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Without the support of AASA and Seton Hall University, the AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice would not be possible.

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Abstract
To comply with the terms of New York State’s Race to the Top grant, officials legislated an evaluation system that linked student test results to a teacher’s annual rating. The Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents in New York State, an organization of superintendents in districts just north of New York City, concerned about the model’s design, cost, and efficacy, met with state education officials, members of the Board of Regents, and representatives of the Governor’s office to explain why the model was not only ineffective in producing accurate data but had deleterious side effects. Rebuffed by these officials, the superintendents contracted with Education Analytics (EA), an organization with expertise on value-added measurement (VAM) to conduct two separate analyses of the evaluation system’s results. The commentary provides a brief overview of the study and a critique of the system as it is being currently implemented.

Key Words

teacher evaluation, VAM, APPR
To be eligible for Race to the Top grant funding, states had to agree to develop a teacher and principal evaluation system that uses student assessment data. In August 2010, the United States education department made awards to nine states and the District of Columbia. One of the states, New York, received $696,646,000 to be used over four years. State and school officials, starved for funding sources, embraced the money but failed to consider related costs and complexities of implementation.

Perhaps the most challenging task would be the development of a precise evaluation system that could accurately link student assessment data to teacher effectiveness. Such data would be used for purposes of accountability and employment decisions such as termination. A system would need to ensure a level of granularity that could make distinctions across the many demographic, programmatic, and instructional variations of classrooms across the state. Hence, the concept of value-added measurement (VAM) was introduced into the lexicon of New York’s schools.

Educational researchers raised objections. There was little evidence that this could be done. Superintendents in New York State were also concerned. They would not only have to overhaul a comprehensive system that would be more costly than the grants received by individual districts, they would have to negotiate the terms of the evaluation systems with their collective bargaining units. Districts would have to comply with new laws and regulations and provide significant professional development to implement not only the new evaluation system but revise the curriculum because of the state’s adoption of the Common Core standards.

The rate of change, lack of funds, complexity of the work, and unanswered questions about the research behind the reforms raised fears that inevitably a teacher/principal evaluation system that was supposed to be strengthened by the new laws would in fact be weakened. Superintendents also anticipated that the use of the system to rate and perhaps terminate teachers would face legal challenges and incur even more costs. The political illusion of accountability was quickly becoming transparent to those in charge of making and enforcing the changes.

As a result of these concerns, the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents (LHCSS), an organization representing 77 school districts and over 225,000 students, advised caution, study, and piloting to state education department and government officials. The organization decried the changes as not only being another unfunded mandate, perhaps the most onerous in state history, but one that required research. In 2013, the group called for an immediate cessation of the use of student data for purposes of accountability until an independent assessment could be made. They asked for similar reviews regarding the assessments used by the state. Were they valid, reliable, and developmentally appropriate?

State officials were unable to answer questions raised by the LHCSS. While they agreed to meet with the leadership of the group—beyond rhetoric about the need for college and career readiness and that the Common Core, upon which the assessments were based, were “internationally-benchmarked,”—they were unable to provide substantive research. The superintendents were frustrated.

When VAM was first introduced, the LHCSS superintendents invited Sean Corcoran
of New York University who wrote about the promise of the methodology but warned of a lack of precision, citing examples of instability in data that were being generated by such large systems as Houston and New York City. Agreeing that there is an intuitive appeal in the use of such data to isolate a teacher’s effect on a student’s learning, Corcoran’s analysis revealed a wide margin of error in the data, making it impossible to accurately assess teacher effect without years of data.

Corcoran concluded, “But teachers, policymakers, and school leaders should not be seduced by the elegant simplicity of value-added. Before adopting these measures wholesale, policy-makers should be fully aware of their limitations and consider whether the minimal benefits of their adoption outweigh the cost” (Corcoran, 2010).

The New York State Council of School Superintendents invited Corcoran to their annual state conference. Speaking before a packed room, he shared his research. Concerns were shared with state education officials who continued to press on, citing that these changes were required by the U.S. Department of Education as related to the Race to the Top grant.

Legislators were caught in the middle. They needed the money that the state would be receiving from a grant they had supported but were hearing from superintendents about implementation challenges and costs. State education officials assured them that this was the right path.

Governor Andrew Cuomo embraced the concept of accountability as defined by a rating system based on test scores. There was simplicity about the model that could be understood by the average voter. To quiet voices of dissent, the governor convened commissions and appointed their membership.

One commission, chaired by former Time Warner CEO Richard Parsons, toured the state to hear from multiple constituent groups on matters related to school reform. Following fervor over the Common Core, the governor formed another group to study the standards. Without the use of empirical evidence, the reforms had quickly become politicized.

