SUPERINTENDENT PREPARATION TO LEAD THE NEW YORK STATE REGENTS'
REFORM AGENDA: PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED SUPERINTENDENTS

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Abstract

Professional development has come into focus for system leaders as globalization has created a need for the United States to re-look at the preparation of students to navigate successfully in a competitive world. The New York State [NYS] Regents' Reform Agenda has promoted set standards with the goal of improving student performance. Leadership preparation and ability to address the needed changes is critical in order to address the student achievement gaps. The focus of this qualitative study was to investigate how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda. This study explored three areas of relevance to system leaders: the importance of leadership as it relates to the change process; how system leaders can impact their organizations through their commitment to visioning; and implementation of change and best practice in developing system leaders.

Data for this study was collected using a 15-question interview protocol, which mapped to the following four key concepts: preparation, application, resources, and leadership involvement in the Reform Agenda. The qualitative research study used a phenomenological approach to secure a deep understanding and allowed the researcher to elicit "varied perspectives of participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 129).

Findings from this study showed a strong theme that New York State mandates have defined professional development for participating superintendents. In addition, findings further revealed that the value of professional development was not embraced by all participating superintendents in this study. The professional development choices that were made by participating superintendents were individualized but not connected to leadership standards or the NYS Reform Agenda. Data showed the frequency of professional development by participating superintendents was inconsistent to support pervasive personal and professional

growth. There was not strong support for superintendents to use Common Core for leading or

improvement efforts. Findings further revealed that a minority of superintendents in this study

sought additional preparation handling leadership issues, module implementation, data analysis,

and developing understandings for implementing the next phase of Common Core Standards and

Assessments. The majority of participating superintendents in this study reported they were not

applying or promoting what they learned regarding the NYS Reform Agenda as a system leader.

Keywords: Superintendent professional development, New York State Regents' Reform Agenda,

Leading, Value of leadership, 21st Century Learners, Professional development for system

leaders, Change leadership

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My dissertation represents many things in my life. The completion of this document solidifies my belief in myself and my abilities as an educator. It is a release of all of my energies that I have given to others which can now be funneled on a concentrated effort for my own professional growth. I feel that this program has truly set me free and opened me up to new possibilities in life.

My family has been extremely encouraging on this journey, and I would like to thank all of them for putting aside their needs so I could focus and be guilt free for not giving so much of myself for the past few years. Their patience and understanding was appreciated. I know my mother will be proud, and if my dad were alive, he would in his own little way say something memorable regarding my completion of the program.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Student achievement is paramount in the United States in order for our country to remain competitive in a global economy. It is critical to address the educational needs of our poor and minority children and to provide them with an equitable education allowing access to the middle class by lifting barriers and implementing supports. "Eliminating the social class differences in student outcomes requires eliminating the impact of social class on children in American society" (Rothstein, 2004, p. 149).

Student performance in the U.S. has not remained competitive in relation to other countries. This was noted by Stewart (2012):

> It is therefore all the more alarming that in December 2010, when the 2009 results from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) Programme for International Student Assessments (PISA) were released, U.S. students once again scored way below those of other developed countries on tests of reading, math, and science. These mediocre results followed similar scores from the previous rounds of PISA in 2000, 2003, and 2006, as well as from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Survey (TIMSS) conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement also showed similar trends to OECD in student achievement in the U.S. (p. 2)

Elmore (2002) shares that the work of schools is becoming more complicated; however things have not really changed that much in years. He further notes that the lack of flexibility in the system will eventually force it to fail under pressure. Accountability has come to the forefront for American public schools as the political arena places demands on public education to show results.

Accountability is an exercise in hope. When we raise academic standards, children raise their academic sights. When children are regularly tested, teachers know where and how to improve. When scores are known to parents, parents are empowered to push for change. When accountability for our schools is real, the results for our children are real. (Bush, 2001, para. 18)

Schools have not changed much since the 19th century when teachers worked in isolation and content defined the student learning and knowledge. The content driven system has prohibited collaboration among teachers and led to a system resistant to change (Elmore, 2002).

The world is rapidly changing with globalization, technological growth, and the influence of Asia. These changes placed a great demand on schools implementing more rigorous standards for the purpose of preparing students to compete in a global economy. In China, India, and the former Soviet Union, a shift has taken place within the workforce once focused on low skill development; it is now a more competitive work force. As competition developed with other countries, U.S. schools have to provide an educational system which will allow Americans to maintain the present level of living standards. The U.S. was world leader for the 20th century in education. Other countries are taking the lead and surpassing the U.S. in education for the 21st century by preparing students with a more rigorous curriculum and by producing greater results (Stewart, 2012).

Globalization 2.0 occurred between the 1800s and 2000. During this time period, multinational companies were on the rise that impacted the markets and labor force. Walls came down for exchange of goods, and communications flowed among continents. More recently, Globalization 3.0 has taken hold, which is no longer spearheaded solely by Europeans and Americans. This new era is charged with individuals from all over the world creating a very flat

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and small world in which people experience influences from around the world in their daily lives (Friedman, 2005). The economy has experienced a rapid shift with the world market expanding and presenting a need to provide an education for students that prepares them with a skill set to function in a global setting (Stewart, 2012).

This has been an ongoing conversation for over thirty years. Beginning in the 1980s, *A Nation At Risk Report* (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983) pointed out that the U.S. ranked last seven times on international tests. Regardless of these assessments and the mediocre performance, the U.S. economy was not impacted. Stability of its work force, which was more highly educated than other countries, was a contributing factor.

The U.S. ranked fourth on the World Economic Forum's 2010-2011 Global Competitiveness Index (Schwab, 2010). This report depicts America's education system as costly and unproductive, which threatens its competitiveness and weakens its ability to attract companies. Work in the U.S. is being outsourced by many companies to other countries as a cost effective measure and to reach productive workforces. The cost is also significant to our low income students. Graduates impact the economy through their buying power and tax base. There are economic costs and benefits not only to the amount of education, as measured by high school and college graduation rates, but also to the quality of education (Stewart, 2012)**.**

In response to this dilemma, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) adopted the Regents' Reform Agenda in 2011. The New York State (NYS) Regents' Reform Agenda is a change model which encompasses the Federal Race to the Top elements. Elements of this reform were based on four pillars: implementing the Common Core Standards and Assessments; building instructional systems; recruiting, developing, and maintaining quality teachers and principals; and turning around the lowest achieving schools. Seven hundred million

dollars in competitive grants were provided to states over a four year period to embrace a wholesale change in standards and assessments.

High-performing schools in other countries are focused on continually updating assessments to determine if their educational systems are preparing their students for a global economy. Stewart (2012) identifies *international benchmarking* as a strategy in which methods are compared against research which many governments are utilizing to further develop their educational systems. He further notes that there are commonalities in the systems that are succeeding. The first component he discusses is that successful school change comes with vision and leadership. The second component is that change requires political and societal leadership. He further shares that leadership must have a moral purpose and must address the inequities to create a more just system and a vision must be broad and articulated by leaders at every level. Stewart (2012) further discusses that leaders need to bring together stakeholders to help define the vision of what we want learners to know in 2030.

School district leadership is critical, as U.S. educators look to address a new system of educating students with higher national standards and assessments to become more competitive in a global economy. There is strong evidence that weak leadership leads to poor performance (Barber, Whelan, & Clark, 2010). Day and Sammons (2013) report that certain leadership characteristics are linked to success in schools and discuss that leaders that can emphasize setting goals, working closely with communities, careful use of resources, and monitoring teacher performance to achieve results.

Reform efforts in schools throughout the country are focused on the development of leaders. Stewart (2012) discusses England, China, and Canada as countries which have developed leadership as part of their reform movements. England's National College of School

Leadership is an example of one approach that combines programs for leaders with ongoing peer support through network clustering of schools. China uses two high-level, university-based centers for leadership: one for primary and one for secondary. These centers run ongoing executive leadership training based on models from other countries. Canada embraces a new framework for leadership development, which focuses in on developing instructional leaders (Stewart, 2012). The emphases in successful reform movements all identify leadership development as a critical element to sustain improvement and to effectively address change.

Statement of Problem

The implementation of the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda has an aggressive timeline. The preparation of superintendents to lead the reform effort with fidelity and confidence is the area of investigation of this research. Leading with a vision and providing guidance for the successful implementation of any new initiative requires time, training, and deep understanding on behalf of system leaders. In order for students to be successful under a new model of standards and assessment, strong leadership will be required to provide the necessary resources, training, and communications among the administration, board, staff, parents, and students. Studies by Waters and Marzano (2006) have shown that system leaders who have a clear vision with goals, understand the process for implementing change efforts, can articulate that vision, and can implement it in a consistent and pervasive manner are successful in positively impacting student achievement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda. The Reform Agenda is a four pillared change model to address implementing Common Core

Standards and Assessments; building instructional data systems; recruiting, developing, and maintaining quality teachers and principals; and turning around the lowest achieving schools.

This study was framed by three areas of relevance to system leadership in the literature as it relates to the change process; impact on organizations through leader commitment to visioning; and developing system leaders in implementation of change.

Research questions

This study intended to give the researcher the data needed to make recommendations to practitioners and policy makers regarding the preparation, training, and roles for system leaders to effectively implement and embed best practices in the culture of public education for long-term change and impact on student learning.

The research questions were as follows:

1. How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

2. How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

3. How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader with regard to the Reform Agenda?

4. What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

Significance of Study

This is a time of great change in the education system in NYS. This change has created chaos in the field, as well as opportunity to seize the moment and create something that will impact children and learning. NYS's goal to prepare students to be *college and career ready* is accompanied by a timeline and rollout that has come under great criticism from parents and

educators which has led to understanding the needs of system leaders in order for this vision to come to fruition.

This study provides practitioners and policy makers with a lens on the preparation of superintendents in the Reform Agenda. Further examination of how superintendents used their training in the Reform Agenda as system leaders was explored. Best practices, in terms of successful implementation defined by study participants and relevant research, will be highlighted and recommendations will be made for application throughout the state.

Limitations were evident in the existing research regarding studies that speak about system leaders addressing their own transition to Regents' Reform Agenda in NYS and perceptions.

Limitations/ Delimitations

This study was delimited to data collection from 18 superintendents in NYS from each of the three categories of districts: rural, suburban, and urban settings. Six superintendents were carefully selected from each network region within the aforementioned settings, based on gender and experience. A larger sampling of superintendents may have been of benefit; however, the sampling size selected provided for a more in depth lens on what issues were prevalent. This study utilized a qualitative research approach. Phenomenological strategy was applied in this research. Creswell (2009) identifies the use of a general phenomenological approach as valuable when a researcher is seeking to understand the specific experiences of individuals to draw deep meaning and patterns for findings while research is being conducted.

The data were organized so patterns could be identified. Patterns were then organized into themes and coded. A narrative report was developed to summarize the data collection and to provide deeper understandings of the data collected.

Definition of terms

The terms noted below are evident throughout the dissertation.

Common Core State Standards: Consistent standards developed by the federal government, which NYS adopted for K-12 in content specific areas. Common Core Standards are reflective of what content and skills students need to be successful in life.

Interview guide approach: Process that allows for important topics to be covered, that gives the participants freedom to emphasize other feedback, and that will provide for extensive comments (McMillan, 2012).

New York State (NYS) Regents' Reform Agenda: A change model to address implementing the Common Core Standards and Assessments; building instructional systems; recruiting, developing, and maintaining quality teachers and principals; and turning around the lowest achieving schools. In this study the name NYS Reform Agenda and Reform Agenda are used interchangeably.

Network Region: NYSED divides the state into six network regions. Each region contains one or more Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and each BOCES supports school districts within a specific geographic region.

Phenomenological strategy: Identifies the use of a general phenomenological approach as valuable when a researcher is seeking to understand the specific experiences of individuals to draw deep meaning and patterns for findings while research is being conducted (Creswell, 2009).

Professional development: "a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (Learning Forward, 2014, para. 3).

Race to the Top: A Federal initiative, which sponsors millions of dollars in competitive grants to

   states that embrace a wholesale change in standards and assessments.

Reward Schools: A Reward School is a school with outstanding student achievement or growth

   over the past three years.

State Education Department Reference File (SEDREF): NYSED's core data file system.

Organization of the Study

   This study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the need to develop the system

leader in order to successfully implement the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda. This chapter

further draws attention to the need to analyze effective practices and gaps in the training for

practitioners. Chapter 2 reviews literature pertinent to developing system leaders and identifies

research based best practices to train system leaders that will have a long-term impact on

educational systems implementing the goals and vision of the NYSED. Chapter 3 presents the

methods utilized throughout the study inclusive of research questions, research design, target

population, data collection, interview questions, data and reliability, data analysis, delimitations,

and bias. Chapter 4 presents the data and analyses of the data from participants during this

qualitative study. Chapter 5 summarizes findings and presents recommendations for policy

makers and practitioners.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This is a time of great change in the education system in NYS. These changes have created chaos with implementation; resistance to testing and implementation of modules; understanding of what Common Core is; funding for materials; and availability of training in the field, as well as an opportunity to embrace educators' urges to sort things out and organize the new expectations into something significant for children and learning. NYS's goal to prepare students to be college and career ready is a noteworthy vision. However, superintendents debate the timeline and five year rollout of the NYS implementation of the standards and assessments in response to the federal Race to the Top funding timeline and acknowledge the pressures on leaders charged with bringing this reform effort to fruition (New York State Council of School Superintendents [NYSCOSS], 2013).

