

A  
E  
C  
R  
S

# Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration 2013 Yearbook:

## *Jazzing It Up*

Edited by  
Frances Kochan, Linda Searby  
and Maysaa Barakat

Editorial Assistance by  
Altamese Stroud-Hill

Published by:  
Auburn University  
College of Education  
3084 Haley Center  
Auburn, AL 36849  
September 2013



AUBURN UNIVERSITY  

---

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Southern Regional Council on Educational  
Administration 2013 Yearbook

*Jazzing It Up*

Edited by

Frances Kochan, Linda Searby, and Maysaa Barakat

Editorial assistance by

Altamese Stroud-Hill

Published by

**College of Education**  
Auburn University  
3084 Haley Center  
Auburn, AL 36849-5218

September, 2013

**2012–2013  
Board of Directors**

**President**

Dr. Willie Ennis III  
*Southeastern Louisiana University*

**Conference Chair &  
President-Elect (2013–2014)**

Dr. Cheryl Evans  
*University of Central Oklahoma*

**Corresponding Secretary**

Dr. Shonta Smith  
*Southeast Missouri State University*

**Recording Secretary**

Dr. Dana Owens-DeLong  
*Southwestern Christian University*

**Treasurer**

Dr. Art Rouse  
*East Carolina University*

**SRCEA Yearbook Editors  
(2012–2013)**

Dr. Frances Kochan, Dr. Linda  
Searby, and Maysaa Barakat  
*Auburn University*

**SRCEA Yearbook Editor  
(2013–2014)**

Dr. Ronald Childress  
*Marshall University*

**President-Elect (2014–2015)**

Dr. Mary Chandler  
*Kennesaw State University*

**Board Member**

Dr. Ellen Reames  
*Auburn University*

**Board Member**

Dr. Eddie Obleton  
*Columbus State University*

The *Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration Yearbook* is a refereed journal published under the auspices of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (SRCEA). The title of the 2013 Yearbook, *Jazzing it Up*, was the theme of the 2012 Annual Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The Council is a non-profit, professional society that exists for the improvement of educational leadership preparation programs through the promotion of research and the exchange of ideas and information. Membership is open to all persons interested in the improvement of preparation programs for educational administrators. An annual meeting is held in the Fall, at varied locations in the South.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of SRCEA and/or joining us at the 2013 annual meeting in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma should check the SRCEA website ([www.srcea.us](http://www.srcea.us))

Anyone interested in submitting a manuscript for the 2014 *Yearbook*, should refer to the information contained on page 22 of this *Yearbook*. If you are willing to be a reviewer for the publication, please see page 44 or contact

Dr. Ronald Childress, Editor

*SRCEA Yearbook*

College of Education and Professional Development  
Marshall University, South Charleston Campus--Rm 242

100 Angus E. Peyton Dr.

South Charleston, WV 25303-1600

(304) 746-1904 (tel)

(304) 746-2074 (fax)

[rchildress@marshall.edu](mailto:rchildress@marshall.edu)

## 2013 Yearbook Editorial Review Board

Dr. Darlene Bruner, *University of South Florida*

Dr. T. C. Chan, *Kennesaw State University*

Dr. Mary Chandler, *Kennesaw State University*

Dr. Ron Childress, *Marshall University*

Dr. Cheryl Evans, *University of Central Oklahoma*

Dr. Anna Hassenplug, *University of Akron*

Dr. Hal Holloman, *East Carolina University*

Dr. Barbara Mallory, *Winthrop University*

Dr. Sheila D. Moore, *Florida A&M University*

Dr. Dana Owens-DeLong, *University of Central Oklahoma*

Dr. Ellen Reames, *Auburn University*

Dr. Art Rouse, *East Carolina University*

Dr. Isabelle Warren, *Troy State University*

Dr. Paul Watkins, *Southeast Missouri State University*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Comments.....	1
<i>Outstanding Young Scholar Paper</i> : Successful Principals in High Poverty Schools: Some Basic Criteria..... Sheila D. Moore	3
Jazzing up the Leadership Repertoire: Findings from Action Research..... Barbara J. Mallory & Gwendolyn Martin	13
Call for Manuscripts.....	22
The “Do Something Syndrome”: Planning for School Improvement in a Turbulent Political Environment..... Edward L. Bouie, Jr.	23
Superintendent Retention: Organizational Commitment and Superintendent Longevity..... Sandra Bass Talbert & Don M. Beach	33
Call for Reviewers.....	44
School Leaders’ Perceptions of the Importance of Disposition Standards for Potential Leaders..... Christopher G. Pritchett & Trellys A. Riley	45
Cyberlearning: The Social Media Connection..... Pamela Lemoine, Michael D. Richardson Evan Mense & Kenneth E. Lane	55
Academic and Campus Accommodations that Foster Success for College Students with Asperger’s Disorder..... Marc Ellison, Jaclyn Clark Michael Cunningham & Rebecca Hansen	65
<i>Outstanding Graduate Student Paper</i> : Using a Biological Lens to Investigate Successful Student Outcomes: Linking Planning, Policies and Population Dynamics..... Tina M. Tinney	77

## **Sheila Moore – Outstanding Young Scholar Award**

Dr. Sheila Moore joined the faculty at Florida A&M University Fall 2011 as an Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership. Before coming to Florida A&M University, Dr. Moore served in the capacity of Outreach Coordinator K–12 Initiative, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Project Coordinator, and Graduate Research Assistant at Auburn University. Dr. Moore began her career as a Social Studies Teacher in Secondary Schools in Macon County Schools, Alabama and continued her public school experiences in the Buffalo Public Schools as a teacher, instructional leader and central office administrator.

Dr. Moore has published and made several conference presentations. Her research interests include principal leadership, leadership in high poverty, high-achieving schools, faculty-student doctoral mentoring, and educational leadership preparation programs. Currently, she is leading the initiative to redesign the educational leadership master's program and serves as the faculty administrator for an outreach program that is targeted at STEM education. In addition, Dr. Moore serves on several boards and is active in the community. She is a Holmes Scholar Alumni and serves on the National Association of Holmes Scholars Alumni Board as Chair of the Membership Committee. She is also a member of the Florida A&M Early Childhood Center Advisory Council, and the Tallahassee Kiwanis Club.



## **Tina Tinney – Outstanding Graduate Student Paper**

Tina Tinney is the newly appointed Dean of General Education at Northshore Technical Community College. Dr. Tinney was previously an instructor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana and an Associate Professor at Nunez Community College in Chalmette, LA where she served as Health and Natural Sciences Department Chair. Her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership was completed at Southeastern Louisiana University. In addition to receiving the SRCEA Outstanding Graduate Paper Award, she also earned the Dr. Preston B. Allison Outstanding Dissertation Award from Southeastern Louisiana University. Dr. Tinney's research combined biological and educational models to study resource allocation, sustainability and student success in post-secondary environments. Her research interests include student success, the transfer function, multi-institutional enrollment, accountability and assessment in higher education.



## **SRCEA 2013 Jack Greer Lifetime Contribution Award**

Jack Greer was a professor at Georgia State University for over 25 years. He was the glue that stabilized SRCEA in the early years. SRCEA had its beginnings in Atlanta and moved primarily between Florida and Georgia for the conference meetings. “The organization didn't meet in the fanciest hotels, never-the-less, the fellowship was important as well as learning and collaborating on research.” Jack was extremely active in several professional organizations and he served as a mentor to many of the past members. Jack co-authored leadership texts and articles with more than just a few members.

Because of his love for SRCEA, his mentoring of others, his vast research in our field, and his ability to keep the early organization together, Mike Richard and others proposed a *Jack Greer Lifetime Contribution Award* to honor him and others who gave so much to SRCEA and their profession.

Jack Greer was the first recipient. Unfortunately Jack was not well and he passed away a few months after that presentation (taken from SRCEA History, Nancy Mims, 2007).

Those receiving the Award and who hold it in high regard are as follows:

Jack Greer, 1999  
Ivan Barden, 2000  
Bob Blackman, 2001  
Frank Markus, 2002  
Jim Lyons, 2003  
Nancy Mims, 2005  
William Bozman, 2006  
Paula Short, 2008  
Tom Valesky, 2009  
Lynn Bradshaw, 2010  
Frances Kochan, 2011



### **Michael D. Richardson**

Michael D. Richardson is Director of the Doctoral Program in Curriculum and Leadership and the Fuller E. Callaway Professorial Chair at Columbus State University. He previously held faculty and administrative appointments at Western Kentucky University, Clemson University, Georgia Southern University, Mercer University and Southeastern Louisiana University. He completed a BS and MA in Education at Tennessee Technological University and was awarded the Ed.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Tennessee. Dr. Richardson served as Founding Editor of the *Journal of School Leadership* an internationally refereed journal of educational leadership, Founding Editor of *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership*, and as Editor of *The Journal of At-Risk Issues*. He has authored or edited seventeen books, published more than one hundred-twenty-five articles in professional journals, published more than fifty book chapters and made more than two hundred-twenty-five presentations to state, regional, national and international professional organizations. He has chaired more than ninety dissertations and continues to actively conduct research and write for publication. His current research areas are organizational theory, particularly resiliency of leaders, phenomenology, and the implications of technology for education. Dr. Richardson served as a secondary and elementary principal, Personnel Director, Director of Special Projects, Coordinator of Federal Programs, and Assistant Superintendent before entering higher education.

Michael has been an active member of SCREA for over a decade. He has presented papers for the last 14 years, hosted the conference in Savannah in 1998 and was program chair in 1999 and 2000. Dr. Richardson gave workshops on academic publishing at the conference for nine years, as a way of serving the organization and its members. He served on the Executive Board for five years and was the founder and first editor of the *SRCEA Yearbook*. Finally, Dr. Richardson was the person who initiated the Jack Greer Award. In addition to being an outstanding teacher and scholar, Dr. Michael Richardson has demonstrated a life-long dedication to SRCEA and so it is most appropriate that he was this year's recipient.

## AUTHOR NOTES

**Maysaa Barakat** is a Graduate Research Assistant and a Ph.D. candidate in the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology department at Auburn University. Her research interests include Social justice, Diversity and the preparation of school leaders. She served as a building level school administrator for 12 years in Cairo Egypt. Maysaa Barakat served as the junior and senior graduate representative for Leadership for Social Justice Special Interest Group (LSJ-SIG) from 2010 until 2013 at the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

**Don M. Beach** is Regents Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Tarleton State University – Texas A&M University System, Stephenville, Texas. His primary teaching interests are in the areas of instructional leadership, school and organizational leadership, and ethics. He is an active writer, researcher, and teacher and has over 40 years of experience in the public schools and university. He has served as a teacher, building level administrator, central office administrator, program coordinator and dean in Tennessee and Texas. His research interests include principal leadership, professional development of school leaders, ethical behavior, and organizational theory.

**Edward L. Bouie, Jr.** is a career educator with over 39 years of experience working in both public schools and higher education. Dr. Bouie served with the DeKalb County School System (Georgia) for 31 years as a high school band director, high school assistant principal, elementary school principal, Area Assistant Superintendent, and Associate Superintendent for Information Systems. Dr. Bouie worked for six years at Argosy University where he served as Associate Professor of Educational Leadership, Dean of the School of Education, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, and for three years as Campus President. Dr. Bouie is presently Associate Professor for Educational Leadership and Chair of the Educational Leadership Department in the Tift College of Education, Mercer University.

**Jaelyn Clark** is the Assistant Coordinator for The College Program for Students With Asperger's Syndrome, located at Marshall University. Sponsored by the West Virginia Autism Training Center, this program provides person-centered supports for students as they live out a typical college lifestyle. Ms. Clark is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction in the Graduate School of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia. Her area of interest includes supporting college students on the autism spectrum as they transition out of college.

**Michael Cunningham** is the program director for Leadership Studies/Adult & Technical Ed. at Marshall University. Dr. Cunningham holds an Ed.D. in Education Leadership and a B.S. degree in Horticulture from West Virginia University. He also earned an M.A. in Education Administration from the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies. Dr. Cunningham served the public schools of West Virginia for 24 years with 19 of those years in the role of school principal. He was named West Virginia Secondary Principal of the Year in 1995. For the past 17 years, Dr. Cunningham has served as a faculty member and program director at Marshall University.

**Marc Ellison** is the Associate Director of Training for the West Virginia Autism Training Center, located at Marshall University, and an adjunct instructor at the university. Dr. Ellison holds an Ed.D. in Education Leadership and a M.A. in Counseling. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) who has worked more than 27 years to provide person-centered support, services, and advocacy to individuals who live with autism spectrum disorders, their families and those who support them. He has supported individuals with autism spectrum disorders throughout their lifespan as they moved to the community from state-supported institutions, searched for and obtained employment, entered into relationships, and transitioned into college.

**Rebecca Hansen** is the Program Coordinator for the West Virginia Autism Training Center's College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome at Marshall University. Ms. Hansen is currently a doctoral student in Education Leadership in the Graduate School of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia. Her area of emphasis is in student affairs issues within higher education, with specific interest in issues related to access and comprehensive supports for students with autism spectrum disorders. Ms. Hansen holds an undergraduate degree in Biology and a master's degree in Student Affairs Counseling. She has provided individualized and person-centered supports for students with ASD at Marshall University for over nine years.

**Frances K. Kochan** joined the faculty of the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology department at Auburn University in 1995 and is a Wayne T. Smith Distinguished Professor. While at Auburn, she was Director of the Truman Pierce Institute, Associate Dean and Dean. Dr. Kochan served as a teacher, principal, and superintendent at the school system level. Her research interests include the cultural aspects of mentoring and leadership, organizational change, and collaboration through organizational partnerships.

**Kenneth E. Lane** is the Hibernia National Bank Endowed Professor and Director of the doctoral program in Educational Leadership as well as the Graduate Coordinator of the Department of Educational Leadership and Technology at Southeastern Louisiana University. Dr. Lane served as the Director of the National Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at California State University, San Bernardino. He has an extensive background in Educational Administration and Leadership including Assistant Dean, Department Chair and Program Coordinator on the university level as well as experience as a school administrator. Dr. Lane is the Executive Director of the International Academy of Educational Leadership. He is also President-Elect of the Education Law Association (ELA). Additionally, he is Co-Editor of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) *Yearbook* and recently served as the Editor of the *Education Leadership Review*.

**Pamela Lemoine** is an Assistant Professor at Southeastern Louisiana University in the Department of Educational Leadership and Technology in Hammond, Louisiana. Her interests in the cross disciplines of educational leadership behaviors, educational technology, classroom management practices, and academic achievement, have influenced her interests in teaching, researching, and writing. Prior to joining the faculty at Southeastern Louisiana University Pam served as a consultant at the Teaching Research Institute in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She has extensive experience as a classroom teacher, librarian, principal, and district supervisor in South Louisiana as well as in Japan, Germany, and Canada.

**Barbara J. Mallory** currently serves as associate professor in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at High Point University in North Carolina. As a former principal and school improvement specialist with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Dr. Mallory began her career in higher education in 2005 at Georgia Southern University (GSU), where she served as Coordinator of the Educational Leadership Programs. In 2010, Dr. Mallory was named Director of The Rex Institute for Educational Renewal and Partnership at Winthrop University. Her current research interests focus on the principalship, international school leadership and reform, and dispositions of educational leaders. Dr. Mallory was honored as a 2011 inductee into the ECU Educators' Hall of Fame.

**Gwendolyn A. Martin** is a licensed professional counselor currently employed as an elementary school counselor. She earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Georgia, where she also works as an adjunct professor in the College of Education. She has over 16 years of experience in public education that began as a Special Education Teacher. Research and writing interests include barriers to women in school leadership, role perceptions of school counselors, training teachers to use data to drive instruction and student motivation.

**Evan G. Mense** is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Technology and is serving as Director of the Masters in Educational Leadership Program at Southeastern Louisiana University. Dr. Mense has an extensive background in Educational Administration and Leadership as a principal and public school administrator in Missouri. Dr. Mense holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Saint Louis University-Saint Louis, Missouri, a Master of Science degree in Administration from Pittsburg State University – Pittsburg, Kansas, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Missouri Southern State University – Joplin, Missouri.

**Sheila D. Moore** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Services at Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Florida. Her primary teaching interests are in the areas of instructional leadership, school leadership, and curriculum. Prior to joining the faculty at FAMU, Sheila served as a graduate research assistant in the Truman Pierce Institute, Auburn University. She has 24 years of experience in public education, serving as a teacher, building level administrator, and central office administrator in Alabama and New York. Her research interests include principal leadership, professional development of school leaders, mentoring, and graduate education.



**Christopher G. Pritchett** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Instructional Leadership and Administration at Troy University in Phenix City, Alabama. His primary teaching responsibilities are in the areas of instructional leadership, human resources administration, and using school data. Prior to joining the faculty of Troy University in 2008, he worked 16 years in public K–12 education as a teacher, middle school administrator, and high school administrator. His research interests include the use of technology by educators, school district and university partnerships, and leadership dispositions.

**Michael D. Richardson** is Meraux Endowed Professor of Educational Leadership and Department Head for Educational Leadership and Technology at Southeastern Louisiana University. Previously he served as Professor of Educational Leadership and Director of Doctoral Studies in the Tift College of Education at Mercer University. In addition he held faculty and administrative appointments at Western Kentucky University, Clemson University and Georgia Southern University. Dr. Richardson served as Founding Editor of the *Journal of School Leadership* and as Editor of the *Journal of At-Risk Issues* and Founding Editor of both *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* and *International Review of Educational Administration*. Dr. Richardson served as a secondary and elementary principal, Personnel Director, Director of Special Projects, Coordinator of Federal Programs, and Assistant Superintendent before entering higher education.

**Trellys A. Riley** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Instructional Leadership and Administration at Troy University. She currently is working on research projects involving dispositions for instructional leaders, higher education leadership opportunities for department chairs, and college and career education leadership. Service activities include serving as interim chair for the education department at the Troy University–Phenix City campus, Chancellor’s Fellow, Faculty Development and Personnel at the University level. She has 28 years of experience in public education, serving as a high school teacher in Oklahoma and Kansas, teacher educator at Oklahoma State University and Auburn University and as an Education Administrator/Leader for 9 years in Alabama.

**Linda Searby** joined the Educational Leadership faculty at Auburn in January, 2012. She is the Review Editor for *Mentoring & Tutoring Journal*, and serves on the Executive Boards of the International Mentoring Association and the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration. Dr. Searby has published over 18 articles in her area of research, which focuses on mentoring from the protegee’s perspective, specifically on the development of a mentoring mindset in proteges. Dr. Searby’s research interests also include the assistant principalship and instructional leadership preparation.

**Sandra Bass Talbert** is serving in her 8<sup>th</sup> year as superintendent of Lorena Independent School District in Lorena, Texas. She has been an educator in public schools for 28 years and is committed to leading by example, building consensus among all stakeholders in education, and is herself a lifelong learner. Sandra’s service in education has ranged from elementary schools to college level including a variety of roles such as teacher, administrator, and state-wide trainer. Sandra received her Bachelor’s Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University, her Master’s Degree from Sam Houston State University, and her Doctorate from Tarleton State University. She currently serves on multiple local, regional, and statewide education committees and has been recognized for her leadership among educators.

**Tina M. Tinney** is currently an Instructor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana where she also earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. She has been a higher education faculty member for 14 years, with 7 years as an instructor at the university level and 7 years in the Community College system during which time she served as an Associate Professor, program director and Chair of Health and Natural Sciences. Her research interests include student success, the transfer function, and accountability and assessment in higher education.

# Reflections on the 2013 SRCEA Yearbook

Frances Kochan, Linda Searby & Maysaa Barakat

*Auburn University*

Last year's SRCEA conference theme was *Jazzing It Up*. We think the title is very appropriate to this 2013 Yearbook, as it contains a mixture of many diverse ideas coming from both seasoned scholars and newer arrivals. The topics cover issues in K–12 and higher education and they are situated in a wide variety of settings. We think that, like jazz, the parts of the journal come together to form an interesting and exciting whole.

The first article, *Successful Principals in High Poverty Schools: Some Basic Criteria*, written by Sheila Moore, received the SRCEA Outstanding Young Scholar Award. Dr. Moore's article focuses on principals of successful and unsuccessful schools who serve high poverty student populations. Like the music of jazz, she moves from the traditional focus of most such research to look at the demographic factors related to these principals including such elements as race, gender, age, and years of service. Her findings provide important information for those hiring principals and point to a wide spectrum of research ideas for others to consider.

The second paper, written by past president Barbara Mallory, *Jazzing up the Leadership Repertoire: Findings from Action Research*, also looks at leadership at the school level. It not only incorporates the conference theme in its title, but describes a setting which depicts an ensemble of people, with differing roles, creating a new way of working together through a distributed leadership model. The rich descriptions provided help the reader to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes used and the outcomes achieved in this exciting approach to change.

Edward Bouie, in his manuscript, *The 'Do Something Syndrome': Planning for School Improvement in a Turbulent Political* environment, presents a stimulating overview of the political environment which has forced schools into a continuous cycle of change. This movement and back and forth

flow is similar to the notes that flow from a jazz number, but unlike the unique sounds that emote from the instruments, Bouie presents an environment of discord, in which inappropriate models are being thrust upon schools, causing them to “do something” which may not be a viable solution to the problems before them.

Like the ebb and flow of jazz, Sandra Bass Talbert and Don Beach move the focus of the Yearbook back to the individual leader in their article, *Superintendent Retention: Organizational Commitment and Superintendent Longevity*. Continuing the metaphor of jazz, these authors take a look at the longevity of the superintendent through a creative lens. They examine, not what others, such as the school board or community think or do, but rather focus on the commitment of the superintendent as an element in his or her continuation on the job. The result is an intriguing and unique look at the issue of superintendent retention, which offers intriguing avenues for future research.

Christopher Pritchett and Trellys Riley continue the focus on school leadership in their paper, *School Leaders' Perceptions of the Importance of Disposition Standards for Potential Leaders*. The authors help us to see, that like a jazz group, all players must have a voice and a part to play in the final outcome if it is to be successful. They delve into school leaders' perceptions of university preparation programs and the standards used in creating and implementing them. They move us from the school setting to the connections between schools and universities. This helps us to transition to the next part of the Yearbook, which focuses on issues more closely connected to higher education. Musically then, we move to another tempo.

Pamela Lemoine, Michael Richardson, Evan Mense, and Kenneth Lance, not only change the tempo, open up a whole new dimension of

learning in their article, *Cyberlearning: The Social Media Connection*. They explore new horizons through their comprehensive description of the world of social media and how it is and can be used in higher education to foster learning and personal growth. They present the challenges and open our eyes and our ears to new possibilities. The concepts of equity and fostering learning for all through social media carry-over, like a musical theme, to our next study.

Marc Ellison, Jaclyn Clark, Michael Cunningham, and Rebecca Hansen present a melody of hope in their manuscript, *Academic and Campus Accommodations that Foster Success for College Students with Asperger's Disorder*. Here, they identify the attributes necessary if institutions want to ensure success for students with Asperger's Disorder. The authors stress the need to have an environment in which, like a good jazz ensemble, the parts create a whole in which everything and everyone one is able to add their own special attribute to enrich the outcome.

Tina Tinney's article, *Using a Biological Lens to Investigate Successful Student Outcomes: Linking Planning, Policies, and Population Dynamics*, like the previous authors, examines issues within the environment. However, she addresses them from the perspective of how students' use the resources available within the university setting relates to their learning

success. This manuscript, which won the outstanding graduate paper award, completes our repertoire. As a graduate student who demonstrated outstanding research and writing skills, like the jazz musician who plays a new sound or rhythm, she helps us to see how we can build on past knowledge to create new understandings.

We thank all of the authors for their contributions to the *Yearbook*. Our gratitude also goes to the reviewers, who are listed separately, within this document. They graciously contributed their time and expertise to assure a high quality publication. Thanks also go to Altamese Stroud-Hill, our wonderful assistant, who formatted all of the materials and helped to complete this task. We could not have completed it without her.

This will be our last year as co-editors of the *SRCEA Yearbook*. We have appreciated the opportunity and thank the officers and SRCEA Board for their support over the last two years. We pass the mantle on to Dr. Ronald Childress, in the College of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University in Charleston. Dr. Childress has been a prolific contributor to the journal and has served as a reviewer for many years. He will bring his expertise and commitment to this task and we thank him for accepting it. We know he will do a fantastic job.

# Successful Principals in High Poverty Schools: Some Basic Criteria

Sheila D. Moore

Florida A&M University

## Abstract

*Studies about the role of the principal in creating school success often examine what principals do and the types of leadership they provide. This study took a somewhat different approach by examining demographic data related to principals of successful and unsuccessful high poverty schools to determine whether differences existed in terms of gender, age, and years of experience as principal. The study also examined the size of the school population. The findings from this study suggest that principal age, experience, and school size may be factors in successful and unsuccessful high poverty schools.*

## Introduction

Never in the history of education has there been so much attention paid to moving all public school students to high levels of achievement (Ylimaki, 2007). Policies and laws such as *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) and a history of reports through the years (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002, p. 2; National Staff Development Council (NSDC), 2000) have emphasized the need to improve schools. Creating high quality schools requires setting high standards for all students (Carter, 2000; Kannapel & Clements, 2005); populating every school with leaders and teachers that are highly qualified and competent (Fullan, 2002; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003); and assuring that school leaders and teachers participate in high quality professional development practices that are aligned with professional development standards that promote student achievement (Blankstein, 2004).

Schools with high concentrations of children of poverty face significant school improvement challenges. Poverty can have a significant impact on student achievement (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn 1997). Traditionally, schools with high poverty rates have struggled to educate students successfully (Carter, 2000; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Children living in poverty are more likely to fall behind their classmates, be labeled as problem

students, be absent, be truant, have negative performance on standardized tests, and eventually drop out of school altogether.

More than 20 years ago, educators began exploring how schools with high numbers of poor students could be as successful in student performance as schools in more advantaged communities. Research on similar populations has found that students who live in poverty experience school differently than affluent students (Comer, 2001; Griffith, 2002; Williams, 2003). However, students in high poverty schools can perform well (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Simon & Izumi, 2003).

During the present school accountability era, identifying specific elements that help schools steadily raise the level of student achievement has become particularly important to stakeholders including school administrators, teachers, parents, and politicians (Gieselmann, 2009). Research has indicated that certain characteristics are associated with increased student achievement and performance in schools traditionally viewed as low performing with a large number of students living in poverty (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). It is understood and virtually known that principals are a key to school success and student learning (Schargel, Thacker, & Bell, 2007). This is strongly substantiated for the specific cases of highly

effective schools serving high poverty populations (Carter, 2000; Schargel, Thacker, & Bell, 2007). Effective leadership matters in high poverty schools, and if schools are not participating in high quality professional development, student achievement will remain stagnate (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Carter (2000) reported successful high poverty schools have professional education personnel that support the belief that all students can and will learn. High poverty schools with principals and teachers that believe in their students, set high goals for their students, and engage in professional development activities that promote supportive and nurturing classroom environments have students with higher achievement scores (Carter; Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

Although the literature indicates students can achieve in a high poverty situation, many still have the belief that poverty equates low achievement in schools. As a result, low expectations, low standards for teaching and learning, ineffective leadership and low academic success for students who find themselves in poverty is still a reality.

To counteract this belief, the state of Alabama created the Torchbearer Schools Program in 2004 to recognize high-poverty, high-performing public schools. The Alabama Leadership Academy (ALA; 2006) at the Alabama State Department of Education was established to increase the achievement of all students in Alabama by supporting the growth and development of superintendents, principals, and teachers as instructional leaders. A book study conducted by the Alabama Leadership Academy formed the basis of the Torchbearer Program. The book study group read and discussed Samuel Casey-Carter's book, *No Excuses: 21 Lessons from High-Performing, High Poverty Schools* (Carter, 2000). Carter's book outlines research-based methods for raising student achievement in 21 high-poverty population schools in the nation. The belief of many who attended the book study was that Alabama had no high-poverty high-performing public schools (Alabama Leadership Academy, 2006). However, some members disagreed, and so the members of the

Alabama Leadership Academy, which included Alabama State Department of Education personnel, created the Torchbearer Schools Program to recognize high-poverty, high-performing public schools in Alabama. To be considered for recognition as a Torchbearer School, schools must meet the following criteria:

1. at least 80% of the student population receive free/reduced meals;
2. at least 80% of students score at Levels III or IV on the Math section of the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT);
3. at least 80% of students score at Levels III or IV of the Reading section of the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT);
4. at least 95% of twelfth grade students pass all required subjects of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (high schools); and
5. have a graduation rate above the state average (high schools).