Frustrated with the lack of a scientific approach to study technical elements of the reforms, the LHCSS decided to conduct their own research. In 2013, the LHCSS contracted with Education Analytics (EA), an organization affiliated with the University of Wisconsin, to conduct an analysis of the link between teacher ratings and student scores.

The researchers’ report included such suggestions as the need to collect data over multiple years to ensure a more reliable data set, caution in using such data for policy or accountability-related decisions, and the need to develop a protocol for daily data monitoring to ensure that there is linkage among teachers, students, and time. Education Analytics (2013) also cautioned that the “amount of evidence used in a decision should be proportionate to the stakes of the decision” (p.26). The researchers, hopeful about the potential of VAM, were markedly concerned about how it was being implemented and how the generated data were being used.

Again in 2014, the LHCSS contracted with Education Analytics to conduct a similar study. Examining anonymous data from 32 school districts in the region, researchers praised the state for making adjustments to its formula for measuring growth. These included the addition of covariate granularity for
covariates such as students with disabilities, English language learners, and average classroom characteristics that they believed improved the growth model. The authors described New York as a “pioneer” state in this work. Yet, as history has shown while some pioneers successfully find new frontiers, others have led followers into the wilderness on a trail to disaster. Consider the Donner party.

The report also revealed serious problems with New York’s teacher evaluation system. In fact, the minor technical adjustments failed to mask several significant flaws that have rendered teacher scores meaningless. The researchers cited a double standard inherent in the evaluation model. Those teachers whose students took exams based on Common Core standards more consistently received lower evaluation scores than the majority of teachers whose students were assessed with locally-developed or vendor-developed exams.

For the majority of teachers, the results of these exams contributed to up to 40 points of a 100 point composite total. The remaining 60 points were assigned according to a rubric that assessed teacher preparation, practice, and observational data. The rubric selection and terms of its use within the parameters of the new law would have to be collectively bargained.

The local assessments, some of which are identified as Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), were developed by teachers and used for purposes of accountability yet lacked the 5-10 years of field-testing, data gathering, development and training that are typically required before such instruments are used to make decisions affecting student placement or hiring decisions.

Aside from a lack of an empirical basis for the locally-developed assessments, the state’s design of the rating system that ranks a teacher within a range of Highly Effective/Effective/Developing/Ineffective (HEIDI) levels causes a disproportionate number of teachers to score in the upper range of the “observational” 60 point scale.

Based on the analysis of the EA researchers, the LHCSS published four findings:

- The state’s design of the HEIDI ratings causes a disproportionate number of teachers to score in the upper range. While there are various theories on why this occurs, the report suggests that the state’s design incentivizes districts to report ratings in the range of 55-60 points.

  The point assignment within the rubric is collectively bargained. In addition to points gathered during an observation, teachers are awarded for such tasks as communicating with families, setting goals for lessons, or maintaining accurate records. Typically, teachers have little problem providing evidence according to the state-approved plans.

  The analysis revealed that due to this design, the observational rating and practice component of the evaluation system – the 60 points – accounts for approximately 10% of the differentiation between teachers because the ratings utilize only a small part of the 60 points.

  District-to-district comparisons across the state are not possible. Not only does the state allow districts to choose from a menu of evaluation
rubrics, but they then must negotiate with their units on how points are weighted, the number of observations, and other terms. Hence, across the over 700 school districts in New York, there are multiple variations of the ways that points are assigned and teachers are evaluated.

- The state’s design of the HEDI scale requires districts to abandon almost all of the rating scale. Publically, the New York state education department suggests that 80% of the evaluation system is controlled by local districts. According to Education Analytics, this is not the reality. Districts are responding to a set of rules that requires them to abandon almost all of the rating scale.

  The researchers cite inconsistencies in the breakdown of points: “Of note here is that this particular breakdown is not consistent with the breakdowns mandated by the state for the state growth measure, comparable growth measure, or local components of the APPR. On those scales, the Ineffective rating represented 3 of 21 possible points or 14.3% of the scale. On the Composite Rating scale, Ineffective represents 65 or 101 points or 64.5% of the scale. The end result is that if a district used the consistent point breakdown for Observational Rubrics and Practice measure Ratings, they would disproportionately rate teachers lower than their component scores” (p.42).

  In order to rectify the flaws in the formula, districts would have to negotiate more skewed ratings categories. What collective bargaining unit is going to agree to such an adjustment when the use of such assessments has no empirical basis? What ethical school district leader would want to subject staff—teachers and principals—to an imprecise evaluation system that would place highly effective staff at risk and unintentionally protect ineffective teachers?

