process."

Ways Search Consultants Impact the Results of the Process

The process this District used was different from the others. The former superintendent said the District used a consultant very effectively. "That person would identify a set of candidates, help us in the initial interviewing of the candidates, help us establish criteria and characteristics for positions that we were working on, served as an advisor to the Board, helped us stay on track as far as our process."

He/she went on to discuss the pros and cons. In this case the BOCES consultant, "knew the culture of the district; they knew basically the type of persons that we were looking for. There's a term that I always like to use called 'fit.'"

The consultant can also help speed the process up. "I believe they are important because everyone is doing 120% and you need someone who is moving that forward. But we felt that simply handing it over to an external agent was handing over too much control," said the current superintendent. "The network piece was phenomenal...to be able to hear 'we interviewed that person 10 times and here are their deficiencies,' and to have a current superintendent...just added credibility."

The cost of the search and the credibility of those conducting it weighed heavy on the Board President. They have “always resisted going to an outside agency, because I think it is important that we recognize we have good people here.”

Issues the District was Facing When They Were in the Process of Looking for a New Leader

“The district had a strong record of choosing people who were a real ‘fit’ for the district,” said the former superintendent. He/she pointed to the fact that the previous superintendent was there for twenty-five years prior and then he/she was there for ten years. The former superintendent expected that trend to continue. This is something the district takes great pride in.

The former superintendent continued by discussing concerns he/she had when leaving. “In this district *Mr. Flash* would not fly. *Mr. Cool, Mr. Flash* - someone who wanted to be there for several years and use it as a stepping stone to another job – I think the community is too sharp and they know what they were looking for.” Those values included solid experience in public school education and accomplishments from the classroom to building level.

The current superintendent said, “it was the strength of the culture and the structure that I knew I would have a voice on the team...and our curriculum was heading in the right direction. We have stability in the district.”

It was apparent throughout all of the interviews that this district was stable. The Board President echoed this, “Everything was going well and the previous superintendents had great relationship with the community, we had the structure all in place for what we were looking for and how the district would move forward...someone that was accountable, would be visible, be open and work with all.”

Economics were also a factor. “We needed someone who could manage a budget, someone who could communicate with the community...because once you lose the community support it is always reflected in a “no” vote,” said the Union President.

Summary

The researcher found that the process of succession intended was not the final outcome. It is a district that prides itself on a rich and active shared decision making process and had a very active committee develop the questions and expectations for the new superintendent. This district had opened the search up to both internal and external candidates and had not had internal candidates apply. Well into the search process; after the actual interviews had occurred and the recommendations had been made, the Board did not take the recommendations of the committees but turned to the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum to take the position. As a result of this process, the credibility of the process was questioned. It should be made clear that the current superintendent’s ability or credibility was never in question, just the process and the violation of the shared decision making process.

Leadership and knowing the culture of the district is something consistently valued by this district. It is looked for when grooming and identifying future leaders. In addition they are looking for someone that will continue to promote the shared decision making process.

Although a BOCES search consultant model was instituted, the district maintained some of that control for the district. This researcher found that they felt their culture was so unique that they needed to be an integral part of the process.

During the research process the one theme that kept coming through was the issues the district was facing were stable issues and the committee was looking for someone that could support

their shared decision making process. They were looking for someone that would support the culture of this district.

District D

District D educates nearly 3,000 students from 4 villages and towns. Its mission statement centers on a commitment to providing an environment that allows students to realize their full potential while preparing them for life in an ever-changing world.

It is comprised of four elementary schools, a middle school and high school. The basic goals of instruction are to improve skills in reading, writing, and mathematics as measured by standardized tests and authentic assessments. This district focuses on the whole child by promoting good citizenship and 21st century skills.

The document review provided a historical time table of the steps taken during succession. For example, the Board appointed an interim superintendent at the rate of \$550 a day, and the local BOCES was hired to assist in the search.

A postcard form was mailed to 9,000 community members seeking input as the Board began its search. The District Superintendent from BOCES interviewed staff members, students and community members to develop characteristics desired in a superintendent.

In March 2005, an application and brochure was developed for the search. (See Appendix F.) The salary for the position was advertised as in the \$125,000 range.

Nature of Leadership Succession

The former superintendent said there was no real plan for succession of superintendent. “All you had basically were some Board members who may have been there years ago when they

hired somebody. It was a unique place too because I was the first superintendent not to retire from there.” This superintendent was the third or fourth over the span of forty to fifty years. Therefore, hiring a replacement was not done often. “For building level administrators there was a plan in place with an internship program to give people an opportunity.”

The former superintendent was pursuing a position in a larger district. When he/she became a finalist, it was discussed with this District’s Board. “We came up with a rough plan basically what I would need to put in place while they did a formal search and the Board would have to have an actual work session to decide whether to look to a BOCES superintendent, a consultant, going to do it ourselves.”

The current superintendent and the current Board President echoed that there is no formal plan. The president said he/she tries to initially look at internal candidates when possible. “That’s kind of like the first step in our process. But we don’t really have a plan per se in terms of how we’re going to go about looking at leadership roles.”

He/she also said that when the former superintendent left, their contract already required six months notice. “So by virtue of that...there is a chunk of time to plan.”

The other three interviewees spoke to having no knowledge of a formalized succession plan. The current PTA President said the process of hiring “was very transparent.”

Role Stakeholders Played in the Leadership Succession Process

The former superintendent said he/she offered to help in the search, but because the District hired an interim, there was not enough time for him/her to be part of the process.

The current Board President did play an active role, saying the Board met to “discuss whether or not as a board we wanted to conduct the search for the position if we wanted to reach out for help with the process.” The Board decided to reach out to the local BOCES. The District Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent conducted the search for them. This search happened differently than the other districts.

Interested candidates contacted BOCES and were interviewed verbally. BOCES compiled a list of possible candidates that would be a good match. From there, the District met with those people. “We actually interviewed them as a board... The whole process from start to finish of appointing our superintendent was about a year long so it is a very lengthy process,” said the Board President.

The current Curriculum Director said he/she was on the interview committee and the Board listened to his/her ideas during the interview process. Although the current Union President was not on the committee, he/she said Board valued the Union’s opinion. The current PTA president had no involvement.

Importance of Succession Plan in the Organization

The former superintendent said, “It is good to have something in place because you have to remember the Board of Education turnover is constant. One of the board’s top three jobs is to basically hire and work with that individual. So it wouldn’t hurt to have something in place.”

“Despite our practice here I would say ‘yes.’ I think it is important,” said the current superintendent. “I think maybe part of why folks don’t see it is because they don’t understand the role of the superintendent don’t understand that it really is a CEO type of role.” He/she went on to discuss the importance of always having someone leading the district. “It is important not

in terms of day to day retirement, but in terms of catastrophic incidents. So if I were to develop an illness or your superintendent were to be killed in a car accident...you best have some sort of game plan.”

The Board President held the same position during the last succession, saying there is not anything formally written, but he/she thinks there should. “It would be very advantageous to have especially now with the changing economy and with the market the way it is. Administrators right now and for the last several years there has been a very small pool of candidates to choose from.”

The current Union President shared a different perspective. “I think it works well in our District. We’re a relatively small district...and I think that it needn’t be an extremely formalized and elaborate process. Maybe some of the districts have something written down or something that’s more formalized than what we have...We’ve been able to voice our opinions and actually influence decisions that are made.”

The Director of Curriculum agreed similarly. “You could write a succession plan for example that said, ‘Upon this happening the Assistant Superintendent will take over the reign and so on and so forth...’” He/she went on to say that if that person does not fill the set of skills needed, then the plan is not worth much. “So not knowing those things in advance I am not sure that the succession plan written down doesn’t need to quickly get altered anyway.”