Twenty-two schools have been awarded this designation more than once since the program began in 2004. Of these, 20 were elementary schools, and two were middle/junior high schools. There has been only one high school awarded this designation since the inception of the Torchbearer Schools program.

The Alabama Leadership Academy (2006) conducted site visits to Torchbearer Schools to discern why these schools were successful when other schools with similar demographics had not been. Torchbearer Schools had several traits in common, but the most striking commonality among these schools was principals, teachers, and students who were excited about learning (ALA, 2006). Torchbearer School principals indicated in a Principal Survey administered in year three of the program by the Alabama Leadership Academy (2009) that they believed that poverty is no excuse for poor achievement. The principals also indicated that the strength and commitment of their professional development program is a factor in their success. Principals reported that teachers in Torchbearer Schools participate in professional development that allowed them to provide input

into instructional decisions. They also noted that high-level, ongoing, capacity building professional development is a priority in their schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research indicates that the principal is an important element in school success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Ylimaki, 2007). However, little research exists about the principals of Alabama Torchbearer Schools and the role that they play in creating school success and academic achievement in high poverty schools. Lindahl (2008) compared the organizational culture and climate of Alabama Torchbearer Schools and Non-Torchbearer Schools serving low-income students. The results from this study strongly supported the fact that the Torchbearer Schools had significantly more positive school climates than their counterparts, Non-Torchbearer Schools. However, Lindahl's study did not address the principals' role in the success of high poverty high achieving schools. Studies about the role of the principal in creating school success often examine what principals do and the types of leadership they provide. This study took a somewhat different approach by examining demographic data related to principals of successful and unsuccessful high poverty schools to determine whether differences existed in terms of gender, age, and years of experience as principal. It also examined the size of the school population.

### **Sample Population**

Two groups were identified to participate in this study. One group, identified as Torchbearer School principals, is in high-poverty and high-performing schools which have been awarded the Alabama Torchbearer School designation beginning the 2004–2005 school year. Principals from fifty-nine Torchbearer Schools agreed to participate in the study.

A comparison population of principals from low-performing elementary, middle, and junior high schools serving low-income students were selected using data from the Alabama Department of Education's (ALSDE) web site. First, ALSDE's list of schools that did not make Adequate Yearly

Progress for school year 2008–2009 was used to determine which schools met this criterion. Then, in order to assure the matched school population, the ALSDE database on those schools was used to identify which of those schools served populations in which 70% or more of the students qualified for free or reduce priced lunch. Twenty-nine principals from Non-Torchbearer Schools participated in the study.

### **Data Collection**

This was a two-part study which used a survey instrument to gather data. Part of the survey included a demographic questionnaire which gathered the characteristics of principals of Torchbearer Schools and principals of Non-Torchbearer Schools in terms of (a) gender, (b) age, and (c) years of experience as a principal. It also included a question about school size. After approval to conduct the study was received from the University Institutional Review Board, the demographic questionnaire and a letter asking for participation were sent to all principals in the population. A stamped, self-addressed envelope in which to return the completed survey was also included. A second mail-out was sent three weeks later as a follow up. The questionnaires were color-coded to identify the respondents as coming from a Torchbearer or Non-Torchbearer Schools. There were no other identifying features on the questionnaire or return envelopes.

### **Limitations**

This study had the following limitation:

- 1) Only elementary, middle/junior high schools in Alabama were included in this study.

Although findings from the study may be generalized to schools and principals in Alabama with similar populations to those in this study, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the State.

This study had the following assumption:

- 1) It is presumed that principal responses on the NSDC survey, demographic and

qualitative responses reflected their honest perceptions.

### Data Analysis

There were 88 valid responses, yielding an overall response rate of 73 percent. Fifty-nine or 84% of the principals in Torchbearer Schools responded. Twenty-nine or 58% of the principals in Non-Torchbearer Schools participated. Descriptive statistics were used to identify characteristics of the demographic data for principals of Torchbearer Schools and principals of Non-Torchbearer Schools.

## Results

### Gender

The gender of principals in the two types of schools is reported in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Overall, two-thirds of the principals in these schools were female. In the Torchbearer Schools, 39% of the principals were male and 61% were female. The difference in the number of males and females in the Non-Torchbearer Schools were greater. In these schools, only 28% of the principals were males, while 72% were females.

**Table 1**

*Gender: Torchbearer and Non-Torchbearer Principals (N=88)*

N		Valid Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	29	33.0	33.0
	Female	59	67.0	67.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0

**Table 2**

*Gender: Torchbearer Principals (N=59)*

N		Valid Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	23	39.0	39.0
	Female	36	61.0	61.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0

**Table 3**

*Gender: Non-Torchbearer Principals (N=29)*

N		Valid Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	8	28.0	28.0
	Female	21	72.0	72.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0

### Principal Age

Demographic data related to principal age are reported in Table 4. The data related to the age of principals in these schools indicates that the ages are similar, but there are also some differences. Although the percent of principals age 36–46 are almost the same (20.3) and (20.6) in both types of schools, there are older principals in the Torchbearer schools than in the non-Torchbearer Schools. The percent of Torchbearer principals

ages 47–57 is 62.7% while the percent in the other schools is 44.8%. In addition, the percent of principals' ages 58 or higher is 24.1% in the non-torchbearer schools and 16.9% in the Torchbearer Schools. At the opposite end of the continuum, there were 3 principals (10.3%) in the non-Torchbearer Schools who reported being in the 25–35 year age range, while no principals in the Torchbearer Schools fell into this category.

**Table 4**  
*Principal Age*

Principal	Age			
	25–35	36–46	47–57	58 and more
Torchbearer	0	12	37	10
Percent	0	20.3%	62.7%	16.9%
Non-Torchbearer	3	6	13	7
Percent	10.3%	20.6%	44.8%	24.1%

**Experience**

Demographic data related to total principal experience are reported in Table 5. The data related to experience of principals in these schools indicate that the percent of principals with 0–3 years experience was greater for the Non-Torchbearer principals (31.0%); no principals in the Torchbearer Schools fell into this category. It appears that there are more experienced principals in the Torchbearer Schools than in the Non-Torchbearer Schools. The percent of Torchbearer principals reporting 10–12 years experience was 38.9%, while the percent in the other school is 6.8%. Furthermore, the percent of principals with 16–18 years of experience was 23.7% in the Torchbearer Schools and 6.8% in the Non-Torchbearer Schools. In addition, the percent of

Torchbearer principals, reporting 13–15 years experience was 13.5% and 6.8% in the Non-Torchbearer Schools. Likewise, the percent of principals with 7–9 years experience was 24.1% in the Non-Torchbearer Schools and 5.0% in the Torchbearer Schools. There were five principals in the Torchbearer Schools (8.4%) and Non-Torchbearer Schools (17.2%) who reported being in the 4–6 years range. At the opposite end of the continuum, 6.7% of Torchbearer principals reported being in the category of 19–25 years and two (3.3%) reported 26 years or more of experience; whereas there was one principal reporting in both categories of 19–25 years and 26 years or more of experience for the Non-Torchbearer Schools.

**Table 5**  
*Principal Experience by Years*

Principal	0–3 years	4–6 years	7–9 years	10–12 years	13–15 years	16–18 years	19–25 years	26 years and more
Torchbearer	0	5	3	23	8	14	4	2
Percent	0	8.4%	5.0%	38.9%	13.5%	23.7%	6.7%	3.3%
Non-Torchbearer	9	5	7	2	2	2	1	1
Percent	31.0%	17.2%	24.1%	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%	3.4%	3.4%

**School Population**

The data related to school size indicates that Torchbearer Schools are smaller than Non-Torchbearer Schools. Overall, two-thirds of the principals in Torchbearer Schools reported school populations of less than 300. The difference in

school populations for the Non-Torchbearer schools was greater. In these schools, 53.8% reported that they were in schools that had student populations in the category of 300–500 (see Table 6).



**Table 6**  
*Principal by School Population*

		School Population			
		less than 300	300–500	501–750	751–1000
Principal	Torchbearer	38	15	3	1
	Percent	66.7%	26.3%	5.3%	1.8%
Non-Torchbearer		5	14	4	2
	Percent	19.2%	53.8%	15.4%	7.7%

These data present some demographic information which may help explain some of the differences in student performance in these schools. A discussion of the implications and conclusions for these results follows.

### Discussion

High poverty schools face many challenges; however, research has confirmed that effective educators can improve the academic outcomes of low-income students and provide them with hope and promise for the future (Carter, 2000; Haberman, 2005; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Leadership matters in these types of schools and the literature indicates that the principal is an important element in school success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Ylimaki, 2007). Stepping back from the fact that all of these principals who participated in this study are in schools that are high poverty; one group appears to be successful in improving student achievement, whereas the other group does not. The findings from this study could suggest that principal age and experience and school size may be factors in student achievement in Alabama Torchbearer schools; however, the relationship of these variables and student achievement should be investigated before one can be confident of their role in student achievement.

### Age and Experience

Principals in the Torchbearer Schools were older than those in non-Torchbearer principals. For women principals in these schools, this may be partially due to their own career choices and tendency to move into administration later in life than do men (Shakeshaft, 1989, 1993). Perhaps related to age, the principals in the Non-Torchbearer Schools have much less experience than those in the Torchbearer Schools. The data

show that 72.3 percent of Non-Torchbearer principals have less than ten years of experience while only 13.4 percent of Torchbearer principals have this much experience. This finding indicates that experience matters in leading schools where poverty impacts student achievement. This finding is supported by other research.

Bista and Glasman (1998) determined there was a positive relationship between total years of principal experience and school improvement. It may also be that these principals have a better understanding of the curricular and accountability demands of the principalship. It may also be that because of experience, these principals may have greater insight into the management side of education, which may allow them to spend more time on the instructional aspects of schools. This finding bears further study and examination within state and local school systems. Further research may discover whether the age factor is related to factors that might impact student success. For example, age may influence leadership approaches or beliefs that impact student success. This finding also suggests that superintendents may need to examine their hiring practices and principal assignments, especially when they have schools that are rife with challenges. Since experience appears to matter, it may be important for superintendents, particularly those in Alabama, to establish collaborative opportunities to connect experienced high performing principals with less experienced principals. In this way, Torchbearer principals could serve in the roles of coaches, mentors, and role models for others. These principals, who appear to have a wealth of knowledge, may be able to provide insight for less experienced principals on creating an environment where students are successful. In addition, it

would seem important for superintendents and others who select principals to consider the issue of experience and age, previously noted, when selecting principals in schools with low student performance.

### **School Size**

School size was examined in this study. Overall, two-thirds of the principals in Torchbearer Schools reported school populations of less than 300 while 53.8% of the Non-Torchbearer principals reported that they were in schools with student populations of 300–500 and only 19.2% reported working in schools of less than 300. Furthermore, 5.3% of the Torchbearer Schools reported a population of over 500 and 15.4% of the Non-Torchbearer schools had a population greater than 500. In addition, two principals in Non-Torchbearer Schools reported that they were in schools that had student populations of 750 or more while one principal in the Torchbearer Schools reported a school population of 750 or more.

The findings support other research indicating that small schools can raise student achievement, especially for low income students (Bracey, 2001). There is a growing body of literature that indicates that children, especially those struggling academically, benefit from being in smaller schools, due primarily to the increased likelihood of having a close personal relationship with at least one administrator (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Advocates for small schools have argued that they can raise student achievement, especially for low income students simply because of their size. Bracey (2001) and Leithwood et al. (2004) contend that at the elementary level, the optimum size is 250–300 students. The data from this study support this finding.

This information could be useful to school districts when implementing school reform and considering how to foster student achievement in low-performing schools. If it is not possible to restructure schools to make them smaller, those involved may want to consider developing a schools within a schools program (Howley &

Bickel, 2000) or using a similar model to create a more personal environment for students.

### **Gender**

The movement of women into the ranks of administration in public education has gained momentum in recent years, especially during the last decade (Blackman & Fenwick, 2000; Boris-Schacter & Lager, 2006). This is true in the state of Alabama as well. In 2000, Kochan, Spencer, and Mathews reported the state average for the number of female principals in Alabama was 38%. The percent of female principals in the state presently is 49%. However, although presumably not related to differences in school success, the percent of women in these high poverty schools stands at 67%.

Sixty-one percent of Torchbearer principals and 72% of Non-Torchbearer principals were females. Shakeshaft (1989) discovered that men and women approach the job of educational administration differently and respond in ways that are dissimilar. Women tend to have a different leadership style and effectiveness may depend on this alternate approach and the types of schools to which they are assigned. Regan and Brooks (1995) identified five feminist attributes of leadership: collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision.

Research studies of characteristics of successful high poverty schools include high levels of collaboration, a supportive learning environment and effective school leadership. Previously reviewed studies confirm principal gender did predict student achievement (Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1993; Kochan, et al., 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007) and that female principals are able to work with their school communities to create successful schools (Lyman, Ashby, & Tripses, 2005; Smulyan, 2000; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Emerging from the literature is the fact that female principals tend to be successful in high poverty schools. Without further investigation, one cannot conclude that the large percent of women (72% in this study) in Non-Torchbearer Schools explains

the difference in student success between Torchbearer Schools and Non-Torchbearer schools. However, some research shows that women are often placed in schools with high poverty rates, as well as in schools which are difficult to operate (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). It appears that this may be occurring in the state of Alabama. Research should be conducted to investigate the placement of women in low performing schools. It may be that women can create more collaborative communities in schools which lead to success; thus placing them in such schools may make a difference in student success. In the past, women were seen as being selflessly nurturing, domestic, and more motherly in manner (Popiel, 2004), and this may impact the placement of female principals at particular schools. Further research should be conducted to examine this outcome more fully.

### **Conclusion**

#### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The results of this study suggest that principal experience, age, and school size vary in Torchbearer and Non-Torchbearer schools. These variations may impact achievement, especially in high poverty schools. There were a greater number of more experienced and older principals in Torchbearer Schools than in Non-Torchbearer Schools. A greater number of more experienced and older principals lead in smaller schools. Superintendents in the state of Alabama may need to review their current practices in regards to principal selection, particularly in settings that are challenging. They may also want to examine school size and develop plans for lowering size or creating patterns of practice that focus more clearly on student learning.

Also, mentoring opportunities for experienced and less experienced principals in high poverty schools may require greater attention from superintendents with regard to promoting student achievement. It is imperative that less experienced principals receive the necessary support that allows them to be effective. Furthermore, superintendents could consider the placement of new principals under the direction of these experienced principals. Even

though prior teaching experience was not investigated, studies that focus on the contributions of prior teaching experience and administrative practices may help principals to be successful in all schools.

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

This study identified demographic factors that may be related to student success in high poverty schools. The following suggestions may be helpful for future studies on the role of principals in creating school success and academic achievement in high poverty schools.

1. Examine principal selection/placement in high poverty schools and the impact on student achievement
2. Conduct an analysis which will provide the thick, contextual descriptions available from qualitative data collection processes such as case studies, observations or interviews to examine how principal experience and age may affect behaviors, beliefs, knowledge, and skills related to student learning
3. An investigation of the impact of race/ethnicity on student success in high poverty schools in the state of Alabama.

Continued research regarding principal leadership in high poverty schools is critically important to amass evidence that informs our understandings of effective principals in high poverty schools and how best to support them. Enhanced research efforts regarding internal practices, principal leadership styles, professional development and other factors that may enhance success should also be conducted so that all students will be given an opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

#### **References**

- Alabama Leadership Academy. (2006). *Alabama torchbearer schools: Lighting the way to student achievement*. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Education.
- Alabama Leadership Academy. (2009). *Alabama torchbearer schools: Lighting the way to*

- student achievement. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Education.
- Blackman, M. C., & Fenwick, L. T. (2000). The principalship: Looking for leaders in a time of change. *Education Week*, 19(29), 46–68.
- Boris-Schacter, S., & Lager, S. (2006). *Balanced leadership: How effective principals manage their work*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bista, M. B., & Glasman, N. S. (1998). Principals' approaches to leadership, their antecedents and student outcomes. *Journal of School Leadership*, 8(2), 109–136.
- Blankstein, A. (2004). *Failure is not an option: Six principles that guide student achievement in high performing schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bloom, C. M., & Erlandson, D. A. (2003). African American women principals in urban schools: Realities, (re)constructions, and resolutions. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 339–369.
- Bracey, W. (2001). Small schools, great strides. *Phi Delta Kappa International*, pp. 413–414.
- Carter, S. C. (2000). No excuses: Lessons from 21 high-performing high-poverty schools. Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation.
- Comer, J. (2001). Schools that develop children. *The American Prospect*, 12(7), 30–35.
- Duncan, G. J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1997). *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Eagly A. H., Karau, S. J., & Johnson, B. T. (1993). Gender and leadership style among school principals: A meta-analysis. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 28, 76–102.
- Fullan, M. (2002). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gieselmann, S. (2009). Principals and school factors that may impact elementary school student achievement. *The Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 22(2).
- Griffith, J. (2002). A multilevel analysis of the relation of school learning and social environments to minority achievement in public elementary schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 102(5), 349–367.
- Haberman, M. (2005). *Star teachers of children in poverty*. Indianapolis, IN: Kappa Delta Pi.
- Hale, E., & Moorman, H. (2003). *Preparing school principals: A national perspective on policy and program innovations*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.
- Howley, R., & Bickel, R. (2000). The influence of scale on school performance: A multi-level extension of the Matthew principle. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(22).
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kannapel, P. J., & Clements, S. K. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.
- Kochan, F., Spencer, W., & Mathews, J. (2000). Gender-based perceptions of the challenges, changes, and essential skills of the principalship. *Journal of School Leadership*, 10, 290–309.
- Leithwood, K., Seashore-Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). How leadership influences student learning: Learning from the leadership project. The Wallace Foundation.
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What do we know about successful school leadership*. Washington, DC: AERA Division A Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership.
- Lindahl, R. (2008). School climate differences between high-performing and low-performing schools that serve high-poverty populations. *NCPEA Education Leadership Review*, 10 (1).
- Lyman, L. L., Ashby, D. E., & Tripses, J. S. (2005). *Leaders who dare: Pushing the boundaries*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Lyman, L., & Villani, C. (2004). *Best leadership practices for high-poverty schools*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.
- Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformations and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39, 370–397.
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2003). *No dream denied: A pledge to America's children*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2002). *Standards for advanced*

- programs in educational leadership*. Arlington, VA: Author.
- National Staff Development Council (NSDC). (2000). *Learning to lead, learning to learn: Improving school quality through principal professional development*. Oxford, OH: Author.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Public Law 107-110. 115 STAT. 1425.
- Popiel, J. J. (2004). Making mothers: The advice genre and the domestic ideal, 1760-1830. *Journal of Family History*, 29(4), 339–350.
- Regan, H. B., & Brooks, G. H. (1995). *Out of women's experiences: Creating relational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press Inc.
- Schargel, F. P., Thacker, T., & Bell, J. (2007). *From at-risk to academic excellence: What successful leaders do*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1989). The gender gap in research in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 25(4), 324–337.
- Shakeshaft, C., Brown, G., Irby, B. J., Grogan, M., and Ballenger, J. (2007). Increasing gender equity in educational leadership. In S. S. Klein, B. Richardson, D. A. Grayson, L. H. Fox, C. Kramarae, D. S. Pollard, & C. A. Dwyer (Eds.), *Handbook for achieving gender equity through education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Simon, W. S. Jr., & Izumi, L. T. (2003). High poverty but high-performing schools offer proof that minority students from poor families can thrive. *Orange County Register*. Retrieved from [http://www.pacificresearch.org/press/opd/2003/opd\\_03-04-23li.html](http://www.pacificresearch.org/press/opd/2003/opd_03-04-23li.html)
- Smulyan, L. (2000). *Balancing acts: Women principals at work*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Williams, B. (Ed.) (2003). *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Ylimaki, R. (2007). Instructional leadership in challenging U.S. schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35, 11–19.
- Young, M. D., & Mcleod, S. (2001). Flukes, opportunities and planned interventions: Factors affecting women's decisions to enter educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(4), 430–462.

# Jazzing Up the Leadership Repertoire: Findings from Action Research

Barbara J. Mallory  
High Point University

Gwendolyn Martin  
Georgia Southern University

## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how distributed leadership worked within the framework of an elementary school. The project developed as a result of teacher inquiry about ways to use data to provide instruction to increase student achievement in mathematics. Results indicated that engaging in action research through distributed leadership practices changed teachers' assumptions about the use of data to drive instruction; teachers began to work more cohesively to meet the needs of all students; and teachers engaged in dialogue about instructional strategies and overall student achievement goals.*

## Introduction

Lambert (2002) observed that “the days of the lone instructional leader are over” (p. 37). Principals are not expected to be the sole school leader of a school, but rather they are now being described as a “leader of leaders” (Fullan, 2001; Gronn, 2009; Leithwood & Pristine, 2002). What this means is that, as the principal assumes the role of school leader, he/she is also assuming an approach to leadership practices within the school that promotes the capacity of others to lead. The principal in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools knows he/she cannot go it alone, so he or she must adopt a leadership style that will mobilize all to foster school success.

Many musical metaphors exist to describe the repertoire of leadership approaches. In a University of Washington study (2003), the researchers described principals determined to be “the leader” as “one-man bands;” those who attempted to lead by delegating responsibilities to others were described as being similar to the leader of a “jazz combo;” and those who believed in sharing leadership throughout the school were described as “orchestral leaders,” facilitating teams, but also encouraging soloists to perform. No doubt, the school leader today must have the capacity to jazz up the repertoire of leadership practices within the school, as the job is complex, demanding, and situational, with an interdependence of individual performances, as well as group “synergy.”

Some states, such as Georgia and North Carolina, have endorsed the model of distributed leadership as a way to administer schools, as evident in the state standards for university-based school leadership programs. While not evident in Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards in 2002, the 2011 ELCC standards include the expectation that leadership candidates will be involved in “developing school capacity for distributed leadership” as part of their building-level performances (Retrieved from <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zRZI73R0nOQ%3d&tabid=676>). Harris (2012) distinguishes the distributed leadership approach from others by describing what it is and what it is not. She cautions that distributed leadership can be misunderstood as being the same, or very similar to, shared leadership; however, distributed leadership needs to be viewed as a model of leadership practice, rather than a model of leadership. On her website, Harris explains the nuances of distributed leadership as an organizational condition, which is promoted rather than mandated, in which not everyone leads. She further notes that it is not delegation, is inclusive, and has many organizational configurations (Retrieved from [http://almaharris.co.uk/distributed\\_leadership.htm](http://almaharris.co.uk/distributed_leadership.htm)).

Harris (2011) defines this organizational configuration as “a process where distributed leadership is the by-product of shared activity, discussion or dialogue rather than the routine handing out of

tasks” in which “leadership that is shared amongst those members of the organization with the necessary expertise and capability to lead. Distributed leadership means drawing upon all the potential leadership capability and capacity within the organization in a planned and purposeful way” (p. 31).

This conceptualization of distributed leadership brings us back to the jazz metaphor. For example, just as jazz is the product of reacting with one’s feelings and thoughts by responding to the stimulus of one’s immediate environment, distributed leadership is the product of interactions of followers and leaders unique to one’s environment. Just as syncopation is characteristic of jazz, it also characterizes distributed leadership, as this type of leadership may occur in interactions where it would not normally occur, if the principal did not promote it.

This is why Spillane (2006) encourages principals to know the interdependencies within a school. Spillane (2006) explains that distributed leadership has followers in interaction with leaders and situations. The trick is to unpack the interdependencies that exist within a school so as to understand how leadership may be distributed, or in Harris’ (2011) perspective, how it may be promoted, as interdependence is characteristic of interactions among leaders.

For aspiring school leaders, the distributed leadership approach helps prevent the “lonely at the top” syndrome of leading a school. There is opportunity for mutual inquiry, critical dialogue, conversations about instructional practice, and partnerships for school renewal. Distributed leadership is not about the principal position or administrator role; rather it is about a convergence of needs and leadership to address them. It evolves, or emerges, within the needs of the school or district. Not everyone will be leading at the same time, perhaps making leadership fluid from situation to situation, but always interdependent on interactions within the school. In other words, just as jazz, distributed leadership depends on context, need, creativity, and capability. The challenge for

principals may be figuring out how leadership practice is distributed over leaders and followers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the paper is to describe an action research study examining how distributed leadership occurred in one school where the principal issued a call to action to improve scores on standardized tests in mathematics. The setting of the action research was Smiley Elementary School (pseudonym), where the principal clearly identified a problem with student performance in mathematics and counselor-teacher leadership emerged to address the problem by focusing on improving teacher ability to use data to modify instruction and enhance student learning. The focus of the action research was to examine how leadership was distributed in the interactions among and between counselor and teachers and principal in the school. The trifecta of formal leader (the principal), a problem (test scores in mathematics were low), and emergence of leadership based on needs (counselor and team of third grade teachers) generated a model of distributed leadership within the school.

### **Action Research Project**

Smiley Elementary (pseudonym) is an elementary school in the South that has typically performed “good enough” by measurements from standardized testing over the past decade. However, in 2011, the performance of third grade students in math dropped, much to the alarm of the third grade teachers. In 2011, Smiley Elementary School’s percent of third graders scoring at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in math dropped from 57% to 48% as measured by the TerraNova, which is a standardized norm-referenced achievement test developed by CTB/McGraw Hill that compares students’ scores to scores from a normed group. Department of Defense Schools (DoDEA) administers TerraNova to all students in grades 3-11, except those who have been approved for an alternate assessment. The subtest categories are reading, language arts, math, science and social studies. There was also a decrease (24% to 20%) in the number of third graders scoring in the top quartile (76–100) in math. The goal for the school is to have 70% of students at or above the 50<sup>th</sup>

percentile. The principal expected higher performance scores, as he highlighted the poor performance of third grade students on the 2011 standardized math test. The need for action was urgent, and teachers were eager to understand and address the decline in performance of their third grade students, which set the stage for instructional leadership emergence.

### **The Situation**

If principals think about how they promote distributed leadership, then they know that they can promote it by providing certain systems and structures that support the emergence of leadership practices. A call for action is not enough. The formal leader must provide systems and structures to encourage educators to step up and take ownership and leadership of problems of practice. At Smiley Elementary School certain structures and systems were in place to facilitate distributed leadership. For example, the principal believed in teacher capacity to solve problems as evidenced by his call to action and expressed belief in their ability to make “it” happen. Additionally, teachers had necessary resources, such as access to data and professional development in using data to improve instruction, and the faculty was organized in teams of teachers to solve problems of practice by grade level. With these structures in place, the principal’s role in this distributed leadership model was to present the problem and call for action, just as the principal of Smiley Elementary did. He believed teachers could be instructional leaders, and it became his role to become a follower of their plans to improve student performance in mathematics.

The leadership to solve the problem of low scores on the standardized mathematics test was not delegated or formally assigned, but in this school, leadership emerged when a counselor listened to a group of third grade teachers discussing the problem and volunteered to join them in an action research project to determine how to solve the problem. The principal did not have a formal role in the action research project over the next few months, but he actively inquired about the progress.

In this particular setting, the principal set expectations for student performance on standardized testing, and he encouraged teachers to make “it” happen. The counselor and team of teachers became the central players, taking on the leadership practices necessary to address the problem. The counselor’s leadership emerged because she had been trained in data analysis in her counselor education program, and she was compelled to become more involved in the instructional program of the school based on needs of students. As the counselor heard the third grade teachers’ conversation following the meeting where the principal had presented the problem and issued a call for action, she decided to invite the third grade team, which consisted of four veteran teachers, to participate in an action research project.

As the third grade team was excited to have a “formal “leader,” which is the way they viewed the counselor in this project, they first met to establish the background of the problem. At first, the four teachers shared previous experiences and beliefs about workshops on data driven instruction. The major theme that emerged from these conversations is that they had not transferred the learning from the workshops into their own professional practice. The consensus was that workshops typically focused on data collection, but not analysis. The counselor suggested they began their project with data analysis and how it informs instruction, and the teachers were eager to begin problem-solving of low test scores by studying their student data in depth.

### **Procedures and Data Collection**

The focus of the action research project grew out of teachers’ interest in ways to utilize data to drive instruction to increase student achievement. The project began with a description of the problem of low test scores in third grade mathematics. The counselor, as the informal leader of the team, performed some initial data analysis and shared findings of the problem with the third grade team during a third grade meeting at the beginning of the 2011 academic year. The findings consisted of individual (teacher) and collective (grade level)



areas of strengths and weaknesses related to student achievement on math skills as measured by the TerraNova.

Following a presentation of this data and the findings, the teachers were “hooked” and wanted to learn more about individual student performance. They decided to engage in a year-long project to improve third grade standardized test scores in mathematics. With a goal and a capable leader (the counselor), the team planned several meetings that focused on analyzing data. Together the team decided on three major queries while analyzing test data: what did students know, what were they expected to know, and what teachers could do to improve instruction in needs-improvement areas so that overall math scores would improve.

