

**POLITICS, PRACTICALITY AND PERSONALITY:
SUPERINTENDENT SUCCESSION PLANNING IN NEW YORK STATE**

**A Doctoral Research Project
Presented to
Associate Professor Ann Myers
Doctoral Research Committee Chair
School of Education
The Sage Colleges**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
In Educational Leadership**

Charles S. Dedrick

July, 2009

© Charles Steven Dedrick

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

School districts need to begin thinking about succession planning due to the shortage of superintendent candidates and the limited number of individuals choosing to enter the field of administration. Some of the major obstacles facing those interested in succession planning are defining what it is, what the process should entail and who should oversee the initiative. This study will address the issues a school district will face as it begins planning for superintendent succession. These include issues such as: school board politics, community involvement, personalities of applicants, school culture and student achievement. All of these factors need to be considered for a board of education and a community to match their needs with the strengths of each superintendent candidate.

Through the use of a grounded theory approach and a qualitative study, leaders from around New York were interviewed to determine a definition and understanding of succession planning. The study was centered on three essential questions: (A) How important is succession planning by a school district to replace its superintendent? (B) What are the steps that should be taken in order to plan and prepare for leadership succession? (C) What factors inhibit school districts from adequately planning for superintendent succession?

Recommendations include succession planning as a process of preparing an organization and not just an individual. It should be completed so that student achievement increases and individuals are properly trained. Finally, succession planning should take place so that the largest possible pool of candidates can participate and have the opportunity to become a superintendent.

Suggested Keywords: succession, succession planning, superintendent succession, leadership succession, superintendent turnover, passive absorption, transition planning, internal candidate, external candidate, superintendent search, vertical preparation, horizontal preparation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the many individuals who helped me prepare for, pursue and complete the Doctor of Education Degree program and this research at Sage Graduate School.

During my time at Sage, I have had the privilege to work with two separate but equally supportive Boards of Education. First in the Cohoes City School District as Superintendent of Schools at the beginning of the program and next serving as District Superintendent at Capital Region BOCES as I completed it. I thank both Boards for trusting my ability to lead while at the same time pursuing a Doctoral Degree.

Dr. Ann Myers, my program advisor, committee chair and administrative mentor had faith in my ability to complete scholarly research and writing. She encouraged me to pursue this dream and I will forever be thankful for all that she has done for my education and career. Whether it was an early morning meeting at “the Diner” or a late afternoon session in the office, her devotion of time, expertise and knowledge to me and this program was appreciated and will never be forgotten.

I would also like to thank the other professors in the program: Dr. James Butterworth added a sense of humor and pragmatic realism to the program that often carried me through, especially on the more difficult days. Dr. Daniel Alemu, the second member of my committee, gave freely of his time, always responding to questions quickly and with remarkable flexibility. Dr. Connell Frazer helped me understand coding and grounded theory when there did not seem to be any hope of grasping either. Dr. Raymond O’Connell framed the research like no one else. He provided a steady hand and an even tempered, veteran like approach that was reasonable and reassuring. My third committee member Dr. Jan Hammond offered invaluable advice and encouragement that helped me to “keep the focus.”

Thank you to my Doctoral Program Coach, Dr. Geoffrey Davis, District Superintendent of H-F-M BOCES. His encouragement, help and counsel kept me moving forward. His two important words of advice, “keep writing” were always on mind and allowed me to finish on time.

Thank you to all of the participants in my study. The study was done during the development of the New York State budget and most of the participants were intimately involved in that process. For them to give me as much time and access as they did for this research, will always be remembered and appreciated.

I thank my fellow members of Cohort #1 for providing a learning atmosphere that was second to no other. I have never known 18 such different yet similar individuals in my lifetime. You constantly pushed me to a higher level because it was important to me that you respected my work. I can only say that of a few other individuals in my life. While we were the “experimental group,” we were also the group that set the bar. Together we set it high. It was an honor to work beside each and every member of Cohort #1 and I can only hope that the learning community that we created will always remain part of our lives.

Thank you to my family. My wife Martha is truly a special person who gave of herself, allowing me to complete this program of study. I will never be able to thank her enough for her undying support. Martha picked up many of the pieces around our home and in our family that I was unable to do, due to the time constraints of work and doctoral study. I feel as if she has earned the title of “Doctor Dedrick” as much as I have. My children Kaylee, Steven, William and Anna are always able to inspire me to go beyond the ordinary and they provided much of the motivation for me to complete this course of study. It is for them and their generation that I will use this degree to move education beyond “passive absorption.”

Finally, on behalf of my siblings William, Patricia and James, I dedicate this research and my Doctoral Degree to our parents Bill and Florence Dedrick. Their work ethic and commitment to family created the foundation necessary to succeed. I have no doubt that our mom and dad are looking down proudly at this accomplishment and I thank them for all they did to make it possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Abstract	iv
Chapter	
I. Introduction	1
II. Review of the Related Literature	3
The Importance of Succession Planning to Replace Superintendents	3
Steps in Planning Leadership Succession	7
Challenges of Planned Superintendent Succession	11
III. Research Methodology	17
Essential Questions	17
Participants in the Study	17
Reliability and Validity	22
Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures	24
Data Analysis	24
Limitations of the Study	25
IV. Summary of Results	28
The Importance of Succession Planning by a School District to Replace Its Superintendent	28
Steps that Should be Taken in Order to Plan and Prepare for Leadership Succession	39
Factors that Inhibit School Districts from Adequately Planning for Superintendent Succession	52
V. Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions	68
Definition of Succession Planning	69
Preparation for the Superintendency	70
No Established Process for Succession Planning at the Micro Level	71
Disagreement over Who Should Coordinate a Succession Plan	71
Succession Plans Should Not Depend Solely on Internally Prepared Candidates	72

Current Succession Planning Discriminates	73
Recommendations	74
Implication on Future Research	78
Conclusion	81
References	84

LIST OF TABLES

	page
Table 1. Participant Search History	21
Table 2. States Researched for Succession Planning Activities	23
Table 3. Definition of Succession Planning by Participant Group	29
Table 4. Participant Belief in Succession Planning as a Tool to Alleviate the Shortage of Administrators	40
Table 5. Who Should Lead a District's Succession Planning Efforts	45
Table 6. What Type of District Should Implement Succession Planning	49
Table 7. Problems of Succession Planning Identified by Participant Group	52
Table 8. Types of Political Problems Identified	56
Table 9. Types of Discrimination Mentioned by Participant Group	58
Table 10. Participant Belief in Expanded Public Policy by New York State	62
Table 11. Identification of Suggested Policy Changes	64

LIST OF FIGURES

	page
Figure 1. Current Model of Internal Succession Planning as it Relates to Change	75
Figure 2. Proposed Model of Succession Planning	76
Figure 3. Increasing the Potential Administrative Pool	77

APPENDIX

	page
Appendix A Sage Graduate School IRB Research Approval Letter	89
Appendix B Invitation to Participate Letter	90
Appendix C Sample Questions	91
Appendix D Sample Data Sheet	92
Appendix E Coding Sheet	93

Chapter I

Introduction

All school districts will eventually have to face a change in leadership. In New York State that change may be coming sooner than later for the following reasons: by 2011, sixty percent of superintendents are expected to retire, individuals are becoming superintendents for the first time at an older age and the average age of a superintendent in 2006 was 54.6 years old, only four months shy of reaching the minimum retirement age in New York State (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2006).

Nationally eighty five percent of superintendents believe there is an inadequate supply of educational leaders needed to fill anticipated superintendent openings. Furthermore, eighty percent of superintendents said there were no programs in their districts to identify individuals aspiring to the superintendency and according to the superintendents surveyed, the most cited reasons that administrators chose not to become superintendents are lack of school funding, personal/family issues and school board relations (American Association of School Administrators, 2007).

It is apparent that school districts need to begin thinking about succession planning if they have not already begun to do so. One of the major issues facing those interested in succession planning is identifying what it really is. There is considerable disagreement over not only what the process should entail, but even over what the definition is of succession planning by policy makers and those who influence policy across New York State.

While the simplest view of succession planning may address the issue of superintendent turnover by having another administrator ready to step into the position, there are a number of issues that arise from that model that are addressed in this study.

Succession planning is on the minds of leaders in New York State. Some believe that school districts themselves need to address the issue and they are not facing up to challenge. Speaking on school leadership at the Sage Graduate School in August 2008, New York State Assemblyman Robert Reilly of Colonie stated that schools are “simply not planning for the succession of their superintendent.”

Is this truly the case and do those in policy leadership roles across New York State agree with this assessment? What is the belief among legislators, the State Education Department and State leadership organizations such as the New York State School Boards Association and the New York State Council of School Superintendents? What is the belief of those who conduct superintendent searches for school districts in various areas of New York State? Most importantly, if school districts do begin a process of planning for superintendent succession, how should they go about doing it so that issues such as school culture, student achievement and the largest candidate pool possible are considered?

Through a grounded theory approach and a qualitative analysis of what educational and policy leaders across New York State know about succession planning for the superintendency as well as an analysis of written documentation on the topic, this study presents the facts as they exist today in regard to this important and relevant issue.

The information from this study should be useful to school boards, superintendent search consultants, superintendent preparation programs, The New York State School Boards Association, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the New York State Education Department, colleges and universities and students and staff in school districts throughout New York State.

Chapter II

Review of the Related Literature

It is vital to inform my study through previous works on succession planning. Accordingly, in this section, relevant literature on the topic will be presented in three subtopics related to my study: the importance of succession planning to replace superintendents: the steps in leadership succession: and the challenges of planned superintendent succession.

The Importance of Succession Planning to Replace Superintendents

There is a clear shortage of qualified superintendent candidates. Reasons include the demands of the position, the stress associated with it, the compensation for what the job entails and the decreased number of administrators interested in the position (Maryland Report, 2006; Orr, 2006). Another factor that causes some individuals to question a career as an administrator is the standards movement which is often viewed as a negative by some potential administrators (Brayman & Fink, 2006). As a result of these factors as well as those cited in the studies by NYSCOSS and AASA, it is more important than ever for school districts to begin preparing for eventual turnover in their superintendent positions.

In a qualitative longitudinal study by Barker (2006), it was found that one of the most important aspects of succession planning was the transition from the current educational leader to the next. This study looked at one school over a period of 18 years through three periods of leadership succession. Leadership change over a period of time was studied as it related to the characteristics of the organization. It was found that continued academic improvement was threatened by leadership succession when there was a relationship between the faculty and the past leader of the school and a new leader who was not open to dialogue with this group. The overall finding indicated that leadership succession if done incorrectly could undermine school

improvement efforts. The study also found that despite succession planning, outside influences such as declining enrollment or high levels of staff turnover could have a significant impact upon a school's leadership regardless of succession plans.

A qualitative study by Clark (1996) supported the argument that succession planning for the position of school superintendent, did not necessarily affect educational reforms. This study found that continuation of reform efforts were based more on leadership styles of the new and former superintendent, forces outside the school system, how the reform process in the school district was initiated and how entrenched the reform effort in the school district had become.

In another qualitative study, Bias (1994) analyzed two school districts and the superintendent in each. It was determined the attributes a person brings to the job can greatly influence the atmosphere in the school community. This study also found that if the actions of the Board of Education in the creation of and during the transition process were considered positive by the school community, the succession would be positive. An example of a positive development in the search process by the Board of Education is empowerment of the community in the transition process. This created a lasting "heightened sense of morale" in the school district which carried over into the administration of the superintendent who took the helm (p. 132). In each of the districts that were studied, community involvement in the succession process led to a continuation of positive community involvement in other areas of the schools over time.

In another study, Rogers and Safer (1990) pointed out that boards of education had only two choices in planning for a new superintendent. They could either look internally or externally. An internal selection may indicate the desire to maintain stability while an external candidate could indicate the need for change. This case study looks at an "overlap model" where

the new superintendent is chosen and begins work before the current superintendent leaves the job. This model was meant to provide stability in a case where no internal candidates are available. The authors found that the model had serious flaws, the most significant of which was the fact that in order to be seamless, the incoming superintendent would need to share the same values as the outgoing superintendent. This was found to be very unlikely. Therefore the importance of succession planning was reinforced if stability is a desire of a board of education. By creating a succession plan, the Board could help dictate and shape a group of potential leaders to choose from, allowing them to match the needs of the district with the qualities of those who have been trained and not having to worry about an awkward overlap model where a new person would be brought in and placed with the outgoing leader.

The subject of inside and outside candidates for a superintendent's position was further researched in a quantitative study by Geisel (2002) that looked at public school superintendents in the State of Michigan. Geisel confirmed the Rogers and Safer (1990) study by finding there is a significant relationship between whether the new leader is an inside or outside candidate and whether she/he will be a change agent or someone who will maintain the stability of the organization. Just as Rogers and Safer (1990) found, it was more likely to be a change agent if the new leader is hired from the outside as opposed to an internal candidate who would be more inclined to maintain the status quo. Another finding in the study is one that local school boards must take note of if they are interested in increasing a pool of candidates for a superintendent position. The study found a major concern of outside candidates who were appointed to a superintendent position was "moving and/or relocating family" (p. 74). Depending upon the locale, this factor could seriously limit the number of applicants for a position that required relocation.

Transition planning is not only important to educators but is important whenever leadership change takes place. In a mixed methods study by Schmalzried and Fallon (2007) of local health departments in Ohio, they found that top executives of the organizations believed that having a succession plan was important while health board members who answered the questionnaire were not as concerned. This was the case even though 43.7% of top executives reported that they planned to leave their position within six years. This figure is lower than the 60% of New York State superintendents who expect to retire by 2011 (NYSCOSS, 2006) but points out the significance of the need for succession planning in both states and across sectors. In the case of Ohio, the study pointedly tells local health departments that more must be done to educate boards of health on succession planning.

In another study of the health care industry in Kentucky, Shipman (2007) found the supply of future leaders was going to be “dangerously” low if there was not some type of succession plan put into practice. Can the same be said for New York State boards of education and can a parallel conclusion be drawn between New York schools and the health care industry in Ohio and Kentucky?

In a case study of “pre-arrival factors,” defined as issues in place before a new superintendent joins a school district, Ortiz and Kalbus (1998) identified these factors as important to the success of a succession plan. These pre-arrival factors include but are not limited to the events which led to the prior superintendent leaving, the successor’s characteristics and the process used to replace the former superintendent. In one particular case it was found the successor was well prepared for the job because “most staff and co-workers had agreed the organization needed a fiscal and technical person” and that the successor who had been identified had those characteristics (p. 347). In this case, the pre-arrival factor of what the district believed

was necessary in a new leader was identified in the search process and someone was chosen who met those needs. Therefore when a board of education creates a succession plan that will work, it is important to identify the pre-arrival factors of the organization and locate a successor who is prepared for them.