The PTO President said, “I think it is important to have a basic plan in place but it should be a plan that has a lot of flexibility.”

Attributes School Districts Value When they Identify/Groom Future Leaders

Each stakeholder had a definite opinion on attributes school districts value when identifying/grooming future leaders.

“You give opportunities for folks to come out of the teaching ranks and try them for a couple years and we always ventured into it with ‘we’ll see if it works for you and we’ll see if it works for us;’ we both had to be very honest with each other and in most cases it did,” stated the former superintendent.

The current superintendent said, “People think they are looking for this unique human being and actually everybody is looking for that, I think, *same* unique human being...what plays more greatly into it is people’s personalities...I don’t think we are looking for dramatically different things from school to school.”

The current Board President said, “There’s no formal plan that I am aware of. We were looking for someone who had a strong educational background.” This District interviewed people from all over the East Coast, so the Board wanted someone who “had done their homework.” The President went on to say he/she wanted, “somebody who had integrity, somebody who would be able to be a leader, somebody who presented themselves very well especially to the public; who was a strong communicator.”

“The ability to connect with students is vital to this position.” said the Curriculum Director. He went on to say that he/she values the ability to show an analytical mind- to be problem solver. The District culture is based on an ability to be collegial with colleagues.

The Union President said, “you want to make sure that the person be qualified and have experience in the position- but for me my primary objective would be to make sure that this

person worked well with organized labor.” He/she would also research if there were any major issues involving the candidate person and bargaining unit in the past.

The PTA President said the PTA is looking for someone that involves parents. “I know with the current economy many of them are working longer hours and it is important to take those few hours and get them excited about being involved in their kid’s education.”

Ways Search Consultants Impact the Results of the Process

Search consultants do have an impact on the process in this District. The former superintendent said that “if they’re good they will only have a positive impact. They will find the best person for the position. They’re not going to put a body in there for the sake of putting a body in there...Search consultants will put the right person in there or will be honest with the person.” That honestly would include telling the candidate what type of working relationship they should expect with the Board and other leaders.

The current superintendent had a slightly different view. “It depends what role the consultant takes with the board. So if the consultant comes to the board and says ‘my role is to bring you some group of candidates that meets your minimum requirements and then your role is to take it from there and figure out who best fits,’ I think that’s perfect.” But if they try to take over too much, the current superintendent said it ends negatively.

He/she went on to say that sometimes candidates, “are out of this mix by virtue of not being part of that person’s stable. And that worries me, frankly it does. And I would go so far as to say at this point in time some of that is still a gender issue. If your stable is primarily males and you’re a female who would like to move, you could be in a rough spot just by virtue of gender.” At the end of the day, it should be the Board’s decision.

“Oh definitely, what they are able to do is really basically weed out the pool for us so that we weren’t taking the time to interview every person that applied for the job,” said the Board President.

The PTA Council President said a search consultant brings their own set of candidates to the process and the Union President did not feel he/she knew enough to comment.

Issues the District was Facing When They Were in the Process of Looking for a New Leader

This researcher found that the reputation of high taxes came up repeatedly. This District is fighting for tax certiorari on the industry and retail that has moved.

“It is a difficult place you have a fiscally conservative board who when we started the budget process it was all doom and gloom...I don’t know what other issues that the current superintendent had when they got there, but the dollars and cents issue in this District was always the big factor,” said the former superintendent.

“They had personnel issues that did not become clear to me until I got here, in addition the budget, I’d have to say that other than that...people who were pretty solid here at that point and were not talking about leaving; those are what I would see as the two primary things as I was coming on.” said the current superintendent.

Changing demographics and a decrease in PTA support were issues the current Board President shared. “At the time there was an increase in special education students. So the Board was concerned about,” he/she said.

Although not on the team, the Union President said, “there was a lengthy and complicated renovation process...they were just looking for someone that meshed with the district that would fit in.”

The Curriculum Director recalls it as a “more period of calm. We had gone through hell and back with cuts in I think it was 2001 we weren’t used to laying off teachers and we laid off quite a number of them.”

This feeling was supported by the PTA Council President who stated, “No, not at the time, there are always things going on in a school district, but nothing big at the time.”

Summary

The researcher discovered many factors that contributed to the succession planning process in this district. Factors that contributed to the direction that the Board of Education moved in included (a) a very detailed schedule from the Board of Education that was well publicized by the Board of Education to all stakeholders (b) although there is not a formal written succession plan, by contract the superintendent is required to give six months notice before departing (c) Board of Education is willing to look at and consider internal candidates or interims based on what is best for the District (d) the process of succession begins and is directed by the Board of Education (e) all stakeholders are looking for someone that is able to relate to a variety of groups and someone who has had a variety of experiences that has lead them to this position.

During the time this search began the district was relatively stable but was facing the budget issues that have been occurring over the past several years with declining State Aid and growing property taxes.

Findings: Cross Site Comparisons

The problem addressed in this qualitative comparative case study is “Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession.” Four school districts involved in succession served as sites for the conduct of this study. The findings from each district are unique to its context. Generalizations cannot be made to other school districts. The findings raise questions for the reader about two issues: superintendent succession, and specifically, its effect on education reform and initiatives.

A review of the findings from the four school districts may lead the reader to answer the question by saying “nothing really happens to education reform and initiatives when the superintendent leaves.” A comparison of the data across sites, however, identifies more complex answers to these questions.

There were several similarities when it comes to the nature of leadership succession and any plans that coincide with that process (APPENDIX B). It was clear that there were no formal, written plans in any of the four districts. In districts where clear plans were discussed, they were merely understandings between stakeholders or plans based on historical protocol. Internship programs were discussed in a few districts that acted as preparation for internal movement to leadership positions.

An analysis and comparison of findings across the sites unveiled three major themes that answered this research question: (a) it did not matter whether it was an internal or external succession, there was no public, documented plan of succession. (b) the term succession planning is defined differently in each district (c) not all stakeholders have the same amount of input into the process.

Data revealed that it did not matter whether the incoming superintendent was an internal candidate or an external candidate there was not a formalized written succession plan for stakeholders to use to guide them through the process. This was true for all four districts. No matter what the size of the district there was not a formal plan but a conceptual one that has evolved over time primarily due to the size and needs of each of the districts. In addition, it is clear that Central Office Administrators and the Board of Education are the only stakeholders that have a voice and role in the informal plan from the beginning.

Districts A and D, although not written, appeared to have the most concrete succession plans. Internship programs are set up in both places, providing leadership opportunities for teachers in order to create an internal supply of administrators. While this is true, District A's stakeholders were not all familiar with this plan, while District D's stakeholders were.

In District C, the language of shared decision - making and being part of the process is the only documented piece that would qualify as part of the succession interview process. This process does not address or allow the teacher's union to be part of the initial conversations when the departure is announced.

The only other two formalized documents that address the succession process at all were seen in District B where the superintendent's performance is reviewed every six months to address issues that might be present. This by nature would force the issue of succession to be addressed if there were concerns. District D requires that in the superintendent's contract, he/she must give six month notice before departing.

Districts B and C emphasized a process rooted in shared decision making. This refers to an interview process where all parties were given input and a role. Along with this shared decision

making process came the idea that stakeholders in Districts C and D viewed the process as one rooted in historical protocol. While nothing was ever written down, they appeared to follow similar steps in the search for a new superintendent.

It is important to note the size, location and history of the district to begin to realize where the district is in terms of its succession planning and process. It appears that over time history has repeated itself. Therefore, protocol that was established in previous successions has become the procedures historically followed.

There were several similarities when it came to the role stakeholders played in the succession plan process as well. Three of the four superintendents played an active role in the succession process when they announced their departure. Districts A, B, and C asked the exiting superintendent to play an active role in their own succession. Those roles differed across districts, but included: helping to establish criteria and interview questions, mentoring and training their own successor, hosting and facilitating the initial interview.