Superintendent development with regard to the Reform Agenda was examined to ascertain if the specific needs of these superintendents had been fully addressed. Leading with a vision and providing guidance for the successful implementation of reform is worthy of time, training, and profound comprehension on behalf of system leaders (Bennis, 2009; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2013). In order for students to be successful under a new model of standards and assessment, robust leadership will be necessary to improving student performance (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the Regents' Reform Agenda. The Reform Agenda is a change model to address implementing Common Core Standards and Assessments; building instructional data systems; recruiting, developing, and maintaining quality teachers and principals; and turning around lowest-achieving schools (NYSED, EngageNY,

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n.d.).

This study was designed to yield data that would allow the formation of recommendations to practitioners and policy makers regarding the preparation, training, and roles for system leaders to effectively implement and embed best practices in the culture of public education for long-term change and impact on student learning.

The research questions were as follows:

1. How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

2. How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

3. How have superintendents applied what they learned as a system leader with regard to the Reform Agenda?

4. What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

New York State Reform Agenda

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) produced a report in 1983 referred to as *A Nation at Risk*. This document challenged schools to reform based on findings that 23 million Americans were considered to be functionally illiterate. These findings further led to recommendations that schools restructure the curriculum in English Language Arts and math, increase support to teachers, and address the sequence of offerings in schools (NCEE, 1983).

The urgency related to this concern was articulated in a 2006 report released by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) titled, *Answering the Challenge of a Changing World: Strengthening Education for the 21st Century*:

This global challenge requires bold action and leadership. America has done it before.

Following the Soviet Union's 1957 launch of Sputnik, the world's first satellite, Congress

passed and President Eisenhower signed into law the National Defense Education Act of

1958… Today, America faces not a streaking satellite but a rapidly changing global

workforce. (USDOE, 2006, p. 4)

Zhao (2009) states we must meet the challenges of a global economy; thinking must be

transformed regarding how we educate children. Students will need the skills to navigate a new

world in order to exercise their rights in life to enjoy happiness in a globalized world.

There is evidence that past reforms have not made an impact on changing the progress of

students in poverty (Coleman et al.,1966; Rothstein, 2004). Noguera and Wells (2011) also

share that "Reforms must be designed to counter and mitigate the effects of social and economic

conditions in the local environment" (p. 1).

President Obama's *Blueprint for Reform* sets a vision for addressing failing schools. The

goal of this reform is to reduce drop-out rates and to make the nation's lowest performing

schools a priority. Monitoring schools' achievement is part of this effort, along with

transforming or closing down failing schools (USDOE, Office of Planning, Evaluation and

Policy Development, 2010).

Results of Obama's *Blueprint for Reform* have shown few shifts in improvement despite

increased accountability and raising standards (Nogurea & Wells, 2011). Reforms have been

criticized for having a top down influence without careful understandings of how these reforms

will impact education (Fullan, 2007). There are two gaps that the Reform Agenda intended to

address. The first is the gap in student performance among sub groups, and the second is the gap

between the U.S. and other countries. Closing the gap with other countries has become an

emphasis of the U.S. because it directly correlates with the progress of the country and the

economy (Zhao, 2009).

Leadership Matters

Fear of the unknown can paralyze an organization. Scharmer (2009) identifies fear as the obstacle to open will. He notes that there is fear of death, fear of being ridiculed, fear of ostracized, and for some, fear of losing economic security. He prompts others to see that leadership is about guiding people through the process of letting go of the old self and letting come to the new self (Scharmer, 2009).

The literature clearly depicts leadership as an important driver that affects the performance of an organization. Leadership qualities and skills related to high impact schools include vision for learning, instructional program, curricular program, assessment program, communities of learning, resource acquisition and use, organizational culture, and advocacy (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007).

Louis (2003) argues that there has been an increase in poverty in the U.S. since 1972, which sets the country apart from others with regard to performance. He cites that data has not been a focus, and leadership has been underdeveloped and unable to fully address student needs. Educators must face the challenges of a changing landscape, as well as address new practices. Louis (2003) identifies the main obstacle in teachers' ability to change practices is "creating settings in which success for students motivates teachers" (p. 371). He further contends that strong leadership will be the key component to keeping teachers engaged and helping them shift perceptions regarding the students they serve. Teacher engagement in their practice, as well as an environment that allows for a true democratic community in schools while addressing social justice, will lead to change.

Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the impact of district

level leadership. Several findings emerged; district level leadership matters and effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-orientated districts. Findings show that district leaders who effectively address responsibilities in goal setting, goals for achievement, along with Board of Education alignment with goals and resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction can have a strong impact on student achievement in districts. In fact, there was statistical significance between district level leader responsibilities and student academic achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

"Our quality of life depends of the quality of our leaders" (Bennis, 2009, p. 5). Bennis describes leaders as important, as they are responsible for effectiveness, are critical during change and upheaval of the past, and are needed in the wake of national concern about the integrity of our institutions (2009). Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) further emphasize the need for leaders to inspire all of us and to work through the emotions and channel them in effective ways. Furthermore,

> Leaders' emotional states and actions do affect how the people they lead will feel and therefore perform. The leader's ability to manage their moods and the impact they have on others is a public matter that impacts the success of a business. (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 18)

Leaders have a clear primordial role when it comes to leading that has been prevalent throughout history. The leader plays a strong role in terms of being an emotional guide (Goleman et al., 2002). "Leadership from central office matters" in terms of the impact on learning and setting the tone and environment that leads to excellence (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 45). Reform changes without strong leadership will not come to fruition for schools. "Effective leadership at that level of the organization has come much more sharply into focus, and is characterized by

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pressure and support" (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 45).

Eight dimensions frame findings for leadership for learning. Dimensions focus on vision, instruction, curriculum, assessment, community, resources, culture, and advocacy (Murphy et al., 2007). The first dimension, vision, is embraced by high performing school leaders through the facilitation of the developing of a vision, embracing the concept that all children can learn, emphasizing goals for student learning, setting targets that are clearly articulated, and putting timelines in place (Murphy et al., 2007).

The historical look at research reveals that the successful leader must continue to influence and help others to believe that all students can achieve, so there is success and goals are met (Christensen, 1992). It is further noted by Weber (1971) that strong leadership is a common factor that high performing schools have in common. In addition, there is a strong commitment to learning, which ties into dimension three, the curricular program. These leaders are highly involved and map their curriculum as well as monitor its application (Wilson & Corcoran, 1988). Leaders with a strong knowledge base navigate the new Regents' Reform Agenda nimbly.

More recently studies (Gano-Phillips et al., 2011) have identified leadership as a collaborative approach to address successful large scale reform. A new report by Chingos, Whitehurst, and Lindquist (2014) calls into question the weight of research over the past 20 years by revealing that superintendent leadership has very little influence on student performance. These researchers scaffold the significance of impact on student performance with teachers being in the forefront, principals next and then superintendents at the end of the hierarchy.

The NYS Reform Agenda relies heavily on the use of assessments for monitoring student and teacher effectiveness. Effective leaders have comprehensive assessment systems in place,

which focus on progress monitoring, use of a variety of methods for data collection, analysis, and adjustment of instruction to meet individual student needs. The systems in place have strong alignment with what needs to be taught and are visible (Murphy et al., 2007).

The job of the leader, as described by Scharmer (2009):

Is to mobilize action and produce results. This involves integration of goals, strategies, personalities, and processes. There is a new shift from a focus on the 'what' to the 'how' and from the 'how' to the 'who' which brings us to the inner place where system leaders operate. (p. 62)

Goleman et al. (2002) contend that leaders who show emotional intelligence and who possess a majority of competencies related to emotional intelligence have proven to be highly effective. These leaders are self-aware and are able to manage themselves and project strong emotional control. They have a unique drive and are able to be opportunist and optimistic. Their social competency is high, and they have a unique ability to manage relationships and are seen as inspirational. Those leaders are capable of developing teamwork and collaboration among stakeholders to address change. Furthermore, they note that capturing and discovering one's ideal self as a leader further promulgates success in an ever-changing educational landscape (2002).

There is strong evidence in the literature that the following elements: shared vision, framing of essential instructional support, multiple assessments, program coherence, democratic process, raising tough questions and problems resolved together, allowing for solutions out of shared dialogue, and confronting and engaging political alliances, are common to behaviors that are important to system leaders (Lambert, 2003; Murphy et al., 2007; Wilson & Corcoran, 1988).

Dufour and Marzano (2011) describe leadership as *a love affair* and state "the best

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educational leaders are in love with the work they do, with the purpose their work serves, and with the people they lead and serve" (p. 194). They identify that "the key to leadership is to develop the capacity of others to accomplish a collective endeavor, not doing it all by oneself" (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 207).

Reeves (2006) suggests that the leader must create an environment in which it is not an expectation that the leader bears the burden of being consummate in all areas, but rather it is the role of the leader to develop an organization that is stellar in all facets.

Leadership is significant in a time when superintendents are in the midst of a reform change in NYS. Leaders must transform policy and deliver it to their organizations to effectuate change that is consistent and pervasive within the organization to have a positive effect on student learning.

NYSED, as part of the Reform Agenda, identified gaps between learning and standards. Because of this disparity, the state has developed new standards and assessments to increase the rigor and to ultimately prepare students to be career and college ready in a competitive world (NYSED, 2013).

In order for students to be successful under a new model of standards and assessment, strong leadership will be required to provide the necessary resources, training, and communication among the administration, board, staff, parents, and students. In summary, research confirms that if change is to be sustainable, it requires leaders to convey a vision, and to have strong goals that address student learning. Leaders who understand the value of developing a vision and learning how to promote and disseminate it with an incisive approach can inspire others to accept transformation. Leaders must know themselves and have a love for what they do. They must incorporate learning for themselves and others as an enduring process. Leaders

examine student learning and guide changes to address the needs of each child. They create the conditions that allow for transformation.

Professional Development for System Leaders

A review of literature and studies pertinent to developing system leaders and identifying research based best practices to educate systems leaders that will have a long-term impact on educational systems implementing the goals and vision of the SED is essential. Stewart, Raskin, and Zielaski (2012) further allude to the need to research what specific needs superintendents have regarding professional development in order to successfully implement the Reform Agenda in their schools.

> Leaders learn from their own experiences by looking at past experiences, seeking experiences in the present that will improve them, taking risks, and seeing the future. Leaders must use their instincts to sense opportunity and then follow the 'blessed impulse' that arises. (Bennis, 2009, p. 93)

Fullan (2008) notes that leaders are continually working in concert together, and as they do, there is a natural development and grooming of other leaders, which leads to continuity and the adherence to goals within the organization.

Reeves (2002) discusses the overall shortage of educators compressing the pool of qualified leaders to take the helm. Schools can groom from within or look for leaders from alternate career paths. Both solutions lead to the need for leadership training programs as an investment in the future. Identification of the necessary skills needed, as well as the knowledge base required to do the job successfully, is necessary. Professional development transformation is identified as a way to address the expansion of the candidate pool. Schools partnering with universities and becoming the lab for learning personal management, strategic planning, and data

analysis is a concept to build capacity and to develop reflective, successful leaders.

Developing school leaders has come into focus as countries are adopting new standards to address a more rigorous education system. Bennis (2002) discusses the value of leadership institutes. He shares the key components of successful institutes are one-to-one coaching and peer networking. The goal is to produce leaders who think deeply about the organization and to draw upon documented experiences for improvement. Tschannen-Moran (2013) identifies "coaching as a way to assist people to move forward toward their goals through conversation and their way of being with people" (p. 45). Riddle (2008) agrees that coaching is important and a way to transition to a team concept which exposes hidden dynamics and allows for increased management.

Stewart (2012) cites that many countries are adopting new training programs for leaders, which identify people with specific traits to be leaders and provide them with mentoring and placing them into apprenticeship schools. Individuals are selected early on as possessing specific leadership characteristics, and they are placed in leadership roles with peer support through ongoing networks in clusters of schools.

Higgins, Young, Weiner, and Wlodarczyk (2009/2010) share that leaders need to reach beyond their traditional roles of managing systems to expand their influence on others through a collaborative approach to leading. Superintendents must become reflective leaders and begin to understand how to organize and develop team leadership. Superintendents who shift their focus from interactions of others to getting tasks completed will increase feelings within the organization that everyone is valued. Leadership training in task related coaching was found to be helpful to superintendents leading organizations in a study conducted with Connecticut Leadership Teams by the Superintendents' Network of the Connecticut Center for School

Change.

Superintendent preparation programs have not sufficiently prepared leaders for the challenges of the new work with which they are confronted (Reeves & Berry 2009). Orr (2006) states that college programs have been responsive to the concern of inadequate preparation and have emphasized the need to develop leadership skills, specific competencies, and enriched experiences in the field while in training. Changes in college programming for leadership training influenced the development of *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008*, which established leadership "performance expectations to facilitate curriculum development, candidate assessments, and accountability" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 11). ISLLC Standards 1 and 2 provide for "lifelong career development of leaders with a strong focus on continuous professional improvement through quality career planning and development" (CCSSO, 2013, p. 85).

The use of recognized standards helps to provide for a common language for superintendents to share in learning for areas of growth (Spanneut et al., 2011). Leaders must be decisive and commit to long-range professional development, which is based on individual needs and measured against the leadership standards set forth in recognized standards for leaders. Professional development for superintendents needs to be ongoing and consistent to provide for the development of skills, attitudes, and knowledge (Kowalski, Lasley, & Mahoney, 2008).