Steps in Planning Leadership Succession

The preparation for an administrative position is vital to a person's success in that position. Organizations must clearly understand what is needed in and by their leaders as well as what is expected of them (Nugent, 2008). The current leaders within an organization are an important piece of the puzzle in leadership development. It is important for the development of the next generation of leaders that the current leaders accept that responsibility (Groves, 2007). In some cases however it is pointed out that some current leaders, while excellent at leading their organization are not good at developing new leaders. In these cases a different approach to administrator development has to be initiated that involves those who are good at this important task, possibly leading to a "development network" (Hammelt, 2008).

The career path to the superintendency is important because it provides insight into the preparation necessary for a person to rise to that position. In a study of early career superintendents, defined by the author as those having been in the position of school superintendent for an average of two years, Baldwin (2007) found that the vast majority of these New York Superintendents began their careers originally in the field of education. Of new superintendents who were surveyed, 64% were prepared in the field of educational administration; 20% in other education areas; 9% in the social sciences which includes such fields as school psychology, counseling and social psychology; 7% in Business or Law; 17% did not respond. Furthermore the study found that prior to becoming superintendent 36% of

respondents served in a school district administrative role; 43% were building level administrators; 3% were in non supervisory roles within a school and only 2% came from the non traditional roles of either State Service or served as a President of a non-profit organization.

Fink & Brayman (2004) call the preparation to be a superintendent of a specific community “in-bound trajectory.” This is defined as a person who has the knowledge and skills to “join a community with the prospect of becoming full participants in its practice” when she/he enters a new administrative position (p. 440). In-bound trajectory allows a successful candidate for a position to become accepted more quickly by a staff and a community due to his or her standing among those groups. In-bound trajectories can be used to quickly establish oneself as an educational leader in a school or a district and allow a leader the ability to move at a much quicker pace for making effective changes and reforms. The qualities necessary to create in-bound trajectory are important for potential leaders to know and understand and may differ by community. Establishing what new leaders must be aware of about their new position is a key factor to better job performance and security in it. Creating this base of knowledge should be part of planning for leadership turnover and will lead to more successful succession efforts (Levitz, 2008) and therefore increase the in-bound trajectory of successful candidates. In one community simply being an experienced school leader will create the trajectory necessary to be successful. In another district, a person may need to have intimate detailed knowledge of events that have occurred that are helping to shape the current culture in a school.

Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) looked at succession planning in a section of the United Kingdom. This study rather pointedly states that “little information concerning leadership succession planning within educational organizations is presently available in the literature” (p. 271). This mixed method study begins with a questionnaire and ended with interviews. It

sought answers to questions about leadership succession by studying the perception of head teachers and middle level leaders in schools in the English West Midlands. The study found that aspiring leaders usually believed in themselves as a leader but furthermore believed that they needed to convince someone else that they had the required skills necessary to become a leader. An important finding of the study is that current leaders are growing more aware of a leadership crisis and support activities that will support leadership development.

Another study on preparedness dealt with leadership succession in business. In this qualitative study of Chief Executive Officers and human resource executives by Groves (2007), it was found that businesses that are considered “best practice organizations effectively integrate leadership development and succession planning systems” (p. 239). This study found that potential leaders who are developed through a systemic method that uses current managers in the business to serve as mentors for the new leaders is viewed by these businesses as being a successful approach.

Groves (2007) studied 15 of these businesses and their succession planning practices. In these organizations it was found that employees viewed by current managers as having the highest potential for future management careers are identified as having potential executive talent and developed to be the next generation of leaders. A key finding of the study is “related to avoiding the replacement mentality is resisting the temptation to designate an heir apparent for key executive positions” (p. 248). Avoiding this pitfall allows an organization to develop a wide variety of talented potential executives to serve as future leaders without having to depend upon only one person. This way if one of the potential executives left an organization, years of preparation would not have been wasted. Generally the findings of the study support developing multiple managers to create “flexibility” for current management.

Preparedness was also dealt with in a study completed by d'Arbon, Duignan and Duncan (2002). The study acknowledges that there is a "worldwide shortage" of people applying for vacant positions and seeks to determine why. A survey was developed for all Assistant Principals, subject coordinators and religious education coordinators in 588 Catholic Schools. The survey sought to determine why people were not applying for higher leadership positions. It was found that one of the main reasons for the lack of applications was the need to adequately prepare those in positions other than assistant principal for promotion. It was felt that the pool of potential applicants would increase substantially if more individuals were prepared to take on leadership positions.

In a qualitative case study by Zimmerman (2007), it was determined that districts need to prepare newly appointed administrators by providing them with "critical support" to achieve success in their job. For example in the study, a new superintendent was quoted as saying that "one of the most difficult things that I've had to deal with, right off the bat, is that I have to go to voters and ask them for operating money" (p. 36). This was a dilemma for this new superintendent despite the fact that he thought that he knew about school finances. As a result, the study recommends that school districts recognize issues like this as a problem in retaining talented administrators and furnish opportunities for learning, networking and mentoring.

A study by Smith (1992) looked at insider versus outsider candidates for the position of superintendent of schools. In this quantitative study of New Jersey superintendent turnover, the researcher studied various scenarios under which a school district decided to choose an inside versus an outside candidate as the next superintendent. If a board of education knows and understands the various reasons for the selection, it may help them prepare more adequately for leadership change. For example in this study it was found in districts that over time had

experienced high student achievement scores, more often tended to select inside as opposed to outside candidates. For high performing districts this could mean something as simple as preparing internal candidates, who are under the supervision of the superintendent for the leadership change that is about to occur. Having this internal candidate ready to step into the position of superintendent could more likely, but not guarantee keeping student achievement growing and create a seamless transition of authority.

A factor to consider when preparing for leadership succession is the manner in which the previous leader left the school district and the circumstances under which the new leader will be found. In a study by Kasper (1997), she found that the conditions under which the predecessor left a district led a school board to follow a certain course. For example she recommends that all districts create “transition teams.” For districts that are changing school leaders due to negative circumstances, one of her recommendations is to create an inventory of issues and keep the constituents informed through a communications plan. In situations where the leadership turnover is for positive reasons such as a retirement under good terms, she suggests that the new school leader “work closely with the predecessor” (p. 127). Following some of these common sense suggestions in the study could make the transition easier for the school, the community and the new leader.

Challenges of Planned Superintendent Succession

Whenever factors such as age, gender or race are used to disqualify applicants, it reduces a district’s opportunity to plan for administrative succession (Higbie, 2004). A school can increase its administrative applicant pool by not allowing these factors to invade and therefore limit its succession planning ability. A major source of potential administrators for a school district will come from adequately preparing its own next generation of leaders to step into open

leadership positions (Olsen, 2008). A major problem faced in the quest to increase leadership capacity is the difficulty encountered in trying to get teachers to leave their current teaching position for a career in administration (Hengel, 2007). Teachers are that next generation and it's important that potentially good administrators be rewarded for going into administration. In an article for School Administrator magazine it is pointed out that in New York, teachers are awarded one full year of retirement credit in the New York State Teacher Retirement system for working approximately 185 days. Superintendents are awarded the same one year service credit in the same retirement system for working 220 days. This significant difference is enough inequity to make some teachers unwilling to enter the field of administration (Tallerico & Tingley, 2001).

A factor that eliminates a significant number of possible applicants for an administrative position is the lack of development opportunities for administratively talented individuals according to Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt (2005). The researchers tried to identify what department chairs at the University of Nevada Las Vegas should know in order to become effective leaders. They found that while internal candidates knew their department they may not be effective leaders. Outside candidates who were hired were usually a signal of a desire to change by either the administration or the department. To combat this internal selection problem, they found that individuals should be identified one year in advance of taking over a department and receive advanced "academic leadership preparation." Doing so would create a seamless transition to and provide a more effective leader. This concept is similar to Rogers' and Safer's Overlap Model in their 1990 study.

According to a study by Alberi (2009), the Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt (2005) model is also similar to one used by the Army to train their future leaders. While the Army does not

specifically mention “coaching” or “training” in its list of activities that should take place in order to train new leaders, it is a fundamental understanding in the Army that it is incumbent upon individuals to “train subordinates and learn from superiors for eventual upward mobility” (p. 13). Furthermore according to Alberi is also understood in the army that all leaders are considered teachers, whose duty it is to prepare the next generation of leaders.

Superintendent recruitment is addressed by Winter, Rinehart, Keedy and Bjork (2007) who studied a population of principals to determine their attraction to the superintendency. This quantitative study involved sending surveys to 587 principals in Kentucky. Of those surveyed, 58.8% responded. A key finding of the study was that a higher age was a negative factor in principals deciding to apply for superintendent positions. The researchers indicate that as a result, recruiters may want to concentrate on a younger population in order to increase applicants for a superintendent position. This is counterintuitive from what recruiters may look for when seeking more experienced applicants. Another key finding was that potential superintendents may view the job as “too demanding in terms of time away from family” (p. 50). The idea that the superintendent job requires more time away from one’s family than other administrative positions points out the need for more succession preparedness on the part of school districts. The fact that the job may seem to require a loss of family time may not in fact be accurate and through training programs for aspiring superintendents this issue could be addressed.

In another study by Reynolds, White, Brayman and Moore (2008), it was found that gender was still an issue in the selection of principals for schools in Canada. The qualitative study involved interviews with 33 individuals in ten schools located across Canada. Participants in the study “repeatedly” stated that gender and race were not issues in the selection of principals but some of those who were interviewed admitted that the needs of their school may warrant

consideration of these factors when a selection is made. These interviewees did not make the connection between their decision that a school needed a man as a leader as being the same as rejecting a whole group of candidates because of gender. One of the findings of this study is that “existing practices cannot be relied upon to increase participation rates by women” (p. 50). The study found that it is necessary to continue encouraging women and minority candidates to prepare for administrative positions and to encourage their applications. Not doing so would eliminate a large percentage of eligible applicants for a position.

Another study that focused on gender issues in educational administration succession was completed by Brooking (2008) in New Zealand’s primary schools. This study used semi structured in-depth interviews with focus groups of six to twelve individuals. It found that in order to provide for a quality succession, more attention needed to be paid to “previous experience, qualifications and suitability” (p. 52) than to factors such as the gender of the applicant. Often gender was considered more important due to non academic reasons such as historical need. As a result, there is a significant amount of “untapped talent” in the population that should be considered part of any succession plan but often is not for reasons unrelated to the ability of the person to do the job.

In a qualitative study, Sherman (2005) looked at the reported administrative shortage by interviewing 15 women who were considered teacher leaders. Their participation in a school-district wide aspiring administrators program was the main subject of the study. This study was designed to determine whether this program had actually been helpful to women who desired to move into administration from teaching. Findings included that women “have been constrained by traditional norms surrounding educational administration in the district, indicating that

problems are much larger in scope than that which can be cured by district-led “grow your own” leadership programs” (p. 707).

In the Sherman study (2005), vehicles for preparing women for administration are looked at in detail. For example it was found that traditional mentoring programs tend to team up a veteran administrator with a new potential administrator who most often both shares the same characteristics. The problem, according to the United States Department of Education in 1997, only 34% of sitting principals and 13% of sitting superintendents were women (p. 711) thus leading to a potential problem for women entering administration through a mentoring relationship with a male mentor who may not fully understand the gender issues a women faces in an administrative position.

The Sherman (2005) study points out that while district based leadership preparation initiatives claim to address the issue of moving women into administration, too often these programs exist to support the “status quo” and are simply means for current superintendents and/or principals to act as “gatekeeper” to the administrative profession. It was found that “age sex and race were seen to play a role in job progression” (p. 710) for administrators.

According to Charlton (1998) a major issue in the selection and retention of a new superintendent is the method employed by the selecting school district in finding a new leader. In this study, it was found that process does matter. He determined that such issues as using a search consultant as opposed to doing the search for itself (the Board of Education) did not make a “significant” difference in the number and qualities of superintendent candidates that a Board of Education gets to consider. He also discovered that factors such as including community and staff in the process, making a unanimous decision in the hiring of a new superintendent and

visiting the community of an outside candidate before hiring her/him made a difference in the long term satisfaction of the Board and the community in who was eventually selected.

Ocasio (1994) studied the politics of leadership succession in business. For this study a random sample of 120 United States industrial companies from the Moody's Industrial Directory were chosen to participate. Each of the companies was studied for a period of years beginning in 1960 through 1990. Such factors as profit, Board of Directors, CEO turnover and succession were studied. While the study found that poor economic performance leads to a greater likelihood of succession, it also found that a major CEO liability was inexperience. Those with less experience were more likely to fail. Other factors leading to failure were lack of familiarity with past practices of the organization and its politics. A possible solution for this in schools is either the "overlap model" in the Rogers and Safer study or proper training of potential leaders outlined in the Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt study.

When planning for the succession of leadership in any organization, it is clear that many factors need to be considered. The key areas that should be addressed when creating a succession plan include "organizational culture, ownership, strategic goals, identification and assessment of high potentials, development, action learning, mentoring, coaching and rewards" (Krauss, 2008, p. 60). Above all, the research indicates that a well thought out plan, that combines "leadership recruitment, preparation, selection, assignment induction and on-going development" will result in successful leadership succession (Fink & Brayman, 2004, p. 445).

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate “succession planning” on a policy level as it relates to the position of superintendent of schools in school districts across New York State. Succession planning is often discussed but it was clear through my research that there are a great many differences of opinion about what that process should and does entail. Through the use of a grounded theory approach and a qualitative study, the researcher interviewed leaders from various organizations to determine common threads and differences that will contribute to creating a clearer definition and understanding of succession planning in New York State. The study was centered on three essential questions:

1. How important is succession planning by a school district to replace its superintendent?
2. What are the steps that should be taken in order to plan and prepare for leadership succession?
3. What factors inhibit school districts from adequately planning for superintendent succession?

Participants in the Study

Participants for the study were selected because they are the individuals who hold key positions in New York State, are knowledgeable about succession planning for the superintendency and are in a position to propose policy changes to bring about a more uniform system of succession planning if the need is shown to exist.

The 16 research participants in the sample include the following individuals:

The Commissioner of the New York State Education Department and/or his designee:

The Commissioner is the Chief Executive Officer of the University of the State of New York and responsible for all education matters covering pre school through the college and university level in New York State.

A member of the Board of Regents and/or her/his designee: The Regents are responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State. The Board is comprised of 16 members elected by the State Legislature for five year terms: one from each of the State's 12 judicial districts and four members who serve at large.

The Executive Director of the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) and/or his designee: NYSSBA trains school board members in how to conduct superintendent searches and works closely with various organizations in New York State on ways to improve school board-superintendent relations.

The Executive Director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) and/or his designee: This organization represents over 700 school superintendents and district superintendents in New York State. It is a lobbying organization as well as an organization that provides in-service training and legal services for its members. NYSCOSS is creating a new superintendent development program that will begin in the summer of 2009.

Education Leadership in the New York State Comptroller's Office: The Comptroller has recently been involved with superintendent selection by way of the 211 waiver process that allows for retired individuals to return to work as a school superintendent due to the apparent

shortage of available candidates. The Comptroller has worked on ways to streamline the process to make it possible for retired individuals to fill in when needed. It would be important to include a member of the Comptroller's Office in the study due to the fact that succession planning may create less need for interim, retired superintendents.