A strong connection between all the districts was that the Board of Education had a major role in the recruitment, interview and decision process from the beginning. In fact, in District A, the decision was made solely by the Board of Education. In District B, the Board of Education worked with all stakeholders but still maintained the power in guiding the process with support from local BOCES.

In District C, the Board started the process by involving all stakeholders. In the end, however, it controlled the results by ignoring suggestions made by other stakeholders. It essentially chose its own candidate independent of the process. That internal candidate was a solid choice, but other stakeholders felt the Board's actions violated the process.

In District D, the Board of Education made sure that stakeholders had a voice. Their opinions and ideas were valued.

This leads to the process of shared decision making in each district. The data reveals that District A employed a top-heavy decision process where shared decision making was not instituted for this major decision in the life of the school. Both Districts B and D held true to their shared decision making policy by involving all stakeholders and following those people's advice. District C was a community rich in shared decision making. But in their succession process, did not take the advice of the group. Because of internal information it received, the District chose not to reopen the search but to turn to an internal central office administrator and offer that individual the position.

It was clear that at some level all former superintendents from their respective districts had some part in their succession process. District A had active discussions and an informal plan of succession that took place within the last year of his departure as he transitioned out of his role as superintendent and into the role of building principal. District B's former superintendent wrote up descriptors of what the Board of Education should look for when replacing him/her. District C's former superintendent reviewed applications and assisted the Board of Education in the initial selection of the candidates. Finally District D's former superintendent offered his services but had a minimal role as he was moving onto another district and was replaced by an interim.

An analysis and comparison of findings across the sites unveiled four major themes in regards to characteristics stakeholders look for in a superintendent: (a) honesty (b) integrity (c) strength (work within the culture of the district) (d) strong educational background.

Honesty, integrity and strength are the characteristics which continued to come up time and time again in the interviews across all the districts, and with all the stakeholders. People are looking for someone that is going to say what they mean and then be able to back up their decision with integrity and strength.

In discussing attributes that stakeholders look for when grooming a future leader, once again there were some strong similarities. On the other hand, there were some attributes that did not follow suit. The term culture was not specifically used by every District, but interviewees from each District did allude to the importance of culture.

In District A, stakeholders were looking for someone with a sense of dedication to the district and its history in order to continue the culture. In District B, the term “culture” was not formally used, but numerous times the history of the district was mentioned.

In District C, stakeholders discussed a feeling that it possessed a unique culture. Shared decision making processes were spoken about by everyone. It is this researcher’s belief that it is the District’s strong commitment to its culture that allowed it to survive what was perceived as a violation of its shared decision making process. As a district, the stakeholders were able to get beyond the violation of the process when the Board of Education appointed a superintendent without others’ input.

Finally, in District D, stakeholders were looking for someone who had local knowledge of the district to keep things moving in the direction it was going. That direction can be considered its culture.

All schools were looking for someone with character attributes they could trust. They were looking for integrity, honesty and strength. One interesting point to be noted is that in District A

and C, where there was internal succession, the Board was looking for someone who was willing to learn.

In District D, one individual felt that all districts were basically looking for the same type of candidate when they developed their qualifications and began to groom future leaders. This is interesting as many other interviewees felt that each district was unique and that each district was looking for something different.

Similarly, the superintendent from District D felt that although stakeholders get together to develop the unique list for their district, people are actually looking for the same type of unique human being. He/she said that people are often looking for someone with similar personality to themselves and the skills a person has may not play such a big factor in the selection process.

Parents across the districts wanted a leader that involved parents and had unique ways to get parents involved. All parents interviewed realize the difficult times families are going through and they want someone who will acknowledge this and work in creative ways to involve parents.

District A does not historically use a search consultant in their process so data from this district is not based on actual experiences. For the purpose of this study their responses will not be included in this comparison. However Districts B, C, and D all utilized their local BOCES while conducting their latest search.

All the stakeholders in the three districts that utilized the search consultants felt that the search consultants provided them with qualified candidates to interview. It did not matter whether they were a small or large district, stakeholders all felt that initially the search consultant provided them with a variety of choices. The District that differed most was District C. When

this District researched further into the candidate's background they realized that there were concerns with the integrity of the individual and how they would fit in the district.

In spite of the process and the unexpected outcome, the stakeholders in District C (internal succession) still had positive comments about the process led by the search consultant. They felt that search consultants provided a good set of candidates, helped in the initial interviewing, assisted in the criteria of the position, served as an advisor to the Board and helped the District stay on track in the process. This researcher found this to be interesting since the process and the shared decision making policy seemed to be violated. It appears that the stakeholders did not connect the search consultant to derailing the process.

Stakeholders in both Districts B and D, where there was external succession, cited positives and negatives in using a consultant. Although the interviewees did recognize some positives from using a search consultant, they most definitely identified negatives in the process. Some of the observations and concerns they addressed were the consultants slowing down the process, conducting the search contrary to what you want as a district as well trying to bring their own candidates and agenda to the process. One interesting observation made by a Board member in District B is that a private search consultant might not know the culture of the school system and what they brought to the table might not be a "good fit." Both District B and D felt that the negatives outweighed the positives in this case.

District B's current superintendent and the Board Presidents felt that there were factors you needed to consider when looking at search consultants. The size of the District, skills of the Board and the personalities of the District weighed heavy on their minds.

District B and D's current superintendents both felt that utilizing a private search consultant provided a larger base to work from and it created less bias with the pool of candidates. They felt the attention and pool of candidates the consultant brought forward was better than what they could bring themselves. It also prevented the district from having a local tie cut down on some of the backdoor political issues.

They both however did express that there is a new district superintendent in the role of search consultant advisor and they had a great deal of respect for this individual and would see how the local searches went in the next few years before weighing in.

The reaction of whether the impact was positive and negative was varied and could not be broken out by any specific group. Negatively people felt that when somebody is pulled in from a distance to do a search here, they have no clue as to the culture of the district and the process can be compromised. They felt the attention and pool of candidates they brought forward was better.

The themes that emerged from the question regarding issues the District was facing when it was in the process were as varied as the districts themselves. One district was concerned with remaining intact and not being forced to merge with another local district. Other districts said everything was working fine. One reoccurring theme was the cost of educating students and the ability to get budgets passed in tough economic times.

All of the school systems were dealing with some issue, although varied. Districts A, B, and D felt that they were looking for someone that could come in and bridge gaps. In the case of District A it was both the building project and the threat of being taken over by a larger school that led them to desire those attributes.

With District B it was labor negotiations and building projects that were causing concern. In District D the issues included another building projects, changing demographics and needs of the community. District C felt that they wanted someone to continue the culture and stability of the district.

It was abundantly clear from the data that all that were interviewed wanted someone that was an educational leader that had a good sense of the New York State Standards and their learning community.

The findings of this study show that succession of superintendent in four districts is as varied as the school districts themselves. Barriers to succession planning were time and money. Another barrier was a failure to focus on the importance of the planning process.

This study has answered five questions pertaining: Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. The next chapter discusses findings in relationship to the literature on succession planning and identifies implications for further research.

CHAPTER V

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. Succession planning is often referred to at a district level. But it was clear through this case study comparison that there are a number of different definitions surrounding what a succession process should, and does, look like in each individual school system.

Through the use of a qualitative, case study design, the researcher was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation for those involved. The researcher did so through interviews with current and previous stakeholders involved at the time of the succession (See APPENDIX G & H-Stakeholders Interviewed). It was through these interviews that the researcher was able to determine common threads and differences that will contribute to creating a clearer definition and understanding of succession planning for the superintendency in New York State.