After the first four meetings, the team of four third grade teachers often met without the counselor. The counselor periodically met with the third grade team to analyze data and to discuss changes in instruction to address areas of concern. During the first semester of the 2011 academic year, the third grade team frequently met during their common planning time and during grade level collaboration meetings, keeping notes and minutes that they shared with the counselor and principal. Collaboration meetings were structured into the school schedule and afforded teachers the opportunity to meet as a team one a day a week for forty-five minutes. The collaborative meeting was in addition to the forty-five minutes that teachers received daily for planning, which resulted in a total of ninety minutes a day for collaboration and planning. This structure provided the opportunity teachers to share instructional strategies and have collaborative discussions designed to increase student achievement. The counselor provided written correspondence, commenting on data analysis strategies and instructional practices.

On occasion, the assistant principal attended collaborative meetings to provide support and encouragement. However, within this school instructional leadership for third grade student improvement was mostly dependent on inter-

actions of the counselor and the team of four third grade teachers. The counselor was completely immersed in the action research project, often asking questions and depending on the third grade teachers for insight and clarification on curriculum issues and other relevant issues. For example, on several occasions teachers were asked the extent to which their textbooks covered specific skills that students were expected to know on the test. Teachers were also asked to find supplemental materials to reinforce skills in areas where students displayed areas of weakness. The principal was not involved in the instructional leadership of this improvement initiative, but he observed that the counselor was leading this team of third grade teachers and expressed appreciation to her for her leadership. The counselor, who had little training in third grade mathematics, relied on the curriculum leadership from the four teachers, as they identified the instructional program based on formative and summative assessment.

The teachers were the curriculum leaders, using data to drive instruction. For instance, because all the teachers were veterans and most had taught third grade in the school for a number of years, they knew what skills were covered in text, what supplemental materials were available and whether or not additional supplemental materials were needed to teach various skills. Teachers were also aware of the various strategies used within the school/grade level to teach skills. The interdependencies involved the teachers and counselor playing off one another, with the practices of the counselor enabling the practice of the teachers, and the leadership practices of the teachers enabling the practice of the counselor.

Collaborative discussions provided the opportunity to share goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns and results. These discussions gave teachers a support system to improve the classroom practice individually and collectively. The counselor continued in a leadership role as data analysis leader and chief encourager. She provided this leadership by providing essential information, such as content of the standardized test, explanations of measurement used in the

standardized testing and how test content and measurement were related to what was being taught. For example, one teacher did not understand why her students were the only ones who did not perform well on a benchmark test. After the counselor did an analysis on the skills tested, she discussed the finding with the teacher and the team during a collaboration meeting. As it turns out, the other teachers were all using a particular strategy to teach the skill, but this teacher did not see the value in the strategy so she chose to use a different strategy. After some time to reflect, the teacher discussed this with the counselor and told her that she would use the same strategy that other teachers used over a two-week period and retest students to see if it made a difference. Two weeks later the teacher had to admit that students' performance showed significant improvement. The four teachers trusted the counselor as the informal leader of the team, as evidenced by their open discussions and freedom to admit pitfalls.

Another hallmark of distributed leadership is that it is fluid, based on needs and context. The team of teachers reciprocated in leadership practices, accepting responsibility for establishing goals to improve the current level of student math performance. They were instructional leaders with goals and set up structures and systems for student improvement. For example, each teacher agreed that their student's class goal would be to achieve an 80% class average on each topic/skill tests (known as end-of-chapter tests). After each topic tests class scores were averaged. The results were displayed in the hall. Classes became very competitive and each wanted their class average to be the highest.

In addition, an analysis of skills was completed individually by student, class and by grade level to show areas of strengths and weaknesses. The teachers were helping third grade students use data analysis, and eventually data use was a comfort zone. The teachers began to share with other grade level teachers and their data analysis provided valuable information regarding successful instructional strategies or the need for skill remediation. Their visioning generated the

capacity for them to work together to achieve the goals they set. The team continually reviewed and revised plans to reflect specific areas that should be targeted to improve student achievement. For example, if an individual teacher and/or the grade level performed lower than expected on a particular topic test, the teacher would reteach the skill for the class or small groups of students that did not meet expectations. Additionally, one teacher had an extra planning period one day per week built into her schedule. She offered to take students from each of the other classes during this period to provide skill remediation. The skill to be remediated was decided during grade level/collaboration meetings based on data analysis of topic tests.

By the end of the first academic semester, the third grade team of four teachers decided to develop a strategic plan. With their confidence level at an optimum, and with progress they were witnessing, they assumed the leadership role for the problem of low test scores. They wanted to be tactical and strategic. As Harris (2011) described in a distributed leadership model, interdependence and a need generates leadership, or ownership of a problem. These four teachers became leaders, as they saw the strength of planning and making instructional decisions together and the urgent need to improve mathematics scores. Smiley's third grade teacher team developed a strategic plan and set goals to increase student achievement. The plan consisted of an instructional calendar developed by the group of teachers to make sure that all skills would be addressed prior to the end-of-year standardized test.

The counselor's role as informal leader of the team shifted. In distributed leadership, leadership is fluid, based on need and situation. The counselor routinely checked on the strategic plan and followed student progress through observations and data analysis, but rarely did the counselor perform leadership functions once the strategic plan was in place, other than the leadership function of monitoring. This leadership practice of following the team's strategic plan became the counselor "norm." The leadership practice

exemplified here is defined in the interactions of the counselor, the teachers, the data, and student performance and behaviors. The data and records of student performance became a critical leadership tool used by the counselor in her meeting and observation routine and used by the team of teachers as they made curriculum decisions. The principal was not involved in the instructional leadership of third grade, as he observed the strategic plan implemented. It was not that he was *laissez faire*, or hands off, but he was confident of their work and became more of an encourager in his formal role as principal. He was free to tackle other problems and lead where other leadership had not emerged.

By the end of the academic year, by focusing on student learning and growth, the third grade team of teachers and counselor simultaneously improved math instruction in the third grade. This is evidenced by student performance and achievement on individual math topic tests, formative assessment of student work, and mid-year benchmark testing outcomes. Individual student assessments in third grade mathematics indicate that students are proficient in skills that have been taught.

### **Outcomes of Distributing Leadership**

Although this action research project portrays how a distributed leadership model worked in one school, the outcomes described by those involved in the action research project reveal the power of distributing leadership and how it sets the stage for school improvement. First of all, the four teacher participants of the study identified a sense of empowerment as the most satisfying outcome. This sense of empowerment came from the realization that they had led themselves to solve a problem of practice.

They never visualized themselves as leaders. When they first heard the principal's call to action, they were not confident to talk openly about the problem. However, when the counselor stepped in and assumed a leadership role, they initiated a dialogue that proved to be the impetus for the emergence of their own leadership. Distributed

leadership, as Spillane (2006) emphasized, is not mandated but it is a by-product of shared discussion and dialogue as Harris (2011) described. At first, the counselor assumed the major leadership role with the team, but as the four teachers considered new and better ways of analyzing standardized test data and benchmark assessments to inform instructional decision making, they developed a plan, set goals, and worked their own strategic plan. Their confidence and sense of empowerment grew.

Another outcome was explicit goal setting and operationalizing the concept of high expectations that the principal always talked about in faculty meetings. In previous years, they wanted students to achieve and they wanted to use data to drive instruction, but they had not implemented the practice of data analysis for instructional improvement. They had basically accepted the data provided by the principal and vowed to do better the next year. With the counselor stepping in and providing some examples and monitoring their use of data, they began to see how data informed them of individual student performance and how they could measure student improvement throughout the year. For example, each teacher agreed that the class goal for end-of-topic and benchmark tests would be for each student to score 80% or higher. They agreed that 80% mastery was a high expectation, and they challenged themselves to exceed the expectations of the testing administrator, who informed them that the grade level goal for mastery on TerraNova was 58% of third grade students scoring at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in mathematics. The goals were continuously restated and student mastery was reviewed during grade level collaboration meetings. These instructional practices are now embedded in the culture of the third grade team as a result of their instructional leadership focus.

Another outcome is that leadership roles were fluid throughout the year. The counselor, who began as the "informal leader" of the team, was much more hands-on and engaged in instructional leadership at the beginning of the year. She led the professional development of data analysis, encouraged critical

inquiry, and provided examples and encouragement for the third grade team. By mid-year, the counselor's role had shifted to that of monitoring, especially as the teachers assumed more of the leadership role by developing their strategic plan. However, the counselor, throughout the year, continued demonstrating the leadership practice of communication and encourager by sending email reminders of class goals, grade level goals and quick responses to inquiries made by teachers. The principal, interestingly, became less involved as more leadership was assumed by the third grade team. The conceptualization of distributed leadership implies that when leadership is distributed, the "formal" leader, or principal, becomes a follower, at the very least. In other words, in a school where leadership is being assumed around the needs of the school, a principal is always the active follower. In this case, the principal was less visible and active as a leader or follower, which did not interfere with the teachers' sense of empowerment. However, as Blasé and Blasé (2003) found, when principals and teachers work together in an environment based on trust and respect, school performance improves. If the principal seizes the opportunity to recognize and applaud the teacher leadership, such as exhibited in this action research project, then perhaps it will serve to encourage teacher empowerment.

Another outcome of distributing leadership was the high visibility of the third grade team. As a leadership practice, visibility is critical, and the team no longer dreaded parent meetings. The team became visible forces within the school community, and they enjoyed the positive visibility of teachers at work. Other teachers in the school frequently inquired about their data wall display, their collaborative planning meetings and other activities they were engaged in. The data wall was routinely updated following each topic test and the benchmark test. This visibility not only generated motivation for their leadership through the action research project, but professionally the teachers felt that they were important and worthy of the noble career paths they had sought.

Finally, throughout the action research project process, a team of teachers and a counselor were able to participate in leadership activities and decision making. The project involved a collaborative team of third grade teachers with a sense of urgency to improve student achievement. As a result of engaging in action research through a distributed leadership model:

- Teacher assumptions about the use of data changed. They began to embrace data as a useful indicator of the teaching and learning process instead of suffering from the typical DRIP syndrome – data rich/information poor.
- Teachers interacted around a situation and engaged in leadership practices to improve student achievement. They acted as curriculum leaders.
- Teachers began to focus more on results in assessing their own effectiveness. They asked often, "Are we making progress toward the goals that we have set?" an indicator of leadership practice.
- Teachers worked less in isolation and began to work more cohesively to meet the needs of all third grade students. Goals, work habits, and routines were more aligned.
- Over the course of the project, teachers' collaborative efforts were driven by data on student learning. This in turn, promoted higher expectations by the teachers for all students and cultivated a collective sense of efficacy among the teachers.
- Data analysis and instructional strategies became ongoing topics in weekly grade level collaboration meetings. They were instructional leaders engaged in conversations about leading learning.

### **Next Steps**

Although this research project revealed many aspects of distributed leadership in this setting, there are new queries about distributed leadership that require additional study. It is still unclear exactly what the role of the principal, or the

positional leader, in a model of leadership that is fluid and based on needs should be. Research into how and when the principal becomes a follower would be of value. An interview with the principal and principals in other schools in Georgia and North Carolina where distributed leadership is encouraged may provide insights into changes in the principal's role when a distributed leadership model is implemented.

Additional research issues related to this particular project include examining how this team's project may have influenced others in the school. For example, it would be valuable to determine if the teachers in the school became more empowered after seeing what happened with this team. In a follow-up interview, the counselor indicated that she felt that by becoming a leader in this situation, she was implementing the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, which requires school counselors to focus on improving student achievement. A study on that aspect of the counselor's leadership in teaching and learning and how it might impact counselors in other schools or settings may be helpful as well.

### Summary

A distributed approach to school leadership is a human enterprise, but it is not just sharing leadership responsibility among a few in a school. It is not just matching a certain leader with a certain leadership activity. A distributed approach, as examined in how leadership practice was defined in the interactions among the counselor and teachers at Smiley Elementary, expects reciprocity in followership and leadership in a given situation. The principal of a school may want to identify structures, policies, and procedures that promote the kind of leadership that emerges in a school to solve a problem of practice. If the distributed leadership approach becomes part of the school culture, then the principal may be described as a "leader among leaders." In the case of the action research project, the principal did not force, mandate, or compel the group to lead their way through the problem, but true to the distributed leadership approach, leadership thrived because it was based on a need and not preoccupied by

formal line of authority. Principals that jazz up the repertoire of leadership through the distributed leadership approach help advance the art and science of leadership.

### References

- Blasé, J. R., & Blasé, J. (2003). *Breaking the silence: Overcoming the problem of principal mistreatment of teachers*. California: Corwin Press.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gronn, P. (2009). Hybrid leadership. In K. Leithwood, B. Mascall & T. Strauss (Eds.), *Distributed leadership according to the evidence* (pp. 17–40). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hamilton, L., Halverson, R., Jackson, S., Mandinach, E., Supovitz, J., & Wayman, J. (2009). *Using student achievement data to support instructional decision-making* (NCEE 2009-4067). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Harris, A. (2011). Q&A. *Education Northwest Magazine*, 17(1), 31–33. Retrieved from: [http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/1219](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/1219)
- Lambert, L. (2002). A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8).
- Leithwood, K., & Prestine, N. (2002). Unpacking the challenges of leadership at the school and district level. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *Challenges of school leadership* (NSSE Yearbook). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Leonard, P., & Leonard, L. (2001). The collaborative prescription: Remedy or reverie. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 4, 383–399.
- Lewis, D., Madison-Harris R., Muoneke, A., & Times, C. Using data to guide instruction and improve student learning. *SEDL Letter*, 22(2).
- Louis, K., & Wahlstrom, K. (2011). Principals as cultural leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (5), 52–56.
- Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Portin, B., Schneider, P., DeArmond, M., & Gundlach, L. (2003). *Making sense of leading schools: A study of the school principalship* (pp. 25–30). Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center on Reinventing Public Education.

Wayman, J. (2005) Involving teachers in data-driven decision-making: Using computer data

systems to support teacher inquiry and reflection. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 10(3), 295–308.

Wayman, J., Cho, V., & Johnston, M. (2007). *The data-informed district: A district-wide evaluation of data use in the Natrona County School District*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas.

---

---

*2014 SRCEA Yearbook*  
**Call for Manuscripts**

---

---

The *SRCEA Yearbook* is the official yearbook of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration. The *Yearbook* is nationally refereed and the journal is published in the fall of each year.

**FOCUS:** Manuscripts should be original works neither previously published nor consequently submitted for publication in other journals. Manuscripts should be written clearly and concisely for a diverse audience, especially educational leadership and management professionals in PK–12 and higher education. **Topics should reflect the theme of the 2013 conference, “Building Tomorrow Together.”** Priority in the selection of manuscripts will be given to authors whose papers were accepted and presented at the 2013 conference.

**FORMAT:** Manuscripts should follow the guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Generally, manuscripts should not exceed 30 typed, double-spaced, consecutively numbered pages, including all cited references. **In some cases, longer manuscripts may be accepted.** Submitted manuscripts which do not follow the APA referencing format will not be reviewed. Illustrative materials, including charts, table, figures, etc., should be clearly labeled with a minimum of 1½” margins.

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:** An electronic copy of the manuscript must be submitted to the editor; hard copies of the document will not be accepted for review. Manuscripts should include a cover page with the following information: author’s full name, institutional or professional affiliation, email address, mailing address, telephone number, full name of co-authors with their institution or professional affiliation and email addresses, and the full manuscript title. Also note on the title page if the paper was presented at the 2013 SRCEA Annual Conference. Do not include any identifying information on the text pages. All appropriate manuscripts will be submitted to a blind review. **Manuscripts must be submitted by Friday, December 6, 2013.** If accepted, authors will be notified of publication. There is no publication fee.

Dr. Ronald Childress, Editor  
*SRCEA Yearbook*  
College of Education and Professional Development  
Marshall University, South Charleston Campus--Rm 242  
100 Angus E. Peyton Dr.  
South Charleston, WV 25303-1600  
(304) 746-1904 (tel)  
(304) 746-2074 (FAX)  
Submit Manuscripts to: [rchildress@marshall.edu](mailto:rchildress@marshall.edu)

# The “Do Something Syndrome”: Planning for School Improvement in a Turbulent Political Environment

Edward L. Bouie, Jr.

*Mercer University*

## Abstract

*The current political discourse focused on education is dominated by two themes – crisis discourse and Utopian expectations – both operationalized through the implementation of public policy that frame public schools from a perspective of institutional failure, resulting in a sense of urgency for confronting issues of school improvement. The focus of improvement strategies emanating from the political discourse is based on a market-based approach underpinned by a philosophy of neoliberalism. Today’s educational leaders, caught in the middle of these debates, often adopt and implement strategies to improve student achievement and school effectiveness that are framed by the current social and political debates as opposed to critical consideration of the knowledge base produced by the latest educational research that provides empirical and theoretical guidance for effective educational practices. The urgency to “do something” often results in a hodgepodge of programs and initiatives either hastily developed, purchased, or adopted absent utilization of a logical planning model to causally link the identified problems with the initiatives undertaken to solve them, thus leading to solutions that are unrelated to the problems they are purported to solve. Though problems go unresolved, educational leaders have demonstrated to their constituents that they are “doing something.”*

The fierce partisanship that characterizes the political process in the United States today influences almost every element in our society. The ideological battleground upon which these social, cultural, and political wars are waged seem to have a new focal point every few weeks, with many of the most hotly contested issues continuing to remain at the forefront regardless of the new “flavor of the month” (Best, 2006). There is no area that is more subjected to political rhetoric, cultural debate, and proposed reform than public education (Schmidt & Thomas, 2009). Using the current political discourse and subsequent policy decisions as a backdrop, I will argue that within the current turbulent political environment surrounding public education, educational leaders are continually influenced by the constant criticism of the public school system and prevailing beliefs that improving “failing” schools can be accomplished within an unreasonable timeframe by incorporating solutions that are framed by a neoliberalism perspective. The rush to adopt these perspectives, despite the absence of evidence that they will lead to school improvement results in what I call the “do something syndrome”, I define this as an irrational rush to demonstrate action to constitu-

ents through the implementation of a hodgepodge of programs and initiatives either hastily conceived, purchased, or adopted absent the utilization of a logical planning approach to causally link the identified problems with the initiatives undertaken to solve them. The outcome is the adoption of solutions that are unrelated to the problems they are purported to solve. Further, I will attempt to develop a process of logical planning derived from a causal perspective that links planning, problem solving, research, and evaluation as a more effective alternative for adopting and implementing initiatives that are directly linked to the problems faced by today’s educational leader.

## Background

Today’s educational leaders are caught in the middle of these debates and, unfortunately, the strategies adopted to improve student achievement and school effectiveness are often framed by the current social and political debates as opposed to critical consideration of the knowledge base produced by the latest educational research that provides empirical and theoretical guidance for effective educational practices (Kumashiro, 2008). Further, because these debates are grounded in



ideological beliefs, they are often divorced from science and the logical thinking process that characterize good scientific research. Canguilhem (1988) defines ideology as

an epistemological concept with a polemical function, applied to systems of representation that express themselves in the language of politics, ethics, religion, and metaphysics. These languages claim to express things as they are, whereas in reality they are means of protecting and defending a situation, that is, a particular structure of the relations between men and things. (p. 29)

Chris Mooney (2011), in an article entitled *We Can't Handle the Truth: The Science of Why People Don't Believe Science*, quoted former Stanford psychologist Leon Festinger (1956) who wrote:

A man with conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree with him and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point. (p. 40)

Festinger's quote can be used to describe many of the staunch advocates of political strategies that are promoted as cures for what many believe to be a failing educational system. Some of the most popular reforms include, charter schools, school vouchers, value-added teacher evaluation, merit pay, and the latest, a common core curriculum. Each of these strategies has been subjected to critical empirical research in an effort to determine if, in fact, they are viable strategies for improving schools and student achievement. There is a plethora of research that presents mixed evidence on the effectiveness of each strategy, including charter schools (CREDO, 2009; Woodworth et al., 2009; Zimmer et al., 2009), school vouchers (Campbell et al., 2005; Greene et al., 1998; Greene, 2004; Howell et al., 2006; Rouse, 1998; Warren, 2008; Witt, 2000; Wolf et al., 2009), value-added teacher evaluation (Baker et al., 2010; Rothstein et al., 2008; Schochet & Hanley, 2010), merit pay (Fryer, 2011; Springer et al., 2010), and the common core curriculum (Loveless, 2012). The

evidence, however, seems to have no effect, as Festinger described, on the advocates.

Festinger (1957) is perhaps best known for the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, which suggests that when people are induced to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their beliefs, an uncomfortable psychological tension is aroused. This tension will actually lead people to change their beliefs to fit their actual behavior. Building on Festinger's research, recent advances in psychology and neuroscience presents new perspectives on how preexisting beliefs, regardless of evidence to the contrary, can alter our thoughts and reframe our most objective and logical conclusions. The concept of "motivated reasoning" (Kunda, 1990) posits that logical reasoning is influenced by emotion, so much so that the two are almost inseparable. Mooney (2011) reports that not only are the two inseparable, but our affective view of people, things, and ideas arise much more rapidly than our conscious thoughts. As a result, reasoning actually can occur at a slower pace, so conclusions are often more connected to emotions than reasoning. In other words, "rather than search rationally for information that either confirms or disconfirms a particular belief, people actually seek out information that confirms what they already believe" (Begley, 2009). Begley's comment accurately describes the process followed by many of today's most outspoken politicians who consistently criticize public education, promote solutions rooted in political ideology, and seek evidence to support those beliefs.

Schmidt and Thomas (2009) describe the current political discourse directed at public schools as characterized by crisis discourse and utopian expectations: the use of political rhetoric, framed by ideology, which describe public schools as inadequate, in a state of crisis, and in need of radical immediate improvement. The political establishment has used two primary tools to ingrain these crisis beliefs into the psyche of the American public. Beginning with the Reagan administration and continuing with the Obama administration, the nation has been subjected to public speeches bemoaning the poor quality of

public education and its negative impact on the nation’s economic growth, global competition, and international influence. These patterns of speech are coupled with educational policy that began with 1983s “A Nation at Risk,” accelerated through Goals 2000, and codified without much critical concern as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under George W. Bush and Secretary of Education Paige (Schmidt & Thomas, 2009). This pattern is continuing with the Obama administration’s *Race to the Top*.

The underlying ideology of neoliberalism drives the language of these speeches and the subsequent policies. The dynamic established through crisis discourse about the public education system, combined with Utopian expectations for schools, helps mask the neoliberal assumptions embedded in what Freire (1998) calls “the bureaucratizing of the mind”: “The freedom that moves us, that makes us take risks, is being subjugated to a process of standardization of formulas, models against which we are evaluated” (p. 111).

### **The Political Context of School Reform**

In a previous paper (Bouie, 2012), I argued that school leaders, who are under immense pressure to raise standardized test scores, particularly for poor and minority children, attempt to do so by applying politically sanctioned solutions to educational problems without subjecting them to critical scrutiny within the context in which they are applied. Further, these “solutions” often conflict with well-established theoretical paradigms governing professional knowledge in the areas of organizational behavior and child development. The politics surrounding school reform, due to strong ideological beliefs, tend to dismiss evidence that does not support the tenets of the ideology to which advocates adhere.

The dominant philosophy undergirding the political discourse directed at public education is neoliberalism. According to Giroux (2002), “neoliberalism is characterized by a political discourse wherein — individual and social agency is defined largely through market-driven notions of individualism, competition, and consumption” (p.

426). As such, education is conceptualized through a human capital framework that defines the primary goal of education as economic growth. Becker (1994) posits that economic growth depends on the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of the workforce, and therefore investments in education will improve human capital leading to economic growth. Human capital economics values knowledge or curriculum according to how it meets the needs of the economic system undergirded by a vision of education as a business preparing workers for business. The main points of neoliberalism, as defined by Martinez and Garcia (2012), are:

1. **The Rule of the Market.** Liberating “free” enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes. Greater openness to international trade and investment. Reduce wages by de-unionizing workers and eliminating workers’ rights. Elimination of price controls. Overall, total freedom of movement for capital, goods and services, coupled with a strategy to convince the citizenry that such an approach is good for economic growth by promoting the belief that an unregulated market is the best way to increase economic growth, which will ultimately benefit everyone.
2. **Cutting Public Expenditure for Social Services** like education and health care. Reducing the safety net for the poor, and even maintenance of roads, bridges, and water supply — again in the name of reducing government’s role. Of course, government subsidies and tax benefits for business are not opposed.
3. **Deregulation.** Reduce government regulation of everything that could diminish profits including protecting the environment and safety on the job.
4. **Privatization.** Sell state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors. This includes banks, key industries, railroads, toll highways, electricity, schools, hospitals and even fresh water.

5. **Eliminating the Concept of “The Public Good” or “Community”** and replacing it with “individual responsibility.” Pressuring the poorest people in a society to find solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security all by themselves — then blaming them for failure (<http://corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376>, August 26, 2012).

The connection between these propositions and educational improvement strategies such as charter schools, school vouchers, value-added teacher evaluation, and teacher merit pay is clear. Each of these strategies is directly connected to the view of education as a business operating in a free-market economy. This perspective has its roots in the work of Friedman (1955), who believed that major school reform could only be accomplished by privatizing a major segment of the educational system — i.e., by enabling a private, for-profit industry to develop that will provide a wide variety of learning opportunities and offer effective competition to public schools. This view was extended with the work of Chubb and Moe (1990) and continues today through a variety of advocates, including Chester Finn, Frederick Hess, Eli Broad, Louis Gerstner, and Arne Duncan (English, 2010).

The constant negative barrage of political discourse directed at public education creates a turbulent environment for today’s educational leader. Stephen Gross in his books *Staying Centered: Curriculum Leadership in a Turbulent Era* (1998) and *Promises Kept: Sustaining School and District Leadership in Turbulent Times* (2004) developed a framework for identifying turbulent conditions in schools. Gross’ framework, developed after studying several schools that had experienced turbulence and volatile conditions after a number of years developing curriculum, instructional, and assessment innovations, revealed that the degree of turbulence experienced at the schools and districts studied could be divided into four levels (2008):

*Light turbulence* includes ongoing issues with the normal functioning of the school. Examples of this include dealing with a disjointed

community or geographic isolation of the school. *Moderate turbulence* is related to specific issues that are highly recognized as important and needing to be solved. The loss of an important support structure or rapid growth of the student body are examples of moderate turbulence. *Severe turbulence* is found in cases where the whole enterprise seems threatened. *Extreme turbulence* would mean serious danger of the destruction of the institution. (pp. 8–9)

The constant barrage of criticism facing public education and the calls for market-driven reforms such as those suggested by Friedman, Chubb and Moe, and other neoliberal advocates results in an environment of *severe turbulence* according to Gross’s typology. Within this turbulent environment, crisis discourse coupled with Utopian expectations facilitate the frames for viewing educational problems through a political ideological lens, thus leading to problem solutions that are more prone to promote a political and social agenda than to improve the achievement level of public school students.

### “Do Something” Problem-Solving

Cuban (2001) states,

To solve problems, an individual or group must take some initiative – even risk – by first identifying the problem, framing it, generating solutions, deciding on a solution, and taking action that alters what routinely occurs in order to solve the problem. (p. 5)

Further, according to Cuban, framing and solving problems is subjective and involves power and conflict. As explained previously, both the framing of educational problems as well as the solutions generated to solve those problems are determined through the political process and promoted through a neoliberal political discourse, thus effectively limiting rational planning and critical reflection from the control or influence of educational leaders.

Educational leaders continuously feel the political pressure to “do something” to improve the

performance of the schools and districts for which they are accountable. Because the problems have been effectively framed through the political discourse, solutions tend to be defined from a broad organizational and structural perspective that is focused on business processes of effectiveness and efficiency as well as reforms directly related to school organization and governance (i.e., charter schools) absent the social, cultural, and economic contexts within which the education of children occurs. Solutions to low school performance such as charter schools, vouchers, value-added teacher evaluation, and merit pay do not consider the barriers to learning with which poor children are continuously faced. In fact, these strategies are directly derived from structural changes rather than individual learning needs. Slogans often embedded in educational rhetoric, such as “each child should learn according to his/her potential,” or “all children will learn,” or “no child left behind,” suggests a focus on the individual needs of children. However, when a standardized curriculum is offered (i.e. common core standards), prescribed standardized teaching strategies (i.e. comprehensive school reform models) and standardized testing, the focus is on group needs on a normal curve. That is to say, the individual child is ranked according to group and national norms, and the focus on individual learning is lost due to a focus on the group. In this model, every child could never learn to the level of the average or above. If that happened, the curve would be re-normalized.