Elected members of the New York State Assembly and Senate: Two lawmakers from the Assembly and one lawmaker from the Senate were interviewed. Representatives were chosen based upon the type of area they represent. One Assembly Member represents a suburban and urban district, the other Assembly Member represents a rural area and the Representative from the Senate represents an area that encompasses all three types of regions. It was determined that one of these participants should belong to her/his respective education committee.

Education Leadership from New York State Government: One staff member from the Legislature who is involved in the formation of statewide education policy and law was interviewed. This is especially important for succession planning from the standpoint of policy formation. The staff member interviewed was selected because he/she has been involved in education policy development matters for at least five years.

A representative from the education leadership in the New York State Governor's Office: Following the last election for governor, a special office for education was created by the incoming governor and it has been maintained under the current governor. This office not only deals with budget issues relating to education but also with educational policy formation. The special office for education coordinates activities between the State Education Department and the Governor. The Governor's office has direct control over the Office of the Budget and therefore control over policy initiatives that will rely on funding from New York State. The staff

member interviewed was selected because he/she has been involved in education policy development matters for at least five years.

Four superintendent search consultants: One from western New York State, one from the Capital Region, one from the downstate area and one from the North Country who have each completed at least five superintendent searches over the past five years. This group was chosen to participate due to their experience and knowledge of the succession process, their past experiences with it and their experiences with Boards of Education and School Superintendents who may have advocated for or against a succession planning process.

A Director of a superintendent development program: The individual has been involved in the development of superintendent candidates for New York State public schools for at least the past five years was also selected to be interviewed for her/his first-hand knowledge of the succession process since she/he has been involved directly with succession planning.

The Executive Director of the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA) and/or his designee: CASDA is a study council affiliated with the School of Education at The University at Albany, State University of New York which has one of the largest preparatory programs for administrators in upstate New York. CASDA has been in existence since 1949 and has a current membership of 122 school districts, public and private, serving more than 10,000 teachers and 175,000 students.

Participants in the study had the experience noted in Table 3.1 completing superintendent searches.

Table 1

Participant Search History

Number of Study Participants Involved in Superintendent Searches	Number of Searches Successfully Completed	Number of Years Involved in Searches
6	265	73

The selection procedure for the sample was finalized in conjunction with the doctoral research chairperson. The intention in the creation and selection of the sample was based on those who already understand the issues facing school districts regarding the shortage of applicants for the superintendent position and who may have actually addressed it through doing searches, creating development programs and/or encouraging individuals to become superintendents. It was also based on the fact that these are the individuals who are in positions of authority who may have some ability to address the shortage of superintendent candidates through policy, staff development activities and/or budgetary formulation for succession planning. A sample cover letter was sent and/or hand delivered to each participant (Appendix B).

Reliability and Validity

Multiple forms of data were analyzed in order to reach the stated conclusions. The first attempt was to locate and analyze documentation that may already exist that defines succession planning.

A query on succession planning was forwarded to all superintendents in New York State requesting any information that individual districts may have on the topic of “superintendent succession planning” through the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS). A request was also be made to the NYSCOSS “Superintendent in Residence” for information. No information was received as a result of these inquiries.

Another request for information on succession planning was forwarded to the New York State Education Department Office of the District Superintendent and to the New York State School Boards Association through the office of the Leadership Development Manager and the Executive Director. Neither organization had any written information to share on succession planning.

An e-mail request was sent to the Texas, Florida and Tennessee Superintendent Associations. Texas was the only organization to reply and made it known they did not have any written information on superintendent succession planning. Information was located on succession planning in Maryland and Delaware through web searches.

Table 2

States Contacted and/or Researched for Information on Succession Planning Activities

Name of State	Response to Inquiry	Statewide Plan for Succession	Grants to Fund Succession Planning
Delaware	Yes	Yes	Yes
Florida	No	Unknown	Unknown
Maryland	Yes	Yes	No
New York	Yes	No	No
Tennessee	No	Unknown	Unknown
Texas	Yes	No	No

In order to validate the study, member checking was employed in which information gathered was reviewed with study participants to ensure its accuracy.

The bias of the researcher needs to be stated so that readers are aware that the researcher was involved in past succession planning activities in school districts in which he has worked. In one case the researcher was chosen to be the next superintendent of a small district when the current superintendent moved on and in another case in another district, the researcher actively prepared two individuals, one female and one male for the Board of Education to choose from to become the next superintendent upon his leaving the District.

My executive coach from the doctoral program at Sage Colleges was used as a peer debriefer. He was asked to review various questions and findings, in order to help clarify the information so that the interpretations of the data are valid.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

There are a total of 12 research questions (Attachment C). The questions were designed for the purpose of finding out each participant's ideas and attitudes towards succession planning while at the same time helping to determine whether policy change may be necessary to bring about a succession planning initiative. Questions were designed for the purpose of discovering the view of, ideas about and need for superintendent succession planning as well as whether policy changes may help reduce the shortage of superintendent candidates.

The data were collected through interviews. To record interviews, an interview sheet that included a place for the name of the person being interviewed, the date of the interview, the location of the interview, the time the interview begins and the time the interview ended was created. Also created was a space to note anything unusual that may happen during the interview. A set of questions to be asked was listed with space in between the questions to write down notes. (Attachment D). Handwritten notes were taken of all interviews.

While very little existing documentation was located on succession planning for the superintendency in New York, a second source documentation included written information about succession planning in general.

Data Analysis

The data analysis first involved the collection of all information from the participants in the study to my 12 questions and was further broken down using a grounded theory approach. The data was organized by transcribing the interviews and my notes from my data collection sheets. It was then cross referenced by coding the key points of information into four separate categories.

A coding process was used to identify concepts. These concepts were cross referenced with each other to establish the major findings in the study. Multiple perspectives within each finding are shown and supported with quotations from the participants.

In order to present the data more effectively, participants and sample questions were clustered together based on similarities for the purpose of organization. Participants were clustered into four groups: non-elected government officials, elected officials, education organization directors and superintendent search professionals 7(Attachment E).

Sample questions were also clustered into four groups, developed through the grounded theory approach: what is succession planning and is it important, can succession planning help alleviate the shortage, what are the problems associated with succession planning and the policy implications of succession planning.

Finally personal interpretations of the data being presented with additional recommendations for future questions that need to be researched on the topic are presented.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study was the predetermined idea of succession planning by many of the participants, especially those who have been involved in the process of searching for and identifying superintendent candidates. As noted in Table 3.1, participants in this study have completed 265 searches with 73 years of experience between them. While these individuals have provided an incredible depth of knowledge on the subject of superintendent succession, they already hold many ideas about the process gained from the many searches they have participated in and the many superintendents whom they have known that came into their job through a succession process.

Another limitation of the study was the time of year that the investigation was being organized and completed and who was being selected to participate. The study involves interviewing New York State Legislators and government staff members. The problem arises because the time frame that participants were asked to be interviewed coincided with the time of year that the Legislature and their aides are working on the budget. The Governor's budget is presented by December 1. After that, it is in the hands of the legislature and it becomes the major focus of life in Albany. It is at this time the research began in earnest and as a result ran into a roadblock of those who were either unwilling or unable to be interviewed until after the budget process was complete. Some of the people interviewed during the budget process could not provide the amount of time necessary to go into as great a detail as they may have been able to during a different time of year.

A third limitation of the study was the nature of the high office holders' schedules and their inclusion in the interview process. As a result of their changing schedules, it was often difficult to get an appointment and many times meetings were canceled at the last minute. Adjustments to schedules at the last minute were commonplace to meet the change that was made by the person to be interviewed. If any future studies are completed that involve such office holders, I would make sure that the person who is completing the study knows that they need to have an extreme amount of flexibility in their own schedule.

The changeover in the New York State Senate in last November's elections also turned out to be another limiting factor to the study. Before the November elections, the Republicans held a majority and therefore control of the Senate. Knowing what the research was going to be, contacts were made to the Senate and Senate staff to set up interviews. When the Republicans lost control of the Senate and the Democrats gained control, everything changed. The new

Democratic majority took control in January 2009 but didn't fill many of the key aide positions well into the time I was doing my research. Many of those who were eventually appointed as aides didn't fit the criteria that had established for interviews. As a result, it became difficult to interview staffers that no longer held their job and new staff members who were still learning their jobs.

A limiting factor for some participants in the study is their self interest may be at stake based on the possible findings. Private search consultants have a vested financial interest in keeping a search process as the primary method of selecting a school leader instead of locating a leader through succession planning. The reason is because they get paid to do searches and do not get paid when someone gains a position through succession. Publicly funded searches by a District Superintendent in New York State have less of a financial interest because District Superintendents do not receive additional compensation for doing a search. However, superintendent searches do allow the District Superintendent access to a Board of Education and the schools in a district.

Another limiting factor of the study is the fact that in order to gain approval of the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB), the study had to be conducted so that individual responses remained anonymous. As a result, some of the intended impact of participant responses was lost by the fact that a reader of the study does not know which study participant replied to a question. The original intent was to keep the participant sample small, but publically identify participants and their responses. This was changed at the urging of the Sage IRB. While the sample is still small (16 participants), it is a group of individuals who are at the forefront of school policy issues in New York State.

CHAPTER IV

Summary of Results

“It is our moral obligation to develop leaders. As leaders we have to be developing others. We start out teaching so it is only natural that we teach people how to become leaders.”

Commissioner Richard Mills, New York State Education Department

The purpose of this study is to investigate “succession planning” as it relates to the position of superintendent of schools in school districts across New York State. Succession planning is often discussed but through the research it became obvious that there are many opinions regarding what that process should and does entail. Through the use of a grounded theory approach and a qualitative study, the researcher interviewed leaders from various organizations to determine common threads and differences that will contribute to creating a clearer definition and understanding of succession planning in New York State.

In this chapter, the research will address three essential questions: (A) How important is succession planning by a school district to replace its superintendent? (B) What are the steps that should be taken in order to plan and prepare for leadership succession? (C) What factors inhibit school districts from adequately planning for superintendent succession?

The Importance of Succession Planning by a School District to Replace Its Superintendent

Succession planning for the superintendency was universally described by those interviewed for this study as “a process.” Succession planning is not simply a system of preparing a person in an organization to become the next leader. Many of those in leadership positions across New York State characterize a process that includes as much preparation for the organization as it does for the individuals who assume leadership positions. While it may seem

succession planning is a simple term to define, there are a variety of ways to explain it, many more ways to implement it and a number of things to be aware of if a school district decides to begin a succession planning initiative.

Definitions of succession planning. Participant definitions in this study fell into five distinct categories. Each of these definitions came from study participants themselves and is grouped according to each participant’s individual response in Table 4.1. Definitions are as follows: (A) “a process organized to identify groom and promote talent to leadership positions;” (B) “a process of determining how we are going to select our next leader;” (C) “a system of anticipating vacancies and identifying individuals years in advance of the need who can be ready to fill vacancies;” (D) “the process of assessing the future needs of your organization. Determining who has the requisite skills to be developed. Not just who, but what does our organization need;” (E) “preparing the organization and individuals to fill a slot when someone leaves either through internal or external means.” A summary of these definitions and how each group of participants defined succession planning is found in the following table:

Table 3

Definition of Succession Planning by Participant Group

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	Definitions by Category				
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
Elected Officials (4)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Organization Directors (4)	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%
Search Professionals (4)	25%	0%	0%	25%	50%

Government officials (elected and non-elected alike) were unanimous in their belief succession planning was a local issue but unlike others in the study they did not view it as preparing both the person and the organization for eventual turnover. Heads of Organizations and Search Professionals were more inclined to view succession planning as more than simply preparing one person but instead preparing the whole organization for the eventual change in the organization's leadership.

According to one official, "succession planning should be viewed as a system of anticipating vacancies." Current leaders have to keep asking who can be ready or made ready to fill vacancies in the organization." The government officials also tended to look at succession planning as a much bigger issue, beyond the single school district. The interviews usually moved in the direction of organizations outside of the P-12 public education system toward other areas in the public sector that should seriously consider using succession planning.

Anticipating Change. One elected official made the case that anticipating eventual movement is healthy for an organization and it should be encouraged, not discouraged. This official also cautioned many leaders leave too quickly. In answer to this, the official believes something could be built into an employment contract that "compels someone to stay in a position for a period of time." This would not only protect the individual who has the contract but also the organization that needs to prepare for the eventual leadership turnover and create time for the organization to properly plan for succession. This idea was also brought up by a search consultant who suggested when a succession plan is created resulting in an internal candidate being elevated into the superintendent position, some type of penalty be worked out if the person were to leave the district "within five years of accepting the position."

One of the elected officials believes many superintendents currently do not reveal to their current board of education she/he is actively looking to change positions until it is too late for the board to adequately prepare for the change in leadership. If the board of education and the superintendent were actively preparing the next leader in a unified, non threatening manner, the current superintendent would feel more comfortable about being honest and open with a board about her/his plans to move on. In order to accomplish this according to this elected official, there would need to be a high degree of trust between the board and the superintendent. It was further pointed out in order to truly plan for superintendent succession a degree of trust needs to be in place anyway. If a superintendent could tell a board in the early stages, or even before beginning a search for a new job, there would be less of a need for an interim superintendent and a more smooth transition between leaders. This elected official felt interim superintendents “are generally treading water and not interested in the long term interests of the institution.” It is easy to see why an official would feel strongly about succession planning if she/he believed the alternative to it was a disengaged individual unable to move a school forward.

Two elected officials (independently of each other) compared a current lengthy search taking place for a university president to a failed search for a school superintendent when a succession plan is not in place. One elected official stated if an organization goes too long without having a leader in place, they could go into “crisis mode.” This was defined as a period where the organization chooses someone to lead it not because she or he is the best person for the job but because the organization simply needs a leader. If the organization goes into crisis mode, it could be very dangerous because the organization could end up picking someone for an important leadership position who they really don’t want and in the long run will end up “just replacing sooner than later and the problem will start all over again.” Instead of falling into a

crisis choice of a leader, this elected official reasoned, “why not engage in succession planning in the first place.” The other elected official who spoke about this same topic pointed out it has been two years at one major university and they are unable to put a new leader in place. This elected official called this “shameful” and stressed if they were able to engage in succession planning, this would not be the issue it is. This respondent felt “school districts should take note and learn a lesson from this situation.”

One of the elected officials also brought up the current search for a new Commissioner of the New York State Education Department. This individual stated, “SED should have five people ready” to move into that position. This elected official was not happy a search seemed to be ongoing but very few people were being kept informed of the search progress. While it was acknowledged this was a decision of the Board of Regents, it was anticipated the process would drag out longer than it should in this official’s opinion. A former Assistant Commissioner had just been named as the Interim Commissioner the day before this interview. The fact did not escape the scrutiny of the elected official who was interviewed. This respondent pointed out it was a good idea for the interim to begin a month early to work with the current Commissioner but a better idea would be for a new permanent Commissioner to work alongside the current Commissioner for a month. The elected official questioned the ability of any interim to move an organization forward, especially one the size of the State Education Department. The elected official stated, “What will happen in the void? Nothing! Major policies will not be implemented and staff will be unsettled. Things will not happen and there is no excuse.” According to this respondent if a succession plan had been in place and approved by the Board of Regents, an interim leader would not have been necessary at the State Education Department.