The most recent reform movements indicate that it is critical to have highly competent leaders in place to close the gap of student achievement. Professional development and training must span over the career of the leader and be an extension of pre-service learning. The profession is one of complexity and requires deep understandings of study and pervasive learning throughout one's career (Reeves & Berry, 2008).

Development of system leaders has intensified in the midst of the changes presented by the Reform Agenda in NYS. There is a need to explore models of leadership training that will have an abiding impact on organizations. As the landscape changes for public education in NYS, so will the thinking about the development of system leaders and the successful implementation of change in a multifaceted system that is facing pressures from the public, unions, government, and NYSED. Superintendents will need to develop personal understanding of professional development and to purposefully select training that will address their growth and development as a leader (Spanneut et al., 2011).

Change Leadership

Leadership has come into focus as the Reform Agenda in NYS comes under great scrutiny. The leader's role is extremely important in times of change, as is their ability to manage transitions. The leader identifies outcomes and monitors the success towards that outcome by keeping the goal alive for those they lead (Bridges, 2009). The transition leader leads through the changes by helping others see the problem, staying positive, maintaining trust, and strengthening bonds. Leaders must continually assess the organization's ability to manage the changes in order to lead successfully (Bridges, 2009).

Fullan et al. (2005) remind us that knowledge of change and the process comes into focus in the midst of failure of reform initiatives. Knowing the moral purpose of change helps when engaging others in reform movements. Once moral purpose is in place, the building of capacity and working with others in new ways becomes important to the system's growth. Understanding is the third component for successful change, which allows for commitment and ownership of the individuals involved. The culture of the organization must be developed to provide for sustainability through the process of change. Developing a climate of change allows for people

to learn within the organization. Monitoring that change and adjusting to data develops the culture of evaluation and promotes accountability at all levels. Leaders who exemplify innovation and the ability to develop the capacity of others, while understanding the change process, will have success with sustainable reform. The seventh component in the change process is developing coherence so people can see the goal and understand how everything interconnects. The final driver is the support of changing individuals, systems, and leaders within the context of change (Fullan et al., 2005).

Reeves (2002) discusses the need to see leadership in the frame of standards and continual improvement in order to move organizations forward. He shares that successful leaders wrap their arms around the concept that *life is difficult* and apply this knowledge as they address change within the organization to have success and accomplishment. Reeves (2002) further notes that "change occurs if there is conscious recognition that the human equation governs individuals and collaborative decisions" (p. 26). People need to know what the impact is on them and what they personally will gain from the change.

According to Louis (2003), school leaders must make significant shifts in their thinking in order to survive the new landscape. This change will be grounded in a democratic model that looks to delegate and empower teachers. The principal or district leader becomes more of a facilitator who puts frameworks in place for success. The premise is to have schools function well, whether the leader is in the building or not. Solutions come from everyone in the organization, and communal decisions are embraced.

Sustainable change by leaders was investigated by Goleman et al. (2002). The authors lead us to understanding the need to ensure that the whole organization embraces emotional intelligence leadership. Leaders must promote an atmosphere of learning, challenge the

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organization to try new things, and vision out the future and where they want to be. What the leader embraces and commits to becomes the fabric of how the employees will operate within the organization. Leaders can move through this process successfully by challenging themselves and by using resources, such as executive coaching, to help become resonant leaders who empower others and are enthusiastic in order to lead with a vision.

Lambert (2003) identifies the need for leaders to develop themselves by building internal capacity and promoting collective commitment to learning for all students. She encourages leaders to launch "a shared and visionary journey into school improvement" (Lambert, 2003, p. 95). She highlights the importance of engaging all stakeholders within the organization in order to provide for improved results for learners.

Reeves (2006) and Lambert (2003) agree that as globalization and change impact schools, leaders must respond to those shifts by understanding the need to embrace the value of unification among parents, community, and administration.

Cultural challenges have emerged with the onset of globalization. The need for leaders to be learners and cultural managers has become inevitable as globalization and technology has spiraled and become pervasive. Cultural challenges are upon us, forcing leaders to have partnerships and multicultural networks. This is a time when leaders need to be provided with concepts and tools that model how to deal with cultural problems (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) indicates the need for leaders to communicate with each other and to become cognizant of the need to develop an awareness of how to create cultural spaces to allow for this to happen.

Stewart et al. (2012) researched barriers to educational reform through a study of Minnesota schools. Their findings identified two areas of need in terms of professional development for superintendents:

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1. District leaders can increase their ability to respond to reform efforts through professional development sessions aimed at increasing knowledge of successful strategies regarding reform efforts. Professional development focused on school wide strategies, such as PLCs or RTI can provide resources for implementation that can begin to bring about reform in schools.

2. District leaders can increase their ability to respond to reform efforts through professional development sessions aimed at advocating for leadership with the skills to enact substantial change in the operations of how schools are addressing student learning. (Stewart et al., 2012, p. 9)

The NYS Regents' Reform Agenda brought multiple changes to the role of the superintendent. One such change was described by Wright and Harris (2010), who studied the role of superintendents in addressing the gaps under the shifts in expectations brought forth by these new initiatives. Their findings emphasize the need for superintendents to recognize cultural proficiency and to train in varied approaches to address cultural differences. Superintendents that had knowledge from reading and abilities from practice were able to use that knowledge to address the implementation of vision and goals.

System leaders' roles continue to evolve, as pressure from policy makers to address a shift in globalization and the impact on education becomes reality. School leaders must continually build capacity and understand the need to make shifts in their thinking while adapting to new terrain during reform efforts. Understanding the change process and applying those tenants will assist leaders in moving organizations successfully through change.

Twenty-First Century Leaders

Leadership roles are characterized as important for the 21st century by Alvy and Robbins

(2010). They encourage leaders to embrace lifelong learning and identify ten leadership

qualities, beliefs and actions, which are focused on the success of leaders:

1. Implementing and sustaining a mission and vision with profound clarity

2. Communicating ideas effectively

3. Building a diverse and competent team

4. Engendering trust, loyalty, and respect

5. Leading and serving with emotional intelligence

6. Exercising situational competence

7. Rising beyond personal and professional trials

8. Exercising purposeful visibility

9. Demonstrating personal growth

10. Believing that hope can become reality. (Alvy & Robbins, 2004, pp. 3-4)

Understanding history, the value of professional growth, and leading by example are emphasized

as elements that will have a long lasting impact on students' lives, as leaders find their way in the

journey to educate all students successfully (Alvy & Robbins 2010).

Petrie (2013), in his white paper, shares that leadership development programs have

common issues related to focus, connectivity, and leader isolation, and they are too short. He

outlines the need to understand adult development phases and the types of thinking adults have at

each phase in the *Vertical Development Model.* The emphasis is teaching competencies, such as

strategic thinking, leading change, conflict, and leading across boundaries.

The challenges that leaders face from around the world have many similarities including

the following: managerial effectiveness, inspiring others, developing employees, leading a team,

guiding change, and managing internal stakeholders, as identified by 736 participants from

China/Hong Kong, Egypt, India, Singapore, Spain, United Kingdom, and the U.S. in a study conducted by Creative Leadership, Inc. (Gentry, Eckert, Stawiski, & Zhao, 2013, p. 2). Gentry et al. (2013) highlight that leaders of the future work across cultural boundaries and must face a more complex environment by working with the government, addressing the need to be competitive and to communicate effectively with diverse constituents.

Understanding the roles of 21st century leaders and the global challenges they face, along with understanding the phases of adult development and the need to emphasize teaching competencies, will play a role in the future development of systems leaders.

Summary

This literature identified leadership as critical to the success of schools. In a time of great change with the NYS Reform Agenda being implemented, leadership roles and responsibilities have changed. Research reported that the role of the superintendent is critical to the success of change reform within districts. The superintendent is responsible for guiding others through change while engaging and motivating them to embrace new challenges.

Successful leaders set a vision and develop and monitor goals for student achievement, while setting a positive tone. Change is less successful without strong leadership.

In summary, the literature further addresses the pressure superintendents are under to change in response to the Reform Agenda. Different leadership skills will need to be employed, inclusive of strength, guiding vision, and the ability to engage others. Leaders need to be committed to professional development for themselves and others in the face of change. They must have a strong background in curriculum development and in the monitoring and evaluation of student progress towards goals set. Leaders must be willing to understand themselves and to be in control of their emotions and their ability to effectuate change. They must embrace leading

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and understand how to foster collaboration and development of constituents.

Literature reveals that development of system leaders is critical to the future success of school systems (Alvy & Robbins, 2010; Petrie, 2013; Stewart et al., 2012). Having set leadership standards and benchmarking needs against these standards provides for a starting point in the identification of training leaders in the preparation for the implementation of the NYS Reform initiatives.

Coaching, mentoring, face to face training, and diversifying leadership by empowering others all point to the need for leaders to better understand their own need for growth, learning best practices in addressing change, and developing skills that bring groups of people together to collaborate in order to meet goals set forth by the organization.

Limitations were evident in the existing research regarding studies that speak to how system leaders are addressing their own transition to the Regents' Reform Agenda in NYS and perceptions of their preparation.

Through this qualitative study, the researcher hoped to gain insight into leaders' approaches to professional development, preparation to implement the NYS Common Core Curriculum, application of learning in regards to the Reform Agenda, roles superintendents desire as part of the Reform Agenda, and future needs of these practitioners in terms of professional development. This study examined the perceptions of 18 superintendents to develop a deeper understanding of practices and perceptions of individual preparations addressing the NYS educational reform initiatives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study investigated perceptions of superintendents regarding their own professional development and preparation in terms of the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda. Four questions were identified which focused on professional development approaches, preparation, application, and roles of the system leader. The qualitative research process was selected to allow the researcher to obtain deeper understandings (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012) of the aforementioned four key concepts.

This chapter was organized to include the following sections: Purpose Statement, Research Questions, Research Design, Target Population, Interview Questions, Data Collection, Data and Reliability, Data Analysis, Delimitations, and Bias.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the Regents' Reform Agenda. The Reform Agenda is a change model to address implementing Common Core Standards and Assessments; building instructional data systems; recruiting, developing, and maintaining quality teachers and principals; and turning around lowest achieving schools.

Research questions

This study was designed to yield data that would allow the formation of recommendations to practitioners and policy makers regarding the preparation, training, and roles for system leaders to effectively implement and embed best practices in the culture of public education for long-term change and impact on student learning.

The research questions were as follows:

1. How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

2. How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

3. How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader in regards to the Reform Agenda?

4. What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

Research Design

This qualitative study investigated how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the Regents' Reform Agenda and perceptions. This researcher used a qualitative research approach based on research designed to explore individual choices on how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in response to the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda. "The use of qualitative research provided for inquiry focused on individual meaning within the complexity of the topic" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Creswell (2009) describes a qualitative study as:

> a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants' setting; analyzing data inductively, building from particulars to general themes, and making interpretation of meaning of data. (p. 232)

Phenomenological strategy was applied in this research. Creswell (2009) identifies the use of a general phenomenological approach as valuable when a researcher is seeking to understand the specific experiences of individuals to draw deep meaning and patterns for findings while research is being conducted.

Instrumentation

The interview questions developed by the researcher were mapped back to four core research questions. The instrument was a 15-question document, which mapped to the following four key concepts: preparation, application, resources, and leadership involvement in the Reform Agenda (see Appendix A).

The questions were reviewed by a panel of practitioners consisting of two superintendents with over ten years of experience in the field who had been actively engaged in the Reform Agenda. In addition, the questions were initially pilot tested by five superintendents who had strong experience with school reform and who were actively involved in state and local training in relation to the Reform Agenda. Revisions were made and the resulting set of edited questions were used during interviews (see Appendix A). The qualitative research study "asks for an exploration of a central phenomenon" and allows the researcher to elicit "varied perspectives of participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 129).

Target Population

The target population was NYS superintendents of schools from districts where a Reward School was identified by the NYSED in 2013-2014. Reward Schools are schools that made significant progress or that had high achievement levels state wide with minimal gaps between subgroups on the NYS assessments. The selection of superintendents was also based on regional performance by selecting the higher performing schools within the region. Higher performing schools in this study were listed as Reward Schools for the 2013-2014 school year located on the NYSED website (Schwartz, 2013).

The total population was 353 schools (including five charters) approved on the Rewards List. A total of 194 school districts were on the 2013-2014 Reward Lists. There were 175 school districts on the list, excluding New York City, identified as Reward Schools.

Eighty-seven of these schools had superintendents with five or more years of experience as a superintendent. Participants had at least five years of experience as a superintendent in order to have participated in the shift to the NYS Common Core. Therefore, only superintendents with over five years of experience were participants in the study, excluding one city district that had less than five years of experience to allow for a more balanced comparison of urban, rural, and suburban schools. NYS Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) provided a database to assist with the identification of districts on the Reward list whose superintendents had been employed five or more years as a superintendent.

Reward Schools were not evenly distributed among NYS schools. One hundred and forty-seven suburban, 21 rural, and 7 urban schools were on the Rewards list. The researcher was interested in statewide perceptions of superintendents in school districts with improved performance by NYS defined standards. Therefore, superintendents were purposely selected from each network region. NYS is divided into six network regions as identified by the NYSED. NYSED divides the state into six Network Region Teams. In order to ensure a statewide geographic distribution for this study, reward districts were categorized into the six regions by using the NYS Joint Management Team Guidelines (see Appendix B). The *List of school districts in New York* (2014) was referenced to further organize districts selected into the six regions.

The researcher sought both male and female participants. Nine female superintendents and nine male superintendents were selected for the study. NYSCOSS provided a database to

further identify the gender of the superintendents to see if there were differences between genders in pursuing professional development. This data was crosschecked with the 2013-2014 NYSCOSS Directory.