If, as a society, we genuinely desire to plan from the perspective of individual needs, then we must begin with a causal model as to why each child is not learning, and, having determined the causes, develop programs of functional activities that would counteract the causes effectively and efficiently. If, as a society, we desire to plan from the perspective of social norms, then we are already doing an adequate job through centralized planning based on proposed structural changes. In this case, the pattern of the planning focused on structure will be based on the pattern of the social structure. If the society is dominated by some group(s), then the planning process will reflect

such group or groups’ norms. If the social structure is based on diversity and valuation of diversity, then planning will attempt to serve the needs of diverse groups. Planning techniques will vary according to social structural forces and knowledge about the appropriate planning techniques to match the social objectives.

By contrast to a focus on structural and organizational planning, Rothstein (2004) in his book *Class and Schools* views learning disparities between different groups of children from a much broader perspective. He analyzes how social class shapes learning and reflects upon the differences in learning styles and readiness across students as they initially enter school. Further, he discusses the influence of income, health, safety and other gaps affecting students as they proceed through school. These gaps are also connected to the income gaps faced by adults, as students look to the significant adults in their lives for evidence that education provides a payoff and often find a lack of evidence to support the value of education. Consequently, according to Rothstein, addressing the achievement gap requires no less than a significant transformation of social and labor policy along with extensive school reform. These issues are certainly not addressed through the ideological and political solutions that are in vogue among the advocates of market-based approaches to educational reform. They either fail to understand that the wider social and economic context has a significant impact on student learning or they simply ignore the evidence since it is incongruent with their ideological beliefs.

Effective planning by school leaders must consider the wider context within which education occurs. When school leaders accept the foundation of school reform advocated by neoliberal neocons and attempt to implement solutions to educational problems based on this foundation, it most often results in programs and strategies that are disconnected from the problems they purport to solve, or, as defined previously, the “do something syndrome.” Ultimately, the problems continue and the blame for failure is placed squarely on those charged with developing and implementing solutions despite the fact that the solutions and

their philosophical foundations were framed and advocated by the very people who blame them for failure.

### **Utilizing a Causal Approach to Planning: Avoiding the “Do Something Syndrome”**

Planning occurs in a context in which there is: (a) some dissatisfaction or anticipation of dissatisfaction with objectives/outcomes or, enabling program activities or both, (b) some need for changing the future for the better, and (c) some underlying causes that are contributing to dissatisfaction and/or the projection of future events that are undesirable (Kaufman, 1986). Planning is nearly always conducted to resolve a problem, and/or prevent a problem now or in the future and therefore must contain a technique or strategy for addressing (a), (b), and (c). In order to address each of these issues, it is necessary to consider the underlying principles that must be incorporated in an effective planning process.

First, planning occurs within a social context and effective planning cannot be divorced from the context in which the problems are occurring (Kaufman, 1986). Therefore, the nature of the context determines the validity of goals and their value to organizational participants whose work should be focused on the development and implementation of program activities for goal attainment. Since the context determines the validity of the goals, the purpose of the plan it would appear is to alter the context (both in terms of causes and outcomes). The plan represents the enabling program activities to alter the context.

Second, formal organizations, including schools and school systems, are goal oriented, and perform functions necessary to achieve identified goals. In order for organizations to determine whether or not the goals were achieved, they must assess the extent to which the organization has progressed toward achieving identified goals. Three conditions arise for the non-attainment of organizational goals. Either (1) the goals were not achieved because they were developed and chosen without adequately understanding the internal and external contextual barriers that might impede achievement,

(2) the causes of the problems were either not determined or determined incorrectly, and therefore, the selection of solution(s) did not counteract or influence the causes (or alter the context), or (3) both. Hence, it may be necessary to alter the goals for them to be realistically achieved by the organization given its contextual internal and external conditions, and the chosen solutions would have to be altered so that a causal relationship exists between the causes of the problems and the solutions identified to impact them.

Third, an organization determines valid and valued operational functional activities to achieve identified goals effectively and efficiently with given resources and within a specified time frame. Logically, this should be accomplished through the implementation of a needs assessment process. Kaufman and English (1979) defined organizational needs as a gap in results. They argue that actual needs can only be identified independent of the premature selection of solutions (wherein processes are defined as means to an end, not an end unto themselves). To conduct a quality needs assessment, current results should first be determined followed by the identification and statement of desired results. The distance between current and desired results is the actual need. Once a need is identified, then a solution can be selected that is targeted to closing the gap (Kaufman & English). The importance of an identified need must be understood both from the perspectives of expected and actual performance as well as the contextual (both internal and external) cause(s) of the need in order to logically select a functional activity with respect to its capacity to counteract the cause of a problem. Since, goals are set, achieved or not achieved in a given context, understanding both the causes for identified needs as well as the causes for non-attainment of goals cannot be ignored in needs assessment.

Finally, the role of research in the planning process must be discussed as an essential component. Research is the fundamental scientific method for mapping a context into dependent (failed outcomes/goals) and independent (causal factors)

variables so that the independent or causal variables that explain the failed outcomes/goals are determined in a valid and reliable manner (Creswell, 2008). No other determinants such as needs assessment or evaluation, despite their importance to the planning process, can be an adequate substitute.

There are two areas of research that must be considered when mapping a context into dependent and independent variables in order to establish a valid causal relationship between identified problems and solutions. First, the theoretical literature related to the organizational problems under consideration should be consulted. According to Creswell (2008),

a theory is an interrelated set of constructs (or variables) formed into propositions, or hypotheses, that specify the relationship among variables (typically in terms of magnitude or direction) ... and it helps to explain (or predict) phenomena that occur in the world. (p. 51)

In other words, why would an independent variable, X, influence or affect a dependent variable, Y? The theory would provide the explanation for this expectation or prediction. Valid accepted theories that have some degree of verification through empirical observations and analysis can provide validity to chosen approaches to solve organizational problems.

Second, the empirical research that has used proposed theory as a means to frame empirical testing of problem-solving strategies derived from theory offer evidence as to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the strategies chosen for empirical inquiry. Again, this provides validity for strategies chosen for implementations as problem-solving measures.

Once planning is completed and put into implementation, measurement, testing and evaluation are the means for determining effectiveness and efficiency. Evaluation utilizes measurement, testing and assessment as tools on which judgment has to be made about

effectiveness and efficiency. When evaluation determines a plan as ineffective, it might raise the issue of causes, and, hence, the need for research. Research is the valid and reliable means of determining the independent or causal factors for failure on the dependent or outcome variables.

Based on the four underlying principles of the planning process described above, effective school reform and improvement must be based on a logical planning process in order to ensure an alignment between identified problems and chosen solutions. A causal planning process will conceptualize planning as a means technique for making effective and efficient choices about the causes for lack of goal achievement, selection of goals that are both valid and valued within the planning context, functional program activities to counteract the causes that impede goal achievement, and identification of necessary resources. Further, a monitoring and evaluation process must be developed to evaluate both the fidelity of implementation of adopted strategies and the extent to which goals are achieved. In order for this process to be successfully implemented, each of the following steps must be included:

1. Assessing failed performance of goals or desired outcomes;
2. Identifying the causes for failure of goals or desired outcomes (consult theoretical literature to establish a causal explanation for the failure of goals);
3. Prioritizing goals, insuring that those chosen are valid within the organization's internal and external contexts and valued by the organizational participants and primary stakeholders;
4. Prioritizing functional activities and corresponding resources (consult empirical literature on the identified problems and underlying causes);
5. Choosing functional activities that are both cost-effective and capable of achieving the objectives by counteracting the identified causes (thus altering the context);
6. Implementing and monitoring functional activities in a specified time frame;

7. Setting criterion/standard or criteria/standards for effectiveness and efficiency;
8. Specifying directions for growth and development.

These planning steps provide a logical planning process for avoiding the “do something syndrome” that can lead to the development and identification of effective solutions to problems that are causally related. Logical planning from this standpoint involves identifying and framing problems appropriately by identifying the causes, considering both the internal and external contexts that reinforce these causes and, thus, have the potential for impeding the problem-solving process, and designing and implementing solutions that directly impact the causes, thus altering the context. This process represents a departure from the current process that advocates solutions to educational problems that are steeped in political ideology and therefore are not causally related to the real causes that impede student achievement of poor and minority children.

### Conclusions

The current political environment in which the process of education is carried out is focused on the implementation of strategies for school reform that neglect the impact of the consequences of schools’ external environment and replacing well-developed professional knowledge and commitment with inappropriate models from ‘for-profit’ business underpinned by a neoliberal philosophy. This results in replacing critical thinking from school leaders who are charged with developing and implementing appropriate strategies for school improvement with politically sanctioned strategies that are steeped in political ideology. Absent the critical thinking and analysis that is necessary to solve seemingly intractable educational problems, school leaders often rush to implement solutions that are compatible with the current political discourse. Since these politically sanctioned solutions are often divorced from current reality as well as the plethora of research on school reform and improvement, solutions are most often not causally related to the problems they purport to solve. The solution to reversing

this detrimental course of action is to adopt a planning process that involves logically defining the causes of educational problems and counteracting those problems with solutions that have a causal relationship with them within the social, economic, and cultural context that such problems occur. Absent the implementation of a logical approach to educational problem-solving that allows for flexibility in determining solutions based on both the internal and external contexts within which schools operate, we are likely to continue along the present path that results in, at best, limited success, and at worst, abject failure. The children who attend our schools deserve more.

### References

- Baker, E., Barton, P., Darling-Hammond, L., Haertel, E., Ladd, H., Ravich, D., Rothstein, R., Shavelson, R., & Shepard, L. (2010). Problems with the use of test scores to evaluate teachers. Economic Policy Institute: Washington D.C.
- Becker, G. (1994). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Begley, S. (2009, August 25). Lies of mass destruction. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2009/08/24/lies-of-mass-destruction.html>
- Best, J. (2006). Flavor of the month: Why smart people fall for fads. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bouie, E. (2012). The impact of bureaucratic structure, scientific management, and institutionalism on standards-based educational reform. *Mercer Journal of Educational Leadership*, 1(1), 1–21.
- Campbell, D. E., West, M. R., & Peterson, P. E. (2005). Participation in a national means-tested voucher program. *Journal of Public Analysis and Management*, (24), 523–541.
- Canguilhem, G. (1988). *Ideology and rationality in the history of the life sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chubb J., & Moe, T. (1990). Politics, markets, and America’s schools. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- CREDO. (2009). *Multiple choice: Charter school performance in 16 states*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

- Creswell, J. (2008). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cuban, L. (2001). *How can I fix it? Finding solutions and managing dilemmas*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- English, F. (2010). The ten most wanted enemies of American public education’s school leadership. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 5(3), 1–16.
- Festinger, L., Riecken, H., & Schachter, L. (1956). *When prophecy fails: A social and psychological study of a modern group that predicted the destruction of the world*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. Reissued 2008 by Pinter & Martin.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Trans. P. Clarke. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Friedman, M. (1955). The role of government in education. In Robert A. Solo (Ed.), *Economics and the public interest*. New Jersey: The Trustees of Rutgers College.
- Fryer, R. (2011). Teacher incentives and student achievement: Evidence from New York City public schools. NBER Working Paper No. 16850
- Giroux, H. (2002). Neoliberalism, corporate culture, and the promise of higher education: The university as a democratic public sphere. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4), 425–463.
- Greene, J. P., Peterson, P. E., & Du, J. (1998). School choices in Milwaukee: A randomized experiment. In P. E. Peterson & B. Hassel (Eds.), *Learning from school choice*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Greene, J. P. (2004). *Graduation rates for choice and public school students in Milwaukee*. Milwaukee, WI: School Choice Wisconsin.
- Gross, S. (2004). *Promises kept: Sustaining innovative curriculum leadership*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Gross, S. (1998). *Staying centered: Curriculum leadership in a turbulent era*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Howell, W. G., Peterson, P. E., Wolf, P. J., & Campbell, D. E. (2006). *The education gap and urban schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Kaufman, R. (1986). A holistic planning model. A system approach for improving organizational effectiveness and impact. *Performance and Instruction Journal*, 8(22), 3–12.
- Kaufman, R., & English, F. W. (1979). *Needs assessment: Concept and application*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 480–498.
- Kumashiro, K. (2008). *The seduction of common sense: How the right has framed the debate on public education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Loveless, T. *How well are American students learning?* 2012 Brown Center Report on American Education. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Martinez, E., & Garcia, A. (2012). What is neoliberalism? Retrieved on August 26, 2012 from <http://corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376>
- Mooney, C. (2011). We can’t handle the truth: The science of why people don’t believe science. *Mother Jones*, 1(63), 40–45.
- Rouse, C. (1998). Private school vouchers and student achievement: An evaluation of the Milwaukee parental choice program. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 113, 553–602.
- Rothstein, R., Jacobsen, R., & Wilder, T. (2008). *Grading education: Getting accountability right*. Washington, DC and New York: Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press.
- Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Schmidt, R., & Thomas, P. L. (2009). *21st century literacy: If we are scripted, are we literate?* Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.
- Schochet, P. Z., & Chiang, H. S. (2010). *Error rates in measuring teacher and school performance based on student test score gains* (NCEE 2010-4004). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance,



- Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20104004/pdf/20104004.pdf>
- Springer, M., Ballou, D., Hamilton, L., Vi-Nhuan, L., Lockwood, J., McCaffrey, D., Pepper, M., & Stecher, B. (2010). Teacher pay for performance: Experimental evidence from the project on incentives in teaching. National Center on Performance incentives. Retrieved on July 26, 2012 from <http://www.hechingerreport.org/static/pointstudy.pdf>
- Shapiro, J., & Gross, S. (2008). *Ethical leadership in turbulent times: (Re)Solving moral dilemmas*. New York: Routledge.
- Warren, J. R. (2008). *Graduation rates for choice and public school students in Milwaukee*. Milwaukee, WI: School Choice Wisconsin.
- Witte, J. (2000). *The market approach to education: An analysis of America's first voucher program*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Witte, J., Wolf, P. J., Cowen, J. M., Fleming, D. J., & Lucas-McLean, J. (2009). *The MPCP longitudinal educational growth study second year report*. SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation Report #10. School Choice Demonstration Project. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas.
- Wolf, P., Gutmann, B., Puma, M., Kisida, B., Rizzo, L., Eissa, N., & Silverberg, M. (2009). *Evaluation of the DC opportunity scholarship program. Impacts after three years*. NCEE 2009-4050). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Woodworth, J. R., David, J.L., Guha, R., Wang, H., & Lopez-Torkox, A. (2008). *San Francisco Bay Area KIPP schools: A study of early implementation and achievement. Final report*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.
- Zimmer, R., Gill, B., Booker, K., Lavertu, S. Sass, T. R., & Witte, J. (2009). *Charter schools in eight states: Effects on achievement, attainment, integration, and competition*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

# Superintendent Retention: Organizational Commitment and Superintendent Longevity

**Sandra Bass Talbert**  
Lorena ISD

**Don M. Beach**  
Tarleton State University

## Abstract

*The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between the three components of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative and the length of time which the superintendent spends in his/her position. The focus of this quantitative study was to examine three components of organizational commitment of superintendents in the state of Texas using a modified version of the Meyer and Allen's survey instrument. This study found that there is a positive correlation between time spent as a superintendent and affective, continuous and normative commitment.*

There is no doubt that the job of the superintendent can often be a difficult one. Houston (2001) noted that “The superintendency is fraught with public criticism, mixed with private moments of triumph. Superintendents are sometimes abused and other times blamed” (p. 428). Demands of both fiscal and academic accountability have made the job seem impossible at times. Once a person is in the position of superintendent, the question arises: “What causes the superintendent to stay in a particular school district or to move to another one?” As noted in the literature, there are distinct advantages to superintendent longevity in a district. As the educational leader of a school district, the superintendent is ultimately responsible for developing and maintaining an educational program that meets the overall objectives of the district and the educational needs of the students. Johnson (1996) noted that new superintendents are expected to diagnose local educational needs and recommend strategies for improvement. Beach and Reinhartz (1990) noted that, “Administrators and teachers consider superintendents to be the educational leaders for the district; state legislators and state education agency personnel hold superintendents responsible for implementing legislation which brings about reform in their districts” (p. 51). The superintendent must accomplish these change or reform efforts while also working in conjunction with the local school board. Beach and Reinhartz (1990) have suggested

that superintendents sometimes get caught in a “mismatch between what they are required to do versus what they feel they should be doing” and such a conflict may “contribute to a short half-life for the superintendents” (p. 55).

One of the essential decisions that the school board makes is the choice of the superintendent to lead the district. “Once a superintendent is hired, the personal and working relationship that develops between the board and the superintendent sets the tone for much of the district’s operations” (Glass & Franceschini, 2007, p. 67). It is imperative for the school board and the superintendent to develop a professional relationship so that the two can work together for the good of the school district. When conflicts arise between the board and the superintendent; the manner in which those conflicts are resolved – or are not resolved – often impacts a superintendent’s longevity with the district. Each time the superintendent in the school district changes, there is a transition period. The price of superintendent turnover can be great – both financially and organizationally. Superintendent and board relationships, which are dysfunctional, can result in a negative financial impact in the district as well as a negative impact on staff morale, student achievement, and community support. In addition to superintendent turnover being costly, superintendent longevity can also have a positive or negative impact on student achievement.

Studies have suggested that superintendents who remain with a particular district over an extended period of time provide stability, predictability, and can have considerable impact on student performance. Several researchers (Becker, 1960; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Somers, 2009) have advanced the concept of organizational commitment to an organization as a way of addressing the various aspects of an employee's willingness to stay with a particular organization. Other studies have demonstrated that organizational commitment is significantly related to outcomes such as punctuality, attendance, citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, work performance, and turnover intention (Bogler, 2005; Dishon-Berkovits & Koslowsky, 2002). Clearly there is value in examining the concept of organizational commitment due to the impact on various job components.

Mowday, et al. (1979) noted that commitment can be characterized by three related factors: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. Other studies of organizational commitment have been conducted in the business sector. While organizational commitment has been studied for many years, few studies have examined organizational commitment of superintendents to determine which of the organizational commitment components are related to superintendent tenure and how that knowledge can be used to assist superintendents and districts. Carlson (1958) noted that many educational researchers and administrators do not view the school system as an organization. Since studies regarding organizational commitment have been conducted in a variety of other fields, an examination of this topic in the field of education could provide meaningful information. This study was based on a previous study by Allen and Meyer (1996) that examined three forms of employee commitment to an organization and focused on superintendents in Texas rather than on employees in organizations other than education. The results of the study also add to the body of literature on organizational

commitment specifically related to the school superintendent.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between the three components of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1987, 1990) and longevity for superintendents. This description acknowledges the possibility of a lack of satisfaction on the part of the school board and/or the superintendent. However, according to a study of superintendents commissioned by the American Association of School Administrators, nearly 90% of superintendents reported satisfaction in their current position (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). The superintendent's and the board's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each other impacts the superintendent's longevity with a district. Meyer and Allen (2004) contended that employee commitment is important because it implies an intention to persist in a course of action; in this case it would be for a superintendent to remain with a particular school district. Other studies have consistently demonstrated that commitment does contribute to a reduction in turnover (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) noted that members of an organization are more likely to report higher levels of commitment when their personal goals match those of the organization.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Meyer and Allen's (1997) three-component model of commitment has been used to determine the psychological state that causes an employee to identify with and continue membership within an organization. Organizational commitment refers to an individual's emotional attachment with the mission, goals, and values of the employing organization. Commitment can be either attitudinal or behavioral. As an attitude, commitment is the employee's identification with the organization; as a behavior, commitment is given in exchange for benefits such as salary. The three components of commitment include affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the

employees' emotional attachment to an organization and involvement with that organization. Those employees with strong affective commitment stay because they believe in the organization. Continuance commitment refers to the employees' recognition of the cost associated with leaving an organization. Those employees with strong continuance commitment stay with an organization because they financially need to. Normative commitment refers to the employees' feeling of obligation to an organization; they stay with the organization because they ought to. Meyer and Allen noted that employees' commitment may reflect varying degrees of all three components.

The importance of studying organizational commitment is multi-faceted. A vital concern of organizations is being able to retain qualified and competent employees by increasing their organizational commitment. The bulk of contemporary information on organizational commitment comes from Meyer and Allen (1997). Most articles that discuss organizational commitment use Meyer and Allen's three-component model of commitment. Although Meyer and Allen have been seminal researchers in this area of research, it should be noted that the concept of organizational commitment originated with Becker's (1960) side bet theory. Studies utilizing Becker's theory focused on measuring the reasons employees leave the organization. Meyer and Allen later describe Becker's theory as one of their components of commitment – continuance commitment.

Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) studied organizational commitment focusing not on the side bets, but on the psychological attachment one has to an organization. They identified commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization and noted that commitment was characterized by three related factors: (1) a strong belief in an acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) a desire to maintain membership in the organization. Once again, the model for organizational commitment was one dimensional. Meyer and Allen (1990)

would later refer to this component of commitment as affective commitment.

In the 1980s the primary contributors to the study on organizational commitment were O'Reilly and Chapman (1986 as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 2). Organizational commitment can be beneficial as well as detrimental. As organizations become leaner, they must retain those employees who add the most value overall to the organization. These are the employees who must be committed to the organization. The opposite of commitment is alienation.

Meyer and Allen examined commitment as a multifaceted construct. Although the definition of commitment varied between authors, Meyer and Allen (1991) noted that a common component of the definitions was that commitment "is a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization" (p. 67). The common element in each of these components was the idea that commitment binds an individual to the organization.

Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to an organization, their identification and involvement with that organization. Employees with affective commitment are the ones who stay with an organization because they *want* to stay. The literature revealed that there is a positive relation between organizational tenure and affective commitment (Cohen, 1993a; Mathius & Zajak, 1990). Supervisor supportiveness is linked to affective commitment as is a feeling of job security. According to the literature, affective commitment, of the three, has the strongest connection to longevity.

Continuance commitment refers to a consciousness of the costs associated with leaving an organization. Employees who stay based on this type of commitment do so because they need to stay. Becker's (1960) side bet theory was based on continuance commitment. Employees with strong continuance commitment are more likely to stay

with an organization than those with weak commitment. However, unlike affective commitment, there are few positive relations with performance indicators. Meyer et al. (1989) noted negative correlations between continuance commitment and supervisor ratings of potential for promotion. Continuance commitment can develop as actions and events occur which increase the cost of leaving the organization. Additionally, continuance commitment will be higher when an employee believes he has few alternatives to his current position. As expected, those elements positively correlated with continuance commitment. Clearly those with continuance commitment are staying for reasons that do not necessarily advance the objectives of the organization.

Normative commitment refers to the obligation that employees feel to stay with an organization. Employees with a high level of normative commitment stay with an organization because they feel they ought to stay. Overall, those employees with strong affective commitment who feel an emotional attachment to the organization and an alignment with the organization's goals and vision will have a greater desire or motivation to contribute to the organization than those with continuance or normative commitment.

Regarding attendance, affective commitment is positively related to fewer voluntary absences. The relationship between normative commitment and absenteeism has received little attention, and there is no agreement in the few studies conducted (Hackett et al., 1994; Meyer et al., 1993; Somers, 1995).

The literature indicates that the impact of commitment on job performance is significant. The in-role job performance that was studied referred to those aspects of the job that are required of the job. Multiple studies, including those with self-reported data and those with independent assessments of performance, suggested that those employees with affective commitment tended to work harder at their jobs and had better overall performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 30).

Employees with continuance commitment did not fare as well on ratings of in-role job performance; studies found that there was negative, little, or no correlation. However, for those with normative commitment, the studies utilizing self-reporting showed a positive correlation between commitment and in-role job performance while studies utilizing independently rated performance indicators reported no significant relations.

Naturally, those employees who have a strong affiliation with the organization – those with affective commitment – appear much more willing to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors than those with continuance or normative commitment. Although the relationship is not as strong, there is a positive relationship between normative commitment and an employee's willingness to go above and beyond for their organization – organizational citizenship behaviors. While an employee with affective commitment will perform these extra duties to increase the organization's effectiveness because he wants the organization to succeed, those with normative commitment will do so out of obligation. When researchers examined continuance commitment and organizational citizenship, the results were mixed. Overall, the literature indicated that employees with strong affective commitment to the organization would be more valuable employees. While employees with various components of commitment may stay with an organization, they do so for different reasons and their effectiveness in the organization is impacted (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 38). Meyer and Allen (1997) used the term 'in-role job performance' to refer to the performance of the required duties of the job. Regarding in-role job performance, strong affective commitment (desire-based; goals and values of employees match those of the organization) results in employees working harder at their jobs and performing better than those with weak commitment. In contrast to the strong performance by those with affective commitment, those with continuance commitment (need-based) do not perform as well. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), those with continuance commitment

had less potential for advancement and poorer overall job performance as reported by their supervisors. For example, superintendents with strong affective commitment would more likely comply with strategic decisions made by the school board than those with continuance commitment. For those superintendents with continuance commitment, the implementation would likely be based on the idea that compliance is a necessity for job security.

Although individuals with strong continuance commitment are more likely to stay with an organization than those with weak commitment, the similarity ends there. Indeed, available research examining continuance commitment suggests that this particular psychological link to the organization has few positive relations with performance indicators” (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Finally, regarding in-role job performance there are few studies examining normative commitment. Clearly, there are differences in the *in-role job performance* between those with various components of commitment. In addition to organizational commitment, there is a concept referred to as organizational citizenship. Meyer and Allen (1997) also reported multiple studies that revealed a significant relationship between employees with strong affective commitment and their willingness to engage in organizational citizenship. Studies of the relationship between continuance commitment and organizational citizenship yielded differing results (unrelated, negatively related, and weakly related). Finally, the relationship between normative commitment and organizational citizenship were positively related although not as strongly as affective commitment and organizational citizenship. Organizational commitment, or lack of organizational commitment, manifests itself in job performance – both in-role job performance and organizational citizenship. Since the stakes are so high in education, the concept that a superintendent’s loyalty to the school district impacts his/her effectiveness in the accomplishment of the district’s goals is a worthy consideration.

In examining the relationship of organizational commitment and superintendent longevity, there

are various other demographic factors that could impact the organizational commitment of superintendents. District characteristics which might impact longevity include information about the size of the school district and the region in which the school is located. The financial characteristics include the superintendent’s current salary. The personal characteristics include information about the superintendent’s gender, age, and number of years as superintendent in the current district. Although the purpose of the study was not to examine the relationship of each of these characteristics with organizational commitment, and thus longevity, each of these characteristics may impact a superintendent’s organizational commitment and therefore demographic information was collected to provide descriptive data.

The literature regarding organizational commitment revealed that employees who identify with an organization are more likely to stay with the organization and that employees are more committed when their personal goals match those of the organization (Cohen, 1993, 2003; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1990, 1996, 1997, 2004; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Of the three components of commitment, those employees with affective commitment are more committed, have better attendance, and are more motivated to contribute to the organization. Their punctuality, job satisfaction, and work performance are better. The literature revealed that the other components of commitment (continuance commitment and normative commitment) had an impact on longevity; however, the impact was not as strong as affective commitment.

Although the pool of literature regarding organizational commitment is growing, there is still little that specifically addresses organizational commitment in the educational arena. The literature revealed that in studies conducted in the business arena, a relationship existed between the three different components of commitment and the employee’s level of success. Also the literature revealed that the longevity of superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student

achievement. Tying these two factors together, this study sought to determine the relationship between the three components of commitment – affective, continuance, and normative – and superintendent longevity. Superintendents were surveyed using the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) which measures three forms of employee commitment to an organization: desire-based, obligation-based and cost-based to create commitment profiles of employees. The resulting information was examined as it related to the length of time the superintendent had been in the current district. The result was seminal research on the topic of organizational commitment among superintendents as it relates to longevity.

### Research Questions

Using the work of Meyer and Allen (1997), the general research question which framed this study was: *What is the relationship between the three components of organizational commitment and the longevity of superintendents?* Three specific research questions were posed for the purpose of determining if a relationship exists between type of organizational commitment and superintendent longevity:

1. What is the relationship between scores on the affective commitment scale and years of service as a superintendent in the current district?
2. What is the relationship between scores on the continuance commitment scale and years of service as a superintendent in the current district?
3. What is the relationship between scores on the normative commitment scale and years of service as a superintendent in the current district?

### Commitment and the Superintendency

In a review of related literature, there has been a plethora of literature on organizational commitment; however, little literature exists on the organizational commitment of superintendents in public schools. Organizational commitment refers to an individual's emotional attachment with the mission, goals, and values of the employing

organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In examining the school organization as a society, one must also examine the hierarchy of leadership, and the superintendent as the leader of the district. The superintendent plays a significant role in leading this mini-society and in establishing its culture.