Retirees in the Workforce. One non-elected government official believes succession planning is important because there are currently a “disproportionate number of baby boomers in the workforce. When they all leave, we will be straining to replace them from a reduced pool of candidates.” According to this individual, part of the planning process for the turnover that is about to occur will be bringing retired people back into the workforce. In contrast to the elected official who felt an interim was not the answer to an organization’s leadership needs, this individual believed the use of retired people to fill the gap in leadership was an important step an organization could take as it was searching for or preparing a new leader. This official stated, “Without the use of retired workers, many vital positions around the State could go unfilled or be filled by those not qualified to carry them out.”

Another non-elected government official believes boards of education may want to do national or state-wide searches; it should be the responsibility of the sitting superintendent to “point out in house talent that may be available.” This official believes all superintendents should “scour” her/his organization for leadership talent and get her/his board of education to think of leadership needs beyond their one particular district. This official acknowledged this would not be an easy process to implement, but it is an important process if we are to grow leaders who would be able to step into superintendent positions across New York. It was stated if a sitting superintendent does both, identify potential leaders and communicate this with a board of education, it will be the first steps in the succession planning process and will help make her/his organization “more healthy.” The organization will be healthier because talented individuals will see they have room to grow as leaders either within the organization and/or possibly have opportunities outside of the organization.

Types of Preparation. Another non-elected official stated in order to further succession planning, when a person becomes a superintendent, the new superintendent needs to face the fact she/he needs to immediately start preparing the next leader and begin to ask, “Where am I going from here?” If a leader can both prepare a new leader and be honest about what her/his plans are it will become easier to create a succession plan that will work for her/his particular organization. This non-elected official suggested in the “700 districts across New York State there is not a lot of interest in having people grow.” In New York State we do not have a large county system of school governance; too often the larger needs of the State and the profession are overlooked in favor of the needs of the particular school district and all too often districts are all consumed by their own day to day operations with little thought given to their own long term needs let alone the long term needs of the profession of school administration. This individual suggested in New York State there could be a “regional, virtual succession plan under the leadership of the District Superintendent” of the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). If this method was followed, each District Superintendent would be asked to identify a “class of leaders” who could be groomed to be the next school superintendents, not just in a specific school district but for any district in need of a superintendent across New York State. Creating a new pool of leaders in this regional manner would take the local issue of a current school superintendent being expected to prepare her or his own successor out of the equation. It was believed by this official such a system would be more palatable to current school superintendents, potential school superintendents and board of education members in particular. Independent from each other, another participant in this study also brought up the idea for the local District Superintendent to be the person who could head up an effort at identifying talent in

a region. She/he stated, “It is not unusual for the District Superintendent to recognize and build talent.”

Another non-elected government official indicated how one agency director tried to put together a succession plan to provide people from within the organization an opportunity to grow in their leadership role for the purpose of providing future leadership, but it was met with resistance because there was fear “some people would be identified for promotion and others would not be.” The concern of this official carries over to schools where the same could happen if succession plans are not conceived and carried out with full support from all participants. In cases like this, the official suggests a hybrid succession plan be created where “managers talk about the rank just below them and ask is she promotable? If not, what can we do to make her promotable and if so, what can we do to further her exposure in the organization?”

One of the organization directors interviewed explained there were two kinds of succession planning; (a) mentor driven and (b) board driven. In a mentored driven process, the “weaknesses” of an individual should be pointed out and worked on in order for the individual to be able to ready her or himself for the job. In this process a candidate is “plumped up” in order to be viable. A mentor driven process also creates a domino effect in an organization where the superintendent is mentoring a principal and the principal in turn mentors a teacher. Mentoring systems that are driven by individuals in a district are usually done informally and “under the radar” meaning there is not a public plan for succession. In a board driven process it is usually done “more explicitly and above the radar.” While there may not be a written plan, in these cases it is clear why a person is either hired by the organization or why a specific person is being given leadership duties.

According to one organization director, “A board of education will often tell a superintendent to create a succession plan when the relationship between them is good. Many times succession planning has come on the heels of a search by a neighboring district that ends up with what are viewed as disappointing results,” defined as either too few candidates applying for the position or a less than desirable choice as superintendent.

Levels of Planning. While those interviewed discussed succession planning as part of a complex planning process, some viewed it on a variety of levels. One elected government official explained succession planning could involve something as simple as “making sure the person you have your eye on for leadership growth leads the organization during periods of time like vacations or business travel by the current leader.” It was felt by starting a succession plan in this way, an organization could get an idea of the ability of any person to perform in the job they are being groomed to assume. This official also looked at this manner of preparation as an important one in case something happens to a leader of an organization unexpectedly. “You need to be thinking of who should replace you if you got hit by a bus” according to this leader. To this official, succession planning was not just a matter of preparing an individual for leadership into the deep future but also preparing people to take on responsibility in case of the unanticipated emergency. This elected leader felt this process didn’t have to be just one person being prepared and it would be better for an organization if more than one person were prepared to take on the leadership role in case the unthinkable occurred. This official stressed however, “Not everyone has the self confidence to think like that. Part of the job of being an administrator is to look at all possible situations and prepare for them.”

An organization director stated, “Succession planning works when things are viewed well in the district. A board of education chooses attributes different from the current superintendent

if things are bad.” Another organization director agreed and stated a board of education will tell the current superintendent to “grow their own when there is a good relationship” between the current board and that superintendent.

Another organization director encourages boards of education to not “waste your time with a search if you know who you want.” But this director also stressed too often schools confuse a person and the needs of the organization. What was meant by this is a district needs to first “design the job, then go out and find the person” who best fits the job. Too often boards want a specific person before really looking at what they need for the job. To overcome this problem, it was suggested the board seek input from the staff and community to establish the profile for the job before doing anything else related to searching for a new district leader. When the information is compiled, the board should compare it to what its own ideas are and then move forward with a plan to name a successor. Involving the staff and community at that point should not preclude a board of education from choosing an internal candidate and in fact might actually make it easier if the staff and community were to identify traits important to a new leader that were held by a current district administrator. This director believes if an internal candidate does emerge through a full search process it will be good for that person in the long run. “Competing for a job is a character builder instead of walking into a job” according to this director.

A search consultant agrees with this point of view by stating, “It is important to attach the culture, mores, vision and goals of a community” to any succession plan. It was stressed by this consultant “the more people who see the same thing will be good for school district as a whole. Bringing community into the succession process is vital and it can be done through efforts of the board of education while the current superintendent is still under contract.”

Limitation of Internal Candidates. One elected government official cautions districts from “depending too heavily on succession plans that purely promote from within the district.” The official’s concern was centered on what she/he felt was “the need to bring new ideas into a school district, or any system for that matter.” According to this elected government official, “A school board may choose someone from within because they are pleased with the way things are going in the schools” as supported in the Rogers and Safer (1990) and the Geisel (2002) studies. As this elected official explains, “The board may not know any better and there may really be an artificial wall between them and what is really happening in the schools.” This leader doesn’t think schools should have to hire a superintendent from the outside but believes strongly all candidates “should be looked at and heard.”

One search consultant believes, “There is no succession planning in public education generally.” This consultant stated, “Most superintendents don’t think about succession planning as a responsibility of leadership but they should.” This line of thought is supported by Groves (2007) and Nugent (2008) studies. The consultant thinks this should not be the case and further states “it is a critical responsibility of leadership to plan for succession.” This individual suggests leaders have to begin a process of planning for succession addressing it on an almost “daily basis.” This can be accomplished by always raising questions with subordinates that “will bring people to the next level and get them to think about what they want to do.”

Preparation is Key. One issue raised by a search consultant is most people who are being prepared for leadership roles are prepared for “vertical succession.” Vertical succession was defined as learning the position(s) in the organization one management level up from the one you currently hold. This consultant suggests to truly prepare leaders for the next step in the process; they need to be prepared “horizontally” as well. Horizontal succession was defined as

learning the position(s) in an organization that are on the same management level as you. This would mean an Assistant Superintendent for Business would be included in curriculum meetings and the assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction would be prepared for the business side of the superintendent's job by being included in the business meetings that take place in a district. Another example is to include a promising elementary principal in the meetings involving secondary principals. This search consultant stresses that in her/his belief, "It isn't just about preparing for the next step; it's also about understanding the district as a whole that will better prepare you as an administrator for the next step."

An organization director suggests that even with a succession plan in place, most districts should still conduct a search for its next leader and "recruitment is the name of the game" to this director. In order to prepare a board of education for superintendent recruitment, a board must discuss "what issues the district is facing, what the expectations are to address them and the personal qualifications that are necessary to achieve them." These three points need to become the pillars on which all other decisions are made in the succession planning process. The first objective of the search consultant according to this agency director should be to "discuss these three issues without an individual's name being on the table. Doing so will allow the board of education to make a clear objective decision that will be in the best interests of the district and the children being educated there."

Steps that Should be Taken in Order to Plan and Prepare for Leadership Succession

It is important not to confuse turnover and succession planning. According to one elected official, "Succession planning can be one of the possible answers for the turnover in school leadership but can not be viewed as the sole answer." This leader believes, to address what

appears to be a rapid turnover in the superintendency, boards of education need to look more closely at succession planning as a tool in the process of recruiting and keeping new school leaders. According to this leader, “It is only part of the process and not the entire process.”

Table 4

Participant Belief in Succession Planning as a Tool to Alleviate the Shortage of Administrators

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	100%	0%
Elected Officials (4)	100%	0%
Organization Directors (4)	75%	25%
Search Professionals (4)	100%	0%

Shortage of Candidates. According to an organization director, “There is absolutely a shortage of people willing to do the superintendent job. There is not a shortage of people qualified to do the job. The pool is as large as it was before but we aren’t harvesting from the pool at the same rate.” This director believes the problem is partially related to the lack of experience by sitting superintendents. “Two thirds of superintendents are in their first five years on the job. These aren’t people who will go out and harvest the pool.” It is also a belief boards of education are “reluctant” to prepare new leaders because they often feel like they are preparing leaders for other districts instead of their own and ask why should they? If boards of education aren’t investing in new leaders and superintendents aren’t able to, based upon their lack of experience, how are we identifying people with talent who can move into district leadership positions? Currently in this director’s opinion, “We are getting by on a system largely

driven by personalities and self selection.” Personalities to this director are people who can sell themselves into a job based not on their knowledge base but instead on their personal traits. Self selection is the process where a person says to themselves this is what I want to do and then goes out and does it. According to this director, instead of entrusting leadership change to personalities and self selection, we need to develop new high quality leadership and we need to make sure “experienced leaders are identifying people with talent as potential future leaders and developing them into superintendent candidates.”

A non-elected government official agrees with the fact there is a large group of qualified individuals to be a school superintendent but states, “There is a big difference between being qualified and being ready to do the job.” This official stated “this is where succession planning can come into play, to prepare those who are qualified but not yet ready for the job.” This official also states people would like to try these administrative positions but “often hear how hard they are.” Instead, “experienced administrators must issue a call regularly to administrative candidates and the New York State Commissioner of Education should show up to potential superintendent meetings 100% of the time to promote the superintendency.”

Another organization director believes there is a shortage of superintendent candidates because of the prevailing views of (a) “the negative conditions the job has to deal with today. They are almost all impossible and the expectations are beyond one person’s ability,” (b) the superintendent is expected to “come in and make things right. It will take time and resources and there aren’t enough of either” and (c) “quality of life issues.” The job is described as “24-7 and you are dealing with people’s money and their kids and they know where you live. It is not a perfect constituency.” This organization director puts it bluntly about why should a person in a

school district desire to move up to the superintendency under all of those conditions? “After all, they don’t assassinate the assistant king” was this director’s simple explanation for why so many certified administrators want no part of the superintendent’s job. This is supported by the Winter, Rinehart, Keedy and Bjork (2007) study which found potential superintendents may be concerned about taking on the superintendent’s job because they feared for their quality of life as a result.

One non-elected government official pointed out, “In New York State, teachers receive one year of service credit in the retirement system for 10 months of work during the school year. Administrators for the most part work 12 months for the same amount of retirement credit.” According to this official, this example is not enough to stop people from applying to become administrators but it is an example of one of the many differences in the way administrators and teachers are treated in New York. This causes fewer people to want to enter administration. According to this official, “When you add up all of those differences, why would someone want to be a school superintendent?” This official mentioned at one time it was being discussed in the legislature to grant 1.2 years of service credit in the retirement system for 12 month administrators but it “was never taken seriously” as a solution to administrative shortages. It was stressed when such issues are brought up, they need to be looked at for wider implications. “Incentivizing makes intuitive sense but is bad policy” according to this official. “If such incentivizing occurs to promote the superintendency, then it will be a precedent for every other group with a tough job our society needs to make sure gets filled, such as extra service credit for police officers who volunteer to work in dangerous areas.” This official believes while there is a shortage of qualified applicants it could be better met through a real succession planning exercise as opposed to incentives to go into a job.

An elected government official thinks there are a significant number of teachers who would like to go into administration and are “thinking about it.” But there are clear disadvantages for those teachers in terms of “workload and salary.” This official believes, “The amount an administrator earns for the time she puts into the job compared to the amount a ten month employee earns is sad. Many teachers look at this and see no reason to go into administration.” This leader recognizes opportunity in succession planning for cases like this because proper planning may deliver information to those interested in becoming an administrator beyond the simple salary and school year debate.

A search consultant stated, “The number of applicants for any one superintendent opening has dropped considerably but not the quality of the top ten individuals for a position.” This consultant also sees the applicants overall are younger and more inexperienced than years ago. Succession planning could help prepare younger applicants for the job they are applying as well as to clarify aspirations for those who decide the superintendency is not the job they really want. This consultant sees people applying before they are ready to assume the duties of a school superintendent but also sees the potential for succession planning in this process.

Another consultant agrees with this sentiment and as a result has tried to move away as much as possible from “self selection in searches.” This consultant believes, “A good search will cast a wide net and not just sit back and wait to see what happens and who might come along” for a superintendent position opening. It is important not just to talk to those who apply on their own through self selection, but also seek out good candidates from across the state and nation and attempt to get them to apply. “As we move in this direction, we’ve seen an expanded pool of candidates and people who are more suitable to the superintendent’s position” according

to this consultant. The process described by this consultant is known as active recruitment because the recruiter is not simply waiting for those interested to apply. The opposite is known as passive recruitment when a recruiter waits for those who are interested in a position to self select for it. Who conducts the search for a school district may dictate whether passive or active recruitment is used. For example; a district superintendent doing a search would have a much harder time reaching out to potential candidates for fear of offending a component or neighboring school district by recruiting someone from another district. On the other hand, a private search consultant has none of the same perceived conflicts and can freely reach out to candidates and be much more active in the pursuit of potential applicants.