Eighty-seven of the school districts had superintendents who had five years or more as a superintendent delineated by region and school type in the Table 1.

Table 1

Summary Chart: Distribution of School Districts with Reward Schools and Superintendents who Have Five Years or Over as a Superintendent

Type of district	Region						
	West	Midwest	Mid State	Hudson Valley	Capital	Long Island	Total
Urban	0	1	1	1	1	0	5
Suburban	8	10	9	17	6	25	75
Rural	3	1	4	0	1	0	9
Total	11	12	14	18	8	25	88[a]

[a] Including 1 urban without five years experience as a superintendent.

Creswell (2009) notes that, "the researcher using qualitative study purposely selects participants to better help the researcher to address the research question and the problem" (p. 178). The participant sample was selected deliberately to further identify if there are any nuances specific to the criteria selected and implications for specific subgroups. Furthermore, this type of sampling provided for more balanced and valid data that limited opportunity for bias (Lauer, 2006). School superintendents who met the stated criteria were then invited based on convenience. No compensation was offered.

The Need/resource capacity index (New York State Education Department [NYSED], Office of Prekindergarten through Grade 12 Education [P12], Information and Reporting Services [IRS], 2012) was initially referred to in order to identify the district types: suburban, rural, and urban. This list was not inclusive of all schools noted on the Reward List and did not delineate the district type in the manner needed for this study. Therefore, *The National Center for Education Statistics Agency Type* list obtained from NYS School Boards Association (NYSSBA) was examined in order to further analyze district types. Discrepancies existed, which prompted a cross reference with the NYS SEDREF Files (NYSED, State Education Reference File [SEDREF], 2014). SEDREF files were found to be all encompassing and allowed for the researcher to use this document solely. Selection of schools, which were suburban, urban, and rural, was purposeful in order to examine type differences.

A consolidated database was created with subheadings to identify region, district name, superintendents with five years or more service, SEDREF district type, and gender. The database, once created, was re-sorted by region and SEDREF type. Superintendents were then selected, ensuring that suburban, urban, and rural schools were represented to provide for statewide distribution. In the selection process, the researcher used convenience sampling by including those known to the researcher. From this resulting pool, the researcher purposefully selected 22 superintendents who included male, female, suburban, urban, and rural distribution. The final selection of superintendents included 22 superintendents representing six regions (see Table 2). Twenty-two superintendents were provided with letters to safeguard the planned participation of 18 superintendents in the study.

Table 2

Distribution of Districts with Reward Schools by Region and Selected Superintendents who have Five years or Over as a Superintendent

	Region						
Type of district	West	Midwest	Mid State	Hudson Valley	Capital	Long Island	Total
Urban	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Suburban	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Rural	3	1	2	0	1	0	7
Total	5	4	4	3	4	2	22[a]

[a] Including 1 urban without five years experience as a superintendent.

Data Collection

The researcher made application to the Sage Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C). Once approval was received, letters to participate in the research were sent to the 22 superintendents identified for this research (see Appendix D). Participants received a letter and a follow up phone call one week after letters were sent to invite them to meet with the researcher and to review the informed consent form. Once confirmation of participation was received, each participant was emailed the interview questions (see Appendix A) and was given two weeks for reflection. Contact was made by phone to the superintendents to set up a face-to-face interview. Superintendents who could not meet with the researcher were given the option of an interview over the phone or by Skype. Participants were also allowed to opt out of questions if they were not comfortable addressing specific topics.

The researcher finalized a selection of superintendents based on returned Informed Consent Forms submitted to the researcher. Eighteen superintendents agreed to participate in the

study (see Table 3). Superintendents who participated represented two urban districts, 12 suburban districts, and four rural districts. The goal was to have three superintendents participate from each of the six network regions to have a regionally balanced look state-wide data. The researcher was able to address this goal in four out of the six network regions.

Table 3

Summary Chart: Distribution of Selected Reward Schools by Region with Superintendents who Have Five Years or Over in That District as Superintendent, Who Submitted Informed Consent Forms and Participated in the Study

Type of district	Region						
	West	Midwest	Mid State	Hudson Valley	Capital	Long Island	Total
Urban		O			E		2
Suburban	C, I	J	G, N	L, M	P, A	B, Q	11
Rural	K	U	S, D		H		5
Total	3	3	4	2	4	2	18[a]

[a] Including 1 urban without five years experience as a superintendent.

A tape recorder was used during the interviews, which lasted no more than 45 to 60 minutes. Participants received the questions with the consent letter and were also asked to give consent to be audio taped. A final transcript was typed by a confidential transcriber and sent to each superintendent to review for accuracy.

All interview responses were stored on a password-protected computer and destroyed after the research was completed and successfully defended. All documents were kept on file and kept confidential in a locked file cabinet and on a secure computer that was accessible only to the researcher.

Confidentiality

There were minimal risks in the study conducted, and a high emphasis on confidentiality was placed on the process and communicated to the participants. Superintendents' names did not appear in any form. Responses were reported by using an alphabetical system. District names were changed to pseudonyms.

Data Validity and Reliability

Validity of the interview questions was achieved by mapping the questions back to the four core research questions. Once the instrument was finalized, the document was used with superintendents. Superintendents were asked to independently answer the questions in order to validate that the data received had mapped to the four core research questions.

Data Analysis

The data were organized so patterns could be identified. Patterns were then organized into themes and coded. Data were reviewed to identify patterns and coded according to an eight step process recommended by Creswell (2009).

A narrative report was developed to summarize the data. Once themes were identified, maps were created to organize the research findings. Further research was conducted in order to assist with the analysis of responses. Emergent themes helped the researcher organize findings and link back to the research questions.

The data collected from the superintendents was organized such that patterns could be identified and emerging themes delineated which pointed to pathways. Differences were tracked among the individual superintendents as it related to the Regents' Reform Agenda. Patterns were then organized into themes and coded. A narrative report was developed to summarize the data collection and to provide insight of the data collected.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to data collection from 18 superintendents in NYS from rural, suburban, and urban settings. Superintendents were carefully selected from each network region within the aforementioned settings, based on district type, gender and experience. A larger sampling of superintendents may have been of benefit. However, the smaller sampling and qualitative choice yielded deeper understandings on issues prevalent in terms of implementation of the NYS Reform Agenda.

Due to the relationship of the researcher to the practitioners, and in consideration that the researcher is a superintendent, member checking was employed to further validate data for accuracy. According to Vogt et al. (2012), this strategy allows for an additional layer of ensuring data is valid and not impaired in anyway.

Bias

The researcher has been a superintendent for 12 years and has seen three major reforms in her career over the past 29 years. The researcher has been fully engaged in implementing the New Common Core Reform Agenda in her own district over the past two years. This particular reform shift has felt different to this researcher, who was intrigued by the level of conflict it created statewide. As a leader, it is a natural instinct to want to fix what is believed to be broken. It was important to put aside personal bias to conduct this study by looking at insight of leaders in terms of the perceptions of superintendents regarding their own professional development and preparation in terms of the NYS's Education Reform Agenda.

Although the researcher had a strong view of the Common Core and its implementation in NYS, through a qualitative study the researcher was able to spend quality time with practitioners in the field to develop understandings of the research study through the

investigation of core questions focused on how they approached professional development for themselves, how they prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments, how they applied what they have learned as system leaders in regards to the Reform Agenda, and to understand what leadership role they wanted as part of the Reform Agenda.

Research on leadership roles in reform, developing system leaders, and the value of leadership in the implementation of a vision to effectuate a pervasive change on schools was completed in order to develop findings and recommendations to policy makers on implementation of the Common Core with emphasis on leadership learning, roles, and influence of the vision.

The researcher was in the same situation as other superintendents and needed to let other ideas come to the forefront from practitioners. By doing so, this informed the researcher's own practice. However, that being said, as the research was conducted the researcher needed to be cognizant of the types of ideas and means of achieving the goals as set forth in the protocol for collection of the data as to not influence the results.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This chapter presents findings of the perceptions of participating superintendents regarding their own professional development in relation to the Regents' Reform Agenda. The data analysis was organized and reported based on four core research question; analyzing approach to professional development; preparation to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments; applying learning as a system leader in regards to the Regents' Reform Agenda; and leadership role superintendents desire as part of the Regents' Reform Agenda. This study used a qualitative research approach to explore individual choices on how superintendents addressed their own professional development in relation to the NYS Regents' Reform Agenda. All schools in this study were recognized by NYSED for being Reward Schools. The target population for the study was NYS school superintendents in those schools who had served in the role for at least five years. This study was delimited to data collection from 18 superintendents in NYS from rural, suburban, and urban settings. Superintendents were purposefully selected from each network region within the aforementioned district type, based on gender and experience. Several regions had no urban rewards schools with superintendents with that longevity, and two had no rural in those regions. The researcher included an urban superintendent with less than 5 years experience to preserve the district type distribution and geographical distribution.

This qualitative study collected data through an individual interview process. Interviews consisted of 15 questions which related to the four research questions. The questionnaire was developed to gain a more in depth understanding of the research questions being posed. The data collected from the superintendents was organized such that patterns could be identified to demonstrate commonalities and differences. Patterns were coded then organized into themes.

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Findings were placed into excel spreadsheets to allow the researcher the ability to manipulate findings by district type, gender, and region.

This chapter presents each research question, tables of coded and thematic responses, and select responses from superintendents. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

2. How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

3. How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader in regards to the Reform Agenda?

4. What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

Interview questions can be found in Appendix A of this study. The analysis according to each research question is presented next.

Research Question 1: How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

There were 18 participating superintendents in the study. Participants responded to the four interview questions related to the research question: What professional development have you participated in to support your growth?; Who has provided the professional development?; How often do you participate in professional development?; and What approach to professional development works best for you?

Responses were coded and placed into themes. Prevalent themes were charted and sorted to analyze similarities and differences. There was a wide range of responses regarding how superintendents approached professional development for themselves. Research Question 1 examined participating superintendents' approaches to professional development. The term

approach was not clearly defined as part of this research nor clarified for participating

superintendents during the interviews. The analysis of interview data revealed that participants

defined approach in five themes; mandates, philosophy, value of professional development,

frequency, and mode of delivery as five components to how superintendents were approaching

professional development for themselves.

Mandates. Mandated implementation of the NYS Reform Agenda became an

underlying theme for 11 superintendents as they responded to the interview question on approach

to professional development for themselves. Superintendent D noted that Annual Professional

Performance Review (APPR) training was essential. Superintendent D further stated:

> I have gone to some training from LEAF... They put on a great program that was for the
>
> APPR. I have also attended all of the lead evaluator trainings… and I've done a lot of
>
> reading on my own through Engage New York. (personal communication, April 1, 2014)

Superintendent C also focused on professional development specific to the APPR

implementation, "…what I have been doing is attending every regional seminar... I've gotten

myself trained in the APPR process to be the lead evaluator for administrators" (personal

communication, April 1, 2014).

> Superintendent A stated "…I went to everything… offered because there is a

requirement for professional development that's embedded in the APPR to start with…"

(personal communication, March 28, 2014).

Philosophy. Superintendent G offered a broader perspective on professional

development by describing a variety of experiences that have helped to support growth:

> I have always participated in some sort of professional development throughout my
>
> career. I have felt that it is absolutely essential and it is a range. I belong to my state

organization. They offer a tremendous amount of professional development and support.

That also offers me colleague to colleague work so that I can understand what is

happening in other districts. I attend private professional development when it comes up.

If something looks good, it looks like it's something that will help my district; I will

attend that. (personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Superintendent O offered a unique perspective, but still associated with the school

community:

The best professional development, I consider is talking with teachers. I'm in classrooms

every day. I attend PLC meetings, workshops, so learning from teachers…I've learned

from those opportunities…and social networking sites, twitter, Facebook. I've done lots

of twitter to be honest. (personal communication, April 10, 2014)

Value of professional development. Participating superintendents expressed widely

varying opinions of the value of professional development.   Several saw it as not valuable

at all. For example, Superintendent B observed, "I've attended some. I would not say it was

terribly important in my growth" (personal communication, April 1, 2014). Superintendent C

shared that district operations took precedent over professional development, "…Generally kind

of homebound here dealing with all kinds of other aspects of the district" (personal

communication, April 1, 2014).

On the other end of the spectrum, many superintendents communicated that they

embraced professional development and saw it as important to their growth:

I love professional development. It has shaped me in my entire career. So I look for as

many opportunities as possible. So I'll start by saying anything locally that I can

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participate in and that includes opportunities to have people from the outside you know to speak to those of us locally. (Superintendent Q, personal communication, April 5, 2014)

Frequency. Participating superintendents in this study shared the frequency in which they spent time on professional development. Superintendent time spent on professional development was analyzed in table 4. Sixteen out of 18 participating superintendents responded to the frequency in which they participated in professional development. Data are presented by variables in Tables 4, 5 and 6, which address district type, gender, and region.

One out of two urban superintendents saw professional development as a daily obligation and experience. Superintendent O described participation in professional development through the use of technology to address ease of access and increased frequency, "Daily via social networking and twitter, but probably once a quarter at some formal opportunity workshop, somewhere in the country or regionally" (personal communication, April 10, 2014).