The research addressed five essential questions; (1) what is the nature of the leadership succession process in each of the four sample districts? (2) What role did various stakeholders play in the succession plan process? (3) What attributes do school districts value when they identify/groom future leaders? (4) In what ways do search consultants impact the results of the process? (5) What issues do stakeholders feel the District was facing when they were in the process of looking for a new leader? How did that influence their personal decisions in the process?

This chapter presents summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations in the same order.

Summary of Findings

Every organization, including school districts, will eventually have to deal with a shift in leadership. Succession planning is one approach to addressing that change. Across the country, including New York State, there is and will continue to be high turnover of school leadership. By 2011, in New York State alone, sixty percent of superintendents are expected to retire. Because of the demands of the job, candidates are becoming superintendents at an older age. The average New York State superintendent's age in 2006 was 54.6 years old. Most individuals are looking to retire between the ages of 55 and 62, not leaving a great deal of time for the individual to serve in the role of superintendent (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2006).

According to the American Association of School Administrators (2007), 85 percent of superintendents nationwide say they are concerned with the insufficient number of potential candidates that are needed to fill impending superintendent positions. According to those that were surveyed, the most cited reasons that administrators chose not to become superintendents are lack of school funding, personal/family issues and school board relations (American Association of School Administrators, 2007).

Just as in the fields of business and health care, it is necessary that school systems begin to address the issue of succession planning in a more formalized manner. As stated earlier; "Public education should not be treated as a temporary business that is looking to produce quick returns and never-ending profits...it should be treated as one of the most long-lasting enterprises of all" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p.9).

Nature of Leadership Succession

The first major finding of this study supports the research that little is known on the topic or process of leadership succession in education. According to Northfield, Macmillan & Myers (2006), an increase in administrator turnovers and retirement has strengthened the need for strategic leadership on the part of succeeding leaders in order to develop and sustain organizational improvement. This article supports that there is a need to examine how people participate in the succession event and how the event is affected. It also discusses the need to focus on how stakeholders understand and participate in the process.

Schamalzried & Fallon (2007), in their study, assess the degree to which local health departments were prepared to replace top executives. There was a strong link in this study showing the connection between succession planning and a successful leadership transition. That can be seen in this study. In District D, there is currently no individual available at a building level with the correct certification to step into the superintendent position if the current superintendent decided to leave the organization. There are qualified candidates in the other districts, but other than District A there is no active mentorship process that is being utilized to train those administrators for superintendent roles either internally or externally.

According to Nugent (2008) leadership succession planning requires that organizations have a clear understanding of what is valued in leaders, what is expected, and how that expectation can be translated into performance. Succession planning begins with the assessment of future leadership needs within the organization. In Nugent's study of the nursing field, it was felt that each nurse must assume accountability for passing on the spirit, practice, and values of nursing.

This style of leadership focuses on being a person of influence. Nugent also found that a culture of mentorship positively impacts retention and promotes leadership potential and development.

In this study, it was clear that in each of the four districts having a vision and culture of mentorship is established. But in three out of the four districts it is not always carried out in a systematic manner. As a result, organizational change and sustainability needs to be further investigated in each district.

We know that effective school leadership is crucial to school reform and improvement. A deliberate plan for leadership stability and development needs to be in the forefront for educational improvement. “Good succession planning is not just who is next in line for the slot, but also looking at people early in their careers and determining what kind of training they need to become leaders.” (Tropiano, 2004, p.15) This informal model was seen in some districts, especially District B, but it was not systematic, documented and done in a formalized manner.

It is important to note that all participants in this researcher’s case study comparison felt that succession planning was essential for their organization. But all stated that there was not a formalized written succession plan that they followed. In two of the school districts there was a verbal plan they recognized. However, it was merely an unwritten process executed and carried out by the Board of Education. In the two other school districts, the process begins when the superintendent announces his/her departure.

This study found that there are varied definitions surrounding the notion of succession planning. Not all stakeholders in the same organization have the same definition or point of reference due to their level of responsibility or knowledge of the process.

Role Stakeholder Played in Succession Process

This study also addressed stakeholders in the process of succession. The questions centered on this research focused on those involved and what role they played in the process when the superintendent announced his/her departure. Stakeholders were also asked what their District's current plan for succession was and what role they played in carrying it out. They were asked how important a succession plan was to them and why.

Pintar, Capuano, & Rosser's (2007) work supports the concept of an interdisciplinary team composed of members from different divisions in an organization. In the case of their study, the hospital was the organization and the members included stakeholders from: Clinical Services, Human Resources, and Organizational Development. They all had to work together on the succession plan. The divisions come together to organize and implement the process. It is through this team approach that they work to select the right candidates to move forward while continuing to promote others in the program.

In this study of the four school districts, it was clear that there was not diversity in the members that began to initiate the "succession process" when the superintendent announced his/her departure. It usually began with the Board of Education and in some cases the superintendent that was departing. In three out of the four cases, the District consulted with a search consultant to lead the search. However, in terms of being an equal member of an interdisciplinary team that guides the work from the beginning this model was not found in any of the districts.

Another interesting finding that came out of the research was the topic of gender and succession. Brooking (2008), found that there has been a preference for male candidates in

leadership positions. The Governors or boards of trustees in New Zealand who historically make appointments have shown a preference for male principals. In addition, since 1989, local school boards have complete discretion and autonomous power to appoint whomever they like as their leader (principal), regardless of qualifications or experience. Brooking (2008) states that, “Boards left to their own devices have shown a preference for male candidates, and have discriminated against women applicants in a number of ways” (p.42).

Throughout the interview process, this researcher did hear comments about gender and selection. It was raised by two current superintendents and by a current Board President. All three talked about how it came up in discussion during the interview process. This is a finding that this researcher did not intend to address but is now after it came out in the findings. There is further research needed on the area of gender and succession planning as well as the stakeholders’ role in succession planning and their view on gender.

The Process of Recruitment

This researcher could not identify any written plans for superintendent succession that addressed the process of recruitment for any of the four districts involved. Since we know that education is not alone in coping with the generational change, it is very clear in all fields of the research, there needs to be a clear process of recruitment. Hall (1986), through his research, suggests that recruitment needs to come prior to the succession plan in the form of professional development and growth of current leaders.

Those interviewed in this study voiced a wide range of expectations regarding what they expect when they informally identify and groom future leaders. A lack of written, formalized

recruitment planning leads to a wide array of characteristics various stakeholders are looking for in a superintendent.

Through this case study, it came out that there was one school district where the superintendent and the Board of Education identified someone from within the organization who could move into the superintendent position. In this case the Overlap Model, as described by Rogers and Safer (1990), was utilized. Through this process, the board became comfortable with the future superintendent as they were being trained to take over the role.

In one of the districts with internal succession there was no thought given to outside candidates for the position of superintendent. Caution should be given to just promoting from within however. It is not the act of just replacing a leader but should be a process of finding and utilizing the best candidate at the time for the position.

“Succession needs to be planned thoughtfully and ethically, and be an integral part of every school and district-wide improvement plan. Deeper, wide pools of leadership talents must be created so that succession issues are easier to deal with” (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 172).

One interesting finding for this researcher was the varied attributes that each district was looking for when searching for their leader. These characteristics were based on “task specific” attributes needed at the time of the succession. And they varied from district to district depending on the issues that district faced at the time. Despite the undeniable fact that each district was unique in its culture and challenges, one current superintendent felt all districts were basically looking for the same type of person no matter what the circumstances were.

Debra Ellen LaVoi’s research, *A Descriptive Study of the Attributes and Skills Needed by California Superintendents in 2020*, directly addresses the notion of character attributes versus

task specific attributes that were found in this researcher's case study comparison. After examining both quantitative and qualitative data it was clear that having integrity and being trustworthy were identified as the most needed attributes, the second most important attribute was being ethical and honest. Being playful and sociable was the least rated attribute of importance for the superintendent in 2020 in California.