The Board of Education or the Superintendent? Who is responsible for a district's succession planning created a variety of views. Some of the people interviewed thought the current superintendent should be responsible, while others believed the board of education should be responsible. Most agreed some of the responsibility lies with both. The prevailing view is it is a current superintendent's responsibility to develop new talent but it is not his or her responsibility to impose talent upon a board of education. It is up to the board of education to encourage their superintendent to develop talent, hold her/him accountable for developing the talent and then when it comes time for turnover in the district, make the decision on whether the internal talent fits the needs of the organization better than the external talent that is available. In some cases it might be and in others it might not be. In any case, by the board giving the authority to the superintendent to develop talent, even if the board chooses not to promote the internal talent, the district has made a contribution to the profession by helping to create a new district leader. According to one search consultant, "The biggest mistake a person can make when it comes to succession planning is trying to do it in isolation." By attempting to create a

succession plan in isolation, a superintendent or even a board president who may take on this responsibility overlooks the other members of the organization who need to have a say in the process. This consultant states, “It is the entire board of education who chooses the superintendent and for a sitting superintendent to announce he is leaving the district but he has good news in that I have been preparing a certain person for the superintendency for the past three years will not go over well with a board of education.” Therefore it is “foolish” for a superintendent to think they can plan for succession in isolation. This consultant believes it is the “executive’s responsibility” to prepare leaders but she/he may not necessarily be preparing them for her/his own organization.

Table 5

Who Should Lead a District’s Succession Planning Efforts

<u>Name of Participant Group and (Number)</u>	<u>Board of Education</u>	<u>Superintendent of Schools</u>	<u>Combination of both</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	25%	0%	25%	50%
Elected Officials (4)	75%	0%	25%	0%
Organization Directors (4)	75%	0%	25%	0%
Search Professionals (4)	0%	50%	50%	0%

An elected official agreed it is the board of education’s responsibility to hire the next superintendent but cautioned, “A Board needs to be careful not to get so involved in the succession process because it could be construed as micromanaging.” According to this leader it would be a joint decision of the executive and the board to prepare internal candidates for promotion but the line would be drawn at how the preparation was to occur. A board wouldn’t

know about the day to day operations of a school district and may try to overstep in their ability to prepare the next leader. For example, this leader stated she/he wouldn't want to see a board get involved with "who takes over while a leader is on vacation." This elected official also stressed, "Leaders are best trained by other leaders and not by boards." She/he believed a good board will know enough to "stay out of the way in this process."

Another elected official compared a board of education choosing a new superintendent without any type of succession plan in place to being "similar to the National Football League (NFL) draft." This official stated in the NFL draft, teams do all they can to see how a player might perform in the NFL. But a NFL team really doesn't know how well they will do until they get out on the professional field. "No matter what they did at the level below, until a player gets into the NFL, a team will never know if they have a superstar or a bust on their hands." The same could be said of choosing a new school superintendent. A board of education really doesn't generally know what they are getting when they choose someone from outside their district. "They can put that person through all of the exercises they want and still won't know how they operate as a superintendent until they begin the job." This is why, according to this one official, school districts need to engage in succession planning. Succession planning will give them an "opportunity to see their internal candidates perform so they can make a determination about whether they want a certain candidate to do the job or would rather take their chances by drafting someone from the outside." Without succession planning, a district will never even realize they have a choice.

The Costs of Succession Planning. One search consultant suggested, "A district look at succession planning but also consider hiring from the outside if necessary." This consultant explained for some districts it could "very well come down to a matter of cost in determining

whether to do a search or hire an internal candidate. Either way, it is not a no-cost deal.” This was the first participant in the study to raise and discuss the issue of the cost involved in succession planning. This consultant favored the idea of administrators preparing others to take over as future administrators but was concerned it could end up costing districts too much if they jump fully into “succession planning mode.” Some of the hidden costs that were pointed out involve having the people to do the necessary work of the district while someone else is learning about the duties of the superintendent and the time away from the job by the person who is expected to be the mentor. An agency director pointed out, “It is hard to create a rationale for paying for training. Somehow the State needs to address this issue.”

Where Internal Succession Planning Has Worked. A non-elected official was adamant school districts needed to “look at internal candidates first.” According to this official promoting more from within was happening already but “it wasn’t by design.” Boards were finding internal candidates to be the best fit for their school district but it wasn’t because they had engaged in any type of succession planning process. This official believes boards of education need to look for superintendent development programs and encourage potential administrators to enroll and attend them. This support and encouragement “will create both an internal succession plan while at the same time creating a plan that is systemic for the organization.” This official informed the researcher of a plan by a former Superintendent of the Syracuse City School District. As part of his plan to identify potential administrative talent in Syracuse, “He put out a call to all teachers to take part in superintendent issues and analysis teams.” The purpose of the teams was to “flatten the organization and allow him to see talent that existed in parts of the organization he may not be aware of.” Teachers who took part in this opportunity had the chance to display their skills to the superintendent and move up through the

organization. It proved to be extremely successful as a succession program for future Syracuse administrators and was the precursor to the current Superintendent Development Program at Oswego State University.

Another search consultant was aware of three districts where she/he worked with both the current superintendent and the board of education to identify someone from within the organization who could move up to be superintendent. In each case a person was identified, the Board had a chance to work with that person and get comfortable with him or her and move eventually toward filling the vacancy. The process described is very much like the Overlap Model (Rogers and Safer, 1990) for choosing a new leader. A written plan for succession did not exist in any of the three districts according to the search consultant.

One search consultant believes succession planning can be especially useful in small rural school districts. She/he knows of one example where succession planning went extremely well because the district recognized the talent of a middle school principal and brought this person along to “train” for the superintendency. The consultant states, “Often in small, rural districts the school principals are better known than the superintendent and as a result will have a better chance of succeeding in a new position.” The concern she/he sees is, “Many small school boards of education see it as a problem if a chosen superintendent is too good because they will be gone in two years for a better job. If they are bad, they will be gone in two years anyway.” This consultant believes the way to combat this for a small district is to bring people along from the inside that are capable of doing the job of superintendent and it will be more likely for them to stay.

An elected official also brought up rural schools and echoed the ideas of the search consultant for them to be a place where succession can be used effectively because “they often

end up hiring someone without any experience as a superintendent and then they get two years of experience and leave for a better job in a bigger district.”

An organization director agrees rural schools have “to be more sensitive to succession planning than anybody.” “For rural schools, the pool is the shallowest and it’s hard to attract talent to a rural community. Rural communities have figured out they need to stay pretty close to home and learn to grow their own candidates for the superintendency.” In larger, high resource districts, this director thinks “there is a bigger pool of candidates and growing your own isn’t as critical.”

Table 6

What Type of District Should Implement Succession Planning

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	<u>Small/Rural</u>	<u>Large/Urban</u>	<u>All Districts</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	0%	0%	50%	50%
Elected Officials (4)	50%	0%	0%	50%
Organization Directors (4)	50%	0%	50%	0%
Search Professionals (4)	75%	0%	25%	0%

Another organization director disagrees and states, “Suburban and larger school systems should take advantage of succession planning more than they already do, due to their depth of talent.” This director believes rural and small schools can not afford to internally plan for succession because it limits the amount of “new ideas that enter an organization.” The Director believes small school districts can be very insular and as a result need an infusion of outside influence from time to time, making internal succession planning a poor choice for them. This

individual states, “Size does matter, one size or plan does not fit all and smaller districts should look at a modified succession plan” if they are really interested in growing their own talent. In this plan, a number of rural or small districts would create a “pool of potential administrative talent” who could be tapped by each other, thereby “cross pollinating” information from one district to another.

The Lame Duck. While the succession process worked well in some places, another search consultant cautions against letting it be known too soon that a superintendent is leaving and someone who is currently working in the district will be taking her/his place. There are two separate problems associated with this scenario according to this consultant. The first issue is “keeping the person in waiting happy and satisfied with pay and position while they are waiting to move up in an organization. If they are promised too much too soon and it doesn’t happen on their schedule, the district could lose them to another school. The other problem that can be created comes with a word of caution because if information about a “superintendent in waiting” comes out too soon, the sitting superintendent “will lose some, if not all of his authority.” As time progresses, people in the district will start viewing the current superintendent as nothing more than a lame duck. In a lame duck situation the current superintendent will have all of the responsibility of being the superintendent without any of the real authority to carry out initiatives. This same search consultant states “the most important thing a school district can do is hire their next superintendent. A board of education that understands the role will do the best for their community.” As an example she/he cites a school district for which she/he did the search. The Board of Education and the outgoing superintendent were well aware they had a very well trained, potential candidate in their midst. The Board knew the candidate was ready and able to perform the job and she/he would be accepted by the community. Instead of doing

an expensive, time consuming search, the Board chose the successor from within and has been very happy with its choice. In another example, a small district knew they had a potentially strong superintendent candidate working in the district. Instead of spending large sums of money on a large scale search and possibly ending up with a split vote by the Board of Education, it was decided to “save time and save dollars by promoting from within.” According to the search consultant who helped both districts with the internal succession plan, “People keep asking how do we keep talented people around here and these districts are perfect examples of how you do it.” In neither case was the succession plan in writing.

Succession Planning Will Create Greater Shortages. One organization director believes succession planning has the potential to increase the shortage of administrative applicants. In this director’s view, “Moving up the corporate ladder through promotion is viewed as a positive in the world of business” and is something to which almost everyone strives. This director states, “In education it is not the case.” In order to make it more likely for this to occur we would first need to make the superintendency and other administrative positions be viewed in a positive light and right now they are not. One of the major ways to go about addressing this issue according to this director is we have to be careful “not to turn off too many people from administration and succession planning may have that potential if the negatives of the job are the center of attention” as evidenced in the Winter, Rinehart, Keedy and Bjork (2007) study where the negative factors of being a superintendent were cited by numerous principals as reason for not wanting to move into a superintendency. This director stated too often he has heard even superintendents talk too much about the negatives of the job and has seen people shaking their heads and asking why anyone would want the superintendent’s job. Instead she/he suggests superintendents talk about the positive aspect of the job, stressing the impact on

children’s education a superintendent can exert over an entire school system. This positive aspect approach was also brought up by one non-elected government official who believes the “positives of the job of superintendent need to be talked about more than they are.”

Factors that Inhibit School Districts from Adequately Planning for Superintendent Succession

Table 7

Problems of Succession Planning Identified by Participant Group

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	<u>Political</u>	<u>Lack of Planning Ability</u>	<u>Discrimination</u>	<u>Personalities</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	100%	50%	25%	0%
Elected Officials (4)	100%	75%	25%	0%
Organization Directors (4)	100%	100%	50%	50%
Search Professionals (4)	100%	50%	75%	50%

Institutionalize the Plan. According to one elected official, “The key to successful succession planning is to institutionalize the process.” This means to make “the process of selecting the next superintendent so ingrained into the school system, leadership succession takes place even when negative things occur.” This official points out since school boards are elected, there is a chance no matter what they do, and the voters could turn them out during the next election. As a result, succession planning can’t just be something one particular board of education wants to accomplish. “In order to make it happen over time, the board of education in any district will need to bring in all of its constituent groups and make them a part of the succession process.” Doing so only enhances the chances for succession planning to become

institutionalized. The other issue this elected leader sees is the possibility of the current superintendent of schools falling out of favor with a board of education and getting fired. Since Superintendents by nature are so involved in the succession planning process, it again becomes “fundamental to its success for the process to be bigger than any one person” if the process is expected to succeed over time. In some cases this elected official could see a board of education who is very involved in the succession planning process but “negative on the current superintendent of schools, also turn negative on the person or people who have been chosen in the succession plan due to their closeness to the exiting superintendent.” In cases like this without an institutionalized process, all of the time, effort and money spent will be wasted by the school district.

Personality in Succession Planning. An organization director believes, “The first thing you need to look at when planning for succession is personality.” This individual believes, “Personality is the key because you can teach someone all the skills they may need to know but the one thing a person can’t be taught is personality.” This participant in the study believes, “Leadership style comes directly from a person’s personality” and an organization needs to look carefully at personalities of individuals when planning for succession. This director raises some caution in general about any type of succession planning due to the time it may take to prepare someone to move up into a new position. “Who the board of education thinks they want today, based on what is known about a district and its specific needs, may cause the board to choose a certain person to groom. Five years from now the district may be in an entirely different place and the board has this person who may have been really good five years ago but is now feeling they are owed a job.” This could be a major problem for a school district and therefore the model described in the Groves (2007) study suggesting a wide variety of talent be prepared and

not just a single individual. The findings of the study support developing multiple managers to create “flexibility” for current management.

According to another organization director, a problem can be created when a well liked internal candidate is not chosen by a board of education for a job other members of the school community believe rightfully belongs to her/him. This internal conflict is often personality based and the community members are not seeing the larger picture seen by the board of education.

Planning for the Future. Another organization director observed, “Sensitivity to planning something for a future board is not common thought” by a sitting board. “Boards are more in the moment than concerned about the future due to the nature of the job. In the moment may mean putting out today’s fires.” This Director thinks, “Rural districts need to be more sensitive to succession planning because their pool is the shallowest of all.” They also generally have the issue of lower pay compared to other areas of the state. In order to attract an outside candidate, a rural school district will need to compete. “In a rural school district if they are able to promote from within, whoever becomes the superintendent would surely get an increase in pay, but it would be an increase relative to that district. To hire someone from the outside, the increase in pay would generally be relative to outside the community” This is not accepting lesser quality by the rural school district according to this director, it is a matter of the economy of the school district making a decision on what they can afford. This director also explains very often in a rural school a teacher who lives in the community will work his/her way up through the system. This person is immersed in the culture of the community and is readily accepted as a leader.

Politics in Succession Planning. An organization director feels there is “a lot of politics in succession.” This is because of the nature of school boards as elected individuals. This director, unlike some other people interviewed, believes the size of the district really doesn’t matter when it comes to succession planning. “Urban or suburban, it doesn’t matter. If a district is stable, the board will seek a candidate very much like their outgoing superintendent, sometimes from within. If a district is not stable, the board will in all likelihood, search for a candidate from the outside who is different than the current leader.” This director did not accept the argument that rural districts do or should turn more readily to succession planning to deepen their pool of candidates. In this person’s opinion the pool of candidates is very much linked to how stable the district is viewed by those looking to become a superintendent and not entirely by its location and/or size.

According to another organization director, a political problem associated with a succession plan could include the possibility of the board that created the plan may change before the succession plan takes effect. The issue of board turnover was a major concern to this director. “Too often the good ideas of an outgoing board of education get cast aside because of the election of a new board.” The concern over the community feeling the search is not valid can be “overcome if the community is brought into the development of the succession process” by a board of education. According to this director, “The board of education can not act in a vacuum and expect the community to back all of their plans.” In fact this director believes if the board does involve the community into its actions, it is “likely this board will not be thrown out come re-election time because they are the type of board that is listening to their constituents.”