Table 4

Frequency with Which Participating Superintendents Have Participated in Professional Development Sorted by District Type

District type	Total # of superintendents	Professional development participation					
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Bimonthly	Multiple per year	As possible
Rural	4	0	0	2	0	1	0
Suburban	12	2	2	0	1	2	4
Urban	2	1	0	0	0	0	1

Two suburban superintendents participated in professional development weekly. Superintendent J, a suburban superintendent, shared, "I would say at least weekly, because I'm always doing something" (personal communication, April 3, 2014). Data revealed two of the rural superintendents participating in this study participated in professional development monthly and bimonthly, as well as multiple times per year. Half of the participating Suburban

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superintendents spent more time daily, weekly and multiple times per year on professional development.

Data was analyzed by gender of superintendents to determine how often they participated in professional development. Male and female superintendents were interviewed to determine how often they participated in professional development (see Table 5).

Table 5

Frequency with Which Participating Superintendents Have Participated in Professional Development Sorted by Gender

		Professional development participation					
Gender	Total # of superintendents	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Bimonthly	Multiple per year	As possible
Female	9	0	2	2	1	2	2
Male	9	3	0	0	0	1	3

Data revealed gender differences between male and female participating superintendents. The majority of female superintendents reported participating in professional development weekly, bimonthly, and multiple times per year. The majority of male participants identified daily and often as possible in regards to the frequency they participated in professional development. Gender differences emerged between male and female superintendents participating in this study with females having a higher frequency attending professional development weekly and monthly.

The majority of female superintendents participated in professional development monthly and multiple times per year. "It probably averages out to about a couple of days a month. If you averaged it out, obviously sometimes you do something more intensive…" (Superintendent H, personal communication, April 2, 2014).

Female Superintendent K noted, "I would say formal, four times a year. I would say informal, probably eight to ten. I recently started participating in online communities through

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Twitter" (personal communication, April 3, 2014). A theme of technology as a vehicle for addressing frequency of accessing professional development emerged for both genders interviewed.

Superintendent responses were analyzed by region to see how often superintendents participated in professional development (see Table 6). Differences did not emerge related to regional location of superintendents in NYS. More than half of the participating superintendents reported being engaged in professional development at least monthly.

Table 6

Frequency with which Participating Superintendents Have Participated in Professional Development Sorted by Network Region

Region	Total # of superintendents	Professional development participation					
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Bimonthly	Multiple per year	As possible
Capital	4	0	0	1	1	0	2
Hudson	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Long Island	2	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mid State	3	0	0	1	0	2	0
Mid West	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
West	3	0	0	0	0	1	2

Mode of delivery. Mode of delivery for professional development was an emerging theme, which provided insight regarding the delivery models which best addressed superintendent needs. Tables 7, 8, and 9 are summaries of participant responses by district type, gender, and region. Fifteen out of the 18 participants responded to this question. Some participants responded in a variety of ways.

District type did not emerge as a factor (see Table 7). The researcher was unable to determine a clear pattern of preferences for the approach to professional development. Several

suburban and urban superintendents did prefer professional development provided in a group setting. Urban Superintendent E disclosed:

> …I like the mixture…I'm not someone who will…go to a workshop only…I'll read journals...And one of the most valuable, I find, is situations where it can be group discussion and talking and analyzing what information is being shared with us with your superintendent colleagues or administrators in our region. (personal communication, April 1, 2014)

Table 7

Analysis of Mode of Delivery for Professional Development That Works Best for Selected Superintendents Sorted by District Type

District type	Total # of superintendents	Professional development participation							
		Individual	Group	Conferences	With colleagues	Online	Reading	Face to face	Other
Rural	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Suburban	12	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Urban	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0

A relatively small number of the same superintendents gravitated towards reading, and several of suburban and rural superintendents stated that face-to-face professional development was their preference.   The mode of delivery, "other" was defined by three superintendents as consultants, applying learning to teach others, and theoretical context and then connecting.

Gender was further analyzed to determine if there were differences in mode of delivery to professional development for selected superintendents by gender. Table 8 summarizes the responses by themes.

No female superintendents choose individual professional development or with colleagues while over half of male superintendents stated they supported individual professional development and with colleagues. It was stated by Superintendent D:

I need to be with people to learn. I like to read but I also need that stimulation of learning

from others as well. I'm not a total online learner doing the chat room thing. I can do

some of that but I've got to bounce the ideas off of people…But to just have read that

book by myself and think it through it would not have been as meaningful as having the

discussions with all of us and reflecting on it, because I am definitely a reflective

learner… (personal communication, April 1, 2014)

Table 8

Analysis of Mode of Delivery for Professional Development That Works Best for Selected Superintendents Sorted by Gender

Gender	Total # of superintendents	Professional development participation							
		Individual	Group	Conferences	With colleagues	Online	Reading	Face to face	Other
Female	9	0	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Male	9	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	0

Superintendent G emphasized the value of the professional development over the mode

of delivery:

That's a great question. It depends on how good the professional development is that I

attend. If I attend something that is just over the top good, that's the best … right before

NYSCOSS; (a consultant did a pre-conference piece.) It was a small group, and he was

very personal with everybody; gave a lot of great examples. So I loved that, but there can

be individual consultants. It depends on the quality. I'll gain from anything as long as I

connect. (personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Table 9 presents the mode of delivery to professional development by region. Eighteen

superintendents were interviewed from six different regions. Fifteen superintendents responded

to the question on mode of delivery of professional development that worked for respondents.

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Table 9

Analysis of Mode of Delivery for Professional Development That Works Best for Selected Superintendents Sorted by Network Region

Region	Total # of superintendents	Professional development participation							
		Individual	Group	Conferences	With colleagues	Online	Reading	Face to face	Other
Capital	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Hudson	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Long Island	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mid State	3	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	0
Mid West	4	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
West	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

In summary, the largest number of respondents choose group however those respondents represented three of six regions; "I find it is situations where it can be group discussion and talking and analyzing what information is being shared with us with your superintendent colleagues or administrators in our region" (Superintendent E, personal communication, April 1, 2014). A low percentage of superintendents from the Mid West and Western Regions identified face-to-face professional development as the preferred mode of learning. Superintendent I shared, "I really do much better face to face. If I have to do a webinar, I mean I will do them, but I really like the interaction after the webinar to discuss what was presented" (personal communication, April 3, 2014). Superintendent K expressed a more kinesthetic mode of learning as the preference, "I guess I kind of like to see things in action more than actually experience them myself when it's in a learning mode" (personal communication, April 3, 2014).

Many of the participating superintendents identified that their participation in professional development was defined by the initiatives set forth by NYS Reform Agenda. Professional development was embraced by the majority of superintendents who participated in this study and was seen as critical as part of their work on a daily basis. Findings further

revealed that the majority of superintendents participated in professional development as possible or multiple times per year.

Research Question 2: How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

The focus of Research Question 2 was how superintendents had prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Interview questions supported the investigation into this research: how participating superintendents have used their preparation in Common Core, what resources have best met the needs of each superintendent, and what further preparation is needed. The responses were analyzed with district type, gender, and regional differences used as variables for consideration to gain in depth understandings. Table 10 summarizes the preparation superintendents had in Common Core Standards and Assessments by district type. All 18 superintendents responded to the questions presented on preparation to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Three superintendents reported multiple providers and their responses are included in the responses below.

Table 10

Analysis of What Preparation Participating Superintendents Have Had in Common Core Standards and Assessments Sorted by District Type

District type	Total # of superintendents	Professional development providers			
		NYSED	BOCES	Self directed	Little or none
Rural	4	2	3	0	0
Suburban	12	2	3	5	4
Urban	2	0	1	1	0

Note. BOCES = Board of Cooperative Educational Services. NYSED = New York State Education Department

Resources used by participating superintendents were shared as important when discussing how superintendents prepared for Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Superintendent responses varied state-wide. Three themes emerged: professional development providers, professional development utilization, and professional development gaps which centered on providers of professional development including, BOCES, SED, NYSCOSS, peers, and none or own.

Professional development providers. Data revealed two thirds of participating superintendents in rural and suburban settings prepared for the Common Core Standards and Assessments through BOCES and through the use of the NYSED website. Data revealed participating superintendents in rural schools expressed they had a high level of support from BOCES and the NYSED website to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Overall, however, data revealed that BOCES was most used even though less than half of participating superintendents in rural, urban, and suburban settings prepared for the Common Core through BOCES.

Seven of 18 participating superintendents, which were distributed across the state in five of six regions, had participating superintendents that attended professional development to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments through BOCES. Participating superintendents from the Mid State Region had no participation in professional development at BOCES for preparation of the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

> BOCES support was shared as a resource by superintendents from each district type, I would say the work of our BOCES has probably been the best. They have done a lot of work to distill the package and disseminate the important elements of the Common Core and the assessments and what they mean. (Superintendent A, personal communication, March 28, 2014)

Superintendent E supported the use of BOCES to guide them through the Reform Agenda: "I would have to lean on our local BOCES for a lot of help and a lot of deciphering of some of the information that has been put out" (personal communication, April 1, 2014). Superintendent H found BOCES to be proactive by using a regional approach:

> BOCES…they've taken a very proactive systemic approach. Back in 2010 we had a conversation about how we could approach this regionally as a real opportunity to leverage change instead of a compliance activity and we had made a commitment at the superintendents table that that's what we wanted to do. So as an offshoot of that we have superintendent subcommittees who do a lot of the work at the BOCES. (personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Superintendent K shared that extensive training through BOCES was available (personal communication, April 3, 2014). "The majority of what I've had has come from our local BOCES workshops that they've put on out of the curriculum and instruction department of our BOCES" (Superintendent U, personal communication, May 1, 2014). Superintendent C further shared thoughts regarding services attended through BOCES,

> The people in charge there seem to get the information from Albany and then bring it back to the BOCES and then they've set up various sessions. Last year I attended nine planning sessions. This year, so far, two planning sessions on what's happening at the state level with APPR, with online testing, with the standards. (personal communication, April 1, 2014)

Data revealed no major differences between the genders for participation in professional development for Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Professional development utilization. The NYSED's website was cited as a resource that was valuable and also seen as overwhelming. Data revealed that half of the rural participating superintendents cited the NYSED's website was used as a resource when preparing for the Common Core Standards and Assessments. One out of nine participating male superintendents prepared for the Common Core Standards and Assessments through SED offerings while a third of participating female superintendents prepared for the Common Core by using the NYSED's website and resources.

> Not Engage New York. There's a lot of good things about Engage New York but there's so much and it changes so fast that it's overwhelming. And some of the quality is inconsistent. What has been really useful to me…when we have taken things at the regional level, and we've translated them or distilled them or indexed them or done something to help kind of navigate the volume. (Superintendent H, personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Superintendent I relied on the NYSED website, EngageNY:

> I would say Engage New York would be my number one. I mean there are some very good resources on there. Just being able to go there and look and see what's available there between the videos and the samples…the documents that are on there…just different, every time you click on something there's another interesting resource there. (personal communication, April 3, 2014)

Superintendent O also supported the use of EngageNY for resources, "The combination of videos, modules, other printed materials have been good for me. Definitely a good resource" (personal communication, April 10, 2014).

There were many participating superintendents that stated they used NYSCOSS for their own personal professional development needs; however, participating superintendents did not identify NYSCOSS as the main source for preparation of the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Superintendent D stated, "I have gone to some training from LEAF through NYSCOSS. They put on a great program that was for the APPR" (personal communication, April 1, 2014). Mid State Superintendent N shared support of NYSCOSS:

> I do attend the NYSCOSS conferences. We do superintendent retreats in the summer that has professional development as well a key part in my BOCES, chief school officer group as a result of being part of the faculty of the Superintendents Development Program, and then participating in the things that they do as well. (personal communication, April 4, 2014)

Superintendent M further stated support of NYSCOSS, "… NYSCOSS puts on the Harvard Seminar. I always do that seminar where we work with the researchers for a couple of days. I plan to go there again this summer" (personal communication, April 4, 2014).

Professional development gaps. Six out of 14 urban and suburban superintendents prepared for the Common Core through self directed professional development (see Table 11). One third of the participating suburban superintendents indicated they had completed little to no professional development regarding Common Core Standards and Assessments.

There were 10 out of 18 male and female participating superintendents who reported that they did little to nothing to prepare for the Common Core implementation or were self directed (see Table 11). Participating male superintendents chose self directed professional development

to learn about the Common Core Standards and Assessments two times more than participating

female superintendents.

Table 11

Analysis of What Provider Selected Superintendents Have Had in Common Core Standards and Assessments Sorted by Gender

Gender	Total # of superintendents	Professional development approach			
		NYSED	BOCES	Self directed	Little or none
Female	9	3	4	2	2
Male	9	1	3	4	2

Note. BOCES = Board of Cooperative Educational Services. SED = New York State Education Department.

There was data from four out of the six regions which reflected that participating

superintendents were self directed in preparing for the Common Core Standards and

Assessments (see Table 12).

Table 12

Analysis of What Provider Selected Superintendents Have Had in Common Core Standards and Assessments Sorted by Region

Region	Total # of superintendents	Professional development approach			
		NYSED	BOCES	Self directed	Little or none
Capital	4	1	2	0	1
Hudson	2	0	1	0	1
Long Island	2	1	1	1	0
Mid State	3	1	0	1	0
Mid West	4	0	2	2	1
West	3	1	1	2	1

Note. BOCES = Board of Cooperative Educational Services. SED = New York State Education Department.

Regional differences were analyzed to determine if resources varied by location (Table 13). There was not a consistent trend for a specific resource used by participating superintendents to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Superintendents in the Capital Region found SED's EngageNY website cumbersome and overwhelming. The majority of the superintendents from the Western Region used BOCES to assist in implementation of the Common Core Standards and Assessments. BOCES was also used as a resource by half of the participating superintendents from the Capital Region and Long Island Region.