The continuity of leadership has shown to be critical to improving student learning and school advancement. In his article *Sustained Improvement Efforts over Time*, Bergeson (2004) asserted that "Improved districts sustain engagement in educational reform over time; district commitment to improvement efforts helps staff internalize the changes. District stability helps schools 'stay the course' of school improvement, to persevere and persist" (p. 19). One way to achieve this stability is through the commitment of the superintendent to stay with one particular district.

### Superintendent Tenure

As noted earlier, the price of superintendent turnover is great – both financially and organizationally. When the CEO of an organization, such as superintendent, has to be replaced, it is a significant event. Considering all of these factors, superintendent tenure or longevity is of utmost importance to a school's success.

The length of time that a superintendent stays in a district is referred to as tenure. According to the 2006 mid-decade study of the American school superintendency, tenure rates hovered around 6 years. In a study of 292 North Carolina superintendents, Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla, and Ghosh (2002) found that superintendent tenure averaged 6 to 7 years, regardless of the district's size or location. The 2010 superintendent survey conducted by the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) reported that the average tenure with a school district was five years. "Factors significantly related to superintendents' longevity in office were the extent of school board involvement in management, support for needed construction, consolidation of school systems, district poverty level, and superintendent's post-graduate education" (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006, p. 1).

Multiple sources noted that the problem with superintendent tenure might not be at the crisis level attributed to it (Cooper, et al., 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2006; Natkin et al., 2002; Lashway, 2002). However, there seems to be consensus that the topic of superintendent commitment, longevity, and factors contributing to tenure and turnover both need further research (DiPalo & Hoy, 2005; Glass & Franceschini, 2006; Hoyle, et al., 2005). One reason tenure matters is the realization that it takes a significant amount of time for superintendents to make an impact on their districts. The factors impacting superintendents' tenure include community satisfaction, school board turnover, and alignment of vision. Iannacone (1986, 1996) noted that the district's history of school board member turnover should be predictive of superintendent survival in office. Clark (2011) noted that school boards adopt a 'quick-fix, results tomorrow' mentality.

There are numerous reasons that longevity is important for superintendents. Cascio (1982) noted that considering the costs associated with turnover much can be gained by finding ways to increase employee commitment. Superintendents should note the importance of remaining in a district long enough to see the positive impact of their leadership on student learning and achievement and recognize the importance of longevity, but the school board should as well. The board must realize the significance of the role they play in determining the length of superintendent tenure in their districts. The literature confirms the importance of superintendent longevity. Both superintendents and school boards must recognize this importance and respond accordingly. Research literature focusing on superintendent longevity is essential to answering the question: What facilitates longevity for superintendent?

### **Research Design and Methodology**

One factor that appears to impact longevity is the organizational commitment of the superintendent. Organizational commitment is the superintendent's emotional attachment with the mission, goals, and values of the school district. The persistence for a

superintendent would involve seeing goals and visions carried out in the school district which should result in longevity.

### **Instrument**

The study replicated Meyer and Allen's study of the three forms of commitment to an organization which had previously focused predominately on the business arena. The focus of this study was public school superintendents in the state of Texas. Superintendents regularly utilize the Internet for communication; therefore, the online survey was an appropriate choice for data collection among superintendents.

Meyer and Allen's (1991, 1997) survey instrument measures three forms of employee commitment to an organization: desire-based, obligation-based and cost-based to create commitment profiles of employees. The academic version of the TCM Employee Commitment Survey was prepared for those researchers who intended to use the commitment scales for academic research purposes. For Meyer and Allen, organizational commitment can be characterized by different mindsets. The goal of the research study was to determine if a relationship existed when comparing the components of organizational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative) and superintendent longevity.

There are two versions of the TCM Employee Commitment Survey. The original survey contained 24 questions, 8 for each of the three commitment scales: affective, normative, and continuous. The revised survey contains 18 questions, 6 for each of the three commitment scales: affective, normative, and continuous). The other difference between the original survey and the revised survey exists in the normative commitment scale which measures the employees' feeling of obligation to stay with an organization. In order to tailor the survey to superintendents, the researcher customized the items for the participating organization; the term 'school district' was used rather than the term 'organization.' According to Meyer and Allen (2004), "it may be advisable to substitute the relevant organization's



name in the item” (p. 6). The surveys given to the superintendents contained statements pertaining to their perception of their relationship with the organization and their reasons for staying.

### Participants

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) database AskTED was utilized to identify superintendents for this study. AskTED provided a listing of superintendents currently serving in Texas schools. Those serving as interim superintendent, acting superintendent or director were removed from the list. The resulting edited list consisted of 1164 current superintendents in Texas for the 2010–2011 school year. The entire pool was used for the research study. An email which included an explanation of the study, an invitation to participate in the study, and a link to the online survey was sent to 1164 Texas school superintendents. The link connected the respondent to a survey utilizing the online survey distribution company SurveyMonkey. The entire pool of superintendents was used because surveying all of the superintendents increased the chances of a higher return rate and therefore a greater amount of data to analyze.

### Data Analysis

Of the 1164 surveys sent, 1134 current superintendents in Texas successfully received the survey. The response rate was 38.6 percent with 438 superintendents responding. The items in the survey were grouped according to scale: affective commitment scale (ACS), normative commitment scale (NCS), and continuance commitment scale (CCS). Three bivariate correlations were conducted between affective commitment and longevity, continuance commitment and longevity, and normative commitment and longevity.

### Findings

The findings are reported for each of the three research questions, followed by a discussion and suggestions for further research. Pearson  $r$  was conducted to determine the correlation between district tenure as a superintendent and each component of commitment.

The first question addressed was “*What is the relationship between scores on the Affective Commitment scale and years of service as a superintendent in the current district?*” There was a positive correlation between district tenure as a superintendent and affective commitment. A correlation for the data revealed that affective commitment and superintendent longevity were significantly related,  $r = +.225, p < .01$ . The data indicated that individuals spending more time as a superintendent in their current district had higher affective commitment scores, on average, than individuals spending less time as superintendent in their current district.

The second research question addressed was “*What is the relationship between scores on the Continuance Commitment scale and years of service as a superintendent in the current district?*” It examined the correlation between district tenure as a superintendent and continuance commitment. A correlation for the data revealed that continuance commitment and superintendent longevity were significantly related,  $r = +.185, p < .01$ . The data indicated that individuals spending more time as a superintendent in their current district had higher continuance commitment scores, on average, than individuals spending less time as superintendent in their current district. However, the relationship between continuance commitment and superintendent longevity was not as strong as the relationship between affective commitment and superintendent longevity.

The third research question addressed was “*What is the relationship between scores on the Normative Commitment scale and years of service as a superintendent in the current district?*” The research revealed that normative commitment and superintendent longevity were significantly related, although not as strong as affective and continuance commitment. The data indicated that individuals spending more time as a superintendent in their current district had higher normative commitment scores, on average, than individuals spending less time as superintendent in their current district.

A multiple regression was utilized to determine how the continuous variables of affective commit-

ment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment may predict a superintendent's years of service. Normative commitment was not statistically as a predictor of years of service with a standard coefficient of  $a = 0.014$ .

### **Discussion and Implications**

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between organizational commitment and superintendent longevity. Organizational commitment was measured using Meyer and Allen's (1990) TCM employee commitment survey. The data revealed that affective commitment was found to be a significant predictor of superintendents' intent to stay with their school district. Thus, if superintendents have a sense of affection to the mission of the school district, they are less likely to leave and stay with the organization because they want to stay. The second strongest predictor of longevity was continuance commitment. The data also revealed that normative commitment had the least impact on superintendent's intent to stay with an organization.

Organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct. By better understanding how people become committed to an organization, employers can work to create an environment conducive to longer tenure and to more affective commitment among employees. The study was intended to address questions regarding superintendent's relationships with their school districts, how those relationships are established, and how they influence workers' behavior, well-being, and contributions to the school district's effectiveness. Meyer and Allen (1997) found that affective commitment to the organization had the strongest and most consistent relationship with desirable outcomes such as retention, attendance, performance, and citizenship. One goal of this study was to determine if the same conclusions could be drawn when the selected audience was school superintendents in Texas at this point in time over 15 years later.

This study confirmed the researcher's notion that those superintendents whose goals, values, and

vision align with those of the school district will tend to stay with that school district longer (strongest correlation between longevity and affective commitment). For example, if a superintendent values innovation and risk taking and the district where he/she serves does not, there will most likely be a disconnect and the superintendent or the school board or both will become dissatisfied. The superintendent might stay because of obligation or normative commitment, or necessity – continuance commitment. However, if the emotional attachment – affective commitment – is not present, the tenure is likely to be shorter.

The findings in this study of commitment among Texas superintendents were consistent with those revealed in the literature regarding organizational commitment among employees in other organizations. The study found affective commitment and superintendent longevity were significantly related as were continuance commitment and longevity and normative commitment and longevity although neither as strongly related as affective commitment. These findings mirrored those in studies conducted among employees in organizations such as banks and Fortune 500 companies.

### **Future Studies**

Further studies could be conducted to see if other components of organizational commitment such as attendance, punctuality, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors would hold true with superintendents. Future research should consider other variables which play a role in years of service as this study only examined the variables of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Additional research could examine the same issues addressed in this study, in other states and settings. Likewise, it might be of value to examine whether differences exist for superintendents in urban, rural or suburban schools and for individuals based on gender, race, ethnicity, age and other demographic factors.

Conventional knowledge would endorse the idea that those employees who are committed to their

organization are less likely to leave the organization. The literature revealed that employees who identify with an organization are more likely to stay with that organization (Allen & Meyer 1990; Cohen, 2003; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). However, there are varying reasons that employees stay; perhaps it is because they want to stay – affective commitment, because they need to stay – continuance commitment, or because they feel they ought to stay – normative commitment. Gaylor also concluded job motivation/commitment can lead to longer organizational tenure, thus enhancing the organization's sustainability. Organizational enhancement in school districts would translate to factors such as increased student achievement, greater satisfaction among stakeholders, and improved teacher contentment and morale. For the purposes of this study, the researcher was interested in which of the motivating factors – desire, cost, or obligation – most impacted superintendent's longevity. Three research questions were posed to determine if a relationship exists between the various components of organizational commitment and superintendent longevity. It is hoped that the research serves as a springboard for a variety of future studies regarding various aspects of organizational commitment among superintendents and that the results will help foster longevity in the superintendency and will add to the quality and success of schools and school systems.

### References

- Allen, N., & Meyer, J. (1996). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: An examination of construct validity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 49, 252–276.
- Beach, D., & Reinhartz, J. (1990, Spring). A study of the Texas superintendency: A demographic analysis. *Texas Study of Secondary Education Research Journal*, 46.
- Becker, H. (1960). Notes on the concept of commitment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66, 32–42.
- Bergeson, T. (2004, October). *Characteristics of improved school districts: Themes from school districts*. Olympia, WA: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Bogler, R. (2005). Satisfaction of Jewish and Arab teachers in Israel. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 145, 19–33.
- Byrd, J., Drews, C., & Johnson, J. (2006, August). Factors impacting superintendent turnover: Lessons from the field. *NCPEA Education Leadership Review*, 7(2).
- Callahan, R. (1964). *The superintendent of schools: An historical analysis*. Final report of project S-212. Washington, DC: US Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- Carlson, R. (1958, Winter). Research and the school system as an organization. *The School Review*, 66(4), 473–483.
- Cascio, W. (1982). *Costing human resources: The financial impact of behavior in organizations*. Boston: Kent Publishing Co.
- Clark, R. (2011, February). The superintendent as a temp. *School Administrator*, 54(4), 40.
- Cohen, A. (1993). *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cohen, A. (2003). *Multiple commitments in the workplace: An integrative approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cooper, B., Fusarelli, L., & Carella, V. (2000). *Career crisis in the superintendency? The results of a national survey*. Arlington: American Association of School Administrators.
- Cuban, L. (1985). Conflict and leadership in the superintendency. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 67(1), 28–30.
- DiPaola, M., & Hoy, W. (2005). Organizational citizenship of faculty and achievement of high school students. *The High School Journal*, 88(3), 35–44.
- Dishon-Berkovits, M., & Koslowsky, M. (2002). Determinants of employee punctuality. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 142, 723–739.
- Glass, T., & Franceschini, L. (2007). *The state of the American school superintendency: A mid-decade study*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Hackett, D., Bycio, P., & Hausdorf, P. (1994). Further assessment of Meyer's and Allen's (1991) three-

- component model of organizational commitment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 15–23.
- Houston, P. (2001, February). Superintendents for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: It's not just a job, it's a calling. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(6), 428–433.
- Hoyle, J., Bjork, L., Collier, V., & Glass, T. (2005). *The superintendent as CEO: Standards-based performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Iannaccone, L. (1996). Callahan's vulnerability thesis and "dissatisfaction theory". *Peabody Journal of Education*, 71(2), 110–119.
- Johnson, S. (1996). *Leading to change: The challenge of the new superintendency*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lashway, L. (2002, September). *The superintendent in an age of accountability*. ERIC Digest 161.
- Mathieu, J., & Zajac, D. (1990). A review of meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 171–194.
- Meyer, J., & Allen, N. (1984). Testing the "side-bet theory" of organizational commitment: Some methodological considerations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69, 372–378.
- Meyer, J., & Allen, N. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 63(1), 1–19.
- Meyer, J., & Allen, N. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1, 61–89.
- Meyer, J., & Allen, N. (1997). *Commitment in the workplace: Theory, research, and application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Meyer, J., & Allen, N. (2004). *TCM employee commitment survey academic users guide*. London, Ontario, Canada: University of Western Ontario.
- Meyer, J., & Allen, N., Smith, C. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 538–551.
- Meyer, J., Stanley, D., Herscovitch, L., & Topolnytsky, L. (2002). Affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization: A meta-analysis of antecedents, correlates and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61, 20–52.
- Mowday, R., Porter, L., & Steers, R. (1982). *Employee-organization linkages: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover*. New York: Academic Press.
- Mowday, R., Steers, R., & Porter, L. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14, 224–247.
- Natkin, G., Cooper, B., Alborano, J., Padilla, A., & Ghosh, S. (2002, April 1–5). *Predicting and modeling superintendent turnover*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
- O'Reilly, C., & Chapman, J. (1986). Organizational commitment and psychological attachment: The effects of compliance, identification and internalization of pro-social behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71, 492–499.
- Porter, L., Steers, R., Mowday, R., & Boulian, P. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59, 603–609.
- Shoulders, D. (2004). *The perceived role of the superintendent in school board member development* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Kentucky, Providence, KY.
- Somers, M. (1995). Organizational commitment, turnover, and absenteeism: An examination of direct and interaction effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 16, 49–58.
- Somers, M. (2009). The combined influence of affective, continuance and normative commitment on employee withdrawal. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74, 75–81.
- Tett, R., & Meyer, J. (1993). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover: Path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Personnel Psychology*, 76, 759–769.
- Waters, J., & Marzano, R. (2006, September). *School leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement*. A working paper. Denver: McREL.
- Whittle, C. (2006). *Crash course: A radical plan for improving public education*. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group.

# Reviewers Needed!

Reviewers are needed to assist with the selection of manuscripts for the 2014 *SRCEA Yearbook*. If you are interested, please complete and submit the form below or contact the Editor.

## SRCEA 2014 Reviewer Form

I am interested in serving as a reviewer for manuscripts submitted to the *SRCEA Yearbook* for publication.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home)

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Submit this form to:

Editor  
*SRCEA Yearbook*  
College of Education and Professional Development  
Marshall University, South Charleston Campus, Room 242  
100 Angus E. Peyton Dr. South  
Charleston, WV 25303-1600  
(304) 746-1904 (tel)  
(304) 746-2074 (fax)  
OR  
[rchildress@marshall.edu](mailto:rchildress@marshall.edu)

# School Leaders' Perceptions of the Importance of Disposition Standards for Potential Leaders

Christopher G. Pritchett & Trellys A. Riley

*Troy University*

## Abstract

*This research is part of a two-part study designed to examine school system leaders' perceptions of the importance of the state mandated instructional leadership standards, the value of leader dispositions, and the degree to which they perceive selected leadership dispositions as being correlated to state standards. This part of the study examined the issues related to dispositions of potential school leaders. A survey was designed to explore the perceptions of the K–12 school-based leaders who were partners with a university-based Instructional Leadership and Administration Program in Alabama. Partners representing 11 different school districts were surveyed. Descriptive statistics were used to organize, summarize, and describe collected data. A Pearson product-moment correlation was the statistical procedure used to examine the data. The study concluded that partners viewed dispositions as highly critical aspects of leadership. They also perceived significant correlations between the Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards and leadership dispositions examined.*

## Introduction

There is a growing research base to support the efforts of institutions in assessing dispositions of administrative candidates (Green, Chirichello, Mallory, Melton, & Lindahl, 2011). Martin (2009) recommended that instructing using a thorough list of dispositions with explanations of their importance in school leadership should be part of the first course in educational leadership programs. While the importance of leadership dispositions seems to be gaining increasing visibility, there is limited research about this topic, especially from the perspective of practicing leaders. This research is part of a two part study designed to examine school system leaders perceptions of the importance of the state mandated instructional leadership standards, the value of leader dispositions, and the degree to which they perceive selected leadership dispositions as being correlated to state standards. This part of the study examined the issues related to school leaders' perceptions of the value of dispositions as part of leadership preparation programs. The study examined the views of one university educational leadership preparation program's K–12 partners relative to their perceptions of the importance of dispositions as an element in effective leadership. The partners included building level school leaders/administra-

tors and central office level school administrators. The purpose was to determine which dispositions they viewed as the most important and whether they viewed these dispositions as being correlated to the state mandated instructional leadership standards around which the educational leadership preparation program is built.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do school leaders, involved in a school/university partnership, perceive dispositions as an important function of leader?
2. Which disposition skills do school leaders, involved in a school/university partnership perceive as most and least important in effective leadership?
3. To what extent do the school leaders, involved in a school/university partnership perceive correlations between specific Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards and selected leadership dispositions?

## Review of Literature

### Leadership and Student Learning

There has been an emergence of research connecting school leadership and student achievement (Mendels, 2012). Mendels (2012) identified effective leaders as those who know how to give teachers the backing they need to thrive. They also encourage professional learning (Wallace Foundation, 2012). Furthermore, effective leaders display a laser-like focus on the quality of instruction in their schools (Mendels, 2012). Part of the focus on instruction revolves around the use of research-based strategies to improve teaching and learning and initiate discussions about instructional approaches, both in teams and with individual teachers (Wallace Foundation, 2012).

The Wallace Foundation (2008) acknowledged setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization as key leadership practices to improve student learning. Lumpkin (2008) stated the school leader nurtures relationships with their teachers and others based upon mutual trust, honesty, loyalty and respect. Effective school leaders must convey to their publics that their word is good; they can be trusted and hold faculty and staff accountable for their responsibilities and duties (Siccone, 2012). Exemplary principals provide feedback and guidance to teachers to improve their practice, plan professional development, and use data to analyze and plan for school improvement (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Richards (2004) recognized honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness as the three qualities new teachers most admire in their principal. “When principals serve as collaborative instructional leaders, teachers report that they feel supported, validated, and recognized for how effectively they teach and their students learn” (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 24). Effective principals are characterized by the actions they take.

### Leadership Standards

Effective leadership development can hold tremendous promise for improving schools and increasing student achievement (Gray & Bishop, 2009). How principals are initially prepared is

associated with how they lead and what kind of school improvement gains they achieve (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). An important place to start in developing effective principals is quality state leadership standards (Sun, 2011). The use of competencies or standards to guide performance is one condition that contributes to the success of leadership development initiatives (Gray & Bishop, 2009). Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) identified exemplary programs as those who are aligned with state and professional standards; however, the alignment of programs to standards does not guarantee the cultivation and sustainability of effective leadership.

The Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders were developed as part of a mission to enhance school leadership among principals and administrators in Alabama in order to improve academic achievement for all students (Alabama State Department of Education, 2005). The standards centered around eight areas: (1) Planning for Continuous Learning, (2) Teaching and Learning, (3) Human Resource Development, (4) Diversity, (5) Community and Stakeholder Relationships, (6) Technology, (7) Management of the Learning Organization, and (8) Ethics. The Alabama State Department of Education (2005) identified key indicators for each standard that instructional leader candidates need to demonstrate in their preparation programs and as a practicing instructional leader in the future. The Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards have placed a heavy emphasis on instructional leadership (Southern Regional Education Board, 2010). Although standards are an essential element in creating high quality leadership programs, another important element in leadership are the values and beliefs that principals hold and the actions they engage in because of them. Moreover, the need to accentuate and teach dispositions as an integral part of a leadership preparation program is paramount.

### Dispositions

To become a credible leader, individuals must fully comprehend the beliefs, values, principles, standards, ethics, and ideals that drive them

(Kouzes & Posner, 2007). These are often called dispositions.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) described dispositions as professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities; these positive behaviors support student learning and development. (Mallory & Melton, 2009, p. 7)

Assessing leadership dispositions is an incontestable part of preparing leaders of educational organizations as professors of educational administration (Green, Chirichello, Mallory, Melton, & Lindahl, 2011). Martin (2009) discovered the need for more intentional teaching of dispositions in the first courses of leadership programs. The feedback provided to leadership candidates concerning dispositions needs to be valid, reliable, and relevant to their formation as school leaders (Green et al., 2011). Nixon, Dam, Cooper, and Henderson (2011) concluded a consistent time period for assessment and discussion of dispositions is needed for leadership candidates. A common practice is to assess candidate dispositions at the beginning and the end of a leadership program. Broko, Liston, and Whitcomb (2007) explained that dispositions are an individual's tendencies to act in a given manner and are foretelling of future patterns of action. Assessing dispositions of school leadership candidates throughout the university preparation program can provide early warning signs and offer opportunities to address needed change.

This study sought to examine the importance of this issue as perceived by practitioners who are also involved in a university leadership preparation program. It is believed that the findings will enhance the program's implementation. Findings should also be of value to others who are preparing school leaders and to researchers who are interested in the topic.

## **Methodology**

A survey instrument was developed to gather demographic information and data from the K–12 partners of an Instructional Leadership and Administration Program in regards to their perceptions of dispositions to effective leadership and their beliefs about the criticality of certain leadership dispositions and their relationship to the Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards. The foundation for the items on the survey was derived from the review of literature and the research objectives of this study. There were 35 questions on the survey (see Appendix A). The following four-point Likert scale was used: (1) not at all critical; (2) not very critical; (3) somewhat critical; and (4) very critical. To ensure the validity of the scores and the usability of the survey instrument, a panel of expert university faculty members was asked to evaluate the content. Panel comments, input, and recommendations were considered and incorporated into the final instrument. All neutral categories in sections two, three, and four in the survey were removed based on panel recommendations. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure homogeneity of items. For the importance of the Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards, the coefficient alpha was .737. The coefficient alpha was .759 for the critical level of certain leadership disposition survey questions.

Following appropriate review and revisions to the instrument, surveys were mailed to 69 K–12 partners representing 11 school districts. The population was selected based on each participant's involvement with the Instructional Leadership and Administration Program and/or with specific candidates. Fifty-two surveys or 75.4% of the surveys were returned to the researchers and entered for data analysis.

Statistical treatment of the data included the utilization of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to organize, summarize, and describe the collected data. A Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine if there is a significant correlation between the Alabama Instructional



Leadership Standards and the critical level of certain leadership dispositions.

**Results**

Fifty-two K–12 partners, building-level and central office-level school administrators, participated in this study. Of the respondents who completed the survey, the majority 37 (71.2%) were building level instructional leaders/administrators and 15 (28.8%) were central office instructional leaders/administrators. The instructional leaders/administrators in this study identified their primary level of work in the following areas: elementary (34.6%); middle school (11.5%); high school (26.9%); unit school (1.9%); and central office (25.0%). The majority of the participants (60.8%) work in a county school system while 39.2% work in a city school system. A majority of the population (67.3%) identified their school as a Title I school. The education professionals included in this study were certified at the following levels: master (34.6); specialist (38.5%); and doctorate (26.9%). Of the population that participated in the study, 23 (44.2%) were male and 29 (55.8%) were female. The median years of educational experience for participants was 23

years with an average of 10 years spent in the classroom before becoming an instructional leader/administrator. Eleven different school districts were included in this research study.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent do school leaders, involved in a school/university partnership, perceive dispositions as an important function of leader?

**Research Question 2:** Which disposition skills do school leaders, involved in a school/university partnership, perceive as most and least important in effective leadership?

The participants were asked to rank the critical level of certain leadership dispositions using the following four-point Likert-type scale: (1) not at all critical; (2) not very critical; (3) somewhat critical; and (4) very critical. Overall the school leaders appear to view all of these dispositions as critical aspects of a successful leader. As displayed in Table 1, the highest rated dispositions was Integrity ( $M = 3.98$ ). The lowest score was redesigning the organization ( $M = 3.42$ ). Table 1 reflects the standard deviation and mean for each disposition.

**Table 1**  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Critical Level of Certain Leadership Dispositions*

Disposition	N	M <sup>a</sup>	SD
Build Relationships	51	3.96	.196
Developing People	51	3.82	.385
Empowering Teachers	51	3.86	.348
Fairness	50	3.90	.303
Honesty	51	3.96	.196
Integrity	51	3.98	.140
Providing Professional Development	51	3.76	.428
Redesigning the Organization	50	3.42	.538
Setting Directions for the Organization	50	3.90	.303
Support and Development of Teachers	51	3.94	.238
Trustworthiness	51	3.98	.140
Using Data	51	3.90	.300
Using Research-Based Instructional Strategies	51	3.76	.428

<sup>a</sup> Means are based on the overall sum score for the critical level of certain leadership dispositions.

\*Likert scale of (4) Critical; (3) Somewhat Critical; (2) Not Very Critical; (1) Not At All Critical.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do the school leaders, involved in a school/university partnership perceive correlations between specific Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards and selected leadership dispositions?

In order to address this question, the participants were asked to rank the educational importance of the eight State of Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards using the following four-point Likert-

type scale: (1) not at all important; (2) not very important; (3) somewhat important; and (4) very important. The findings related to this question will be reported in more detail in another venue. However, they are presented here as well in order to address the second research question. Overall, instructional leaders/administrators felt that all standards were either somewhat important or very important. Table 2 reflects the standard deviation and mean for each standard.

**Table 2**  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Level of Importance*

Standard	<i>M</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>SD</i>
Planning for Continuous Improvement	3.96	.194
Teaching and Learning	3.98	.139
Human Resources Development	3.79	.412
Diversity	3.65	.520
Community and Stakeholder Relationships	3.79	.412
Technology	3.87	.345
Management of the Learning Organization	3.92	.269
Ethics	3.85	.415

<sup>a</sup> Means are based on the overall sum score for importance for the eight State of Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards.

*N* = 52

\* Likert scale of (4) Very Important; (3) Somewhat Important; (2) Not Very Important; (1) Not At All Important.

A Pearson product-moment correlation design was utilized for each of the 8 Alabama Instructional Leadership standards and the overall sum score for the perceived level of importance as ranked by K–12 partners. The overall sum score could range from 8 to 32. The mean overall sum score for the standards was 30.81. Moreover, a Pearson product-moment correlation design was utilized for each of the 13 leadership dispositions and the overall sum score for the critical level as ranked by K–12 partners. The overall sum score could range from 13 to 52. The mean overall sum score for the standards was 50.52. A significant positive correlation was found between the overall sum score of the standards and the overall sum score of the dispositions [ $r(48) = .610, p \leq .01$ ].