Table 8

Types of Political Problems Identified

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	<u>Community Interference</u>	<u>Desire of Board of Ed. to Micromanage</u>	<u>Employee Interference</u>	<u>Board of Ed. Elections</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	25%	25%	25%	75%
Elected Officials (4)	50%	25%	0%	75%
Organization Directors (4)	50%	0%	50%	75%
Search Professionals (4)	50%	50%	0%	75%

One search consultant sees the politics of succession planning in a slightly different way. This consultant discussed the politics of succession when a district has two or more internal candidates to choose from. In this person's opinion, "A good succession plan will get more than one person ready for a potential move to new leadership." If that occurs as it should, it could become very difficult for a board of education to keep the process internal because of the infighting that can occur. One building principal could be pitted against another building principal, thereby pitting one entire part of the community against another. Or in another case, an assistant superintendent for business may be applying along with another assistant superintendent for curriculum for the superintendent position. This type of conflict may pit those on the board who feel the district needs a business leader against those who feel the district needs a curriculum leader. This is the type of conflict this search consultant knows boards of education do not like to have. As a result they may turn to a search process instead of facing up to the internal politics of the district.

While internal candidates can be a problem, one search consultant thinks the biggest political problem a district faces when creating a succession plan and/or choosing a new superintendent is when a “board of education member has a relative or friend she/he wants to be the superintendent.” Often if this board member is powerful enough, she/he can sway the other board members into following her/his lead. Someone has to be strong enough to ask, “If this is the best guy for the job.” Too often that question does not get asked and a person who should not be a superintendent gets moved into the position.

Another search consultant thinks, “It is foolish to think politics is not part of everything” in schools. “It is the way people get things done in an organization” and good leaders need to recognize that in order to get things done themselves. This consultant finds the processes we use to identify a new leader to be part of the problem. She/he suggests, “The process leads to mediocrity. Everyone needs to bless a candidate and a candidate can’t offend anyone in order to get there.” As a result, “The leading candidate for a position is very often the least common denominator.” In order to address this problem the board of education must face this fact in the beginning of the search and/or succession process realizing full well the best candidate should not be the one who offends the least. In a process like this, the search consultant has to use and depend heavily on the characteristics created by the board of education and the community and depend quite possibly on the district’s strategic plan to guide and inform.

Table 9

Types of Discrimination Mentioned by Participant Group

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	<u>Age</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Gender</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	0%	25%	25%
Elected Officials (4)	0%	25%	25%
Organization Directors (4)	25%	50%	50%
Search Professionals (4)	50%	50%	50%

The Exclusionary Side of Succession Planning. A critical issue in succession planning is who is doing the planning and who is being groomed for leadership. According to one search consultant, “The idea that succession planning may germinate from two or three people who run the district, decide they want to be in control and ask who we envision being in control next. As a result, they turn to people like themselves. Expect it not to be a woman, not an African American, not an Arab, not a Latino and not a young person.” This consultant feels succession planning under this particular circumstance is more like a decision made by old time politicians like “Mayor Daley in Chicago, Erastus Corning in Albany or Tammany Hall in New York City.” She/he asks if this is what succession planning should be all about and calls into question succession planning that is not inclusive. This consultant feels the succession process should be open and transparent. She/he stated, “Democracy is what our educational system portends to be based on. Our public school systems all put themselves off as a function of the constitution because they are publically funded. It is antithetical to have a process that uses the same process to choose a school superintendent as the process that is used to choose Mafia bosses.” Obviously

she/he feels strongly the process needs to be inclusive of the school and the community and not made in a back room by a few individuals.

A search consultant bluntly stated succession planning if done incorrectly “excludes people.” Succession planning can allow those in a position of authority to gravitate toward people like themselves. It can end up being a system that propagates the status quo. This consultant also pointed out the difference in her/his opinion between education and business. “In the corporate mind, they want the best person for the job; in education it so often starts with can we be friends?” If a true system that plans for leadership succession is developed “it will neither look at the color of someone’s skin nor their ability to be friends.” It will instead look at a “person’s ability to raise achievement levels for all students in their care.”

A non-elected government official admits, “It is likely true succession planning blocks minorities and women.” As a result when we search for a leader we must make sure to include a “diverse pool and keep track of diversity numbers.” Keeping track will tell us if we are successful or not. This official believes it is “hard to find leaders and we can make it even harder by only finding males and harder when we only find white males.” This official stresses the need for looking to all groups for leaders and for the development of leaders and if we do we will increase our applicant pools substantially. The only purpose for choosing a new leader is to help students according to this government official and having those students see someone in charge who does not look like them is a “powerful message to send.” The only way to send that message is to make sure we are inclusive in our succession planning efforts and in our attempts to increase the number of applications for a position.

An elected government official states “It is probably true succession planning as it is now used does not open possibilities to women and minority administrative candidates.” She/he stated, “It is sad to say relatively few middle aged white males think outside of the box and these are the people who are now developing succession plans.” This way of thinking results in a lack of minority administrators which she/he believes “will change over time as more minorities move into positions in education.” This official also believes this is a very difficult subject to openly discuss. She/he feels, “There is always a little tension in the room when the subject is brought up but it needs to be discussed more and not less in order to address the needs of our education system.”

According to one organization director, people of color are often excluded from the superintendent ranks because districts are usually looking for a superintendent with experience. In order to get that experience they have to start somewhere and very often “the feeder districts” who train new superintendents are not places where people of color apply to be the education leader. This director doesn’t think we can change who applies for the superintendency in those districts but instead “we need to address the lack of people of color in the superintendency through senior leadership preparation” to move into the job.

An organization director believes succession planning is one of the best ways to increase the number of applications for leadership positions by people of color. According to this Director, “Persons of color are not self selecting and you want leaders who reflect the community. Succession planning can be seen as a constructive opportunity to encourage persons of color to think about leadership positions.” This director was clear when she/he states, “Succession planning should not be viewed as a threat to people of color but instead as an

opportunity to increase our pool of candidates to be more reflective of society as a whole.” This agency director sees opportunity in succession planning for women as well.

Another organization director stated the biggest disadvantages of succession planning are, “It doesn’t bring the benefit of new thinking to a district and very often the community thinks you’ve set it up.” The new thinking is an issue can be addressed through the right kinds of staff development and by allowing administrators to attend state and national conferences to “be cross-pollinated with new ideas.” The second is actually true but members of the community may not view it as good. To overcome this issue this director suggests bringing the community into the succession process and making them a partner. Doing so will help the community to understand why the succession planning process was used in the first place.

A search consultant points out one of the problems with succession planning when a candidate from inside the organization is elevated to the superintendency is “often no background checking takes place but still should.” According to this consultant, “The people who do succession planning shouldn’t assume a background check doesn’t need to be done. When you have a person in waiting, isn’t it awful to find something out about their past that would inhibit them from doing their job?” Furthermore this consultant states “if I ascend someone into superintendency, is there something about them I should know that I don’t know? If they’ve been in the district for the last 10 years but have been in education for the past 25, what about those prior 15 years?” The consultant states people that come into a district in a capacity less than the superintendency usually undergo less scrutiny. If you now elevate that inside candidate to the superintendency, “you need to make sure they undergo the same scrutiny they would have received had they been as an outside candidate.”

Changing Public Policy. An opinion from the majority of the participants is there should not be public policy governing how a board of education chooses its next superintendent. While many participants believed the state could do more to incentivize succession planning through policy, they were careful to point out their belief in the limitations of how far a policy should go. Most felt the State would do nothing more than to get in the way and that any problems that existed need to be worked out at the local level and not through laws or Commissioner’s Regulations.

Table 10

Participant Belief in Expanded Public Policy by New York State

Name of Participant Group and (Number)	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	25%	75%
Elected Officials (4)	50%	50%
Organization Directors (4)	50%	50%
Search Professionals (4)	50%	50%

According to one non-elected government official, “Accountability is good but sometimes it can go too far. Choosing a superintendent is a local process should not be left up to the State. The State should not be passing public policy that limits the local control of choosing a superintendent. If New York State gets involved, you don’t know what will happen.” This same message was echoed by another non-elected government official who warned against the State getting involved in the superintendent selection process. She/he stated, “It could be a

Board of Regents or an SED issue” but it did not belong in the legislature because “this is not the place for a thoughtful discussion of education. This place (the legislature) is not set up for that.”

An elected government official believes there are already too many laws governing how and when school districts can do things. “If the State comes up for more to do, it could make the process even more difficult for districts to wade through it.” Another elected official agreed and stated the only policy that will work to make succession planning a success will be local policy from a board of education.

Another elected government official has “trouble envisioning a regulation that would work in helping school districts create a succession process.” This individual felt at this time we are “in a mode of de-regulation to reduce the amount of reporting and I would not want us to go in the direction of any superintendent giving an annual report to the Commissioner on his or her succession planning efforts.”

One elected official opened the door slightly to New York State having some role in the succession process by providing “guidelines based on best practices from around the State.” This elected official believes the State Education Department could let school boards know what does and doesn’t work in succession planning so they would be able to properly plan for the succession of a superintendent.

A search consultant stated bluntly, “For all of the controversy surrounding the Commissioner, he has backed up the school board. There will be no prescription on how we identify leaders through a change in public policy.” Another search consultant stated, “The free market will always prevail” in succession planning.

Another search consultant states, “It would be a mistake to require succession planning. It is not the place for the State to weigh itself in. This must be a local decision.” This consultant did feel however the State could invest in leadership development to assist districts to find new high quality superintendents. She/he also questioned the current system of certification for leaders, considering it “a nightmare because it excludes good potential applicants and as a result, leads to a system that contributes to mediocrity by not bringing in good leaders from outside education.” This consultant feels if we invite the State in to fix our succession planning efforts it will in fact backfire and “constrain and reinforce everything we do wrong.” She/he states flatly, “The State should not be invited into this process in any other way.”

Table 11

Identification of Suggested Types of Policy Change by Participant Group

<u>Name of Participant Group and (Number)</u>	<u>Regulations Governing Superintendent Requirements</u>	<u>Allocating Funds for Planning</u>	<u>Waiver Changes for Retired Superintendents</u>
Non-elected Government Officials (4)	0%	0%	25%
Elected Officials (4)	0%	0%	50%
Organization Directors (4)	0%	50%	0%
Search Professionals (4)	50%	0%	0%

Another search consultant echoed these thoughts about non traditional applicants. She/he stated, “The model of who can be a superintendent in New York State needs to be looked at but we also need to face the fact the business world doesn’t have all the answers either.” She/he

went on to say, “All we have to do is look at the banking and auto industry and ask ourselves if this is what we want for our schools?” However this consultant still felt in order to best serve schools, New York needed to move away from the idea that only a traditional educator should become a school superintendent and pointed to the Chancellor of the New York City Public School system as a person who was from the outside but has been doing a “great job of moving the district forward.” This consultant also pointed out a superintendent from another city system that came from a non traditional background and has “run into trouble” because he/she “did not understand the culture of schools.”

An organization director believes there is room for the State in the succession planning process. She/he thinks the big policy change “would be for someone to say there needs to be a broad and deep pool of candidates.” If New York State is interested in new leaders emerging, the “old method of using a replication model for administrators has to be changed.” This director believes it is hard for a board of education to “create the rationale necessary to pay for training.” Furthermore she/he states as a result, “The State has to step in and underwrite the costs associated with developing a new generation of leaders and help to identify that next generation. The State can tap anyone from anywhere which will increase the diversity in the pool. The State is in a position to work with all people at all of these steps. It is a system that is far from perfect and it needs to change. The State has a huge vested interest in seeing it succeed so why shouldn’t they be involved in the process to some degree?” In answer to her/his own rhetorical question she/he states “it all comes down to resources” which are not abundant at this time.

Another organization director believes, “Leadership development receives little more than lip service from those in authority.” It needs more than that in order to be successful.

Boards of Education ignore talent all of the time and it is ludicrous. Development of talent needs to become embedded in public policy so the best leaders for our schools emerge and are developed. This director believes the government could get involved in the form of “grants that would lead to improved leadership opportunities and to groom talent.”

Retirees and Succession. A major public policy issue emerged in the last year involving the use of retired school superintendents to serve as interim superintendents for a school district as the district was searching for a new leader. This received a lot of press coverage last year and as a result, changes in the waiver process that must be issued by the New York State Education Department to a retired individual under the age of 65 to work in a public school district were made.

An elected government official stated, “While the system that was in place may have been legal, it was not moral.” The participant cited one case where a person retired on a Friday and started work in the same district, in the same job on a Monday with a pension and a salary. In cases like this, it is clear a system of succession planning could help stop abuses of the system like this one according to this elected official.

A non-elected government official believes, “There is an obsession for pensions and double dipping by politicians and the press.” The past practice of using a retired superintendent in this official’s opinion was “cost effective for a school district and made a lot of sense.” Attempts by the government at restraining this process will make it more difficult on school districts to find new leaders and will make it more expensive as well. This official agreed tightening up of the 211 waiver process may in fact encourage more schools to develop new leadership through a succession planning process since it “won’t be as easy to hire retired individuals as it used to be.”

Another non-elected government official sees the new “211 waiver process as the safety net for succession plans. The waiver is not bad because the retiree earned their pension and you can pay them less to come back to work. There are also no health care costs involved and as a result, will save a school district a lot of money. From a taxpayers point of view it makes a lot of sense but the media storm that came out of it made it hard for schools.” A problem for schools was the “211 waiver process getting mixed up with the abuses by lawyers” that were in the retirement system fraudulently. As a result of all of these, schools will need to look more aggressively at succession planning because the “public doesn’t differentiate between legal and legitimate 211 waiver issues and illegal activity by a few.”

An organization director thinks the old 211 waiver process went “in reverse of succession planning” because it made it easy on districts that were not prepared for a change in leadership. But this individual also sees the benefit of using the waiver process to allow a district to build for the future. When “circumstances are toxic, bringing in a veteran for one to two years to build a bridge to the future can and should be considered part of a succession planning initiative. Sometimes a district needs to close buildings and lay off people and people working in the schools are not yet ready to take on that kind of responsibility. A veteran can come in and make those changes while bringing the district along to accept a new person in the job.” The tightened waiver system “concerns” this Director and it worries her/him that schools may be reluctant to seek a waiver because of the bad publicity surrounding this issue in 2008.

CHAPTER V

Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate succession planning at a policy level as it relates to the position of superintendent of schools across New York State. Succession planning is often discussed but it was clear through this research that there are a great many differences of opinion about what that process should and does entail. Through the use of a grounded theory approach and a qualitative study, the researcher interviewed leaders from government, various organizations, search professionals and elected officials to determine common threads and differences that will contribute to creating a clearer definition and understanding of succession planning for the superintendency in New York State.

The research addressed three essential questions; (A) how important is succession planning by a school district to replace its superintendent; (B) what are the steps that should be taken in order to plan and prepare for leadership succession; (C) what factors inhibit school districts from adequately planning for superintendent succession.