Table 13

Analysis of What Providers Resources Have Been Used to Assist in Implementing Common Core Standards and Assessments Sorted by Network Region

Region	Total # of superintendents	Resources				
		NYSED	NYSCOSS	BOCES	Peers	None or own
Capital	4	2	0	2	1	1
Hudson	2	1	0	0	0	1
Long Island	2	1	0	1	0	1
Mid State	3	1	0	0	0	2
Mid West	4	2	0	1	1	1
West	3	0	1	2	0	0

Note. BOCES = Board of Cooperative Educational Services. NYSCOSS = New York State Council of School Superintendents. SED = New York State Education Department.

Application of Common Core professional development. During the interviews with participating superintendents further data revealed that the preparation of Common Core assisted superintendents with communicating, goal setting, leading, working with boards, the state, and staff. Data in Table 14 reveal that some participating superintendents from rural and suburban districts used the Common Core Standards and Assessments for goal setting in their schools.

Many suburban participating superintendents noted that Common Core was used to communicate with the staff, Board of Education, public, parents, media, and administration. Superintendent B, shared the benefits of a leader having information in advance so support could be provided to the staff and parents:

> I've used my participation at the state level a great deal because its allowed us…its allowed me to bring things back from the state two, three, four, five months ahead of public release and with…what should I say…a view from underneath so that I can bring the heart of stuff directly to the teachers and administrators and parents. As I said, I often can find it out ahead of time and bring it to people here and then we start to…chewing it all apart and figuring out what were going to do to make sense of it. (personal communication, April 1, 2014)

Table 14

Analysis of How Superintendents Have Used Their Preparation in Common Core Sorted by District Type

		Use of Common Core preparation						
District type	Total # of superintendents	Integrated	BOE	Staff	Goals	Communicating	Leading	State
Rural	4	1	2	1	1	0	0	0
Suburban	12	1	1	1	1	5	4	1
Urban	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

Note. BOE = Board of Education.

Four of the 12 participating suburban superintendents shared that they would use the Common Core to lead. None of the rural or urban participating superintendents identified leading as the use for Common Core. Superintendent E discussed apprehension:

> I think the jury is out. I think there are probably those that would say, yes, we have as much as we need and others saying I wish we had more. I think that the… you know, this has been echoed throughout the State, that the rollout of the common core and the

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whole implementation has been a little dicey and a little questionable. But certainly we

do the best we can and get the information to people as they need it. (personal

communication, April 1, 2014)

District type did not reveal any data differences for how superintendents used their

preparation in the Common Core for integration into the district initiatives implemented in the

district, work with BOE and staff, goal setting, or state level work. None of the rural and urban

participating superintendents cited leading and communicating as how they used their

preparation in the Common Core.

There were no gender differences for participating superintendents using the Common

Core to prepare staff by leading or for communicating. Superintendent A discussed using

Common Core while communicating with officials, "I think I've used my understanding of the

Common Core most in communicating with our elected officials to be honest with you, and

trying to be an influence…an appropriate and positive influence on their work and their

deliberations" (personal communication, March 28, 2014).

Table 15 data reveal responses from participating superintendents by region in regards to

their use of Common Core. Several participating superintendents offered multiple views.

Regional data on how participating superintendents use the Common Core reveal six of the

participating superintendents use Common Core for leading or improvement efforts in five out of

six regions. The majority of Mid State Region participating superintendents did identify leading

as the way they would use Common Core. Three superintendents indicated that Common Core

was integrated into existing programs.

Further half of the Mid West Region participating superintendents used the Common

Core for communicating with constituents. The majority of the participating superintendents in

the Western Region identified preparing staff for preparation of Common Core as a priority.

"Well, I think I used it almost on a daily basis and certainly in discussion with teachers and administrators. That's about the best answer I can give you for that one" (Superintendent I, personal communication, April 3, 2014).

Table 15

Analysis of How Superintendents Have Used Their Preparation in Common Core Sorted by Region

Region	Total # of superintendents	Use of Common Core preparation						
		Integrated	BOE	Staff	Goals	Communicating	Leading	State
Capital	4	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Hudson	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Long Island	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Mid State	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Mid West	4	1	2	0	1	2	0	0
West	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0

Note. BOE = Board of Education.

Additional preparation superintendents needed to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Participating superintendents identified areas of need for additional preparation for Common Core Standards and Assessments; time, online sources, professional development (leadership modules, data and maps), no, and not sure. Data revealed that half of the suburban superintendents cited that they do not want further training in NYS Common Core and Assessments.

Superintendent G further represents others when he stated:

No. I don't feel that I need any additional preparation. We're very familiar with the common core. And again, I think the district is doing as well as it possibly can to integrate the common core into our instruction here. (personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Less than a third of responding rural and suburban superintendents reported they did want more professional development, and six of 16 suburban and rural participating superintendents chose to have it be about leadership, modules, or data maps (see Table 16). Those desiring more training came primarily from the Capital, Midwest, and Long Island Regions.

Table 16

Analysis of What Additional Preparation Participating Superintendents Would Find Useful Sorted by District Type

		Additional preparation				
District type	Total # of superintendents	Time	Online PD	Leadership modules, data, maps	No or not sure	Colleagues
Rural	4	1	1	2	0	0
Suburban	12	0	0	4	6	1
Urban	2	0	0	0	0	2

Note. PD = professional development.

Data in Table 17 reveals additional preparation participating superintendents would find useful by region. Not all participating superintendents responded to the question. One out of four participating superintendents from the Capital Region wanted more time to implement. Both superintendents from Hudson and half from Long Island and Mid West regions were not sure what they needed or did not want more. Half of the participating superintendents from Long Island and the majority of superintendents from Mid State Regions stated they wanted additional training in leadership, data, modules, or mapping.

This research question regarding superintendent preparation to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments revealed data that some participating superintendents identified a need for professional development in modules, data analysis, and curriculum mapping. The majority of participating superintendents was not sure about what they needed more information

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on or did not want more professional development. Several of the participating superintendents

shared the value of working with their colleagues.

Table 17

Analysis of What Additional Preparation Selected Superintendents Would Find Useful Sorted by Network Region

		Additional preparation				
Region	Total # of superintendents	Time	Online PD	Leadership modules, data, maps	No or not sure	Colleagues
Capital	4	1	0	2	0	1
Hudson	2	0	0	0	2	0
Long Island	2	0	0	1	1	0
Mid State	3	0	0	2	1	0
Mid West	4	0	0	1	2	1
West	3	0	1	0	0	1

Note. PD = professional development.

Superintendent Q further stated, "I would again say I'm a proponent of learning from

your next door neighbor, and I've learned a tremendous amount from my local colleagues, people

in like positions as me and also people who wear many different hats" (personal communication,

April 5, 2014).

Research Question 3: How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a

system leader in regards to the Reform Agenda?

Question 3 sought to look at how participating superintendents applied what they learned

in regards to the Reform Agenda as a system leader. All 18 participating superintendents

responded to the research question. Participating superintendents were asked if they applied

learning regarding the Reform Agenda. Data in Table 18 revealed twelve out of 18 participating

superintendents responded no that they had not applied their learning of the Reform Agenda.

"So the reform agenda has colored my work as opposed to driven my work. And I think that's a function of the kind of school district that this is" (Superintendent A, personal communication, March 28, 2014).

Table 18

Analysis of Superintendent Application of Learning in Regards to the Reform Agenda Sorted by District Type

		Appling learning	
District type	Total # of superintendents	Yes	No
Rural	4	1	3
Suburban	12	5	7
Urban	2	0	2

I have not…I haven't promoted it as the reform agenda. What we've done systematically

throughout is that we took, for example, language from the Common Core. Shortly

before this was all rolled out, we adopted an instructional model…a definition and

instructional model for 21st century learning for the district…pointed to the same

language in our instructional model and said see this is connected to what we're doing.

(Superintendent H, personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Superintendent B offered a similar position, "Common Core and APPR have actually

been a huge diversion of time and energy away from what we have been trying to do. That's

probably a better answer for what is real here" (personal communication, April 1, 2014).

Several suburban school superintendents shared their viewpoints:

I think it just goes back to my leadership style more than anything else. I just believe that

in order for people to really buy into something they have to truly understand it. They

have to have an opportunity to ask questions, it can't be shoved down their throats. Any

type of reform agenda can't be expected to be successful in less than three to five years

because that's what change takes to be sustainable. (Superintendent I, personal

communication, April 3, 2014)

Superintendent R further expressed, "I'm not promoting the reform agenda so, I'm probably using

my learning to translate it and make it make sense in the culture of our already high expectations

(personal communication, April 10, 2014). Superintendent L noted that with high performing

schools, the Reform Agenda is not a strategic direction, "Well, it's just…it would not be the

strategic direction for my district…I don't even have to say that out loud, not when 98 percent of

the kids are going to college" (personal communication, April 4, 2014).

The third of participating superintendents who did apply the Reform Agenda used it to set

a vision, to communicate, to direct resources, and to train others. Superintendent J described the

dilemma associated with the Reform Agenda, "I'm not an expert in leadership, but I've done a lot

of reading about leadership and the challenge there is watching the state do it wrong and then

trying to help your staff do it right" (personal communication, April 3, 2014).

Superintendent G addressed about the concept of change in regards to the Reform

Agenda:

Well, I've been a student of change throughout my entire career so any time you talk

about things like this; you're really talking about change. I believe that we use the

strategies and the principles that are best known for helping people to embrace and to

work through change. (personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Only one of 18 participating superintendents, a suburban superintendent from Long

Island, utilized the training they received to set a vision. Rural and urban participating

superintendents had no one respond to vision setting as a way they would apply to the Reform

Agenda. More male than female participating superintendents identified training as useful.

Communication was identified as a way in which three participating superintendents

applied the Reform Agenda. One out of 12 participating suburban superintendent stated the

Reform Agenda was used to communicate to staff, boards, and community. These responses

were no consistent with research question two responses about Common Core.

> …Common Core and the potential and the piece of the content rigor, that has certainly
>
> shaped my message to the community and as well as even the message internally in terms
>
> of our value and what we value and what we focus on as systems versus not succumbing
>
> to some of the distractions that unfortunately have become common in the political arena.
>
> (Superintendent P, personal communication, April 4, 2014)

Social media was used by Superintendent N to communicate the Reform Agenda:

> We've used our social media. We have just external communications, newsletters,
>
> websites, letters home, etc. Internally, it was really important as the spokesperson of the
>
> district and, by proxy, the spokesperson for the Regents' Reform Agenda to our
>
> instructional staff then I needed to be able to communicate that message to our staff.
>
> (personal communication, April 4, 2014)

Superintendent P also stressed the importance of communication:

> …It impacts my conversations and discussions with the other principals. It impacts the
>
> redefining of expectations with veteran principals. So I would say yes in that sense of me
>
> trying to help those that lead at the ground level, lead differently one and two become
>
> much more knowledgeable about what's happening so they can in fact lead more
>
> effectively. (personal communication, April 4, 2014)

Superintendent D noted the use of written and verbal communication was supported by him in regards to the Reform Agenda, "I have spent time for example, writing things in our newsletter. Our local radio station has the superintendent on every month. And so for example, I wrote a couple of articles about the common core and common sense" (personal communication, April 1, 2014). Superintendent N agreed that training helped in communication:

> I needed to be able to communicate that message to our staff. So it was important to have a clear understanding of the Regents' Reform Agenda but also develop a vision of how that reform agenda will work in our district. (personal communication, April 4, 2014)

Table 19 presented data of superintendent application of learning in regards to the Reform Agenda by region. Capital Region used the Regents' Reform Agenda the most with half of them applying their learning. In other regions less than half of the participating superintendents used their applied learning in regards to the Reform Agenda. In the Western Region only one out of 18 participating superintendents used their applied learning for setting a vision.

Table 19

Analysis of Superintendent Application of Learning in Regards to the Reform Agenda Sorted by Region

		Applied learning	
District type	Total # of superintendents	Yes	No
Capital	4	2	2
Hudson	2	1	1
Long Island	2	1	1
Mid State	3	1	2
Mid West	4	1	3
West	3	0	3

A small number of superintendents in suburban schools discussed how they promoted the Reform Agenda by integrating it into what they were already doing.

Well, I've been a student of change throughout my entire career so any time you talk about things like this; you're really talking about change. I believe that we use the strategies and the principles that are best known for helping people to embrace and to work through change. (Superintendent G, personal communication, April 2, 2014)

Superintendent K discussed the Reform Agenda as a tool:

I think we need to advocate for what's working and what's not working to get it fixed… as a tool that has been really helpful to learn and the other is to help figure out for people what we need to do better. (personal communication, April 3, 2014)

Superintendent U further describes how the integration of the Reform Agenda looks in the district served:

In my mind, it's the level of support that I can provide to our building administrators and to our staff to make sure they have what they need to properly implement this. As I said, we have prioritized and increased our staff development funding. We have prioritized and directed monies towards replacing curriculum, phasing that out. We have sketched out schedules into the future on how we're going to phase in the purchases to support this at various grade levels. I have worked very closely with the Board emphasizing how important it is for us to make these investments so that we offer appropriate curriculum and we have appropriate materials in our district. (personal communication, May 1, 2014)

In summary, the majority of participating superintendents were not using training to promote the Reform Agenda. The few participating superintendents who did apply what they

learned in their position as superintendent to address the Reform Agenda stated that they applied it through communication with staff, parents and the community, to train, and set a vision.