A Pearson product-moment correlation design was utilized for the importance of each Alabama Instructional Leadership Standard and the critical level of certain leadership dispositions. A significant relationship was indicated between six leadership standards and the critical level of certain leadership dispositions. Table 3 reports the coefficients. Empowering teachers and redesigning the organization correlated with the Community and Stakeholder Relationships standard. Fairness, integrity, providing professional development, redesigning the organization, trustworthiness, using data, and using research-based instructional strategies were all correlated with the Diversity standard. The Ethics standard was correlated with the following dispositions: developing people,

fairness, honesty, integrity, redesigning the organization, trustworthiness, using data, and using research-based instructional strategies. Fairness was the lone disposition correlated to the Human Resource Development standard. Developing people, honesty, integrity, redesigning the organization, support and development of teachers, and trustworthiness were correlated to the Management

of the Learning Organization standard. The Planning for Continuous Improvement standard was correlated to providing professional development, and the support and development of teachers. No correlations were found for the Teaching and Learning standard or the Technology standard. These data are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards and the Critical Level of Certain Leadership Dispositions*

Leadership Dispositions	Pearson Product-Moment Coefficients					
	CSR <sup>a</sup>	DIV <sup>b</sup>	ETH <sup>c</sup>	HRD <sup>d</sup>	MLO <sup>e</sup>	PCI <sup>f</sup>
Developing People	.007	.181	.321*	.132	.439*	.171
Empowering Teachers	.345*	.168	-.151	.068	.096	.213
Fairness	.145	.410*	.511*	.306*	.197	.272
Honesty	.140	.253	.411*	.140	.317*	-.041
Integrity	.270	.450*	.629*	.270	.485*	-.029
Providing Professional Development	.271	.426*	.125	.159	.182	.364*
Redesigning the Organization	.419*	.474*	.302*	.147	.371*	.161
Support and Development of Teachers	.274	.313	-.095	.274	.547*	.379*
Trustworthiness	.270	.450*	.629*	.270	.485*	-.029
Using Data	.308*	.412*	.034	.148	.149	.273
Using Research-Based Instructional Strategies	.271	.515*	.013	.159	.182	.126

<sup>a</sup> = Community and Stakeholder Relationships

<sup>b</sup> = Diversity

<sup>c</sup> = Ethics

<sup>d</sup> = Human Resource Development

<sup>e</sup> = Management of the Learning Organization

<sup>f</sup> = Planning for Continuous Improvement

\* $p \leq .01$

**Note.** Two standards (Teaching and Learning, technology) and two dispositions (build relationships and setting directions for the organization) were not included in the table because there were not significant correlations involving them.

### Discussion

The practitioners viewed all of the dispositions as critical. These individuals are working in schools, mentor future leaders and take an active role in their preparation through their involvement in the university educational leadership program. Thus, their opinion about this issue should be of importance to university faculty as they work to prepare future leaders. Thus, it is apparent for

universities who are preparing educational leaders to heed these findings and to consider the value they place on dealing with these dispositions and evaluate their assessment and development of them in their leadership candidates. Working with partners to gauge how well the university and candidates are doing might be an avenue for gathering meaningful data and insights.

The critical level of certain leadership dispositions and the possibility of correlations between specific Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards and certain leadership dispositions were analyzed. The overall sum scores for certain leadership dispositions indicated each one is critical to the development of school leaders. Results further indicated there are significant correlations between specific Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards and certain leadership dispositions. There were two standards (Teaching and Learning and Technology) not positively correlated to any of the leadership dispositions. Perhaps there are more important dispositions for the two standards than the ones selected for this study. Supplementing the word ‘pedagogy’ along with the Teaching and Learning standard may also generate more connections with the selected dispositions in future studies. Further research with an expanded list of selected dispositions may eliminate having any standards not positively correlated to one or more dispositions, or may confirm the lack of correlation of dispositions with those two standards.

Overall sum scores for certain leadership dispositions indicated each one is critical to the development of school leaders. The findings of the study suggest it is important to emphasize key dispositions while instructing leadership candidates in order to master certain leadership standards. Acquiring certain dispositions while completing their program of study will assist Instructional Leadership and Administration candidates in mastering Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards. Integrity, trustworthiness, honesty, and building relationships are requisite dispositions; hence, they can also serve as criteria when selecting candidates for program admission.

### Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, replicating the survey of K–12 partners of additional institutions would provide more data and broaden the scope of the advancement of leadership dispositions. Sharing these data across institutions would broaden our understanding of the importance of dispositions and their relationship to practice. Similar studies in other states would also be helpful. This might lead

to the development of an instrument which students and/or practitioners could use for self-reflection and growth.

Expanding the list of dispositions to discover other potential leadership dispositions needed to master the Instructional Leadership and Administration Standards not addressed by the results of the original study is another recommended avenue for research. An abundance of research exists defining what leaders must know and be able to do; however, additional research is needed to establish if an instructional leader can be effective with extensive leadership knowledge but without appropriate leadership dispositions.

### Conclusion

The results of the study clearly indicate the importance of dispositions to the practitioners surveyed. Furthermore, there was a link between selected dispositions and the Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards for leaders. All educational leadership professors need to examine the emphasis placed on disposition acquisition in their respective programs.

### References

- Alabama State Department of Education. (2005). Alabama standards for instructional leaders. Retrieved from [https://docs.alsde.edu/documents/113/Alabama\\_Standards\\_for\\_Instructional\\_Leaders.pdf](https://docs.alsde.edu/documents/113/Alabama_Standards_for_Instructional_Leaders.pdf)
- Borko, H., Liston, D., & Whitcomb, J. (2007). Apples and fishes: The debate over dispositions in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58, 359–364.
- Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M.T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Gray, C., & Bishop, Q. (2009). Leadership development: School and districts seeking high performance need strong leaders. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30(1), 28–30, 32.
- Green, J., Chirichello, M., Mallory, B., Melton, T., & Lindahl, R. (2011). Assessing leadership

- dispositions: Issues, challenges, and promising practices. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(4), 1–10. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpeapublications.org/latest-issue-ijelp.html>
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lumpkin, A. (2008). Three keys to success for principals (and their teachers). *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 45(1), 22–25.
- Mallory, B. J., & Melton, T. D. (2009, October). *Leadership dispositions, behaviors, and strategies to support teachers*. Paper presented at the Phi Delta Kappa International 2009 Summit on Quality Educator Recruitment and Retention, Indianapolis, IN.
- Martin, M. (2009). A case study of dispositions addressed in principal preparation programs as a transition into the internships. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 4(3), 1–19. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpeapublications.org/latest-issue-ijelp.html>
- Mendels, P. (2012). The effective principal: Five pivotal practices that shape instructional leadership. *JSD*, 33(1), 54–58. Retrieved from <http://www.learningforward.org/docs/february-2012/mendels331.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
- Nixon, A., Dam, M., Cooper, E., & Henderson, J. (2011). Are performance-based leadership preparation programs effective? The student perspective. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(1), 1–13. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpeapublications.org/latest-issue-ijelp.html>
- Richards, J. (2004). What new teachers value most in principals. *Principal*, 83(3), 42–44.
- Siccone, F. (2012). *Essential skills for effective school leadership*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Sun, C. (2011, August). *School leadership: Improving state systems for leader development*. Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.
- Southern Regional Education Board. (2010). *School leadership change emerging in Alabama: Results of the governor's congress on school leadership*. Atlanta, GA.
- Wallace Foundation (The). (2012, January). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Documents/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf>
- Wallace Foundation (The). (2008). *Becoming a leader: Preparing school principals for today's schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-training/Documents/Becoming-a-Leader-Preparing-Principals-for-Todays-Schools.pdf>

---

## Appendix

**Troy University (Phenix City)**  
**Instructional Leadership & Administration Program**  
**K–12 Partner Survey**

The K–12 partners for the Instructional Leadership and Administration Program at Troy University (Phenix City) play a critical role in preparing candidates for their future as an instructional leader. This survey was developed to gather input in an effort to improve the program. It should take you approximately 5–10 minutes to complete this survey. **Thank you for completing this survey! Your input is valued!**

### Section 1

Please let us know about you. Check the appropriate box and/or respond to questions in the space provided.

- 1) What is your current position at your school?  
 Central Office Instructional Leader/Administrator  
 Building Level Instructional Leader/Administrator
- 2) Please indicate your primary level of work.  
 Elementary (K–5)       Unit School (K–12)       Middle (6–8)  
 Central Office       High (9–12)
- 3) Is your school in a city or county school system?  
 City       County
- 4) Is your school a Title I school?  
 Yes       No
- 5) What is your highest degree held?  
 Master     Specialist     Doctorate
- 6) What is your gender?  
 Male       Female
- 7) How many years have you been in education? \_\_\_\_\_ years
- 8) How many years were you a classroom teacher? \_\_\_\_\_ years
- 9) How many years have you been an administrator/instructional leader? \_\_\_\_\_ years

## Section 2

**Please let us know about your experience with and your perceptions of the Master of Science Instructional Leadership and Administration Program at Troy University Phenix City. Check the appropriate box and/or respond to questions in the space provided.**

- 10) I have had the opportunity to be involved in the development of candidates at the Master of Science Instructional Leadership and Administration Program at Troy University Phenix City.  
 Strongly Agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- 11) Rigorous admission standards are being utilized in the selection process.  
 Strongly Agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- 12) Candidates have the opportunity to engage in practical field experiences.  
 Strongly Agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- 13) Candidates are adequately being prepared to be future instructional leader.  
 Strongly Agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree

### Section 3

Please let us know about your perceptions of the State of Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards. Check the appropriate box.

Alabama Instructional Standard	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important
14. Standard I – Planning for Continuous Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Standard II – Teaching and Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Standard III – Human Resources Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Standard IV – Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Standard V – Community and Stakeholder Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Standard VI – Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Standard VII – Management of the Learning Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Standard VIII – Ethics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Section 4

Based on your experiences and expertise, please answer the following questions about professional dispositions for instructional leaders. Check the appropriate box.

Disposition	Critical	Somewhat Critical	Not Very Critical	Not At All Critical
22. Build Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Developing People	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Empowering Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Fairness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Honesty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Providing Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Redesigning the Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Setting Directions for the Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Support and Development of Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Trustworthiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Using Data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Using Research-Based Instructional Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Section 5

35. Please share any other information that may be useful to the development of future instructional leaders at Troy University Phenix City.

---



---



---

# Cyberlearning: The Social Media Connection

Pamela Lemoine, Michael D. Richardson, Evan G. Mense & Kenneth E. Lane

*Southeastern Louisiana University*

## Abstract

*Social media can be a catalyst for the 21<sup>st</sup> century educator (Long, 2009). Social media provide a method to move from the traditional classroom paper-pencil tasks to technological means that allow students to be interactive participants in their own learning (Langworthy, Shear, & Means, 2010; McDermott & Kowalsky, 2011). Additionally the use of social media in a classroom setting can provide equitable access to multimedia learning tools that address inclusiveness, from special needs students to acceleration of learning for more capable students (Miller & Jensen, 2007).*

*In this chapter the authors provide information on the evolving role of social media as an instructional tool. The authors begin by defining types of social media tools and then consider challenges faced by educators using social media. Discussion includes the immediacy of social media access to online interactive learning opportunities, facilitation of peer-to-peer collaboration, and expedencies offered when professor-student communication is leveraged through use of Web 2.0 learning tools.*

## Introduction

Social media is defined as “any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication such as social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums and wikis” (New York City Department of Education, 2012a, 2012b). Professors envision the use of technology as a solution to help “transform education and improve student learning” (Hew & Brush, 2007, p. 224). New models of cyberlearning through technology provide “new and better ways to measure what matters, diagnose strengths and weaknesses in the course of learning where there is still time to improve student performance” (US Department of Education, 2010, p. xi).

Using social media in classrooms also provides challenges in addressing issues of student safety and privacy of student information and data (Osborne, 2011). Professors have to be vigilant monitors when students are using social media in the classroom. Universities have concerns with student access to social media technologies as well as the provision of devices and technological infrastructure supporting the use of technology (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Deil-Amen, 2011a, 2011b). With dwindling financial resources, higher education must face issues with mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets that allow personal opportunities for learning. Administrators

and professors need to be well versed in current technologies that can be accessed for student use (Cousin, 2005).

During the past 15 years the common means for communicating and sharing have changed drastically (Bjerede, Atlins & Dede, 2012). In the current environment, higher education students use digital media for communication and sharing information at an increasing rate. The focus on learning with digital media or cyberlearning is expected to escalate. Cyberlearning has become a trend that includes both independent learning and learning in collaboration with others (Greenhow, 2011). This flexibility is dependent on learning needs, motivations and contexts where students can mobile devices for personalized learning anytime and anywhere (Teclhaimanot & Hickman, 2011).

Administrators and professors also need to be knowledgeable about legal constraints. Some laws place restrictions on access to online social media. Universities may have added further restrictions for online access that affect professor and student access to online technologies (Children’s Internet Protection Act, 2001).

Online education avenues expand daily (Oh & Kim, 2007). Some researchers have suggested that



students using online learning resources outperform students in traditional face-to-face teaching settings (Allen & Seaman, 2010). They have also speculated that online learning experiences meet individual student learning needs (Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009). With the requirement that 21<sup>st</sup> century student skills include the necessity to access and use information effectively, social media provide educators access to different methods for teaching and learning (Dede, 2011; Downes, 2004; Hew & Brush, 2007). The challenge for educators is to move beyond traditional teaching methods and provide students with social media skills and strategies to take charge of their own learning (Davis, 2007; Hulme, 2009; Richardson, 2006).

### **Trends in Social Media in Higher Education**

Social media allow professors to expand their messages and listen to what clients want (Taylor & Kent, 2010). Facebook reports that within the United States, they have 94,748,820 users and 770 billion page views per month (Burbary, 2011). The change to social media for many students has also resulted in a change for education delivery systems (Navarro & Shoemaker, 1999). Social media permit students to become more active participants in their learning (Byrom & Bingham, 2001). Administrators are forced to provide faculty with the resources to augment social media in institutional delivery (Salmon, 2005). In addition, universities are under constant scrutiny as international standards for public education become increasingly difficult due to shrinking budgets (Ala-Mutka, et al., 2009b). Social media permit students to explore new learning opportunities (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). Not only is it important that professors communicate with students, but it is important that the students transmit their needs to professors and administrators (Teclhaimanot & Hickman, 2011; Wandel, 2008).

Twentieth century learners learned content from textbooks within the boundaries of classroom walls (Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010). Students were provided the “same text as everyone else, assigned the same readings, at the same pace, asked to achieve the same goals in the same way as

all the other students, and then were assessed in the same way as all the others” (Richardson, 2012, p. 14). The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2009) states that essential skills for today’s students include the ability to access and use information effectively, analyze media, and to apply their knowledge to produce products through the use of technology (Ntiri, 2010). The transformation from being a 20<sup>th</sup> century textbook bounded learner of content to a 21<sup>st</sup> century student creator of content necessitates a paradigm shift forcing educators to include access to educational technologies allowing experiential learning (Bjerede, Atlins, & Dede, 2012; McGill, et al., 2005). Twenty-first century learners must learn the technology tools that allow them to become the creators and not just consumers (Langworthy, Shear, & Means, 2010; Qualman, 2009).

Wesch (2011) challenged professors to rescue students from the use of computers as workbooks to become interactive technology users. “We are moving toward ubiquitous computing, ubiquitous information, ubiquitous networks, unlimited speed about everything, everywhere, from anywhere on all kinds of devices that make it ridiculously easy to connect, organize, share, collect, collaborate and publish” (Wesch, 2011, p. 1). Social media permit students and teachers to have instant access to news, information, and interactive experiences through computers, tablets, and smartphones (Davis, 2007). The use of social media as educational tools presents professors with possibilities of using technology means with students to facilitate access to information for research, creativity and collaboration (Dynarski, et al., 2007).

Students are using social media tools both inside and outside the classroom (Mazer, Murphy, & Simmonds, 2007; Prensky, 2005). Edutopia (2008) suggests integration of social media technologies include “four key components of learning: active engagement, participation in groups, frequent interaction and feedback, and connection to real-world experts” (p. 1). Richardson (2006) notes that social media tools provide “vast opportunities to connect to and learn from and with authors, scientists, journalists, explorers, artists, athletes,

and many others” but laments that universities are doing little to use these resources (p. 16).

Persuading universities to allow educational access to social media tools has been an issue (Scott & Rockwell 1997; Prensky, 2001). Educators and researchers support the need to support appropriate use of technology in classrooms (Barnes & Lescault, 2011). Further, university faculty members are reluctant to use social media if it is not known to them or if they are hesitant to try new learning approaches (National Science Foundation Task Force on Cyberlearning [NSFTFC], 2008).

### Types of Social Media

Social media technologies include Weblogs (blogs), microblogs, Wikis, social media networks, podcasts, discussion forums, photo sharing sites, and video sites (Chu & Meulemans, 2008). Social media sites provide connection and communication which enable users to link to others, to send messages, to link to social networking sites that enable users to connect to friends and colleagues, to send emails and instant messages, to blog, to meet new people, to share pictures and information on common interests and to post personal information profiles (Connell, 2009; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2010).

### Blogs

Weblogs are usually called blogs. Blogs are arranged with the newest posted item at the top and usually are focused on a particular topic of interest to the participant creator (Bayne, 2008). Blogs consist of the title to the post, the body and content of the post, comments by readers, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) which gives the global address of documents and resources of the article on the World Wide Web (www), and the date and time of publishing (Dillon, 2011; Huette, 2006).

An EduBlog is a website that can include text, pictures, videos and weblinks designed for student use (Huette, 2006). Davis (2004) defined weblogs as:

Weblogs are spaces on the web where you can write and publish (post) about a topic or several topics. Unlike traditional websites, they provide instant, type-n-click publishing that can be done anywhere, anytime and from any browser. And, the best thing about weblogs is that they encourage discussion and interaction from many participants, not just a select few. Weblogs are sometimes referred to as *blogs*, and the act of publishing (posting) to a weblog is often called *blogging*. In educational circles, they are frequently referred to as *Edublogs* or *Schoolblogs*. (para 1)

Davis (2007) provides a rationale for educational blogging on *anneteachesme.com* stating, “Blogs help learners to see knowledge as interconnected as opposed to a set of discrete facts ... noting that blogging records online learning (and) facilitates reflection and evaluation” (p. 1).

Peters and Massey (2012) suggest that blogs are constructivist activities in that blogging allows students to become critical and analytical thinkers. Richardson (2006) also proposes that blogs allow students to be more reflective as the interactive process allows them to internalize learning through the experience of responding to information posts. As academic tools, blogs provide updateable Websites for students to become creators of information, to publish instantly to the Internet as an author, and the ability to interact with ideas and comments from readers (Ferdig, 2007; Karlin, 2007). Assignments for students to *write* become more interactive experiences where students research areas of interest and then create information, which can be shared with peers in class and others online.

### Microblogs

Microblogs are smaller form of blogs usually limited in the number of characters that can be used in messaging (Shih & Waugh, 2011). *Twitter* is an online microblog that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as “tweets”. Jack Dorsey, Twitter’s founder, explained, “We came across the word *twitter*, and it was just perfect” (Sano, 2009).

Dorsey noted further that the term ‘twitter’ was a short burst of inconsequential information like a chirp from a bird, a tweet (Dron & Anderson, 2007).

Twitter can be used as a professional educational tool to post classroom assignments, reminders about tests, and as a method to communicate between professors and students (Miller & Jensen, 2007). Some universities world-wide have adopted Twitter as a social networking tool that provides fast communication for students about their schools. Miller (2005) suggests that multiple ways to include Twitter in higher education classrooms include use as a polling device, tracking news and participating in research.

### **Wikis**

Wikis are collaborative webspaces that allow professors to share lessons, media, and materials with students. Wikis are used for more collaborative experiences using multiple access points to allow students to work with one another (O’Hanlon, 2007). Richardson (2006) suggests that Wikis allow students to work collaboratively for class projects and presentations that can then be shared with others. Students can become skilled researchers and the use of Wikis allows students as creators to build their own learning experiences and their own interactive, non-print texts (Higdon & Topaz, 2009).

### **Social Networks**

Social networks can also be used for educational purposes (LeRose, Kim & Peng, 2010). The term ‘social network’ does not have a positive connotation; in some universities the terms ‘academic’ or ‘educational networking’ is used interchangeably with social networking (Smith, 2007). Some networks are created specifically for a group of students or a specific class. Smartphones can be used as teaching tools that students use to connect to peers or teachers with questions on assignments, answer blogs, and help one another study (Project Tomorrow, 2012).

### **Photo and Video Sites**

Video sites provide easy, engaging resources to bring multimedia into the classroom to supplement lessons and research new interests (Shear et al., 2010). Social media sites such as YouTube provide a search engine for information with over 100,000,000 videos that have to be screened for suitability prior to classroom use (Shear, Hafter, Miller, & Trinidad, 2011). TedEd (2012) has videos and flips – lessons planned by volunteer teachers – for access by subject or video series.

Videos allow students to pause, repeat, review, and practice while working at their own pace or to move ahead of assigned lessons (McGill, et al., 2005). Video pacing is tailored toward individual student needs. Once video segments have been reviewed, students can work collaboratively in class with peers and the teacher to ensure lesson mastery (Richardson, 2006).

### **Laws Affecting Use of Social Media by Educators**

The use of social media is *the* current method best used for communication among students; however, some social media tools in universities are “blocked and filtered” (Smith, 2007, para. 1) usually due to concerns with cyberbullying and other inappropriate uses of social media. Jansen (2010) suggests part of the responsibilities for professors is to include responsible use of social media along with other areas for which educators are responsible. Smith (2007) speculated that it is the responsibility of the professor to speak openly to students and to train them to make ethical decisions about social networking. Some universities have taken a proactive stance in the use of social media in classrooms (Kleiner, Thomas & Lewis, 2007). Addressed as professional social media use, university guidelines often detail recommended practices for communication between employees, as well as between employees and students (Bayne, 2005).

Student privacy is a primary concern; thus, names of students, pictures, and personal information about students should not be allowed when

students use online resources (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Hemmi, Bayne, & Land, 2009). Professors are responsible for instructing students concerning what they should and should not do online, as well as notifying and explaining to students which social media sites will be used in classrooms (Matthews, 2006). Some universities also restrict direct communication between professors and students on personal media sites (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008).

### **Professor Uses of Social Media**

Digital literacy is also a requirement for educators (Dede, 2011). Professors are expected to review appropriate methods to use social media “in order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students” (p. 4). To establish effective instruction that uses social media, professors must listen and learn from current conversations with students, participate in the use of social media to promote positive learning, and introduce administrators to students’ needs (Hrastinski & Aghaee, 2012). Social media use is not a panacea, but it can be a reliable new learning technique (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2008).

Downes (2004) and Dede (2011) suggest the view of education, as a delivery model for information, needs to change to one with professors and students as creators of learning. Fullan (2011) recommends that increased student achievement necessitates instructional practices be explicitly linked to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that access information communication technologies (ICT). Social media tools allow “learning to expand beyond the four walls of the classroom and the hours of the school day” (Bjerede, Atkins, & Dede, 2012). Such access has enormous potential to increase student achievement as learning can be targeted to specific student needs. Student access to social media also has to be bounded by concerns for privacy and protection for students (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Professors must provide training for students in digital citizenship, building knowledge and responsibility for safe technology usage (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007).

Dede (2011) suggests the professor has to become skilled in the technology as well as the pedagogy. Training for professors is needed to ensure that they can use mobile learning technologies (Hemmi, Bayne, & Land, 2009; Kleiner, Thomas, & Lewis, 2007). Twenty-four/seven access to digital technologies can facilitate new media for professional learning through interactive technology (Fullan, 2011; Keengwe, Onchwari & Onchwari, 2009). However, adding social media tools to instruction requires professors to restructure 20<sup>th</sup> century pedagogies to leverage 21<sup>st</sup> century opportunities for learning (Hartstein, 2011). For professors and students, once isolated to their own individual classrooms with limited print resources, social media promote access, communication, tools for collaboration and analysis, and the ability to interactively share their knowledge (Junco, 2011; Klein, 2008).

### **Social Media Challenges**

All universities are not 21<sup>st</sup> century workplaces with equitable access to technology tools (Carr, 2009; Greenhow, 2011). Older universities often need infrastructure improvements to sustain technology rich environments; financial resources limit the ability of universities to upgrade technology (Greaves, Hayes, Wilson, Gielniak, & Peterson, 2010). Universities face major challenges in providing access devices for every student and educator (Williams, 2009). Even with the rise of relatively low-cost mobile devices, most devices cost at least several hundred dollars and need to be replaced every few years. Hew and Brush (2007) report, “Without adequate hardware and software, there is little opportunity for teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum” (p. 226). These authors further posit, “Access to technology is more than merely the availability of technology in a school; it involves providing the proper amount and right types of technology in locations where teachers and students can best use them” (p. 226). To ensure the integration of technology in classrooms, technology in terms of hardware (computers) and software (programs) must be accessible for professors and students (Gillet, El Helou, Yu, & Salzmman, 2008; Waters, 2011; Yu, Tian, Vogel, & Kwok, 2010).

## Conclusion

The use of social media may not be a panacea, but it is a technique that can change learning in higher education institutions. Professors and administrators are challenged to use social media as one technique for increasing cyberlearning and to collaboratively ensure the best learning opportunities for 21<sup>st</sup> century students. Social media has some built in concerns, but can be used effectively when coupled with professional development for professors who incorporate cyberlearning into their classrooms. Cyberlearning is the key to current and future learning but social media is often the force driving the innovation.