The same study looked at skills which can be referenced as "task specific" attributes. The study found that the skill highest in importance for the California superintendent in 2020 was building relationships, then possessing strong communication skills, and finally, establishing clear directions and goals for the district. Diversity, creativity and innovative skills as well as understanding the client's positions were not valued overall.

How Search Consultants Impact the Succession Process

District A does not historically use a search consultant in their process so data from this district is not based on actual experiences. For the purpose of this study their responses will not be included in this comparison. However Districts B, C, and D all utilized their local BOCES while conducting their latest search.

All the stakeholders in the three districts that utilized the search consultants felt that the search consultants provided them with qualified candidates to interview. It did not matter whether they were small or large they all felt that initially the search consultant provided them with a variety of choices. The District that differed was District C when they researched further into the candidate's background they realized that there were concerns with the integrity of the individual and how they would fit in the district.

In spite of the process and the outcome the stakeholders in District C (internal succession) had positive comments about the process with the search consultant. They felt that the search consultants provided a good set of candidates, helped in the initial interviewing, assisted in the criteria of the position, served as an advisor to the Board and helped the District stay on track in the process. This researcher found this to be interesting since the process and the shared decision making policy seemed to be violated. It appears that the stakeholders did not connect the search consultant to derailing the process.

Both District B and D where there was external succession, although the interviewees did recognize some positives from using a search consultant, they most definitely identified negatives in the process. Some of the observations and concerns they addressed were the consultants slowing down the process, conducting the search contrary to what you want as a district as well trying to bring their own candidates and agenda to the process. One interesting observation made by a Board member in District B is that a private search consultant might not know the culture of the school system and what they brought to the table might not be a “good fit.” Both District B and D felt that the negatives outweighed the positives in this case.

District B with both the current superintendent and the Board Presidents felt that there were factors you needed to consider when looking at search consultants. They stated that the search consultant must consider the skills of the Board and the personalities of the District.

District B and D’s current superintendents both felt that utilizing a private search consultant provided a larger base to work from and it created less bias with the pool of candidates. They both however did express that there is a new district superintendent in the role of search

consultant advisor and they had a great deal of respect for this individual and would see how the local searches went in the next few years before weighing in.

Although there is research that defines the characteristics of superintendents who are chosen in various processes, very little research exists about the search techniques that are employed, and even less is known how effective search consultants are.

“There is really no monolithic construct known as the superintendency. There are many superintendent positions characterized by differences of district size, location, population and needs.” (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000, p. 39) It is essential that each school district develops its own superintendent criteria and search technique that meets the organizational needs.

This study exemplifies the importance of and difficulty in hiring a chief school administrator with the skills set and leadership attributes desired by a specific board of education at a specific moment in time.

Anderson (2006), found that private search and consulting firms were perceived favorably to create the best applicant pool of superintendents. The cost, as mentioned in this case study, seemed to be a factor when focusing on search consultants. In Anderson’s study he reported that the cost of an effective search for a superintendent at the local level ranged from \$5,500 to \$7,500. The cost of a national search was estimated between \$30,000 to \$90,000 when done by a search consultant firm and \$35,000 by school boards.

Issues District was Facing when Looking for a New Leader

Numerous times throughout the research stakeholders said they were looking for someone that could come in and bridge gaps between parties in their districts at a certain moment in time. There was turbulence in three out of the four districts (District A, B, and D) when the succession

process began. From academic and economic challenges to environmental and Union related issues, each district had its own unique set of problems.

Ironically, the district that had the most stability in terms of what they were looking for ended up making one of the most turbulent decisions. This district sought to hire an external candidate, but instead selected an internal candidate for their superintendent, independent of the process. Again, it should be noted that it was not the candidate, but the lack of respect for the shared decision making process that caused the tension and turbulence.

The issues that were facing the four districts did mirror typical small school/ big school issues. Changing demographics in District D (a larger district) along with an increase in special education populations and a sense of disconnect from parents, were all issues that troubled the stakeholders. This contrasted greatly with District B, which was looking for a leader who would bring academic excellence through stronger academic leadership.

District C ended up with an internal candidate. It did not want a leader that would use the district as a stepping stone to another. It was clear in the final reference checks that they had a candidate that was interviewing at multiple districts who was using this type of leverage for upper movement. The Board of Education appeared to value the culture and stability of the district more than angering the community by turning to the internal candidate without shared decision making.

Kelly (2009), in her study titled *A Comparative Case Study of the Influence of District Superintendents in the Establishment of Organizational Learning*, discusses organizational learning. Transformational and instructional leadership practices of the superintendent are key elements that promote district wide organizational learning. These were identified in

academically achieving districts, while there was little evidence of this leadership style or the presence of district wide organizational learning in districts designated Program Improvement status.

The implications of these findings are fairly substantial. They suggest that district level transformational and instructional practices have an influence on learning among members at the organizational level leading to instructional effectiveness and improved academic achievement of students. This research warrants recognition and further research when Board of Educations seeks candidates to fill vacancies. Districts need to not be satisfied with the status quo but really look at a record of proven leadership no matter what the previous position has been.

Conclusions

Nature of Leadership Succession

Based on finding that centered on the nature of leadership succession, all districts did not have formalized written successions plans. Despite this, all participants in all districts stated the notion of having one was important. Two out of the four school districts had a verbal plan it recognized. The two others did not. In all cases, succession is an unwritten process executed by the Board of Education. A lack of written, formalized recruitment planning leads to a wide array of characteristics various stakeholders are looking for in a superintendent.

Role Stakeholder Played in Succession Process.

This study revealed that there are varied definitions surrounding the notion of succession planning. Not all stakeholders in the same organization have the same definition or point of reference.

When looking at the findings of what leadership succession processes stakeholders recognize in their district, this study found that of the four school districts, it was clear that there was not diversity in the members that began to initiate the “succession process” when the superintendent announced his/her departure. It typically began with the Board of Education and in some cases the superintendent that was departing. In three out of the four cases, the District consulted with a search consultant to lead the search. However, in terms of being an equal member of an interdisciplinary team that guides the work from the beginning this model was not found in any of the districts.

The Process of Recruitment

It should be concluded from this study, that there were no written plans for superintendent succession that addressed the process of recruitment for any of the four districts involved. Interviewees in this study voiced a wide range of expectations when they informally identify and groom future leaders.

Through this research it became clear that there was one school district where the superintendent and the Board of Education identified someone from within the organization who could move into the superintendent position. In this case the Overlap Model as described by Rogers and Safer (1990) is being utilized. Through this process, the board becomes comfortable with the future superintendent as they were being trained to take over the role. This district appears to be replicating the model in preparation for their current superintendents’ retirement. It is the conclusion of this researcher that this small urban district is comfortable with its internal candidates and looks to continue to operate under this recruitment process for the time being.

How Search Consultants Impact the Succession Process

The conclusions surrounding search consultants in the succession process were varied. All stakeholders in the three districts that utilized the search consultants felt that this service provided them with qualified candidates to interview. The size of the district did not matter. All felt that initially the search consultant provided them with a variety of choices.

What appeared to be lacking in the search consultant process for one of the districts was the depth of reference checking they had completed prior to the final stage. It was not until well into the process, where essential decisions were being made in the hiring, that issues about the candidates came up. The biggest issue was the candidate's genuine commitment to stay with the district and not use it as a stepping stone.

As mentioned there were many positives from using a search consultant, but stakeholders identified negatives in the process. Some of the observations and concerns they addressed were that consultants slowed the process down, conducted the search contrary to what the districted wanted, and sometimes tried to bring their own candidates or agenda to the process. One interesting observation made was that a private search consultant might not know the culture of the school system and what they brought to the table might not be a "good fit."