Research Question 4: What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

Research Question 4 examined what leadership role superintendents wanted as part of the Reform Agenda. Four questions were asked pertaining to leadership role as part of the Reform Agenda: How do you see your role as superintendent as it relates to the Reform Agenda?; What do you want your role to be in regards to the Reform Agenda?; Do you see any barriers to your vision in terms your participation and role in the Reform Agenda?; and Do you see your role changing in the future in terms of the Reform Agenda? If so, how will you prepare? Responses were analyzed by district type, gender, and region. Half of participating superintendents in this study did not see leading as their primary role in terms of the Reform Agenda. Although the other half of participating superintendents in this study stated that leading was what their role should be in regards to the Reform Agenda.

One participating suburban superintendent who supported leading stated, "I'm the person who puts out the message. I lead the district through our district action plan by visioning with the Board and by developing our annual goals and objectives" (Superintendent G, personal communication, April 2, 2014). Superintendent C further identified leading as the role desired in regards to the Reform Agenda:

> I would like to be an outstanding leader of people. I would like to have a basic knowledge…a working knowledge of what the Reform Agenda is. And I'd like to, to the extent possible, to accomplish that over time. (personal communication, April 1, 2014).

Other participating superintendents identified their role as advocating, facilitating, and being a resource:

I see myself as a guide, as a listener, and also someone who has to provide the resources and make sure that the quality of professional development is a part of our program here so that people can better understand the whole thing. So I guess in terms of being the superintendent is to guide, to listening, to provide resources. (Superintendent E, personal communication, April 1, 2014).

The majority of female participating superintendents saw their role as leading as it related to the Reform Agenda. Only one-third of the male participating superintendents saw their role as leading. Only one of the participating superintendents saw their role as a decision maker in relation to the Reform Agenda.

Table 20

Analysis of Superintendents' Desired Role as it Relates to the Reform Agenda Sorted by Network Region

Region	Total # of superintendents	Role				
		Advocate	Facilitate	Lead	Resource	Decision maker
Capital	4	1	0	1	2	0
Hudson	2	0	0	2	0	0
Long Island	2	0	1	1	0	0
Mid State	3	1	0	1	1	0
Mid West	4	0	1	2	0	1
West	3	1	0	2	0	0

Four themes emerged from participating superintendents regarding perceptions of barriers to desired role in regards to the Reform Agenda; roll out, resources, time, and negativity in the environment about the Reform Agenda (see Table 21). Responses were analyzed by

district type, gender, and region. Eighteen participating superintendents were interviewed;

however, not all superintendents responded to the question and several provided more than one

response to the question.

Table 21

Analysis of Superintendents' Perceptions of Barriers to Desired Role in Regards to the Reform Agenda Sorted by District Type

District type	Total # of superintendents	Barrier			
		Roll out	Resources	Time	Negativity
Rural	4	2	1	0	1
Suburban	12	0	5	2	6
Urban	2	1	0	1	0

Superintendent U emphasized the roll-out as the beginning to the issues related to

implementation of the Reform Agenda:

I think the biggest barriers that we've seen and that we've encountered stem back to the

earliest phases of the roll-out when the Common Core initiatives were really starting to

ramp up under Commissioner Steiner and as leadership transitioned to Commissioner

King, the negative…just the negative commentary that was constantly in the press around

APPR, between the Governor and NYSUT. I think that poisoned the water significantly

and probably created a lot of the emotional angst that we're seeing now because that…I

think that hurt a lot of feelings in the field, and we definitely need a lot of time for that to

improve… (personal communication, May 1, 2014)

One of two participating urban superintendents identified time and rollout as barriers.

Superintendent E described it this way:

I kind of see it…in terms of the whole continued reform agenda is…one barrier I'm

seeing is time. One of the things that we're faced here with is finding the time during the

school year to effectively engage teachers when they are not at the end of their school day

or again, don't want to miss time in their classrooms. (personal communication, April 1,

2014)

Data further revealed five of the participating suburban superintendents reported that

resources where a barrier and close to half identified negativity as a barrier to progress.

Well, the obvious answers are resources really are tight. And people are a little tired and

a little burned out. So I think it's not really a barrier per se, but it is a challenge to get

people to be comfortable with letting go of the past. (Superintendent A, personal

communication, March 28, 2014)

Superintendent K agreed that lack of resources was a real hindrance, "…We don't have the

money, you know, we've cut our supplies and in terms of professional development – we need

more professional development and we don't have the resources to provide adequate " (personal

communication, April 3, 2014).

The majority of male and female superintendents identified resources and negativity as

barriers to their desired role in regards to the Reform Agenda.

Barriers to a desired role were identified by participating superintendents in terms of their

participation and role in the Reform Agenda by region (see Table 22). Half of the participating

superintendents in the Capital, Hudson, Long Island, and Mid West Regions identified that

negativity was a barrier to their desired role. One of two participating Long Island

superintendents participating in this study shared that time and negativity were barriers. All

superintendents in the West region stated that the lack of resources was the greatest barrier.

Table 22

Analysis of Superintendents' Perceptions of Barriers to Desired Role in Terms of Participation in the Reform Agenda Sorted by Network Region

		Barrier			
Region	Total # of superintendents	Roll out	Resources	Time	Negativity
Capital	4	0	1	1	2
Hudson	2	0	0	0	1
Long Island	2	0	0	1	1
Mid State	3	1	1	0	1
Mid West	4	2	1	0	2
West	3	0	3	1	0

Ten participating superintendents felt their role would change in the future, but eight felt it would not. For those who saw their role changing there were differing perspectives on how the changes would appear. Several felt they would they would need to become more political to handle the pressures from the change.

Superintendents shared that they would need to know more about finances in order to have resources for implementation. "…I see the role being pretty much the same as someone who has to garner and appropriate the resources in the right place so that the issues and items and the agenda can be fulfilled" (Superintendent E, personal communication, April 1, 2024).

Communication as the long standing role of the superintendent became a prevalent theme:

Actually, no. I think it will be the same as it is. Trying to make sure all of our voices are heard objectively and also to be the filter, the buffer, the gate keeper to help coordinate the facilitation and the implementation at the local level. I think that always …always will be the superintendent's job is to be the voice of reason to the public and also to be

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the one who helps coordinate the implementation of everything so all the puzzle pieces fit

together. (Superintendent L, personal communication, April 4, 2014)

Superintendent A shared uncertainty:

I don't know if my role is going to change. Because again I told you what I hope

happens with the reform agenda is that we just subsume it and move on to other things.

And so my preparation really has to do with how do I make sure I know what can be

next. How will I know what the possibilities are and where you learn about those kinds

of things? (personal communication, March 28, 2014)

Superintendent G captured the essence of what the superintendents who were interviewed

believed that their mission and role is, was and will be in the midst of any and all reforms:

I want to lead the district to serve every child as best that it can. Our mission in the

district is to have every child meet his or her potential and that…long before the reform

agenda that was our mission and it will continue long after the reform agenda. (personal

communication, April 2, 2014).

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the Regents' Reform Agenda. The researcher was interested in statewide perceptions of superintendents in school districts with improved performance by NYS defined standards. Data was analyzed by network region, gender, participants with over five years of experience, and district type to allow for a balanced comparison. Findings are presented with conclusions. Recommendations are presented that will provide practitioners and policy makers data on the preparation of superintendents in the NYS Reform Agenda. Best practices, in terms of successful implementation defined by study participants and relevant research, will be highlighted, and recommendations will be made for application throughout the state.

Four research questions guided this study:

1. How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

2. How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

3. How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader with regard to the Reform Agenda?

4. What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

Data was collected using a 15-question interview protocol document to identify how superintendents were addressing their own professional development in relation to the Regents' Reform Agenda and their perceptions. The interview instrument mapped to the following four key concepts: preparation, application, resources, and leadership involvement in the Reform Agenda (see Appendix A).

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Data collected from the superintendents who participated in this study were organized by patterns, so emerging themes could be identified. Differences were tracked among the individual superintendents as they related to the Regents' Reform Agenda. Patterns were then organized into themes and coded. A narrative report and summarizing charts were developed to allow for analysis and to provide insight of the data collected.

This chapter will present the findings by research question. The second section of this chapter will present conclusions, which are reflective of the findings. The third section will present policy recommendations based on findings. The fourth section will suggest recommendations for future studies. Concluding thoughts will follow in section five.

Findings

Research Question 1: How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves? The first finding from this study revealed the approach to professional development was defined by participating superintendents in five frames: mandates, philosophy, frequency, mode of delivery, and value of professional development. The majority of male and female participating superintendents identified mandates as the underlying component for obtaining professional development for themselves. Five participating superintendents shared that professional development was more of a philosophy in which various experiences supported their individual growth. It was further noted by three superintendents that professional development was an ongoing process and embedded in their daily work. Superintendents expressed widely varying opinions of the value of professional development. This study revealed 10 of 18 superintendents placed great value on professional development, while six noted it was not important to their personal growth.

Finding three showed gender differences emerged between male and female superintendents in this study, with females having a higher frequency attending professional development weekly and monthly. Less than half of the participating superintendents reported being engaged in professional development at least monthly.

Seven modes of delivery emerged from interview participants: individual, group, conferences, with colleagues, online, reading, and face-to-face. Support for each type of learning varied, and there were no significant differences among gender or district type. Differences were found when looking at responses by region. Analysis of regional data supported that group settings were the preferred mode of delivery for professional development by some participating superintendents in Long Island, Mid State, and West Regions.

Research Question 2: How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments? In response to Research Question 2, the following three themes emerged when participating superintendents were asked how they prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments: professional development providers, professional development utilization, and professional development gaps which centered around providers.

Finding four revealed 10 out of 16 participating superintendents from rural and suburban settings prepared for the Common Core Standards and Assessments by utilizing BOCES and the NYSED website. The Mid State Region had no participating superintendents participate in professional development provided by BOCES to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Finding five is that professional development materials on the NYSED website were utilized as a resource by participating superintendents when preparing for the Common Core

Standards and Assessments. One third of participating female superintendents utilized NYSED's website to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments, while one out of nine male superintendents used those resources. Half of the participating rural superintendents used NYSED's website for preparation of the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Finding six revealed that many participating superintendents in this study stated they used NYSCOSS for their own professional development needs; however, they did not identify NYSCOSS as a main source to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Professional development gaps emerged. Over half of male and female participating superintendents prepared for the Common Core Standards and Assessments through self directed professional development or did little to no professional development. Participating male superintendents chose a self directed professional development approach to prepare for the Common Core Standards and Assessments two times more than female superintendents. One third of suburban participating superintendents stated they did little to no professional development regarding the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Data further reflected that participating superintendents from four out of six regions were self directed in preparing for the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Finding seven showed no urban and rural superintendents identified leading as a way they have used their preparation in the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Regional data showed few of the participating superintendents used their preparation in the Common Core Standards and Assessments for leading or improvement efforts in five out of the six regions.

Finding eight revealed additional preparation was not acknowledged as needed by half of the participating superintendents from suburban districts. All superintendents from Hudson and half from Long Island and Mid West regions were not sure what additional preparation for the

Common Core Standards and Assessments was needed. Half of rural and suburban superintendents stated they would like additional professional development in handling leadership issues, modules, data analysis, and the next steps for implementing the Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Research Question 3: How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader with regard to the Reform Agenda? In response to Research Question 3, finding nine shows that 12 out of the 18 participating superintendents had not applied what they learned in regards to the Reform Agenda.

Finding 10 reveals that six of the 18 participating superintendents that did apply the Reform Agenda used it to set a vision, to communicate, to direct resources, and to train others.

Research Question 4: What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda? In response to Research Question 4, finding 11 shows that half of the participating superintendents in this study did not see leading as their primary role in terms of the Reform Agenda. The majority of female participating superintendents saw their role as leading, while one third of the participating males cited leading as their role. Half of the participating superintendents from Long Island and the Mid West and the majority of the west shared that they wanted their role to be leading.

Finding 13 shows four themes that emerged regarding the perceptions of barriers to desired role of participating superintendents in regards to the Reform Agenda: roll out, resources, time, and negativity. The majority of male and female participating superintendents identified resources and negativity as barriers to their desired role. Half of the participating superintendents in the Capital, Hudson, Long Island, and Mid West Regions identified that negativity was a barrier to their desired role. Half of the Long Island participating

superintendents in this study shared that time and negativity were barriers, and the entire West region stated the lack of resources were the greatest barriers.

Superintendents were asked if they saw their role changing in the future in regards to the Reform Agenda. The final finding was that 10 participating superintendents felt their role would change in the future, while eight participating superintendents stated it would not.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Research Question 1 asked how superintendents approach professional development for themselves. Superintendents' approach to professional development was inconsistent and driven by mandates. Professional development has come into focus for system leaders as globalization has created a need for the U.S. to re-look at the preparation of students to navigate successfully in a competitive world. The NYS Reform Agenda has promoted set standards with the goal of improving student performance. Leadership preparation and ability to address the needed changes is critical in order to address the student achievement gaps. Barber et al. (2010) state the need for strong leadership in order to yield high student performance. Waters and Marzano (2006) further emphasize the value in developing system leaders, so they are prepared to understand and implement the needed changes with a clearly articulated vision and goals in order to have a positive impact on student learning.

Superintendents must first understand the purpose of change and how they personally impact the success of change within their schools. Fullan et al. (2005) remind us that knowing the moral purpose of change is critical if we are to effectively engage others in reform. They further note that leaders that understand change and can build capacity of others will have success in sustaining reform. Intentional development of superintendents needs to be ongoing in order to prepare leaders schools during reform.