All school districts will eventually have to face a change in leadership and succession planning is one method of addressing that change. In New York State there is expected to be a rapid turnover in school leaders for the following reasons: by 2011, sixty percent of superintendents are expected to retire, individuals are becoming superintendents for the first time at an older age and the average age of a superintendent in 2006 was 54.6 years old, only four months shy of reaching the minimum retirement age in New York State (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2006).

Nationally eighty five percent of superintendents believe there is an inadequate supply of educational leaders needed to fill anticipated superintendent openings. Furthermore, eighty percent of superintendents said there were no programs in their districts to identify individuals aspiring to the superintendency. According to the superintendents surveyed, the most cited reasons that administrators chose not to become superintendents are lack of school funding, personal/family issues and school board relations (American Association of School Administrators, 2007).

It is apparent that school districts need to begin thinking about succession planning if they have not already begun to do so. While succession planning could help address the issue of superintendent turnover by having another administrator or group of administrators prepared to step into the position, it is a complex process that needs to be understood before it can be implemented.

Definition of Succession Planning

The first major finding of the study supports the idea that leadership succession is more than preparing one person to take over for the superintendent who is leaving. Succession planning is not about preparing one person for a position, but is instead about preparing an entire organization and some of the people within it. It was important to note that some officials pointed out an organization could prepare itself for a change in leadership and have a succession plan, but not necessarily hire someone from the inside of the organization that was changing leadership. In keeping with the theme of preparing the organization as a whole, the organization that was losing its leader would be preparing others on the inside but the leadership of the organization would look outside as well. Having the plan in place for succession would allow the turnover to take place without the need for an interim. According to one official, “it is all

about planning.” The Groves (2007) study of business leadership succession supports this approach. The study explains an organization should develop a wide variety of talent as opposed to simply developing one heir apparent who could potentially leave the business and confuse the succession planning process. The same approach if used in education will provide a pool of talented individuals who could step into a wide array of school districts of varying sizes and configurations.

Preparation for the Superintendency

Another finding of the study addresses not only the importance of training to become a successful superintendent but also the type of training provided to individuals preparing for the superintendency.

Arbon, Duignan and Duncan (2002) support the importance of training in preparing for the superintendency. They state the pool of potential applicants would increase substantially if more individuals were prepared to take on leadership positions. Another study that supported training was conducted by Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt (2005). In this study a lack of training opportunities for administratively talented candidates ends up eliminating those candidates from the pool of potential administrators.

In this study a search consultant discussed vertical and horizontal succession and believes that preparation for the superintendency must include all aspects of education in order to make the preparation truly horizontal. Currently this consultant believes when training is provided to potential superintendents, the training is mostly vertical. Horizontal training according to this search consultant offers a vital base of knowledge regarding the operations of a school district. According to Levitz (2008) creating that base of knowledge should be part of the planning for leadership turnover and will lead to more successful succession efforts.

No Established Process for Succession Planning at the Micro Level

According to this study, the researcher could identify no written plans for superintendent succession by individual district. Maryland and Delaware were the closest to having plans for superintendent succession. Both states have embarked on a process of preparing a new generation of leaders and in both states succession planning is stressed as part of that process. In New York State, this researcher could not locate a single written succession plan for a school district, even with the assistance of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the State Education Department and the New York State School Boards Association. Those interviewed in this study also had a wide range of expectations regarding what a plan should entail, who should govern the plan and even what succession planning means. This lack of written planning leads to a wide array of opinions on what succession planning is and how it should be implemented across New York State.

During the course of this study a search consultant was aware of three separate school districts where the superintendent and the board of education identified someone from within the organization who could move into the superintendent position. In each case the Overlap Model as described by Rogers and Safer (1990) was utilized. Through the utilization of this process, the boards became comfortable with the personality and leadership characteristics of these individuals. As pointed out in this study, in none of the three cases was there a written plan for succession and no thought was given to outside candidates for the positions.

Disagreement over Who Should Coordinate a Succession Plan

According to Nugent (2008) it is vital that an organization clearly understand what is needed in order to successfully plan for a change in leadership. According to many of the

participants in my study, boards of education were driven in many ways on politics and personalities and not on the macro needs of the organization.

This issue is highlighted by the differences in opinion over what role the current superintendent should play in the process of succession planning. Many of the participants in this study differed on how much of a role the sitting superintendent should play in the process. Many felt it should be board driven, some felt it should be superintendent driven and even others felt it should be an equally shared responsibility. A word of caution is made by Hammelt (2008) in pointing out that some leaders are very good at being leaders while at the same time, not good at training new leaders. This is an issue that every board of education and superintendent must answer for themselves.

A non-elected government official suggested a hybrid succession planning model be created where all levels of managers openly discuss those who are a level below them to determine if those individuals are ready to move to the next level in administration. This process not only encourages growth at the superintendent level but also creates growth at the lower management levels for people who will one day wind up being considered for the top position in the organization.

Succession Plans Should Not Depend Solely on Internally Prepared Candidates

According to Hickman (1992), school districts considered to be high achievers, were more likely to consider internal candidates for the superintendency when turnover occurred. Rogers and Safer (1990) found that Boards of Education wanting to maintain stability also tended to select internal candidates and Geisel (2007) found that outside candidates are more likely to initiate change. Those interviewed for this study seemed to support these findings. An elected official stressed the need for schools to bring new ideas into a system and the only way to

do that was through external candidates. An organization director felt strongly that internal succession plans do not bring the benefit of “cross pollination” of new ideas into a school district and an elected official stated a Board of Education may believe that everything was going well in a school district and as a result choose an internal candidate to be the next superintendent but in reality things may not be so good because there are issues that exist that may be below the radar screens of the Board of Education. As a result a district that needs to initiate change may not do so because everything looks alright to the outside observer or policy maker.

One such item that a Board of Education may not notice is the graduation rates of students with disabilities. At a recent meeting at the State Education Department, the Senior Deputy Commissioner brought up a district in New York State with an overall graduation rate of greater than 90%. The same district’s graduation rate for students with disabilities was less than 30%. This is the type of information that a Board of Education may not be aware of and therefore not realize that all is not well in its school district.

Current Succession Planning Discriminates

A key finding of this study is that succession planning as it currently exists may limit the number of women and minority candidates that enter the superintendency. Considering the fact that there is a shortage of applicants for the superintendent position, anything done that creates fewer possibilities for potential candidates to become a superintendent is doing a disservice to education in general and children in particular.

According to Higbe (2004) whenever factors such as age, race and gender are used to disqualify applicants, it reduces a district’s opportunity to plan for succession of administrators. Reynolds, White, Brayman and Moore (2008) found that discrimination against women entering the field of administration still existed even though those involved in the selection process felt

that it did not. The Brooking (2008) study discusses the “untapped talent” of administrative candidates who get overlooked for discriminatory reasons and the Sherman (2005) study clearly found that age, sex and race played a role in the selection process for those entering the administrative field.

In this study almost half of the participants believed that discrimination plays a role in current superintendent succession plans in New York State. One of the most critical issues in the succession planning process is who gets groomed for leadership. It was the belief of seven of the 16 participants in this study that age, race and gender come into play during the selection process for who gets groomed for leadership. The most damning statement against current succession planning came from a non-elected government official who stated that it is “likely that true succession planning blocks women and minorities” from entering the administrative profession.

Recommendations

Succession planning should be viewed as a process of preparing an organization for the eventual turnover in its leadership as opposed to the current perception that it is all about preparing one person to become the next leader. In preparing an organization, many individuals would be identified as having leadership capabilities and then prepared to take over superintendents’ positions on a regional basis as opposed to a school district by school district basis. According to the Groves (2007), this model creates a pool of candidates and does not tie the organization to only one individual.

In this study many individuals interviewed discussed the problems faced by smaller school districts that simply do not have many candidates to choose from. It was also mentioned how school districts that choose internal candidates often stagnate in terms of achievement and culture.



Figure 1. Current Model of Internal Succession Planning as it Relates to Change

Creating a regional model of preparation, which includes outside as well as inside candidates, would create a larger more fully prepared pool of superintendent candidates.

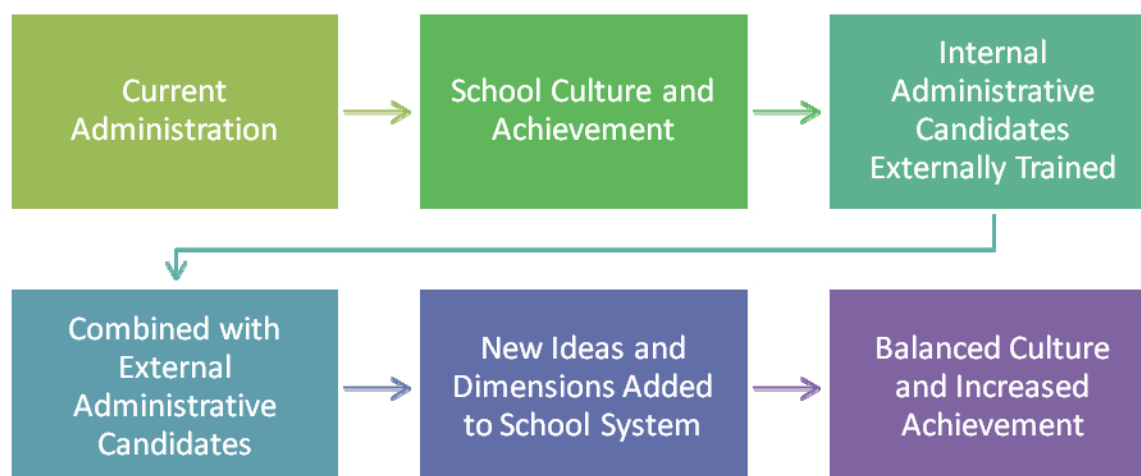


Figure 2. Regional Cohort Model of Succession Planning

Another recommendation involves the actual preparation that takes place for the position of superintendent. One search consultant suggested horizontal as well as vertical preparation and I strongly agree with this concept. In this approach, candidates who are being prepared to become a superintendents are trained for jobs within a school district that are above their current level of authority, while at the same time being trained on other positions within her/his organization on the same level of authority. For example, an elementary principal would not only be trained on issues an assistant superintendent might deal with but would also be trained on issues that a high school principal might deal with as well. This method of preparation will fully prepare someone for the inner workings of an entire school system and the individual will gain a better understanding of the role of the superintendent overseeing a system in the process.

One way to combat the shortage of administrative candidates according to Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt (2005) is to provide training opportunities for administratively talented

individuals. The key is to provide training that will truly prepare a superintendent and to do that effectively means implementing a system of vertical as well as horizontal preparation.

In order to combat the perceived discrimination that takes place in current succession plans, this next recommendation involves a change in policy. While only two of 16 participants in this study suggested increasing government funding for succession planning activities, it is the only way to control the gender and ethnicity of potential candidates. With increased government funding, the State Education Department could set targets for the number of women and minorities who would be in any preparation program.



Figure 3. Increasing the Potential Administrative Pool

Increasing the number of women and minority candidates will increase the overall pool of potential superintendents by a tremendous amount.

The final recommendation involves institutionalizing the process of succession planning. This could be provided through training of school board members and superintendents by their representative organizations of NYSSBA, NYSCOSS or their regional BOCES on how to establish a succession plan.

All three of these organizations already provide a great deal of training to their membership and increasing that training to provide the “do’s and don’t’s” of succession planning could be a joint initiative of all three. Providing a unified front to school districts on this process would allow all board of education members and school superintendents to hear the same message whether they were in Buffalo or on Long Island, similar to the method of delivery for the current six hour board of education training on fiscal accountability. While I am not calling on a mandated training for succession planning I am calling for a unified effort to provide information to school boards and superintendents on how to go about creating and completing a succession plan.

Implication on Future Research

Among those interviewed for this study there was an assumption that smaller and rural school districts were the first step on the superintendent career ladder for many current superintendents and as a result, those small and rural schools could benefit the most from succession planning. It was believed if these small and rural districts used a succession plan approach, it would be less likely for the superintendent to leave for another position. The question of where current superintendents are starting their superintendent career needs to be looked at more thoroughly as well as whether small and rural schools currently are more apt to move current teachers up the ranks and into administrative positions.

Another area that requires further study is the relationship between internal candidates being hired and student achievement, organizational culture and finances.

Many assumptions were made by participants in regard to these three areas. It was assumed that internal candidates would generally not increase student achievement dramatically upward or change the overall culture of a school system. Bias (1994) supports the concept that the attributes one brings to the job will have an influence on school atmosphere. Geisel (2002) and Rogers and Safer (1990) confirmed that an outside candidate was more likely to be a change agent than an internal candidate. The question of whether these changes are good or bad remains unanswered. Student achievement is the measure upon which those changes can best be measured.

Within this same question for further research was the assumption that districts often hire internal candidates for the superintendent position because boards of education are able to hire these candidates for less money than external candidates. I would suggest a comparison of salaries of outgoing superintendents compared to incoming superintendents who are hired through internal and external means and a comparison of salary changes. This information might be important to boards of education who believe they need to move in one direction or another based on finances.

The third area for further research involves the statement made by an organization director in this study. The Director believes there is not a shortage of certified individuals for the superintendent position but instead a shortage of qualified individuals. According to AASA (2007) and NYSCOSS (2006) it is very clear that there is currently a shortage of certified administrators willing to become superintendents. Why those certified individuals are not entering the administrative field in New York State needs to be looked at more carefully in order

to guide school districts and develop policy surrounding school administration. While this is a national issue, we can not rely on national or global studies of this phenominom. A study should be conducted of individuals in New York State to identify what the real reasons are for people not choosing to move into administrative fields. The answers to this study would allow policy makers from around the State to address it in an informed manner instead of guessing that it has to do with pay, work year or even pension credits.

A fourth suggestion for further study focuses on discrimination. I would suggest research that studies factual information about those who are selected through an internal selection process to determine if women and minority candidates were overlooked in order to advance a white male to the superintendency. A study that reviews and details internal selection processes across a broad area would answer the questions raised by this qualitative study in regard to the possible discriminatory practices of current internal selection processes.

A final area for further research is the idea that many participants in this study had about the relationship between the pool of applicants for superintendent positions decreasing and the amount of remuneration that superintendents receive increasing. There was a stated belief by some study participants that there could be a positive relationship between these two occurrences and a basic understanding of the law of supply and demand may lead one to that conclusion. A study that looks at the relationship between the pool of superintendent candidates and the salaries of those candidates is highly recommended to determine if there is a relationship between the two.

Conclusion

Superintendent succession planning has been taking place across New York State but there has been no uniformity in either the definition of it, who is in charge of it or even how to go about planning for the process. If succession planning for the superintendency begins to be carried out in a more uniform manner, with regionalized training opportunities to increase and support those interested in the superintendency, more individuals will be ready to take on the tasks of the position. Through the use of a regional cohort model supported by statewide education organizations and BOCES district superintendents, groups of candidates could be more diverse and better prepared for the position than ever before.