- The system is unfair to teachers and not an accurate measure of their ability to teach children. EA researchers report that districts are faced with a tough decision: “… they can follow the regulations and make sure that every single rating point is attainable on the observation rubric ratings, but if they do, it is likely that many of their teachers will be labeled Ineffective or Developing unjustly. If instead, they adjust their cutoffs on the rating system to only allow points between 40 and 60, they lose the ability to use the ratings as a helpful tool and instead are just a state compliance measure” (p.43).

- The system presents an unfair comparison between those teachers who are scored according to state exams and those who receive scores based on locally-developed exams. Those giving state exams are penalized. Education Analytics cautions that “… the New York State Education Law §3012-c(2)(a) does not specify what is meant by the 20% weight for state and local portions of the overall scale, and so the regulations as currently defined allow for a system that requires a collapse of the importance of the observational rating component to such a degree that it ends up being a ~10% contribution in
differentiating teachers. One interpretation of the law is that it should have a 60% importance in differentiation in the system” (p.46).

Summary
After over two years of researching the data used for New York’s teacher evaluation system, the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents has concluded that the current system is not only flawed but that teachers in the system are being subjected to an inaccurate and unfair evaluation system that is coming at a great expense to taxpayers and diverting funding from other student programs.

There is also the matter of incomparability. Given the current design and the allowable variations across the state, any attempts to compare teachers and school systems are ineffective and perhaps damaging.

The scaled score does not reflect an accurate measure of teacher ability. In its current form it simply does not work. The objective to rate teachers is not being achieved.

Value-added measurements, while not ready for use in high-stakes decisions, are baked into the law. Limited years of data for determining teacher effectiveness and factors related to teacher support during the implementation will lead to appeals and then legal challenges, all at a cost that may be greater than dollars already wasted.

The American Statistical Association (2014) has also raised concerns about both the return on investment and the deleterious effects: “Most VAM studies find that teachers account for about 1-14% of the variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in system-level conditions. Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences” (p.2).

As long as student assessments are used to assign a score to a teacher, the consequences of Campbell’s Law are in play. Not only is there an increased likelihood for corruption, but system priorities and resources will shift in order to conform to narrow technical solutions that reduce the acts of teaching and learning to simplistic exchanges.

The use of student assessment data to evaluate teacher or principal effectiveness corrupts a meaningful culture of learning. Of course, the analysis of data for the purpose of diagnosing student needs and improving instruction has a place in schools, but the linkage between such data and the scoring of a teacher must end.

New York’s education leaders may see themselves as trailblazers or pioneers, but they appear to be lost and en route to potential disaster. Before it’s too late, they need to listen to the local guides who can help lead them out of the wilderness and back on a trail that will positively impact student learning.

Author Biography
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References


Technology Leadership is Just Good Leadership: Dispositions of Tech Savvy Superintendents

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Abstract

This study describes core dispositions of school district superintendents who have been identified as technology savvy leaders by a prominent educational technology newspaper. The superintendents in this study described how they accomplished their technology initiatives and offered suggestions for other superintendents who aspire to be more tech-savvy. The most prevalent dispositions that emerged from the data set were that technology-savvy superintendents are collaborative, set high expectations, have a clear vision of technology and learning, tend to be risk-takers, and personally engage in the use of technology.

Key Words

technology leadership, superintendents, disposition
Studies have shown that after classroom teachers, building administrators are the school-related factor that has the greatest impact on student learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Vitaska, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

It has been found that the school leader accounts for approximately one-fourth of all school-related efforts that effect learning outcomes (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Leaders are thus in a powerful place to initiate educational change that can impact the educational experiences of the end users: the students.

Understanding the actions of leaders, whether at the school or district level, is essential for helping practitioners improve their actions and for researchers to gain a better understanding of what constitutes good leadership.

Fullan (2001) remarked that, “the main problem is not the absence of innovation in schools, but rather the presence of too many disconnected, episodic, fragmented, superficially adorned projects” (p. 21). Fullan further stated that, “educational change is technically simple and socially complex” (p. 69). Linking Fullan’s depiction of change to technology leadership, Hunter (2006) suggested that superintendents play a major role in the success of school-level technology integration.

Hunter suggested that to better integrate technology into schools, superintendents should set a long range vision, provide ongoing professional development, stress the importance of principals’ modeling for teachers, focus on curriculum and technology, and plan for continual infrastructure upgrades. Although relevant, Hunter’s research did not provide concrete examples of how this has been done and the role the superintendent plays in achieving these goals.

While there are some significant studies of building-level leadership related to technology (e.g., Anderson & Dexter, 2005; Schrum, & Levin, 2009), it has been noted that technology leadership at the district level remains under-researched (McLeod, Bathon, & Richardson, 2011; McLeod & Richardson, 2011; Richardson, Bathon, Flora, & Lewis, 2012) despite the fact that we know superintendents wield the power to dramatically influence innovative change efforts.