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Conclusion 2. Research Question 2 asked how have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments. The majority of superintendents in this study were not engaged in professional development related to Common Core Standards and Assessments. Furthermore, there was not strong support for superintendents to use Common Core for leading or improvement efforts. Superintendent preparation was primarily from BOCES and Engage NY, otherwise they were on their own in terms of preparation for the NYS Standards and Assessments. Stewart et al. (2012) speak to the preparation of leaders, "District leaders can increase their ability to respond to reform efforts through professional development sessions aimed at advocating for leadership with the skills to enact substantial change in the operations of how schools are addressing student learning" (p. 9).

Bridges (2009) shares that the leader identifies outcomes and monitors the success towards that outcome by keeping the goal alive for those they lead. Leaders have an important role in the NYS Reform Agenda implementation and its sustainability. Providing quality professional development targeted at the change process provides the foundation for superintendents leading reform.

Conclusion 3. Research Question 3 asked how have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader in regards to the Reform Agenda. The majority of participating superintendents in this study reported they were not applying or promoting what they learned as a system leader regarding the NYS Reform Agenda. Fullen, Cuttress, and Kilcher (2005) discuss the importance of history in relation to reform:

The history of educational reform and innovation is replete with good ideas or policies that fail to get implemented or that are successful in one situation but not in another. A

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missing ingredient in most failed cases is appreciation and use of what we call change

knowledge. (p. 54)

Conclusion 4. Research Question 4 asked what leadership role superintendents want as

part of the Reform Agenda. Participating superintendents were divided in their belief that their

role should be leading the Reform Agenda. The majority of female participants in this study saw

their role as leading, which could be related to prior findings that female superintendents had

greater participation then male participants in professional development and attended it more

frequently.

Superintendents in this study identified barriers with regards to the recent implementation

of the NYS Reform Agenda that prohibited them from leading including: the roll out of the

reform, limited resources, and negativity which surrounded the implementation. The literature

clearly depicts leadership as an important component that impacts performance.

Participating superintendents shared that they believed their role should continue to be

the one who facilitates the vision as part of reform movements in the future. This vision for their

role is supported in the literature as a key component to successful schools. Murphy et al. (2007)

further solidify the importance of the role of the leader to embrace and facilitate a vision.

Policy recommendations

NYSED, as part of the Reform Agenda, identified gaps between learning and standards.

Because of this disparity, the state developed new standards and assessments to increase the rigor

and to ultimately prepare students to be career and college ready in a competitive world. In order

for students to be successful under a new model of standards and assessment, strong leadership is

required to provide the necessary resources, training, and communication among the

administration, board, staff, parents, and students. Leadership professional development is

needed in the midst of significant reform change in NYS. Leaders must transform policy and deliver it to their organizations to effectuate sustainable change.

Bridges (2009) identifies leading as one of the most important roles of a leader; however, this role will not be effective without the leader understanding and managing transitions successfully. There needs to be a concerted professional development effort targeted for superintendents which will address transitions and the future of the NYS Reform Agenda. Engaging superintendents in group discussion with their colleagues facilitated by NYSED to address visioning and leading will help to salvage what has been implemented to date. NYSCOSS and BOCES should partner with the NYSED to deliver professional development for superintendents. It is recommended that the design of the delivery be small groups of superintendents, which cross over all regions to allow for a greater perspective. The use of video conferencing monthly would help to facilitate this process.

It is further recommended that the NYSED develop a portal on their website just for superintendents. This venue would provide ongoing opportunities for superintendents to discuss concerns, to get answers, and to help facilitate ongoing communication back in the districts they lead. Materials and support for effective communications could be further facilitated through NYSCOSS and BOCES. Finally, preparation of superintendents is needed in handling leadership issues, module implementation, data analysis, and developing understandings for implementing the next phase of Common Core Standards and Assessments.

Professional development and training must span over the career of the leader and be an extension of pre-service learning. The profession is one of complexity and requires deep understandings of study and pervasive learning throughout one's career (Reeves & Berry, 2008). Policy makers, the NYSED, and leaders would benefit from revisiting history and changing the

culture of superintendents to make them want to participate in professional development which addresses change leadership in regards to educational reform. Policy makers and the NYSED must begin to recognize that superintendents do not want to participate in professional development pertaining to the Regent's Reform Agenda. They need to come up with new ways to engage the support of leaders to sustain the reform because professional development is not the way to make that happen. One consideration prompted by this study involved required professional development for superintendents throughout their career. Once this is effectively addressed, then the Reform Agenda has a chance to be sustained.

Recommendations for Further Study

Results from this qualitative study bring further ideas into focus. Data from this study was specific to schools that were recognized as Reward Schools by the NYSED. This study was unable to identify any connections with professional development and student achievement. Expanding this study to include low performing schools may provide a broader understanding of value, pursuit, and application of professional development more than research indicated.

Additional quantitative statewide studies would allow researchers to further analyze the influence of superintendents' training linked to leadership standards. Furthermore, it would provide a lens on understanding sustainable practices that will impact student preparation in relation to globalization.

Subsequent quantitative research to be done with all superintendents state-wide would allow a look at varying career points to determine career path issues to get a wider assessment of providers for recommendations unique to the Regents' Reform Agenda on how superintendents are preparing themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

A gap exists between state policy and local delivery.   Leaders must have a role in this process. Enabling superintendents to lead the next chapter of the NYS Reform Agenda is an opportunity that is in the forefront and one that is available for NYSED to address by understanding the motivation and culture. Understanding history, the value of professional growth, and leading by example are emphasized as elements that will have a long lasting impact on students' lives as leaders find their way in the journey to educate all students successfully (Alvy & Robbins, 2010).

Revisiting the process for the delivery of policy to practice that will have lasting impact needs to be part of future reform endeavors. States must communicate the value of leadership, include superintendents in decision-making, and provide support through professional development, which will support the goals of raising standards. Because of their positions in schools districts superintendents cannot be bystanders and have a successful reform implementation.

> The history of educational reform and innovation is replete with good ideas or policies that fail to get implemented or that are successful in one situation but not in another. A missing ingredient in most failed cases is appreciation and use of what we call change knowledge. (Fullen, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005, p. 54)

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Interview Protocols

Opening statement:

Thank you for meeting with me to participate in this interview. My experiences here today and inclusion of your thoughts in my research will hopefully have a lasting impact on the field of education in a pivotal time where we are seeing a new Reform Agenda in Education being rolled out by New York State.

Ice breaker:

Can you tell me a little about yourself in terms of preparation for the superintendency and years in the field?

Question Collection Form:

Research Question 1: How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?

1. What professional development have you participated in to support your growth?

2. Who has provided the professional development?

3. How often do you participate in professional development?

4. What approach to professional development works best for you?

Research Question 2: How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

5. What preparation have you had in the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

6. Have you used your preparation in the Common Core and if so how have you used it and has it been successful?

7. Describe what resources have best met your needs in assisting you to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?

8. Do you feel you need additional preparation? If so, what would be useful?

Research Question 3: How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader with regard to the Reform Agenda?

9. As a systems leader have you applied your learning in regards to the Reform Agenda?

10. How have you applied what you learned in your position as a superintendent to address the Reform Agenda?

11. What have you applied in your learning to promote the Reform Agenda?

Research Question 4: What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

12. How do you see your role as superintendent as it relates to the Reform Agenda?

13. What do you want your role to be in regards to the Reform Agenda?

14. Do you see any barriers to your vision in terms your participation and role in the Reform Agenda? If so, what?

15. Do you see your role changing in the future in terms of the Reform Agenda? If so, how will you prepare?

Closing:

Thank you for your time and expertise. I truly appreciate your dedication. Again your input and expertise will help me to get an in depth understanding of the needs in the field in terms of the preparation and perceptions of superintendents to lead the NYS Reform Agenda.

Geographic Distribution of Districts

NYS JMT BOCES DISTRIBUTION

Note:
 On October 1, 2010 the JMT were divided back to 9 teams. Instead of changing the JMT initial structures we maintained the 6 ROS, 1 NYC Regional and 1 Statewide Language RBE-RN.

JMT	BOCES CD	BOCES NAME
1-West	0490	BOCES CATTAR-ALLEGANY-ERIE-WYOMING
1-West	1491	BOCES ERIE 1
1-West	1492	BOCES ERIE 2-CHAUTAUQUA-CATTARAUGUS
1-West	4590	BOCES ORLEANS-NIAGARA
2-Mid-West	2490	BOCES GENESEE VALLEY
2-Mid-West	2691	BOCES MONROE 1
2-Mid-West	2692	BOCES MONROE 2-ORLEANS
2-Mid-West	4390	BOCES ONTAR-SENEC-YATES-CAYUGA-WAYNE
3-Mid-State	0390	BOCES BROOME-DELAWARE-TIOGA
3-Mid-State	0590	BOCES CAYUGA-ONONDAGA
3-Mid-State	2290	BOCES JEFFER-LEWIS-HAMIL-HERK-ONEIDA
3-Mid-State	2590	BOCES MADISON-ONEIDA
3-Mid-State	4190	BOCES ONEIDA-HERKIMER-MADISON
3-Mid-State	4290	BOCES ONONDAGA-CORTLAND-MADISON
3-Mid-State	4690	BOCES OSWEGO
3-Mid-State	5590	BOCES SCHUYLER-STEUBEN-CHEMUNG-TIOGA-ALLEGANY (Greater Southern Tier)
3-Mid-State	6190	BOCES TOMPKINS-SENECA-TIOGA
4-Hudson Valley	1290	BOCES DELAW-CHENANGO-MADISON-OTSEGO
4-Hudson Valley	1390	BOCES DUTCHESS
4-Hudson Valley	1990	BOCES OTSEGO-DELAW-SCHOHARIE-GREENE (Otsego-North Castskills)
4-Hudson Valley	4490	BOCES ORANGE-ULSTER
4-Hudson Valley	4890	BOCES PUTNAM-NORTHERN WESTCHESTER
4-Hudson Valley	5090	BOCES ROCKLAND
4-Hudson Valley	5990	BOCES SULLIVAN

JMT	BOCES CD	BOCES NAME
4-Hudson Valley	6290	BOCES ULSTER
4-Hudson Valley	6690	BOCES SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER
5-Capital	0190	BOCES ALBANY-SCHOH-SCHENECTADY-SARAT
5-Capital	0990	BOCES CLINTON-ESSEX-WARREN-WASHING
5-Capital	1690	BOCES FRANKLIN-ESSEX-HAMILTON
5-Capital	2090	BOCES HAMILTON-FULTON-MONTGOMERY
5-Capital	2190	BOCES HERK-FULTON-HAMILTON-OTSEGO
5-Capital	4990	BOCES QUESTAR III (R-C-G)
5-Capital	5190	BOCES ST LAWRENCE-LEWIS
5-Capital	6490	BOCES WASHING-SARA-WAR-HAMLTN-ESSEX
6-Long Island	2890	BOCES NASSAU
6-Long Island	5891	BOCES EASTERN SUFFOLK (SUFFOLK I)
6-Long Island	5893	BOCES WESTERN SUFFOLK (SUFFOLK 3)
7-New York City	3090	BOCES NEW YORK CITY

Invitation Letter to Superintendents

To:

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: Superintendent's Preparation for the New York State Reform Agenda: Perceptions of Selected Superintendents

This research is being conducted by: Kathleen M. Davis, Doctoral Candidate, Sage College, Albany, NY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how superintendents are addressing their own professional development in relation to the New York State Regent's Reform Agenda. The Reform Agenda is a change model to address implementing common core standards and assessments, building instructional data systems, recruiting developing and maintaining quality teachers and principals, and turning around lowest–achieving schools. The paper will be published and available to the public. .

This study is intended to give the researcher the data needed to make recommendations to practitioners and policy makers regarding the preparation, training, and roles for system leaders to effectively implement and embed best practices in the culture of public education for long-term change and impact on student learning.

The research questions are as follows:
1. How do superintendents approach professional development for themselves?
2. How have superintendents prepared themselves to implement the Common Core Standards and Assessments?
3. How have superintendents applied what they have learned as a system leader in regards to the Reform Agenda?
4. What leadership role do superintendents want as part of the Reform Agenda?

The questionnaire developed by the researcher maps back to four core research questions. The instrument is a 13 question document which correlates with the following four key concepts: preparation, application, resources and leadership involvement in the Reform Agenda. The responses will be coded and themes will be identified. Once themes are identified, maps will be created to organize the research findings. Further research will be done to tie back to the findings to assist with the analysis of responses.

All documents will be kept on file and kept confidential in a secure area for future reference by the researcher. Permissions will be given for the researcher to tape record responses. A final transcript will be typed by a confidential transcriber and sent to each superintendent to review for accuracy. All interview responses will be stored on a password protected computer only accessible by the researcher and destroyed after the research is completed. The identities of

interviewees and their districts will be held confidential in notes, written reports, and oral reports through the use of pseudonyms.

This study will provide practitioners and policy makers a lens on preparation and perceptions of select superintendents in the Common Core. In addition, resources will be examined and recommendations for training of practitioners will be provided. Further examination of how superintendents are using their training in the Common Core as a systems leader will be explored. Best practices in terms of successful implementation will be highlighted and recommendations will be made for application throughout the state.

Minimal Risk: Related to Personal Information and Confidentiality
Participation is voluntary, 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, _____, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study

Signed: _____
Research participant

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

Dr. Esther Haskvitz, Dean
Sage Graduate Schools
School of Health Sciences
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Troy, New York 12180