## References

- Ala-Mutka, K., Broster, D., Cachia, R., Centeno, C., Feijóo, C., Haché, A., Kluzer, S., Lindmark, S., Lusoli, W., Misuraca, G., Pascu, C., Punie, Y., & Valverde, J.A. (2009b). *The impact of social computing on the EU information society and economy*. JRC Scientific and Technical Report, EUR 24063 EN. Retrieved from: <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=2819>
- Allen, E., & Seaman, J. (2010). *Class differences: Online education in the United States, 2010*. Retrieved from: [http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/class\\_differences](http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/class_differences)
- Anderson, T., & Dron, J. (2011). Three generations of distance education pedagogy. *International Review of Research on Distance and Open Learning*, 12(3), 80–97.
- Barnes, N. G., & Lescault, A. M. (2011). *Social media soars as higher-ed experiments and reevaluates its use of new communications tools*. Retrieved from: <http://www.umassd.edu/media/umassdartmouth/cmr/studiesandresearch/higherEd.pdf>
- Bayne S. (2005). Deceit, desire and control: The identities of learners and teachers in cyberspace. In R. Land & S. Bayne (Eds), *Education in cyberspace* (pp. 26–41). London: Routledge-Falmer.
- Bayne S. (2008). Higher education as a visual practice: Seeing through the virtual learning environment. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13, 383–394.
- Bjerede, M., Atlins, K., & Dede, C. (2012). *Ubiquitous mobile technologies and the transformation of schooling*. Retrieved from: <http://www.qualcomm.com/media/documents/files/ubiquitous-mobile-technologies-and-the-transformation-of-schooling.pdf>
- Burbary, K. (2011). *Facebook demographics revisited – 2011 statistics*. Retrieved from: <http://socialmediatoday.com/kenburbary/276356/facebook-demographics-revisited-2011-statistics>
- Byrom, E., & Bingham, M. (2001). *Factors influencing the effective use of technology for teaching and learning: Lessons learned from the SEIR ♦TEC intensive site schools* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Greensboro, NC: University of North Carolina School of Education, Southeast Initiatives Regional Technology on Education Consortium (SEIR ♦TEC). Retrieved from: <http://www.seirtec.org/publications/lessons.pdf>
- Carr, N. (2009). Planning in a media sea change. *American School Board Journal*, 196(6), 34–35.
- Children’s Internet Protection Act of 2001, 20 USCS 6301
- Chu, C., & Meulemans, Y. (2008). The problems and potential of MySpace and Facebook usage in academic libraries. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 13(1), 77.
- Connell, S. (2009). Academic libraries, Facebook and MySpace, and student outreach: A survey of student opinion. *Libraries and the Academy*, 9(1), 25–36.
- Cousin, G. (2005). Learning from cyberspace. In R. Land & S. Bayne (Eds.) *Education in cyberspace* (pp. 117–129). London: Routledge-Falmer.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Barron, B., Pearson, P. D., Schoenfeld, A., Stage, E. K., Zimmerman, T. D., Cervetti, G. N., & Tilson, J. L. (2008). *Powerful learning: What we know about teaching for understanding*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Davis, A. (2004). *Educational definitions*. Retrieved from: <http://anne.teachme.com>.
- Davis, A. (2007). Rationale for educational blogging. Retrieved from: <http://anne.teachme.com/category/pedagogy/>
- Dede, C. (2011). Reconceptualizing technology to meet the necessity of transformation. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 5(1), 4–16.
- Deil-Amen, R. (2011a). Socio-academic integrative moments: Rethinking academic and social integration among two-year college students in

- career-related programs. *Journal of Higher Education*, 82(1), 54–91.
- Deil-Amen, R. (2011b, December). *The “traditional” college student: A smaller and smaller minority and its implications for diversity and access institutions*. Paper presented at the Mapping Broad- Access Higher Education Conference. Stanford, CA: Stanford University. Retrieved from: <http://cepa.stanford.edu/ecology/1-2-december-conference>
- Dillon, N. (2011). Rules of engagement. *American School Board Journal*, 198(1), 16–20.
- Downes, S. (2004). Educational blogging. *Educause Review*, 39(5).
- Dron, J., & Anderson, T. (2007). Collectives, networks and groups in social software for e-learning. In T. Bastiaens & S. Carliner (Eds.), *Proceedings of World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education 2007* (pp. 2460–2467). Chesapeake, VA: AACE. Retrieved from: [www.editlib.org/index.cfm/files/paper\\_26726.pdf](http://www.editlib.org/index.cfm/files/paper_26726.pdf)
- Dynarski, M., Agodini, R., Heavyside, S., Novak, T., Carey, N., Campuzano, L., Means, B., Murphy, R., Penuel, W., Javitz, H., Emery, D., & Sussex, W. (2007). *Effectiveness of reading and mathematics software products: Findings from the first student cohort*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.
- Edutopia. (2008). *Why integrate technology into the curriculum? The reasons are many*. Retrieved from [www.eductopia.org/technology-integration-introduction](http://www.eductopia.org/technology-integration-introduction)
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook “friends:” Social capital and college students’ use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143–1168.
- Ferdig, R. E. (2007). Editorial: Examining social software in teacher. *Journal of Technology & Teacher Education*, 15(1), 5–10.
- Fogel, J., & Nehmad, E. (2009). Internet social network communities: Risk taking, trust and privacy concerns. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(1), 153–160.
- Fullan, M. (2011, October). Whole system reform for innovative teaching and learning. Retrieved from: [www.itlresearch.com/images/stories/reports/Whole%20System%20Reform%20for%20Innovative%20Teaching%20and%20Learning.pdf](http://www.itlresearch.com/images/stories/reports/Whole%20System%20Reform%20for%20Innovative%20Teaching%20and%20Learning.pdf)
- Gillet, D., El Helou, S., Yu, C. M., & Salzmann, C. (2008, February). *Turning Web 2.0 social software into versatile collaborative learning solutions*. A paper presented at the First International Conference on Advances in Computer-Human Interaction, Sainte Luce, Martinique.
- Greaves, T., Hayes, J., Wilson, L., Gielniak, M., & Peterson, R. (2010). *Technology factor: Nine keys to student achievement and cost-effectiveness*. Retrieved from: <http://www.projectred.org/uploads/REP11/ProjectREDPreview.pdf>
- Greenhow, C. (2011). Online social networking and learning. *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning*, 1, 36–50.
- Hartstein, D. (2011). *How schools can use Facebook to build an online community*. Retrieved from: <http://mashable.com/2011/04/26/facebook-for-schools/>
- Hemmi, A., Bayne, S., & Land, R. (2009). The appropriation and repurposing of social technologies in higher education. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 25, 19–30.
- Hew, K. F., & Brush, T. (2007). Integrating technology into k-12 teaching and learning: Current knowledge gaps and recommendations for future research. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 55(3), 223–252.
- Higdon, J., & Topaz, C. (2009). Blogs and wikis as instructional tools. *College Teaching*, 57, 105–109.
- Hrastinski, S., & Aghaee, N. M. (2012). How are campus students using social media to support their studies? An explorative interview study. *Education and Information Technologies*, 17(4), 451–464.
- Huette, S. (2006). *Blogs in education*. Retrieved from: [http://tep.uoregon.edu/shared/blogswikispodcasts/Blogs in education.pdf](http://tep.uoregon.edu/shared/blogswikispodcasts/Blogs%20in%20education.pdf)
- Hulme, M. (2009). *Life support: Young people’s needs in a digital age*. Youth Net report. Retrieved from <http://www.youthnet.org/mediaandcampaigns/pressreleases/hybrid-lives>
- Jansen, J. (2010). *Use of the internet in higher income households*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/>

[Reports/2010/PIP-Better-off-households-final.pdf](#)

- Jones, C., Ramanau, R., Cross, S., & Healing, G. (2010). Net generation or digital natives: Is there a distinct new generation entering university? *Computers and Education*, 54(3), 722–732.
- Junco, R. (2011). The relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and student engagement. *Computers & Education*, 58, 162–171.
- Junco, R., Heiberger, G., & Loken, E. (2010). The effect of Twitter on college student engagement and grades. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27, 119–132.
- Karlin, S. (2007). Examining how youths interact online. *School Board News*, 73(4), 6–9.
- Keengwe, J., Kidd, T. T., & Kyei-Blankson, L. (2009). Faculty and technology: Implications for faculty training and technology leadership. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 18(1), 23–28.
- Keengwe, J., Onchwari, G., & Onchwari, J. (2009). Technology and student learning: Towards a learner-centered teaching model. *Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education Journal*, 17(1), 11–22.
- Klein, J. (2008). Social networking for the k–12 set. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 12(5), 1–5.
- Kleiner, B., Thomas, N., & Lewis, L. (2007). *Educational technology in teacher education programs for initial licensure* (NCES 2008–040). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.
- Langworthy, M., Shear, L., & Means, B. (2010). The third level: Innovative teaching and learning research. In *Inspired by technology, driven by pedagogy: A systemic approach to technology-based school innovations*. Paris, France: OECD.
- LaRose, R., Kim, J. H., & Peng, W. (2010). Social networking: Addictive, compulsive, problematic, or just another media habit? In Z. Pappacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 59–81). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Long, C. (2009, June 18). *Online social networking for educators: Educators build community and collaboration online*. <http://www.nea.org/hem/20746.htm>
- Matthews, B. (2006). Do you Facebook? Networking with students online. *College & Libraries News*, 67(5), 306–307.
- Mazer, J. P., Murphy, R. E., & Simmonds, C. J. (2007). I'll see you on "Facebook": The effects of computer-mediated teacher self-disclosure on student motivation, affective learning and classroom climate. *Communication Education*, 36(1), 1–17.
- McDermott, E., & Kowalsky, M. (2011). From teaching to training: Considering the implications of social media from school to the workplace. In *Proceedings of World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education 2011* (pp. 1478–1480). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.
- McGill, L., Nicol, D., Littlejohn, A., Grierson, H., Juster, N., & Ion, W. (2005). Creating an information-rich learning environment to enhance design student learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 36, 629–642.
- Miller, S., & Jensen, L. (2007). Connecting and communicating with student on Facebook. *Computers and Libraries*, 27(8), 18–22.
- Miller, S. (2005). *50 ways to use Twitter in the classroom*. Retrieved from: [www.teachhub.com/50-ways-use-twitter-classroom](http://www.teachhub.com/50-ways-use-twitter-classroom)
- National Science Foundation Task Force on Cyberlearning (NSFTFC). (2008). *Fostering learning in the networked world: The cyberlearning opportunity and challenge*. Retrieved from: [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2008/nsf08204/nsf08204\\_1.pdf](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2008/nsf08204/nsf08204_1.pdf)
- Navarro, P., & Shoemaker, J. (1999). The power of cyberlearning: An empirical test. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 11, 33–46.
- New York City Department of Education. (2012a). *NYC Department of Education Social Media Guidelines*. <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/BCF47CED-604B-4FDD-B752-DC2D81504478/0/DOESocialMediaGuidelines20120430.pdf>
- New York City Department of Education. (2012b). *Social media*. Retrieved from: <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/SocialMedia/default.htm>

- Ntiri, D. W. (2010) Access to higher education for nontraditional students and minorities in a technologically focused society. *Urban Education, 36*(1), 129–144.
- Oh, E., & Kim, J. (2007). How are universities involved in blended instruction? In G. Richards (Ed.), *Proceedings of World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education 2007* (pp. 6407–6412). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.
- O’Hanlon, C. (2007). If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em. *T.H.E. Journal, 34*(8), 39–44.
- Osborne, N. (2011, December 20). *Using social media in education, part 1: Opportunity, risk, and policy*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/industry/library/ind-educ-social-media1/index.html>
- Parameswaran, M., & Whinston, A. B. (2007). Social computing: An overview. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems, 19*, 762–780.
- Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. (2009). *The MILE guide: Milestones for improving learning and education*. Washington, DC: Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Retrieved from: [http://p21.org/storage/documents/MILE\\_Guide\\_091101.pdf](http://p21.org/storage/documents/MILE_Guide_091101.pdf)
- Peters, T., & Massey, M. (2012) *Blogs & wikis: Their educational uses* [Powerpoint]. Retrieved from: [www.faculty.colostate-pueblo.edu/tim.peters/tie/blogs1.ppt](http://www.faculty.colostate-pueblo.edu/tim.peters/tie/blogs1.ppt)
- Prenkys, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon, 9*(5), 1–6.
- Prenkys, M. (2005). Listening to the natives. *Educational Leadership, 63*(4), 8–13.
- Project Tomorrow Speak Up Report. (2011). *Creating our future: Students speak up about their vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning*. Washington, DC: Project Tomorrow Speak Up. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Creating+our+future:+Students+speaking+up+about+their+vision+for+21st+century+learning&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>
- Qualman, E. (2009). *Socialnomics*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons
- Richardson, W. (2006). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Richardson, W. (2012). *Why school?: How education must change when learning and information are everywhere*. New York, NY: TED Books.
- Salmon, G. (2005). Flying not flapping: A strategic framework for e-learning and pedagogical innovation in higher education institutions. *Journal of the Association for Learning Technology, 13*(3), 201–218.
- Sano, D. (2009, February 18). Twitter creator Jack Dorsey illuminates the site’s founding document. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2009/02/twitter-creator.html>
- Scott, C. R., & Rockwell, S.C. (1997). The effect of communication, writing and technology apprehension on likelihood to use new communication technologies. *Communication Education, 46*(1), 44–62.
- Shear, L., Gorges, T., Means, B., Singleton, C., Novais, G., Gallaher, L., & Lundh, P. (2010). *The Microsoft innovative schools program year 2 evaluation report*. Seattle, WA: Microsoft.
- Shear, L., Hafter, A., Miller, G., & Trinidad, G. (2011). *ITL research phase II design: Introduction ITL professional learning*. SRI International. Retrieved from: <http://www.itlresearch.com/>
- Shih, C., & Waugh, M. (2011). Web 2.0 Tools for learning in higher education: The presence of blogs, wikis, podcasts, microblogs, Facebook and Ning. In M. Koehler & P. Mishra (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference 2011* (pp. 3345–3352). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.
- Smith, F. (2007). *How to use social networking technology for learning*. Retrieved from: <http://www.eductopia.org/social-networking-howto>
- Subrahmanyam, K., Reich, S. M., Waechter, N., & Espinoza, G. (2008). Online and offline social networks: Use of social networking sites by emerging adults. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*(6), 420–433.
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2010). Anticipatory socialization in the use of social media in public relations: A content analysis of PRSA’s Public Relations Tactics. *Public Relations Review, 36*(3), 207–214.



- Teclhaimanot, B., & Hickman, T. (2011). Student-teacher interaction of Facebook: What students find appropriate. *TechTrends*, 55(3), 19–30.
- TEDEd. (2012). *Lessons worth sharing*. Retrieved from: <http://ed.ted.com/>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development. (2010). *Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*. Washington, DC: The Author. Retrieved from: <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. (2012). *Understanding the implications of online learning for educational productivity*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site?: Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14, 875–901.
- Wandel, T. (2008). Colleges and universities want to be your friend: Communicating via online social networking. *Planning for Higher Education*, 37(1), 35–48.
- Waters, J.K. (2011). Social networking: Keeping it clean. *T.H.E. Journal*, 38(1), 52–54.
- Wesch, M. (2011, March 23). The old revolution. *Campus Technology* [online]. <http://campus.technology.com/articles/2011/03/23/the-old-revolution.aspx>
- Williams, H. (2009). Redefining teacher education programs for the 21st century. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 26(3), 25.
- Yu, A. Y., Tian, S. W., Vogel, D., & Kwok, R. C. (2010). Can learning be virtually boosted? An investigation of online social networking impacts. *Computers & Education*, 55, 1494–1503.

# Academic and Campus Accommodations that Foster Success for College Students with Asperger's Disorder

Marc Ellison, Ed.D, Jaclyn Clark, MA.T., Michael Cunningham, Ed.D., & Rebecca Hansen, MA  
Marshall University

## Abstract

*Although the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has risen significantly since first described in the 1940s, there is a dearth of information in regard to effectively supporting the classroom instruction and navigation of campus society for students with Asperger's Disorder, and how to support their navigation of a campus society. This qualitative study explores factors needed to provide effective supports to college students diagnosed with this disorder. Investigators convened a panel of experts to provide input on the topic, and then used a Delphi surveying method to categorize common themes identified by panel members. The findings resulted in the creation of the Best Practices Checklist for On-Campus Supports of Students with ASD in Higher Education checklist. The information gleaned should be of value for those in higher education whose students may have ASD and for the school leaders they prepare.*

## Background

Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disability Not Otherwise Specified (PDD NOS) are psychological conditions commonly described as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), a term that suggests flexibility regarding impairment within this continuum. Research demonstrates that while individuals diagnosed with ASDs experience a "disruption in development [that] occurs across multiple areas of functioning" (VanBergeijk, Klin & Volkmar, 2008, p. 1360) those diagnosed can range from mildly to profoundly affected by the disorder. The prevalence of ASDs has increased significantly since the disorders were first described in the 1940s by doctors Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger. The Centers for Disease Control currently reports the prevalence in the United States at 1:88 children (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>). Males are affected at a rate five times greater than females: 1 in 54 boys are diagnosed with an ASD, while 1 in 252 girls are affected.

In contrast to Autistic Disorder, individuals diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder (commonly called Asperger's Syndrome) develop language and communication skills along typically expected

milestones and experience no clinically significant delays in adaptive functioning or cognitive abilities, with the exception of skills used for social interaction. Indeed, those with AS often have well developed vocabularies and "may possess cognitive abilities similar to neurotypical or gifted individuals" (VanBergeijk, et al., 2008, p. 1359).

Despite pervasive and often debilitating social, emotional, and communication challenges that exist within the autism spectrum, evidence suggests many individuals with ASDs have the intellectual capacity to learn within a mainstream educational environment (Huckabee, 2003) and many may be intellectually gifted (Huber, 2008). Some with Asperger's Disorder may be attracted to careers that can be reached only through the completion of academic study at an institution of higher learning (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Burtenshaw & Hobson, 2007). Indeed, the obsessive, fixed interest symptomatic of the disorder provides the focus for intense, rigid study and the ability to grasp narrow expertise of a specific subject (Farrell, 2004).

Evidence suggests that in 2008 there were "between 284,000 and 486,000 individuals"

(VanBergeijk, et al., 2008, p. 1359) under the age of 20 diagnosed with milder forms of ASDs potentially preparing to enter American colleges and universities. The increasing prevalence may create significant difficulties for colleges and universities unprepared for a growing number of students who have the intellectual ability necessary to enter college, but lack the social and cognitive organization skills necessary to graduate. The successful support of college students with more traditional physical or learning disabilities is well represented in education research and literature (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008; Wolf, Brown, & Bork, 2009). There is a dearth of research, however, regarding how best to support college students with AS (VanBergeijk, Klin & Volkmar, 2008).

### Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore elements needed to provide effective academic, social, and independent living supports to college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder. Specifically, researchers were interested in investigating the pedagogical and social accommodations necessary for an effective college experience for this student population. It was anticipated that a deeper understanding of the education and support needs associated with Asperger's Disorder would benefit individual college students diagnosed with the disorder and the faculty and staff within higher education who must instruct and support them.

### Methods

This qualitative study explored the phenomenon of providing effective instruction and support to college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, especially those issues related to their access and supports that address needs specific to their disorder. The research questions were:

1. What challenges do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder anticipate *most* students diagnosed with the disorder will experience on a traditional college or university campus?
2. What supports do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder

anticipate *most* students diagnosed with the disorder will require for success on a traditional college or university campus?

3. Do experts believe traditional "academic adjustments and reasonable modifications" commonly found in higher education meet the needs of *most* college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder?
4. What do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder report as barriers to providing necessary classroom and academic accommodations to college students diagnosed with the disorder?
5. What do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder report as barriers to providing necessary non-academic supports (on campus, but outside the classroom) to college students diagnosed with the disorder?

Through purposive sampling, ten experts were identified and invited to participate in an open-ended survey. Invited panelists were selected from diverse backgrounds; each, however, had extensive knowledge of autism spectrum disorders and professional experience in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder. Panel members included college professors, autism researchers, disability support coordinators in higher education, and individuals diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder who hold college degrees and who speak publically on the subject of autism-specific supports within higher education. Panelists were invited to participate by blind email. Seven of the ten agreed to participate. A description of panel members is included in the *Settings and Participants* section of this paper.

A Delphi protocol was designed to solicit information from panel members in multiple rounds until a consensus was reached among them. Investigators anticipated three rounds of surveys; however, only two rounds were necessary before consensus was reached. Round 1 of the survey (Attachment A) consisted of five questions that gathered opinions on: (1) the most common challenges students with Asperger's Disorder typically face in college, (2) the type of assistance

most commonly needed to effectively support college students with Asperger's Disorder, (3) the effectiveness of traditional disability services in higher education for students with Asperger's Disorder, (4) barriers to effective academic supports, and (5) barriers to effective non-academic supports.

Data received from Round 1 were organized into common themes, placed into a matrix (Attachment B) and then sent to panel members who were asked to either "agree" or "disagree" with results that emerged from that round. Panel members who disagreed were asked to explain their contention in detail. Round 2 of the survey (Attachment C) also provided the opportunity to provide new or clarifying information about each data category. More detailed information about this analysis is provided in the data collection and analysis section.

### **Setting and Participants**

The exchange of surveys and responses took place electronically via email. Panel members included disability service professionals employed in higher education; noted researchers and autism professionals; college faculty with experience teaching or supporting students diagnosed with AS; and individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders who have a public, national reputation (through authoring books or articles on the subject) for expertise regarding this phenomenon. A description of individuals who participated as panel members follows.

**Participant 1:** The director of a university-based autism service program and clinic that specializes in the support of college students with Asperger's Disorder.

**Participant 24:** The director of a university-based program that specializes in supporting and educating individuals with autism spectrum disorders across the lifespan, and has extensive experience developing support programs for college students with Asperger's Disorder.

**Participant 5:** The director of an educational program for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Participant 5 has a national reputation for expertise on the topic of adult services for individuals with Asperger's Disorder. Participant 5 agreed to participate, and replied with responses to Round 1.

**Participant 47:** An author, former university faculty member, and public speaker diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder.

**Participant 58:** A university faculty member, author, and public speaker diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder.

**Participant 69:** A disability services employee within higher education who has experience developing supports for college students with Asperger's Disorder.

**Participant 710:** A disability services employee within higher education who has experience with developing supports for college students with Asperger's Disorder.

Three additional individuals — a university faculty member and author diagnosed with an ASD, a director of a statewide autism support program, and a person who has publically disclosed a personal diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder and who directs an organization dedicated to teaching self-advocacy skills to the population — were invited but declined to participate in the study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Panel members were asked to complete each Delphi survey round by specific dates and reply electronically with answers to investigators. Data from Round 1 were organized per question, and an emergent category analysis was performed. Categorized responses were then ranked from "Most Cited" to "Least Cited" among the panel.

Two investigators independently analyzed each categorized response, and then compared outcomes to ensure a reliable interpretation of data. Disagreement occurred surrounding the

organization of responses of the terms *self-advocacy* and *disclosure*. One investigator interpreted the terms as a significant topic deserving of a stand-alone category. A second investigator interpreted the relevance of the terms to be contained within the context of other topics that addressed symptoms, such as *executive functioning* or *communication challenges*. Due to the prevalence of the terms in the responses from panelists, however, a decision was reached to make *Self-Advocacy and Disclosure* a separate and distinct category. Responses from panel members and the emergent categories that resulted are:

***Challenges most students with Asperger's Disorder will experience on a traditional college campus***

Panel members suggest a variety of challenges that exist for most college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, with the majority of those challenges being outside the traditional "academic," environment. Types of challenges identified by panel members, from most-to-least cited responses are: *social interactions with peers and professors, executive functioning challenges* (particularly in regard to time management and academic organization), *social communication challenges* (especially in understanding and using the pragmatics of language), *dorm life and independent living*, (hygiene problems or roommate issues), *dining hall and food preference issues, difficulty working in groups*, and challenges involving *self-advocacy* and *disclosure* of their psychological diagnosis.

Themes that emerged from these responses indicate most college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder will experience: (1) academic challenges, (2) social challenges, (3) communication challenges, (4) independent living challenges, (5) challenges with cognitive organization, and (6) challenges with self-advocacy and disclosure.

***The supports most college students with Asperger's Disorder will require to be successful***

The ability to recognize and access "resources" and "information" were key components to the supports panel members believed integral to college success. Needs identified, in most-to-least cited order, were: *a responsive disability services office, assistance with executive functioning elements necessary for the typical college lifestyle* (such as calendar and scheduling support, assistance with organization of assignments, and help with preparation for assignments and exams), *assistance with social interaction and participation* (especially professionals who can model correct social skills, or provide assistance in learning new social skills), *assistance with identifying campus resources* (such as school based clubs, organizations, and tutoring services), and *access to effective counseling services* (to help reduce anxiety and develop stress management strategies).

Emerging themes believed necessary for successful supports were: (1) access to basic academic adjustments and reasonable accommodations, (2) service personnel to provide direct academic assistance and/or advice, (3) service personnel to provide direct social assistance and/or advice, (4) assistance with identifying campus resources, and (5) mental health services.

***Assessing the ability of traditional disability services to meet the needs of students with Asperger's Disorder***

Panel members voiced strongly that traditional disability services on modern college campuses do not meet the needs of students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, with six of the seven panel members replying "No" to this specific survey item. Comments about this item were categorized into two groups: *traditional accommodations tend to be academically related* (extended time on exams, etc.) *assistance is needed in regards to clarification and interpretation of test questions and academic assignments*. The latter seemed directly tied to communication and language difficulties symptomatic of ASD.

Panel members suggest the needs of students with Asperger's Disorder differ greatly from the historical and traditional focus of disability services in higher education. Emergent themes were: (1)

characteristics of this disorder require a greater need for social supports than is provided by traditional disability services, and (2) the language challenges associated with the disorder requires a specialized delivery of information to the student. Some panel members opined that traditional disability services can be helpful; however social based supports are of a greater need than academic based supports.

### **Barriers that prevent necessary classroom and academic accommodations**

The misunderstanding and misinterpretation of symptoms, along with a general lack of knowledge about the disorder, appears to be primary barriers to effective academic accommodations. In most-to-least cited order, panel members report the *lack of understanding* about the needs of students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, the fact that *social needs are often unforeseen* because of the strong academic competence, and that *intelligence often masks the social needs* of those in this student population as three of the top four barriers to academic accommodations. Acknowledging that dedicated resources (including dedicated professional staff) are necessary for students with this disorder, panel members' second most mentioned barrier to providing academic accommodations was *limited resources and space* within disability or support offices.

Themes that emerged as barriers to effective academic accommodations were: (1) *knowledge of and about the disorder*, (2) *finances and available resources of traditional disability office*, (3) *too strong an emphasis is placed on academic ability by college faculty and staff, with too little emphasis placed on social ability*, and (4) *self-advocacy skills of student to request academic accommodations and the decision on disclosing the diagnosis to administrative staff and professors*.

### **Barriers that prevent necessary non-academic supports to college students with Asperger's Disorder**

Panel members expressed a variety of reasons that effective supports may be prevented from occurring outside the classroom. Those reasons

include: the *expense of hiring staff*, and the general *lack of staffing* to provide necessary supports, *negative attitudes and perspectives of faculty and administration towards students with Asperger's Disorder*, and a *lack of knowledge of the non-academic needs of support for this population*.

Themes that emerged in this category were: (1) *finances and resources of traditional disability office*, (2) *attitudes of faculty and staff on campus*, (3) *lack of knowledge among college faculty and staff about non-academic needs*, and (4) *student self-advocacy for non-academic related accommodations and decisions on disclosure of diagnosis*.

Once themes were categorized, investigators developed a matrix to illustrate how individual responses from panelists fit themes that emerged from the group (Attachment B). That matrix, a brief analysis of initial findings, and Round 2 of the Delphi Survey were then sent to panel members. Round 2 of the survey asked panel members to "agree" or "disagree" with the results, and provided each an opportunity to add or clarify information.

Four of the six panel members who responded to the Round 2 survey agreed with the results. Participant 7 added "Self-Advocacy and Disclosure likely pose as a top challenge" to the sections *Challenges to Campus Living* and *Non-Academic Barriers*. Participant 4 disagreed with content in the *Challenges to Campus Living* section, stating "Communication challenges are more significant." Participant 4 also disagreed with content in the *Non-Academic Barriers* section, stating "Faculty/Staff attitudes have a greater effect."

### **Conclusions**

Upon receiving and evaluating data from Round 1 and Round 2 of the Delphi survey, the following interpretations conclude this study:

1. *Social Challenges, Independent Living Skills, and Cognitive Organizational Skills* were mentioned as a need more often by expert panelist than was *Academic Challenges*. This suggests panelists agree that students diagnosed with Asperger's

Disorder are, generally, intellectually capable of performing in the classroom but struggle with the social and organizational aspects of the college lifestyle;

2. Resources dedicated to meeting the *Social Challenges* of students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder are considered integral to effective college support;
3. Traditional disability services are ineffective for supporting this student population due to: (a) its historical focus on meeting academic rather than social needs, (b) its lack of resources, and (c) its general lack of expertise regarding the disorder;
4. The panel of experts connected *self-advocacy* and *disclosure* more to academic success than to other aspects of campus life;
5. *Mental health services* are identified as a necessary support for college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder. These services, however, were mentioned fewer times by the panelists than the need for: (a) dedicated staff with specialized knowledge to provide supports, (b) having a well-informed campus community, and (c) utilizing a well-staffed support program with expertise in the disorder. An equal number of panelists mentioned the need for having staff to teach students to *identify on-campus resources and supports*, which would generally include student mental health services;
6. The panel of experts revealed *faculty and staff attitudes* may play a role in college success for college students with Asperger's Disorder. More panelists expressed a need, however, for increased on-campus *knowledge and information* about the disorder.
7. *Finances* and *Resources* were identified by the majority of panelists as barriers to academic and non-academic success alike due to the high cost of hiring personnel with expertise.

### Implications

Results of this study demonstrate that Asperger's Disorder is an enigma within higher education: the symptoms associated with the disorder—communication and socialization problems, difficulty establishing and carrying out goals, and

difficulty advocating for personal needs—create significant challenges for college faculty and support staff more familiar with students who demonstrate developmentally appropriate self-direction, communication, and social skills. The tradition within higher education is to admit, instruct, and support students who exhibit the academic and social leadership skills necessary to transition into the workforce. Panel members in this study suggest students with Asperger's Disorder may suffer an on-campus attitudinal bias: attitudes about the disorder may create unwillingness to provide intensive supports, and a general lack of understanding about the disorder may lead to the development of a deeper bias.

Higher education is guided by the principle, however, that a complete college education includes life skill training, career guidance, and training students in the art of relationship building. Accreditation bodies expect colleges to support student development in social understanding and cognitive organization, the very skill set delayed in this student population. VanBergeijk et al. (2008) state colleges must “learn to address the social and organizational difficulties of this [the AS] population” (p. 1362) and suggest that failure to develop an academic culture that recognizes and accommodates those needs is equivalent to being noncompliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As evidenced by this study, a lack of understanding about Asperger's Disorder within higher education creates significant barriers to delivering effective academic accommodations and support strategies. Colleges and universities would benefit greatly from hearing first-hand about the needs students diagnosed with the disorder have in higher education. Forming student panels comprised of students with Asperger's Disorder to inform college administration on policy and practice helpful to specific needs of the population would be a significant step toward a more understanding campus society. Dedicating finances and other resources to on-campus support programs with expertise in supporting students with Asperger's Disorder, modeled after the traditional TRIO

programs, for example, could assist with building a supportive infrastructure for students. And finally, the development of a best-practice checklist that outlines those supports known to be most effective with college students diagnosed with AS would be useful tool for students and family members as they interview at and visit colleges they wish to attend.

### Summary

Experts who participated in this study agreed that, generally, college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder have the intellectual ability necessary to succeed in the college classroom. Experts also agreed that social and independent living skill deficits, along with a general lack of understanding about the disorder among college faculty and staff, are most likely the causes for failure. This study suggested traditional disability services have been ineffective in meeting the holistic needs of students with Asperger's Disorder, and that more effective supports can be provided within campus cultures that embrace diversity, recognize the importance of a well-informed campus community, and dedicate resources to this student population.