Throughout the case study this researcher heard that the search consultant must consider the skills of the Board and the personalities of the District. It should be noted that the levels of comfort in conducting business in the public or private were noted when interviewing both Board Presidents and Superintendents. That appeared to also correlate with the experience of both. It is essential that that search consultants at the skills individuals around the table are bringing with them. Then, the consultant must build in time to support where necessary.

Issues District Was Facing when Looking For a New Leader

Issues that face districts at any point in time often do lend themselves to small school/ big school issues. Changing demographics, increases in special education populations, parental disconnect, district cultural values, district stability, academic excellence, financial and physical maintenance is just some of the issues this researcher found throughout the study.

The implication of the research points to the leadership style future superintendents bring to school communities. Transformational and instructional leadership practices of the superintendent are key elements that promote district wide organizational learning and growth.

Recommendations

Succession planning needs to be valued and promoted as a process of preparing an organization for the eventual turnover in its leadership as opposed to the current perception that it is all about preparing one person to become the next leader or it is the process of “scrambling” to fill a position. In preparing the organization, conversations need to occur among stakeholders often and in the open about how the district is progressing and where it needs to be. Academic success of students needs to be the cornerstone of all districts aspirations and at the heart of all succession discussions.

There needs to be training at a district, regional and State level to what are those foundational characteristics and skills that are necessary for all superintendents. Our leaders are guiding districts for the preparation of all students for the 21st Century and we need to make sure that school districts do not get derailed by lack of consistent or quality leadership. Individuals who want to have these leadership roles need to be prepared to withstand the pressure and demands of such a position.

A regional type of program is not the only process that will support local leaders. There needs to be a regional program that will look at mentoring leaders not only for their own district but also to reach out and fill leadership positions in other districts. Movement is not about internal or external succession. It is about what skills an individual has for a certain district at a certain moment in time.

Succession planning in a more formalized manner needs to be addressed at a district level as well as a higher level. Whether it is the New York State School Boards Association, or the New York State Council of School Superintendents and the New York State United Teachers, or superintendents and school boards along with Union representation, all parties need to have discussions around this process.

Based on Northfield, Macmillan & Myers's work in 2006, we know that there has been and will continue to be an increase in administrator turnovers and retirement. We must strengthen the awareness and the need for strategic leadership on the part of succeeding leaders in order to develop and sustain organizational improvement. This research, supports the need to further examine how people participate in the succession event and how the event is affected. It also promotes the need to focus on how stakeholders understand and participate in the process and how that is transferred into the organization.

In addition, Boards and superintendents must develop contingency plans in the event that illness or death strikes this position. Additionally a negotiated clause should be placed in the contract that addresses the steps of notification and the lead time a superintendent must give the Board, and the steps that will follow. This can be effective with training and guidance given by administrators and Board guiding bodies.

The second set of recommendations centers on the process of recruitment. It is clear that recruitment occurs in the moment and deals with the issues that the organization/district is facing. With that said, there are core values and principles that are unique to each organization and district that must be clearly articulated. These values need to be embedded into the process of recruitment. Often very little is known by the public about the superintendent role and responsibilities. A clear job description must be developed and made public for all stakeholders. What needs to be done prior to the succession process beginning is the grooming of individuals not for specific district jobs but for the qualities that would be appealing to many districts. A clear mentorship needs to be established in districts and at a regional level to help support all interested individuals seeking a superintendent position develop and enhance those skills. Mentorship must happen across districts. Districts can not hold onto people as if they “own” them. Instead, Districts must promote leadership for the sake of leadership. This plan should be developed at a district level and then shared at a regional level. We have talented people that are doing many different jobs. Continuing to re-inventing the wheel does not make sense.

With a formalized written succession plan, the process of using a search consultant needs to be addressed in the document. Steps in choosing the process need to be outlined. This does not mean that a search consultant has to be chosen but it needs to be an option in the process. A self evaluation or assessment of where the stakeholders (community, parents, Union, and Board of Education) are in their skills needs to be evaluated early on in the process.

Criteria for selecting the search consultant, whether that be private or public, needs to be clearly documented and then followed. Criteria for what the organization needs to be established at the time of the announced succession. Board of Education members, Union representation, parent and community stakeholders all need to be a part of selecting the consultant to be used if

at all. Experience, cost and proven results need to be explored in the interview process of selecting the consultant.

It is clear that further research needs to be done on the role of the search consultant and how they impact on the process. In addition, it is this researcher's recommendation that further studies need to be conducted on the success of private versus public versus Board of Education directed searches. This should be looked at in terms of educational achievement of a district.

As mentioned previously, the implication of the findings from the research done by Kelly (2009) in her A Comparative Case Study of the Influence of District Superintendents in the Establishment of Organizational Learning is that there is a capacity for organizational learning. Transformational and instructional leadership practices of the superintendent are key elements that promote district wide organizational learning. It is clear that in this study the term "task specific" skills and leadership and vision kept reoccurring as a theme. These terms need to be better defined and articulated not only in superintendent preparation programs but also in educating the public.

If we truly are going to look for specific attributes to address specific issues that are facing a school organization we must be able to clearly articulate those and provide data to show that those attributes address the issues that are targeted. This will need to be addressed in an assessment checklist when evaluating the skills that are specific to the needs that are being addressed.

Establishing and maintain the process of succession planning is essential. There are many avenues that could be explored to institutionalize this process. School Boards, superintendents, parents and teacher organizations must look to their local and national organizations to start the

process. Through representative agencies such as the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the New York State School Boards association, New York State United Teachers, and the New York State Parent Teachers Association formalized training and development need to occur. In addition the 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York State should be able to provide search consultant services in a systematic way across the state. Since the BOCES model must provide accountability, municipal sharing and efficiency and equity to all of its component schools this is a good start.

With BOCES as a catalyst, school districts can develop shared programs that serve from all districts regardless of enrollment, income or size of tax base. By focusing on collaboration and equitable resources BOCES help to relieve some of the educational and financial burdens increasingly placed on local taxpayers. It is essential that board of education members, superintendents, taxpayers, teachers and students all hear the same information about the process. Although all succession does not have to be a cookie cutter approach, it is important for all schools to begin to create some plan that can be followed through on.

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November 4, 2008

Dear Research Participant,

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research project entitled: Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. The research is being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Alemu, Assistant Professor of Education in the Leadership Program at the Sage Colleges. The researcher is Lynne R. Wells, a doctoral candidate in the program. This project is funded solely by the researcher.

The results of this project will be used in data analysis of practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. Through your participation it is hoped that a greater understanding of succession planning and what takes place at the local school district level will occur.

The research will be conducted through a series of face to face interviews between me (the researcher, Lynne R. Wells) and the current and former superintendent; current and former Board of Education President; current and former Teacher's Union President; current and former PTA/PTO president; Human Resource Director or the individual who managed the hiring process for the current superintendent.

The results of the interviews and case study will be useful to your district and I hope to share my results by sharing them with the New York State Council of School Superintendents, New York State School Board's Association, Colleges and Universities and local school districts as well as providing you with a copy of the case study.

This study is of minimal risk because of the possible violation of confidentiality that might occur to you if you decide to participate in this research.

The interviews should take us approximately 20 minutes to complete. They will be audio taped and the tapes will be destroyed once there has been an analysis of the data. I hope you will take the time to set up a time to meet with me and participate in this research. Your participation is voluntary. Regardless of whether you choose to participate or not, please let me know if you would like a summary of my research finding. To receive a summary, email me at wellsl2@sage.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the interview or about being in this study, you may contact me at 456-6010, EXT 3032. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Sage Colleges has approved this study.