In order to establish a system of succession planning across New York State, the change needs to be driven by the need at the local level. New York's education system of over 700 school districts is historically based on local control. While the move to a uniform system can be steered by statewide organizations, it must be the local school districts who accept and begin to institutionalize the process. This process can begin with organizations such as NYSSBA, NYSCOSS, the State Education Department and BOCES district superintendents adopting a uniform language and systemic training opportunities for school board members and superintendents alike. Grants to local school districts such as those that are available in Delaware for ten thousand dollars each, should become part of an incentive to create true succession plans that meet a consistent criteria established across New York. Another incentive should be the savings generated by those districts that turn to succession planning over paying a consultant to conduct the search. According to the Council of Great City Schools, this process can cost an urban district upwards of \$100,000.00, depending upon how wide and deep the search for a new superintendent needs to be (Borsuk).

There is a tremendous leadership opportunity for these key education groups to play an important role in how future superintendents are prepared and chosen. These partnerships could help to establish a blueprint for succession planning that would be available for implementation on the local level. This blueprint would allow school districts to have a uniform, cohesive succession plan that would make more top quality superintendent candidates available for school districts to choose from, as well as create the leadership necessary to raise achievement levels in the 21st century.

Currently in New York State, district superintendents from the BOCES or private search consultants conduct most superintendent searches with varying degrees of experience and expertise. These are the individuals who also help boards of education with succession planning activities when asked for assistance, yet there is no training program or common set of criteria used from one district superintendent or search consultant to the next.

We will never be able to move forward on this issue without a common language and meaningful debate about the need for succession planning. One such issue in this discussion must be centered around the conflicting expectations by boards of education and superintendents regarding the length of time each expects the superintendent to serve in the position. Based on my own experience, boards of education are often looking for a long term commitment from an individual whom they choose to be the next superintendent while superintendents often view the position far differently as a short term career step. This difference may lead to the lack of planning and responsibility for superintendent succession planning by boards of education so often cited by the participants in this study. Local boards need to understand that succession planning is a powerful and little utilized responsibility they hold in their hands. Addressed in a systemic, organized manner it creates a role for local boards of education in the growth of new

leaders while simultaneously increasing the pool of future candidates when a superintendent departs.

According to Waters and Marzano (2009), there is a direct relationship between school system leadership and student achievement. In order to move the students of New York State to a higher academic performance level, we must do more than ever before to create and maintain great leadership in the superintendency. Establishing an understandable, uniform, systemic and sustainable system of succession planning will be a major step toward achieving that goal.

References

- Alberi, S. J. M. (2009). Leadership in non traditional environments: The foundation for developing women leaders. (M.A. dissertation, Prescott College, 2008). *Dissertations Abstract International*. Publication number AAT 1462059. MAI 47/04, Aug 2009
- American Association of School Administrators. (2007). *2007 State of the Superintendency Survey: Aspiring to the Superintendency*. Arlington, Virginia.
- Baldwin, J. N. (2007). Initiation into leadership in the school superintendency. (Ed.D. dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008). *Dissertations Abstract International*. Publication number AAT 3288594. DAI-A 68/11, May 2008
- Barker, B. (2006). Rethinking leadership and change: a case study in leadership succession and its impact on school transformation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 36(2), 277-293. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from ERIC database.
- Bias, M. J. (1995) The impact of superintendent behavior on school climate in two school districts experiencing a transition in leadership. (Ed.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1994). *Dissertations Abstract International*. Publication number AAT 9506246. DAI-A 55/10, p. 3045, Apr 1995
- Borsuk, A. J. (2009, May, 20). How much should milwaukee spend on its superintendent search?. *JOnline*, Retrieved July 28, 2009, from <http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/45487902.html>
- Brooking, K. (2008). The future challenge of principal succession in New Zealand primary schools: implications of quality and gender. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, 36(1), 41-55. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Academic Search Elite database.
- Charlton, P. (1998) School superintendent selection procedures in selected Idaho school districts. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Idaho, 2008). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 991969. DAI-A 60/01, p. 30, Jul 1999
- Clark, C. K. (1996) Superintendent succession: What happens to education reform when the Kansas school superintendent leaves the district? (Ed.D. dissertation, Wichita State University, 1996). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 9632529. DAI-A 57/06, p. 2286, Dec 1996

- d'Arbon, T. Duignan, P., & Duncan, J. (2002). Planning for future leadership of schools: an Australian study. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(4/5), 468-485. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database.
- Darling-Hammond, L (2007). Excellent teachers deserve excellent leaders. *Educational Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform* (pp. 17-24). New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- Delaware Department of Education. (2009). *Delaware's cohesive leadership system; succession planning*. Dover, Delaware.
- Fink, D. & Brayman, C. (2006). School leadership succession and the challenges of change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(1), 62-89. Retrieved November 5, 2008, from Research Library database.
- Fink, D. & Brayman, C. (2004). Principal succession and educational change. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 42(4/5), 431-449.
- Geisel, R. T. (2002) Superintendent succession in public education: a study of insiders and outsiders. (Ph.D. dissertation, Regent University, 2002). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 3055394. DAI-A 63/05, p. 1643, Nov 2002
- Groves, K. (2007). Integrating leadership development and succession planning best practices. *The Journal of Management Development*, 26(3), 239-260. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database.
- Hammett, P. (2008). The paradox of gifted leadership: developing the generation of leaders. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 40(1), 3-9. Retrieved November 4, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database.
- Hargreaves, A. (2005). Leadership succession. *The Educational Forum*. 69, 163-172.
- Heifetz, R.A. (1994) *Leadership without easy answers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Higbie, P.D. (2004) Factors that influence female educational leaders in North Carolina to seek a position at the central office especially the superintendency. (Ed.D. dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2004). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 3152363. DAI-A 65/11, p. 4059, May 2005
- Kamler, E (2009). Decade of difference, 1995-2005: an examination of the superintendent search consultants' process on long island. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45, 115-144.

- Kasper, D. G. (1997) Superintendent succession: An imperative for transition planning. (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1997). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 9728934. DAI-A 58/04, p. 1164, Oct 1997
- Krauss, J.A. (2008) Succession planning and talent management recommendations to reduce workforce attrition and prepare for an aging population. (Ed.D. dissertation, Wilmington University, 2008). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 3292900. DAI-A 68/12, Jun 2008
- Levitz, A. M. (2008) Succession planning and leadership development in a Delaware school district. (Ed.D. dissertation, Wilmington College, 2008). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 3312907. DAI-A 69/04, Oct 2008
- Mapp, W. E. (2007) *Leadership competencies and their development for community college administrators*. (Ph.D. dissertation, Walden University, 2007). Retrieved November 6, 2008, from Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database. DAI-A 69/02, Aug 2008
- Maryland State Department of Education. (2006). *Leadership succession planning guide for Maryland schools*. Baltimore, Maryland.
- Marzano, R., & Waters, T. (2009). *District leadership that works: Striking the right balance*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- McREL. (2003). *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us about the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement* [A Working Paper]. Aurora, Colorado: Waters, T., Marzano, R.J. & McNulty, B.
- Miller, D. (1993). Some organizational consequences of CEO succession. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(3), 644. Retrieved August 14, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database.
- New York State Council of School Superintendents. (2006). *Snapshot of the Superintendency*. Albany, New York.
- New York State Education Department. (2005). *Educational leadership initiative – update*. Albany: New York State Education Department.
- Nugent, K. (2008). Passing the torch. *Nursing Management*, 39(10), 52. Retrieved November 4, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database.

- Ocasio, W. (1994). Political dynamics and the circulation of power: CEO succession in U.S. industrial corporations, 1960-1990. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39(2), 285-312. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Business Source Premier database.
- Olson, L. (2008). KIPP charter network sees succession planning as key to school stability. *Education Week*, 27(33), 21. Retrieved November 13, 2008, from ProQuest Central database.
- Orr, M. (2006). Learning the superintendency: socialization, negotiation, and determination. *Teachers College Record*. Retrieved August 29, 2008, from tcredcord.org Web site: <http://www.tcrecord.org?PrintContent.asp?ContentID=12560>
- Ortiz, F. I. & Kalbus, J. (1998). Superintendent succession: prearrival and postarrival factors. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1(4), 337-356.
- Reynolds, C., White, R., Brayman, C., Moore, S. (2008). Women and secondary school principal rotation/succession: a study of the beliefs of decision makers in four provinces. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 31(1), 32-54. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Research Library database.
- Rhodes, C., & Brundrett, M. (2006). The identification, development, succession and retention of leadership talent in contextually different primary schools: a case study located within the English West Midlands. *School Leadership & Management*, 26(3), 269-287. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Academic Search Elite database.
- Rogers, J., & Safer, L. (1990). Case Study of an Innovative Superintendent Succession Plan. *Clearing House*, 64(2), 136. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Academic Search Elite database.
- Rothwell, W. J & Kazanas, H.C. (2005, February). A Sample Succession Planning Policy. *Workforce Management*, Retrieved June 8, 2009, from Workforce Week Management.
- Schmalzried, C., & Fallon Jr., L.F. (2007). Succession planning for local health department top executives: reducing risk to communities. *Journal of Community Health*, 32(3), 169-80. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from ProQuest Medical Library database.
- Sherman, W. H. (2005). Preserving the status quo or renegotiating leadership: women's experiences with a district-based aspiring leaders program. *The University Council for Educational Administration*. 41, 707-740.
- Shipman, F. B. (2007) Formal succession planning in healthcare organizations: meeting leadership needs in a changing American workforce. (Ed.D. dissertation, Spalding University, 2007). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 3263463. DAI-B 69/02, Aug 2008

- Smith, E. H., Jr. (1992) Careerbound and placebound superintendents: A study of leader succession in New Jersey public schools. (Ed.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1992). *Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database*. Publication No. AAT 9231391. DAI-A 53/06, p. 1758, Dec 1992
- Tallerico, M., & Tingley, S. (2001). The leadership mismatch: an alternative view. *The School Administrator*, Retrieved November 3, 2008, from <http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticldetail.cfm?mnitemnumber=&tnitemnu>.
- Waters, J.T., Marzano, R.J., & McNulty, B.A. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Waters, J.T., Marzano, R.J., & McNulty, B.A. (2005) *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Winter, P., Rinehart, P., Keedy, J., & Björk, L. (2007). Superintendent recruitment: a statewide assessment of principal attraction to the job. *Planning and Changing*, 38(1/2), 35-59. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Research Library database.
- Wolverton, M., Ackerman, R., & Holt, S. (2005). Preparing for leadership: what academic department chairs need to know. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management*, 27(2), 227-238. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from Academic Search Elite database.
- Zimmerman, J. (2007). School leader succession: a description of transitional experiences. *ERS Spectrum*. 25, 33-44.

Appendix A



Office of the Dean

Sage Graduate School

November 17, 2008

Charles S. Dedrick
29 Indian Pipe Drive
Wynantskill, NY 12198-7818

IRB PROPOSAL # 08-09-XXX
Reviewer: Samuel W. Hill, Chair

Dear Mr. Dedrick

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and has approved your project entitled "Superintendent Succession Planning in New York State." Good luck with your research.

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

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel Hill".

Samuel W. Hill, PhD
Chair, IRB

SWH/nan

Cc: Ann Meyers

Appendix B

Charles S. Dedrick
29 Indian Pipe Drive
Wynantskill, NY 12198-7818
dedric@sage.edu
Phone: (C) 518-470-3859
(H) 518-283-7467

Date:

Name

Title

Address

Address

I am a student in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at the Sage Graduate School in Albany, New York under the direction of Dr. Ann Myers, Associate Professor in the School of Education and Program Director of the Doctor of Education program. You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled "Superintendent Succession Planning in New York State" in which I am the principal researcher.

The purpose of the study is to define "succession planning" as it pertains to school districts across New York State. Succession planning is often talked about but it is apparent that leaders have different ideas of what that the process should and does entail. I plan to interview leaders from various organizations to determine common threads and differences that will contribute to a more clear definition and understanding of superintendent succession planning.

The results of this study will be shared in a symposium at Sage Graduate School during the fall of 2009 that will include participation by educators from around New York State. Furthermore the results of the study may be made available through the Sage Library system.

My interview with you should last approximately one hour. A small amount of time may be necessary for follow-up questions at a later date to clarify responses by phone or e-mail. I will take handwritten notes of the interview and your responses will at all times remain confidential. Individual responses to my questions will not be shared publicly. Your participation in the study will indicate your consent for me to interview you.

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact me at the above e-mail address or phone numbers or Dr. Myers at myersa1@sage.edu or you may call her office at 518-244-2327.

Thank you for considering participation in this important research.

Sincerely,

Charles S. Dedrick

Appendix C

Superintendent Succession Planning in New York State
Sage Colleges
Doctoral Research
Charles S. Dedrick, Researcher

Sample Questions:

1. How do you define succession planning?
2. According to the latest research from NYSCOSS and the AASA, there is an ever growing shortage of superintendent candidates in public education. Should school districts look more aggressively at succession planning to fill the expected void?
3. If schools should schools plan for leadership succession, how would you suggest they go about starting the process?
4. Who should be involved with the formulation of a succession plan in a school district? Why?
5. In school districts that have succession planning, what do you think drives the plan and why? Also, who do you think drives the plan and why? Is that who should drive the plan? Why?
6. Are there political aspects of succession planning? Explain. How can we plan for succession in a political climate?
7. Is succession planning more important for one type of school district over another? Explain.
8. What factors inhibit superintendent succession planning?
9. Might public policy and/or law get in the way of successful succession planning? If so, what policies and/or laws can be changed in order to establish successful succession planning?
10. Might succession planning solve and/or partially address any public policy issues? Explain.
11. Are you aware of any successful succession plans for public institutions? Can you tell me about them?
12. Do you have any final thoughts on succession planning that we didn't cover in the interview?

Appendix D

Sample Data Sheet

Page Number: _____

Superintendent Succession Planning in New York State
Sage Colleges
Doctoral Research
Charles S. Dedrick, Researcher

Name of Interviewee: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Beginning Time: _____

Ending Time: _____

How do you define succession planning?

Appendix E

Participants

Categories in the interview Q= Question number on Attachment A	Non-elected Government Officials	Elected Officials	Education Organization Directors	Search Professionals
What is succession planning? Q1, Q12				
Can succession planning help alleviate the shortage? Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q11, Q12				
Problems associated with succession planning? Q6, Q7, Q8, Q12				
Policy implications? Q9, Q10, Q12				

- A. Government Officials (Non-elected): Leadership in the New York State Comptroller's Office, an education staff member from the New York State Legislature, a staff member from the New York State Governor's Office and the Commissioner of the New York State Education Department.
- B. Government Officials (Elected):, a member of the Board of Regents, a member of the New York State Senate and two members of the New York State Assembly.
- C. Education Organization Directors: The Executive Director of the New York State School Boards Association, The Executive Director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, The Executive Director of the Capital Area School District Association and the Program Administrator of the Superintendent Development Program at Oswego State University.
- D. Search Professionals: Four Superintendent search consultants from various areas of New York State.