### References

- Baron-Cohen, S., Wheelwright, S., Burtenshaw, A., & Hobson, E. (2007, August). Mathematical talent linked to autism. *Human Nature*, 18, 125–131. Published online by Springer Science + Business Media, LLC. Retrieved at: <http://ezproxy.marshall.edu:2536/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=12&sid=ee75be00-17ae-463d-8dec-b29bddfaeb2d%40sessionmgr10>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Autism Spectrum Disorders Data and Statistics. Found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>
- Dillon, M. R. (2007, June). Creating supports for college students with Asperger syndrome through collaboration. *College Student Journal*, 41(2), 499–504.
- Huber, D. H. (2007). *Clinical presentation of autism spectrum disorders in intellectually gifted students*. Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Iowa, United States – Iowa. Retrieved October 20, 2008, from Dissertations & Thesis: ProQuest database. (Publication No. AAT 3301714).
- Huckabee, H. C. G. (2003). *Correspondence of DSM-IV criteria for autistic spectrum disorders with standardized measures of intelligence and language*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Houston, United States – Texas. Retrieved October 20, 2008, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 3089804).
- Johnson, G., Zascavage, V., & Gerber, S. (2008, December). Junior college experience and students with learning disabilities: Implications for success at the four year university. *College Student Journal*, 42(4), 1162–1168.
- VanBergeijk, E., Klin, A., & Volkmar, F. (2008, August). Supporting more able students on the autism spectrum: College and beyond. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 38(7), 1359–1370. doi:10.1007/s10803-007-0524-8
- Wolf, L., Brown, J., & Bork, R. (2009). *Students with Asperger syndrome: A guide for college personnel*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

---

## Attachment A: Round 1 of the Delphi Survey

*Thank you for taking time to complete this qualitative survey. Your knowledge and expertise on the subject of supporting students with Asperger's Disorder in college is recognized and valued, and will be helpful in determining the direction of my doctoral research on this topic.*

*This questionnaire serves as the initial round of a Delphi survey. Subsequent rounds (likely three rounds) developed by the answers you provide will be sent to you electronically during the next several weeks.*



The five questions that make up this survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please answer in detail; then, email the completed survey as an attachment to co-investigator Rebecca Hansen. Her email address is [fuller26@marshall.edu](mailto:fuller26@marshall.edu) Please return your response as soon as possible, but no later than February 29, 2012.

1. Please describe the challenges you expect *most* students with Asperger’s Disorder will experience on a traditional college or university campus.
  
2. Please describe the supports you anticipate *most* students with Asperger’s Disorder will require to be successful on a traditional college or university campus.
  
3. Do traditional “academic adjustments and reasonable modifications” commonly found in higher education meet the needs of *most* college students diagnosed with Asperger’s Disorder? Please explain your “Yes” or “No” answer.
  
4. What barriers exist to providing necessary classroom and academic accommodations to college students with Asperger’s Disorder?
  
5. What barriers exist to providing necessary non-academic supports (on campus, but outside the classroom) to college students with Asperger’s Disorder?

### Attachment B: Response Matrix from Round 1 of Delphi Survey

“X” indicates the expert panelist identified this specific area issue in their survey responses

#### Challenges to Campus Living

Responder	Academic Challenge	Social Challenge	Communication	Independent Living	Cognitive Organization	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
1	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	X	X		X	X	
5		X			X	
7		X				X
8	X	X	X	X	X	X
9		X	X	X	X	
10		X		X		

**Most Effective Supports**

Responder	Access to basic accommodations and modifications	Staff to Provide Academic Assistance	Staff to Provide Social Assistance	Assistance in Identifying Campus Resources	Mental Health Services
1	X		X	X	X
4	X		X	X	
5			X		X
7	X		X		
8		X	X	X	X
9	X				
10		X	X		

**Are Traditional Disability Services Effective?**

Responder	Yes	No
1		X
4		X
5		X
7	X	
8		X
9		X
10		X

**Why Traditional Disability Services Are Not Effective**

Responder	Has a Focus on Academics	Does Not Meet Social Needs Inherent In Disorder	Lack of understanding in how to communicate information to students
1	X	X	X
4	X		
5	X	X	
7			X
8	X	X	X
9	X		X
10	X	X	

**Academic Barriers**

Responder	Knowledge of AD	Finances and Resources of DSS	Weighted Focus on Academics	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
1	X	X		X
4			X	
5	X			X
7		X		X
8	X	X	X	X
9	X	X		
10	X	X		

**Non-Academic Barriers**

Responder	Finances and Resources	Faculty/Staff Attitudes	Lack of Knowledge on AD's	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
1	X		X	
4	X	X	X	
5	X		X	
7			X	
8	X		X	
9	X		X	X
10	X	X	X	

**Attachment C: Round 2 of the Delphi Survey**

The five themes developed from Round 1 of the Delphi survey serve as section headlines below. If you agree with the expert panelist opinions documented in the Response Matrix under that heading, simply place an “X” beside: “I agree with the panelist on this topic.” If you disagree with their responses, or recognize something is missing from that section, place an “X” beside that survey item and then write in your response in the space provided. Please email your responses (by pasting them into an email or by attaching this document to an email) to Rebecca Hansen, [fuller26@marshall.edu](mailto:fuller26@marshall.edu) before March 23, 2012. Thank you for your participation and your expertise.

**Challenges to Campus Living**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

**Most Effective Supports**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

**Why Traditional Disability Services Are Not Effective**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

**Academic Barriers**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

**Non-Academic Barriers**

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix

\_\_\_\_\_ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachment D: Response Matrix from Round 2 of the Delphi Survey**

“X” indicates the expert panelist “Agreed” or “Disagreed” with the Response Matrix from Round 1

**Challenges to Campus Living**

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4		X	Communication challenges are more significant
5			
7		X	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure likely pose as a top challenge
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

**Most Effective Supports**

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4	X		
5			
7	X		
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

**Why Traditional Disability Services Are Not Effective**

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4	X		
5			
7	X		
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

### Academic Barriers

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4	X		
5			
7	X		
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

### Non-Academic Barriers

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4		X	Faculty/Staff attitudes have a greater effect
5			
7		X	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure likely pose as a top barrier
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

# Using a Biological Lens to Investigate Successful Student Outcomes: Linking Planning, Policies, and Population Dynamics

Tina M. Tinney

*Southeastern Louisiana University*

## Introduction

Research indicates that not only is graduating with a baccalaureate degree taking longer, it is being accomplished as a result of multi-institutional enrollment in the process of completion (Ewell, 2011). Increasing numbers of students are exhibiting patterns of multi-institutional enrollment and greater numbers of students are beginning their academic careers in community college environments (Fung, 2010). Students must successfully navigate and acclimate in multiple environments in an effort to obtain a baccalaureate degree. Graduation rates are focused upon as a critical measure of student success and accountability in higher education; yet, graduation rates indicate that fewer percentages of students are ultimately being successful in acquiring four-year degrees (Cook & Pollaro, 2010). Because graduation rates are longitudinal and track only first-time, full-time students entering a post-secondary institution, they have been criticized for not painting an accurate picture of student outcomes and ignoring the transfer population (Cook & Pollaro, 2010). The study focuses on investigating factors that characterize differences between transfer and native student populations in a university environment, their utilization of academic and social resources, and how educational leaders may gain a broader understanding of the portrait of students migrating through higher educational environments. Continued emphasis on higher admission standards demands that transfer student success is tracked and examined multi-dimensionally in an effort to truly exercise effective institutional planning and policy. In light of increased scrutiny of accountability in higher education and stringent economic budgets, this study has implications for

exploring true measures of institutional effectiveness of sub-populations of students previously not examined.

## Purpose of the Study

While most studies focus on student characteristics as indicators of persistence as a successful academic outcome, this study explored differences in behavior, as well as characteristics, among native and transfer students regarding the use of various environmental resources (academic, social, institutional) to assess successful academic outcomes. In this study, transfer students are defined as any student who matriculated to the four-year institution following previous enrollment in a community college. A native student was defined as a student who attended the four-year institution without prior enrollment in any other post-secondary institution. This approach conceptualizes blending a biological model with an educational model to consider environmental resources along with the affective domains of energy expenditure and environmental perceptions (specifically, competition vs. cooperation) with an educational model that explores how the environment influences input-output dynamics. Astin (1993) argued that reporting graduation rates without reporting accompanying contextual environmental information was questionable; therefore, the I-E-O model served as a framework for the study.

## A Review of Relevant Literature

Graduation rates, attainment rates, and statistics related to postsecondary performance provide benchmarks for the analysis of successful student outcomes and institutional quality. Four-year

colleges graduate approximately 56 percent of students in six years, with Louisiana, the state in which this study occurred, averaging a six-year graduation rate of approximately 42 percent (Kelderman, 2011). The national educational attainment rate in the state is approximately 39 percent, with only 27 percent of Louisiana's working-age adults holding at least a two-year degree (Matthews, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Louisiana has the third-lowest percentage of adults who hold bachelor's degrees or higher (Kelderman, 2011).

In an effort to reach graduation attainment goals, both increases in access and success in higher education have become paramount (Ewell, 2011). Several convergent forces are responsible for increased numbers of students using community colleges as their entry point to higher education. Among these are growing numbers of high school graduates, increased admission standards among many universities, demographic changes that are increasing the proportion of poor and minority students, and the rising cost of college tuition (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2003). While the transfer of community college students to a university system is only one of the dimensions of transfer, it warrants priority consideration for several reasons. In 2006, 44 percent of all first-time freshmen

began their postsecondary careers in community colleges (Poch & Wolverton, 2006). There is insufficient data regarding the tracking of progress and success of transfer students. The Commission on the Future of Higher Education, also known as the Spellings commission, cited that databases currently available for use in the calculation of graduation rates are inadequate (Cook & Pollaro, 2010). Due to the lack of a federal student record system that could track individual students' academic career performance and the parameters held by the definition of graduation rates, a large sub-population of student data is absent from the institutional accountability conversation.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study expands upon Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) Model (Figure 1) by incorporating biological facets of institutional environments (Figure 2). A review of educational literature indicated that the I-E-O model has been used by several researchers to examine the relationship among inputs, the environment, and outputs (Astin & Sax, 1998; Campbell & Blakey, 1996; House, 1999); however, no articles specifically addressed the use of this model to assess differences in environmental resources between native and transfer students in postsecondary institutions.

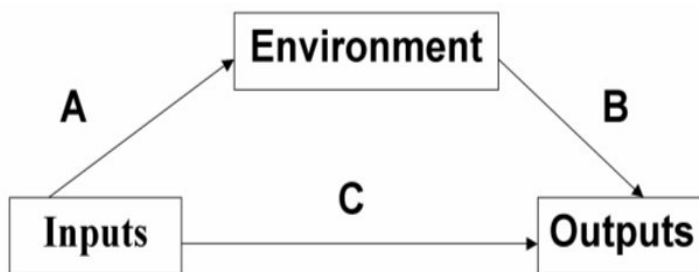


Figure 1. The I-E-O Model: Assessment for Excellence (Astin, A.; Copyright 1993)

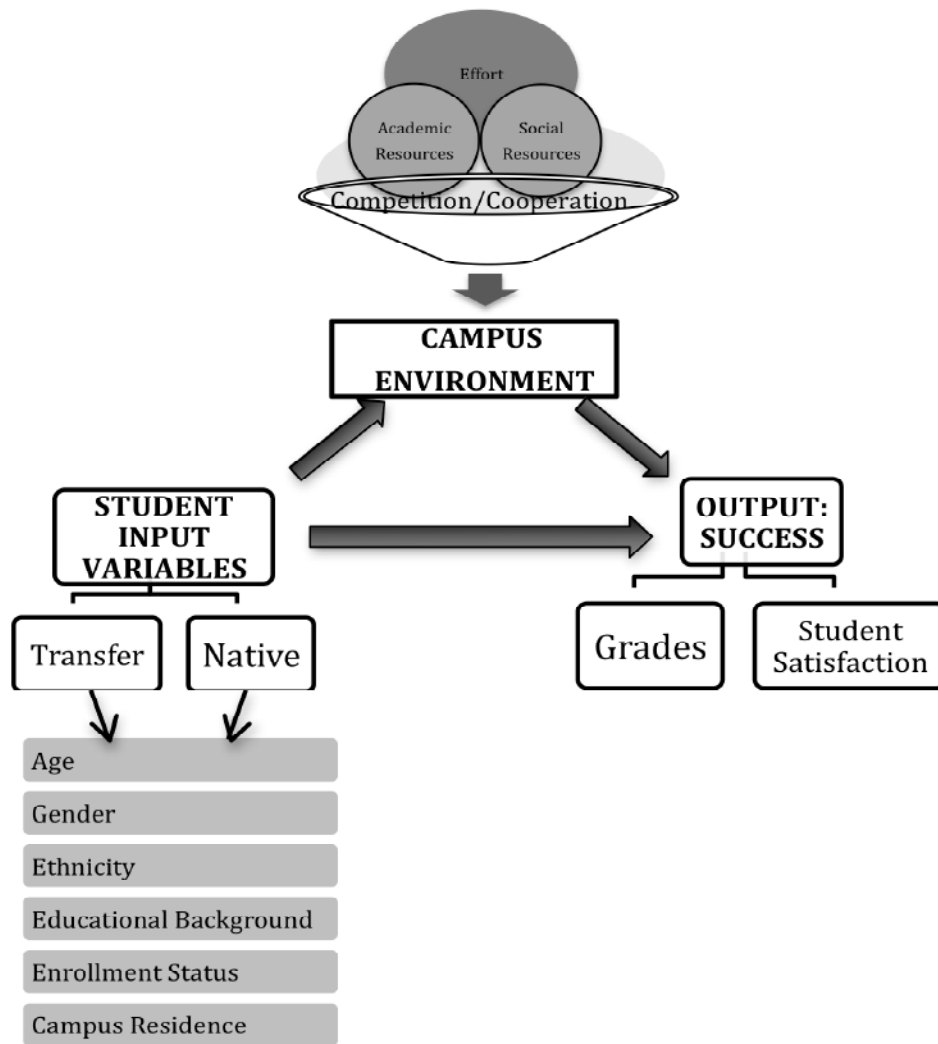


Figure 2. Higher Education I-E-O Model

Input variables pertain to the qualities that students bring to the collegiate experience and possess at time of entry (Astin, 1991). For this study, the distinguishing input characteristic of being native or transfer was primary, with gender, age, ethnic background, educational background and socio-economic level studied as secondary input variables.

The environmental construct was a complex dimension which could encompass several constituent parts. The educational environment was described as having both academic and social

components (Astin, 1993). Literature on student involvement, support, retention, and student success is being linked to student engagement in both of these areas (Tinto, 1993). Student involvement is reflected in the amount of time and energy students devote to educational activities in addition to the quality of their efforts (Astin, 1984). Because energy expenditure is also reflective of biological models and critical to survival, effort was a consideration in the model. Finally, the students' perception of competition and cooperation in the environment was an additional environmental consideration. Interactions with faculty and peers



were identified as an important environmental variable that fosters student involvement with perceptions of competition or cooperation related to student satisfaction (Chrissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005).

A common interpretation of “biological success” is associated with survival. Using this lens of interpretation, academic success may be associated with institutional terms such as persistence. For the output construct of “success,” grades and student satisfaction were considered as representative of both a student’s progress, as well as his/her likelihood to persist in that environment. Grades are an often-acknowledged standard of academic success (Astin, 1993). Student satisfaction was measured as a result of Astin (1999) suggesting that no other outcome category should be given greater priority due to its positive influence on persistence and academic performance.

Educational reform efforts have advocated interdisciplinary/integrative approaches as a means to connect disciplines and foster application of knowledge to real life situations. Consultants, researchers, scientists, and organizational leaders are attempting to understand reality more clearly by embracing the holistic approach as they use approaches that are inspired by models, simulations, and analogies (Ng, 2009). Researchers suggest that there is a dearth of literature that incorporates biological models and higher education (Poch, 2003). Leaders are challenged with exploring environments for unmet needs or underutilized resources and identifying how they are adequately serving readily identifiable segments of the population at the institutional level in order to create healthier situations (Smith, 1993). Researchers have suggested that using biological applications for organizational consideration is valid and useful and may offer deeper understanding of the organization (Sullivan, 1999). According to Lloyd and Maguire (2002), critical to the sustainability of an organization will be what the organization ultimately knows about itself and its environment rather than transient organizational structures or isolated processes.

## Methodology

Limited studies have investigated the behaviors of sub-populations of students in a single environment (Irungu, 2010). The study proposes to identify factors influencing successful student outcomes for transfer and native populations in a single, southern post-secondary institution. The approach to the investigation is a mixed method sequential explanatory design guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the differences in characteristics or traits between native and transfer student populations?
2. What are the differences in environmental resource utilization, specifically academic and social, between native and transfer student populations?
3. To what extent do native and transfer student populations differ in regard to academic effort?
4. To what extent do native and transfer students express differences in perceptions of environmental competition and/or cooperation?
5. To what extent do native and transfer students differ in regard to academic success, specifically defined as student satisfaction and earned grades?

The study consisted of two phases. Phase I was a quantitative investigation using student responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) conducted on the university campus in 2010. The data was disaggregated to examine 151 community college transfer students and 695 native students. Survey items were culled to investigate the constructs of environmental resources as well as student success. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to explore both differences in the populations as well as predictor variables related to success. Phase II was a qualitative component consisting of focus groups (community college transfers and natives) conducted to interpret and analyze responses from students related to academic and social resources in the university environment, as well as their effort and perception of the environment.

**The Results**

*Phase I:* Regarding differences, the native and transfer populations were analyzed with both descriptive statistics as well as chi-square analysis of those results to explore differences. The two populations were examined in regard to gender, age, ethnicity, father’s educational background, enrollment status, and campus residence. No statistically significant differences were revealed between the two populations in regard to gender, ethnicity and father’s educational background. Three demographics — age, enrollment status and campus residence — indicated areas of significant difference (Tables 1–3). Supporting existing research, in regard to age, the transfer population

was different ( $\chi^2$  (5, N = 845) = 201.955,  $p = .000$ .) in regard to the number of “non-traditional” students with significantly less representation in the 19 year old and less category and significantly greater representation of students in all of 24–55 year old categories. Additionally, enrollment status indicates a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2$  (1, N = 846) = 33.019,  $p = .000$ ) in part-time enrollment by the transfer population. Interestingly, campus residence was also significantly different ( $\chi^2$  (4, N = 833) = 26.936,  $p = .000$ ) with the number of transfer students living in dormitories or other campus housing significantly under-represented, indicative of a -3.5 standard residual.

**Table 1**  
*Phase II: List of Themes and Sub-themes*

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Academic Resources	Tangible resources on campus SE101 Online courses
2. Social Resources	Information provided by institution Institutional encouragement Athletics
3. Perceptions of Competition/Cooperation	Among faculty Among staff Among classmates On campus generally
4. Effort	Enrollment Information Academic rigor
5. Academic Career Reflections	Institutional impression Barriers to success
6. Notable Student Reflections	Cleanliness Safety

**Table 2**  
*Demographic: Age*

Age Category \* Transfer or Native Crosstabulation

		Transfer or Native		Total	
		Transfer	Native		
Age Category	19 or younger	Count	19.0	351.0	370.0
		Expected Count	66.1	303.9	370.0
		Std. Residual	-5.8	2.7	
	20–23	Count	39.0	253.0	292.0
		Expected Count	52.2	239.8	292.0
		Std. Residual	-1.8	.9	
	24–29	Count	40.0	62.0	102.0
		Expected Count	18.2	83.8	102.0
		Std. Residual	5.1	-2.4	
	30–39	Count	29.0	14.0	43.0
		Expected Count	7.7	35.3	43.0
		Std. Residual	7.7	-3.6	
	40–55	Count	23.0	13.0	36.0
		Expected Count	6.4	29.6	36.0
		Std. Residual	6.5	-3.0	
	Over 55	Count	1.0	1.0	2.0
		Expected Count	.4	1.6	2.0
		Std. Residual	1.1	-.5	
Total	Count	151.0	694.0	845.0	
	Expected Count	151.0	694.0	845.0	

**Table 3**  
*Demographic: Enrollment Status*

Enrollment Status \* Transfer or Native Crosstabulation

		Transfer or Native		Total	
		Transfer	Native		
Institution reported: Enrollment Status	Part-time	Count	31.0	42.0	73.0
		Expected Count	13.0	60.0	73.0
		Std. Residual	5.0	-2.3	
	Full-time	Count	120.0	653.0	773.0
		Expected Count	138.0	635.0	773.0
		Std. Residual	-1.5	.7	
Total	Count	151.0	695.0	846.0	
	Expected Count	151.0	695.0	846.0	

A regression model was developed to assess relationships between the inputs, native or transfer, in regard to resource utilization within the environment (E) and student success (O). The academic, social, effort, and environmental perception dimensions were measured in the environmental construct. Of particular interest, the model indicated that within the academic construct, the sub-score for instructional engagement indicated that natives showed significantly greater engagement than transfers ( $p = .002$ ). In the social construct, the transfer students demonstrated a significant difference in regard to the perisocial subscale ( $p = .003$ ) which measured student inclusiveness. The model indicated no difference in perceptions of competition or cooperation between the two groups.

Phase II represents the results of two focus group sessions designed to explore factors related to the input, environmental and output constructs. Group 1 consisted of 8 Native students while Group 2 consisted of 6 Transfer students. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes. The sessions were digitally recorded, transcribed, compared, coded, and analyzed. Themes and Sub-themes were identified as illustrated in Table 1. These sub-themes correlate with the NSSE instrument survey items, and revealed additional information specific to interpretation and the university. Specifically, the focus of the survey was to understand the characteristics and behaviors of undergraduate students and the resources that institutions are providing to channel student energies to these activities (National Survey of Student Engagement, n.d.). One area of particular interest was made evident in regard to social resources. While the native group complained that they would appreciate having more social activities, the transfer group identified numerous social functions and applauded the social campus experience. The two groups were clearly divided as to their perceptions of how well the university engaged students socially with members of the native group indicating that the university could “certainly do more” and arguing a lack of communication by saying that “maybe they do a lot of things but people just don’t know about it.” By

contrast, the transfer population voiced collectively that they felt they were encouraged to engage socially. One student stated that although their community college was “small town,” she felt more socially engaged at the university. Another student stated that at his community college, there was “no social anything” and that at the university he observed there were “posters and flyers all over the hallways and always something going on.” He went on to state that “here they want you involved in everything. I feel like I’ve gotten a 180 degree turn because I did nothing at (community college). I went to school. I went to work. I went home. Never anything social.” This information provides a rich layer to preliminary statistical findings that indicate that the statistically different resource utilization lies in the social construct, whereby transfer students more actively sought out and recognized campus social activities.

A second particular area of interest pertains to the exploration of “Effort”. It is notable that when probed, a variety of topics developed where effort was generalized to many different university aspects such as academic rigor, enrollment procedures, social events, information and technology. Three subscales were identified from the NSSE student surveys to reflect effort: Documentation (to reflect writing assignments), Challenge (to reflect academic rigor), and Study Time (to reflect effort off campus). Tied to the statistical findings, the qualitative phase revealed that “effort” had many facets in regard to student interpretation and may require further clarity and definition in survey analysis. Transfer students voiced that university coursework was perceived as more challenging. One student reported that he felt that he had to “put forth a lot more effort” at the university. In comparison to community college coursework, one student stated:

A lot of courses were just memorization and regurgitation. In classes here, you are more free to talk about things. Instead of do this and follow these steps, it’s like this is the idea behind it and this is what we are going toward. I like that the classes here are more structured around the Socratic method and you talk about

things. It's not like you're just learning something, it's like they want you to make the steps in learning and make the connections. It's like they put more emphasis on abstract thought.

This was supported by statistical findings in the linear regression model where students' responses regarding the effort required to meet expectations at the institution were measured. When the effort construct was added, only one dimension of effort, "Challenge," showed a difference between the transfer population ( $M = 5.78$ ) and the native population ( $M = 5.67$ ).

### Discussion

The researcher in this study investigated differences in the community college transfer population and the native population within a single postsecondary institution. After analyzing the data, the researcher concluded that the two populations were significantly different in regard to three demographics: age, enrollment status and campus residence. The researcher sought to gauge the success of community college transfers and explore whether resource utilization by this sub-population is being effective. In regard to resource utilization, initial findings revealed that transfer students are not significantly different in utilizing resources, demonstrating effort, or in their perception of the university environment.

Findings revealed no statistically significant differences in regard to the output measure of "success". The results of a multiple linear regression indicated no statistically significant difference in regard to satisfaction, ( $t = -.046$ ,  $p = .646$ ) which was confirmed by a Chi square analysis,  $\chi^2(52, N = 845) = 70.13$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Differences in earned grades were explored using a MANOVA and the results indicated no statistically significant differences between the transfer and native population, Wilk's  $\lambda = .985$  ( $F = .68$ ;  $df = 18, 1626$ ,  $p = .838$ ). This finding implies that a substantial sub-population of students are being successful in the university environment, but are not contributing to actual metrics such as graduation rates which ultimately yields an

inaccurate analysis of institutional performance in that regard.

### Conclusion

Assessment of institutional effectiveness has recently swayed toward accountability focusing on graduation rates. Yet, a loss of data exists as a growing number of students who enter the higher education pipeline via community colleges are not considered in this formula. Sustainability is a keyword pertaining to both biological environments and organizational institutions. Understanding resource utilization in an environment is imperative in identifying where investments should be made. This study identified notable differences in the area of the social domain that deserve consideration. The fact that the transfer population tends to be older students, enrolled part-time and living off-campus supports limited opportunities for social engagement. The recommendation to invest in opportunities for social collaboration and engagement to enhance campus involvement is paramount. The predictive pay-off toward this investment would yield higher success rates for students, translating into appropriately utilized resources and implications toward greater institutional effectiveness in regard to accountability metrics.

The results of the study have implications for planning by leaders in higher education. Foremost, with accountability being paramount in higher education today, it is essential to understand the performance of all students availing themselves of campus resources. Graduation rates have become an easily recognizable depiction of institutional effectiveness. However, this study supports the idea that measuring institutional effectiveness by this metric would fail to account for the success of the significant sub-population of transfer students.

### References

- Astin, A. W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. New York: American Council on Education/Macmillan.
- Astin, A. W. (1999). *Involvement in Learning revisited: Lessons we have learned*. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 40(5), 587–598.

- Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (1998). How undergraduates are affected by service participation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39(3), 251–263.
- Campbell, J. W., & Blakey, L. S. (1996, May 5-8). *Assessing the impact of early remediation in the persistence and performance of underprepared community college students*. Paper presented at the 36th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Albuquerque, NM. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED397749)
- Chrissman Ishler, J. L., & Upcraft, M. L. (2005). The keys to first-year student persistence. In M. Upcraft, J. N. Gardner, & B. O. Barefoot (Eds.), *Challenging & supporting the first-year student: A handbook for improving the first year of college* (pp. 27–46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Cook, B., & Pullaro, N. (2010). College graduation rates: Behind the numbers. American Council on Education. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&section=reports2&template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=8515>
- Ewell, P. T. (2011). Accountability and institutional effectiveness in the community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2011(153), 23–36.
- Fung, T. (2010). Analysis of graduation rates for four-year colleges: A model of institutional performance using IPEDS. Retrieved from ProQuest LLC.
- House, J. D. (1999). The effects of entering characteristics and instructional experiences and student satisfaction and degree completion: An application of the input-environment-outcome assessment model. *International Journal of Media*, 26(4), 423–434.
- Irungu, J. N. (2010). *The relationship between engagement and perceived academic, personal, and social outcomes for senior international undergraduate students in research universities*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest, LLC. ISBN 978-1-1096-2846-3
- Kelderman, E. (2011). To save money, Louisiana seeks to balance 2- and 4-year colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/To-Save-Money-Louisiana-Seeks/63462>
- Lloyd, M., & Maguire, S. (2002). The possibility horizon. *Journal of Change Management*, 3(2), 149–157.
- Matthews, D., & Lumina Foundation for Education. (2010). A stronger nation through higher education: How and why Americans must meet a “big goal” for college attainment. *Lumina Foundation for Education*. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED 512538).
- National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. (2003). *State policy and community college baccalaureate transfer*. San Jose, CA.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://nsse.iub.edu/html/about.cfm>
- Ng, P. T. (2009). Examining the use of new science metaphors in the learning organisation. *The Learning Organization*, 16(2), 168–180.
- Poch, S. L. (2003, November 12–16). *Higher education in a box*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). Portland, OR.
- Poch, S., & Wolverton, M. (2006). Transfer student graduation efficiency and university administrators: New bedfellows. *Innovative Higher Education*, 30(4), 233–250.
- Smith, D. T. (1993). The new view of biological evolution: Organizational applications to higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, 16(2), 141–156.
- Sullivan, T. J. (1999). Leading people in a chaotic world. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 37(5), 408–423.
- Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2) 167–177.



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

---

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

[education.auburn.edu](http://education.auburn.edu)

[srcea.us/Index2.html](http://srcea.us/Index2.html)

September 2013

Auburn University is an equal opportunity educational institution/employer.