Sincerely,

Lynne R. Wells

Appendix B:

Your IRB project has been approved. You may begin now. A letter will follow.

You must complete the study following the procedures that have been approved. Any changes in procedures must be approved by the IRB in writing before you carry them out.

Be sure you follow all procedures required at the completion of the project. Notify the IRB if you discontinue the project. Notify the IRB if any human subject issues arise during the study.

Good Luck

Appendix C: (Appendix C)

Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession.

Sage Colleges

Doctoral Research

Lynne R. Wells, Researcher

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____ Beginning Time: _____

Page Number: _____ Ending Time: _____

What is the nature of the leadership succession process in the district?

1. What plans do you have in place that center on the succession of leaders in your District?
2. Were there procedures or policies that you had regarding the succession of your former superintendent? Are there current procedures or policies that you have in place for the current superintendent's succession
3. Do you regularly discuss the succession of leaders in your District- specifically the superintendent?
4. Who is involved in the discussion of leadership succession and do you have any documentation on this?

(Appendix C)

Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession.

Sage Colleges

Doctoral Research

Lynne R. Wells, Researcher

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____ Beginning Time: _____

Page Number: _____ Ending Time: _____

What role did you play in the succession plan process?

1. When the former superintendent announced their departure, what went through your mind and what role did you play in the process? (When you the superintendent announced your departure what role did you play in the succession planning?)
2. Is there a current plan for succession in your District and if so what role will you play?
3. How important do you think a succession plan is and why?
4. Who else is involved in the succession plan process?

(Appendix C)

Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession.

Sage Colleges

Doctoral Research

Lynne R. Wells, Researcher

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____ Beginning Time: _____

Page Number: _____ Ending Time: _____

What attributes do school districts value when they identify/groom future leaders?

1. Is there a procedure or program that you use to identify and promote future leaders in your district?
2. Do you promote leaders for only your own district or do you promote leaders to support other districts?
3. What do you look for in future leaders and how do you support that?
4. In these economic, social, academic and high pressure times for schools do you feel that promoting from within is essential or not necessary? Please explain your thoughts.

(Appendix C)

Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession.

Sage Colleges

Doctoral Research

Lynne R. Wells, Researcher

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____ Beginning Time: _____

Page Number: _____ Ending Time: _____

In what ways do search consultants impact the results of the process?

1. When a leader announces that they are going to depart what are the first steps you follow?
2. If you used or will use a search consultant what do you look for?
3. Do you think that the search consultants have an impact on the process and if you do please comment how?
4. Will you use a search consultant in the future and if so why? If not why not?

(Appendix C)

Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession.

Sage Colleges

Doctoral Research

Lynne R. Wells, Researcher

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____ Beginning Time: _____

Page Number: _____ Ending Time: _____

What issues do you feel the District was facing when you were in the process of looking for a new leader and how did that influence your personal decision in the process?

1. Please comment on the factors that made up your criteria for a superintendent and how much did that impact the search and ultimate decision?
2. Were there any factors or issues that came up in the process that influenced your decision and as a result surprised you?

Attachment D: Informed Consent Form

Name of Participant _____

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research project entitled: Practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. The research is being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Alemu, Assistant Professor of Education in the Leadership Program at the Sage Colleges. The researcher is Lynne R. Wells, a doctoral candidate in the program. This project is funded solely by the researcher.

EXPLANATION OF THE STUDY:

Purpose: The purpose of this case study will be to examine the practices used by school districts when undergoing a transition in superintendent leadership succession. The case study will be conducted in four school districts, two districts with internal superintendent selections and two with external superintendent selections thus allowing a comparison of leadership succession.

The nature and duration of subject's participation: This study will take place from December, 2008 to August, 2009. During this time, participants will be asked to answer the interview questions and the interviews should take approximately 20 minutes.

Procedures to be followed: The data that will be collected will be done so primarily through interviews. To record interviews an interview sheet has been established that will include a place for the name of the person being interviewed, the date of the interview, and a set of questions to be asked with space in between the questions to write down notes. Handwritten notes of all interviews will be taken. In addition since the interviews will be the primary method for collecting data, audio taping will occur. The researcher will transcribe verbatim the interview audio tapes. All audio tapes will either be imported into NVIVO 8 (or similar software) Interview data will be coded.

I give permission to the researcher to record me during the course of the interview. Put your initials here to indicate your permission. _____

Benefits of participation: The potential benefit of participating in this study is the shared exploration of ideas and perhaps a deeper understanding about leadership succession in one's own district and other districts will occur as a result of the case study.

Potential risks of participation: There are minimal risks involved in participating in this study

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE:

In the event that I am harmed by participation in this study, I understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical costs might be recovered by legal action.

I understand that I may at any time during the course of this study revoke my consent and withdraw from the study without any penalty.

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this Agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, (print name) _____, having full capacity to consent, do hereby to volunteer to participate in this research study.

Signed: _____ Date _____

Research participant

This research has received approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human subjects. If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Dr. Johan Tribble, Dean

Sage Graduate School

45 Ferry Street

Troy, New York 12180

(518)244-2264

tribbj@sag.edu

Appendix E

Article 3 Section I:

For any vacancy positions requiring supervisory or administrative certification, a committee shall be established by the Superintendent to interview the most promising candidates as determined by the Superintendent or his designee. The Association President may appoint two members to such committee. All other professionals shall be appointed jointly Association president and the District.

Appendix F

Help us search for a new superintendent...and shape the future

Dear Parents and residents of the District D school community,

As you may know, our superintendent of schools, XXX, has accepted a new position and will be leaving District D in April. XXX has led our district for the past eight years. Now, we are searching for the next superintendent to lead the district into the future. We are working with District Superintendent of the BOCES, to assist us with this search. It is very important that we hear from the people who care the most about the schools: you and your family.

We need your help. We would like to hear from you at two community meetings scheduled for **Wednesday, Feb. 9**, and **Wednesday, Feb. 16**, at the Middle School cafeteria. Both sessions begin at 7 p.m.

Please come to one of these meetings to express what qualifications you would like the next superintendent of schools to possess.

If you are unable to attend one of these meetings, feel free to contact a member of the Board of Education or e-mail your ideas to our Web site at District D.org. There will also be opportunities for you to participate in this process by serving on groups to interview the applicants.

It is our hope that if we all work together, we'll be able to find the best educational leader for our district.

- This document has been altered to remove the name of the District as well as the individuals that were represented in the original document.


A tentative timetable for the superintendent search was developed and here of some of the key dates:


- **March 18:** advertising position in various periodicals, newspapers and other services
- **March 31:** materials mailed to interested candidates
- **April 29:** application deadline
- by **May 20:** District Superintendent will screen applications, verify credentials and conduct preliminary interviews of candidates
- by **May 31:** 12-15 candidates are selected as semi-finalists
- by **June 17:** Board of Education reviews all applicants and interviews six to eight of the semi-finalists
- by **June 24:** interview of three to five candidates by the community teams. Each community team will consist of 12 members as follows: two students, two parents, two teachers, two non-instructional staff, two administrators and two community members.
- by **July 8:** written feedback about the semi-finalists to the Board of Education
- by **July 15:** selection of one or two top candidates by the Board of Education for further interviews by board members. May also include school visits by Board of Education members
- by **July 29:** appointment of new superintendent
- **end of August/early September:** new superintendent begins

	Current Superintendent	Former Superintendent	Current Board President	Former Board President	Current Union President	Former Union President	Current PTA President	Former PTA President
District A					Contacted several times but chose not to participate	Name was not provided		
District B						Repeated attempts to meet did not work out	Name was not provided	Name was not provided
District C				Name was not provided			Contacted several times but chose not to participate	Continues to be current PTA president and chose not to participate
District D						Retired and not in area anymore		Name was not provided to researcher

Appendix G: District Stakeholders Interviewed

Key:

 : Researcher met with and interviewed stakeholder

 : Stakeholder was not available for an Interview

	DISTRICT A	DISTRICT B	DISTRICT C	DISTRICT D
<p>QUESTION 1: What is the nature of the leadership succession process in your district? What plans do you have in place as a board that centers on the succession of leaders in your district?</p>	<p>-No formal written plan -Instead there is a “Grow Your Own Administrators Program” (verbal plan providing leadership opportunities for teachers) -Program created after district concluded outside candidates lead to struggle</p> <p>-Conceptual plan has evolved over time as size and needs of district change</p> <p>-PTO stakeholders: “the plan is ‘hear-say.’”</p> <p>-Plan has not been shared with all the stakeholders in the district</p>	<p>-No formal written plan</p> <p>-Central Office Leaders have had informal discussion not to leave at the same time</p> <p>-Appears to be confusion on what the succession process is</p> <p>-Many refer to committee interviewing as the succession plan (share-decision making)</p>	<p>-No formal written plan</p> <p>-Nature of the superintendent defined differently in this district (is a three person team)</p> <p>-Many consider historical protocol the succession model</p> <p>-Historically candidate chosen through shared-decision making (Article 3 Section 1 and shared decision guidelines allow for many stakeholders input)</p> <p>-Board encourages multi-year contracts to create continuity</p>	<p>-No formal plan in place</p> <p>-Internship program to give administrators leadership opportunities</p> <p>-Rely on historical protocol in succession process</p> <p>-Required in the contracts of superintendents in District D to give six months notice</p>
<p>QUESTION 2: What role did you play in the succession plan process?</p>	<p>-Former superintendent had major role in process</p> <p>-Board of Education had major role in process</p> <p>-Parent stakeholders felt they had little to no role in process</p> <p>(TOP HEAVY DECISION-SHARE DECISION MAKING NOT PRESENT)</p>	<p>-Union President expected to be part of the process</p> <p>-Board members had major role</p> <p>-Director of Curriculum stated District Superintendent from local BOCES coordinated the search</p> <p>-Director of Curriculum played major role in process</p> <p>(SHARED DECISION MAKING IN ACTION)</p>	<p>-Former superintendents have active role in</p> <p>-Role of the current superintendent changed during the process when Board decided to chose him/her independent of search (major role)</p> <p>-All stakeholders worked on description of what they were looking for in a superintendent</p> <p>-The Teachers Association President had a considerable amount to say in process</p> <p>(SHARE-DECISION MAKING FELL THROUGH-TOP HEAVY DECISION)</p>	<p>-Board President had an active role in the process</p> <p>-Board played an active role in process</p> <p>-Former Superintendent offered services when definitely knew they were going to leave-ended up not playing large role</p> <p>-Current Curriculum Director played large role</p> <p>-Board took the opinion of the Union, making sure they were comfortable with the decision</p> <p>(SHARE DECISION MAKING IN ACTION)</p>

<p>QUESTION 3: What attributes do school districts value when they identify/groom future leaders?</p>	<p>All stakeholders look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sense of commitment/dedication to district. -Someone with innate intuition in dealing with people. -Someone not afraid to put in extra time -Someone who's visible/accessible all <p>Administrators look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Someone with analytical mind, caring personality <p>Board of Education looks for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Flexible individual, willing to Learn <p>TASK SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES</p>	<p>All stakeholders look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Leaders able to work with many different groups -Someone with broad Knowledge of education field -Someone with a vision -Someone who can lead <p>-Honesty</p> <p>-Integrity</p> <p>-Strength</p> <p>The-Leaders with the talent/skill to perform the job while relating to students/parents</p> <p>TASK SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES</p>	<p>All stakeholders look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Someone with understand of district's culture (including shared-decision making) -Someone who enjoys working with children -Someone committed to children's education/district -Someone who is resilient -Someone with drive -Someone who will go the extra mile -Someone who is willing to learn -Accountability <p>TASK SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES</p>	<p>All stakeholders look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Someone with strong educational background -Someone with specific knowledge of district -Integrity -Ability to leader -Someone who gets parents involved -Someone who works well with organized labor <p>*One stakeholder brought up idea that: Districts think they are looking for a unique human being. Actually everybody's is looking for that</p> <p>TASK SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES</p>
<p>QUESTION 4: In what ways do search consultants impact the results of the process?</p>	<p>-district doesn't historically use a search consultant</p> <p>-not able to respond adequately to the question</p> <p>DIDN'T USE</p>	<p>Positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can provide more independent/broad view <p>Negatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can slow process down -Can conduct search contrary to what you want -Private search consultant doesn't know culture of the 	<p>Positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Search consultants can identify a set of candidates <p>-Can help in initial interviewing</p> <p>-Help establish criteria/characteristics</p> <p>-Serves as advisor to Board,</p> <p>-Helps District stay on track</p> <p>-Create network of</p>	<p>Positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can weed out the pool -Can bring good candidates to pool <p>Negatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consultant are sometimes Pushovers/intimated by Board -Consultants are sometimes pushy themselves, ignoring District's wants

		<p>district</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Costly <p>Other things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Size of the district -Skills of Board -Personalities of District <p>NEGATIVES OUTWEIGH POSITIVE</p>	<p>candidates</p> <p>ONLY POSITIVES</p>	<p>Can bring their own candidates to the process and play favorites</p> <p>NEGATIVES OUTWEIGH POSITIVES</p>
<p>QUESTION 5: What issues do you feel the District was facing when you were in the process of looking for a new leader and how did that influence your personal decision in the process?</p>	<p>-District was in middle of large renovations (Current superintendent was in middle of the building project in previous role, making it a natural succession)</p> <p>-The district “had just come off of a battle to keep the district whole.”</p> <p>-Wanted an administrator who understood District struggles/culture</p> <p>-Small community: wanted someone with a small school/community sense.</p> <p>-TURBULANCE FROM BUILDING AND TRYING TO KEEP DISTRICT TOGETER</p> <p>-CULTURE OF DISTRICT/SMALL DISTRICT SENSE</p>	<p>-Wanted someone with a stronger business/financial sense</p> <p>-District had tough labor management issues</p> <p>-Wanted someone to mend fences</p> <p>-Wanted stronger educational leader</p> <p>-Wanted someone who could balance strength with handling difficult situations in gentle manor</p> <p>-Wanted someone who respected teacher’s union</p> <p>-Wanted someone who was willing to listen to all stakeholders</p> <p>-TURBULANCE FROM ECONOMIC ISSUES AND</p>	<p>-Looking for someone who was a real “fit” for District</p> <p>-Only a few superintendents held position over the years creating source of pride over continuity</p> <p>-Wanted someone who wouldn’t use District as a stepping stone to another job</p> <p>-Someone who maintained culture/stability</p> <p>-Wanted someone who’d be visible/ able to work with all</p> <p>-CULTURE OF DISTRICT/SMALL DISTRICT SENSE</p> <p>-SOMEONE WHO COULD BRIDGE GAPS</p>	<p>-Economic issues from decreasing State aid.</p> <p>-Very contentious building issues</p> <p>-Changing demographics</p> <p>-Decrease in PTA support.</p> <p>-Increase in special education students (CULTURE ISSUES)</p> <p>-Personnel issues beginning to occur</p> <p>-Some recall it as a period of calm</p> <p>-TURBULANCE FROM ECONOMIC ISSUES, BUILDING ISSUES, CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS, DECREASE IN PTA SUPPORT, PERSONNEL ISSUES, INCREASING SPEC. ED.</p>

		LABOR MANAGEMENT ISSUES -SOMEONE WHO COULD BRIDGE GAPS/PEACE KEEPER		
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Appendix H: District Findings