Thus there is a need for researchers and practitioners to better understand how superintendents effectively facilitate technology-related reform in their school districts.

The current study aims to address this need by gaining a better understanding of how the core dispositions influence superintendents’ leadership and technology initiatives.

It is our belief that how superintendents think about technology, instruction, and learning is informed by their leadership dispositions.

Our contention is not that these leaders have inherent characteristics for being technologically savvy. Rather, this study is intended to shed light into what dispositions
these proven district technology leaders developed, honed, and mastered over time. These dispositions have led these leaders into uncharted territory but also have led to noteworthy success as evidenced by national acclaim.

**Leadership Dispositions**
Dispositions have been defined as “values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behavior” (NCATE, 2002, p. 53). Dispositions have also been defined as cognitive tendencies and proclivities that guide a person (Perkins, 1995). Thus school leadership dispositions can be thought of as values and beliefs, as well as behaviors that guide a school administrator’s actions.

Melton, Tysinger, Mallory, and Green (2011) noted that “the elusive nature of leadership provides a complex challenge for assessing dispositions of administrator candidates” (p. 40). Nevertheless, a review of the literature indicates that there is an interest in understanding school leadership dispositions.

For example, researchers have described how the national adoption of standards, namely the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, has impacted leadership preparation programs to foster certain dispositions in its leaders (Bogotch, 2002; Coleman & Creighton, 2002; Rea, et al., 2011; Young & Petersen, 2002).

Both Cornell (2005) and Crawford (2004) researched dispositions related to ISLLC standards. After reviewing the existing research, these authors found that school leadership standards tend to stress four categorical dispositions that include social justice, school improvement, democracy, and risk-taking. Additionally, Martin (2008) found that practicing school leaders tended to hold the following dispositions: observable effort; cooperative and collaborative; reflective practitioners; and open-mindedness. McKerrow, Crawford, and Cornell (2006) researched school leadership preparation programs and found that they tend to stress the disposition found in the ISLLC standards as well as the four categorical dispositions noted above (i.e., social justice, school improvement, democracy, and risk-taking).

**Need for Further Research about Technology Leadership**
The National Education Technology Standards for Administrators (NETS-A) were first released in 2001 and later updated in 2009 (Schrum, Galizio, & Ledesma, 2011). The NETS-A are comprised of five standards, each representing skills deemed necessary for administrators to lead schools in an ever-increasing technology-infused society (International Society for Technology in Education, 2009).

These standards are:

1. Technology leaders provide a technology-focused vision for all stakeholders in the education system.
2. Technology leaders create and sustain a digital-age learning culture.
3. Technology leaders promote an environment of professional practice through the implementation of technology and digital resources.
4. Technology leaders manage their
organizations with the effective use of technology.

5. Technology leaders model and understand social, ethical, and legal issues related to digital technologies.

For each of the five standards, ISTE (2009) provides performance indicators that offer more specific descriptions of the overall standard. Thus ISTE provides administrators with guidance on how to achieve each standard. Like most professional standards, the NETS-A are brief statements of topical coverage and expertise and dispositions that school leaders should have with regard to school technology leadership.

As noted above, most of the existing body of literature focuses on dispositions of school leaders in general but not related to a phenomenon such as technology.

The link with technology, dispositions, and superintendents has been wholly ignored in the literature. Nevertheless, researchers have stressed a need for technology leadership at all levels since the early 2000s (Anderson & Dexter, 2001; Anderson & Dexter 2005; McLeod, 2011; McLeod, Bathon, & Richardson, 2011; McLeod & Richardson, 2011).

This call however has gone largely ignored. McLeod and Richardson (2011) found that there is a dearth of research dedicated to the field of school technology leadership in journals and at educational conferences. McLeod, Bathon, and Richardson (2011) also noted that of the research that does exist, much of the focus is on how tools are used rather than investigating effective technology leadership practices.

Since superintendents spearhead all district efforts, it is vital that those in the field of educational leadership understand the nuances of successful district technology leadership.

In an effort to transform school learning processes to meet the global demands of an ever shifting, technologically suffused citizenry and workforce, exemplary leaders have learned to implement and sustain powerful technology initiatives. Capturing their experiences through their own voice can provide the field with models as well as future research questions.

In this study, the researchers aimed to understand and detail the core dispositions of superintendents who exhibited and experienced notable success when it came to technology leadership.

**Methods**

In the sections below, we identify and describe the dispositions of a group of superintendents who have been identified as being technology savvy by their peers.

Because there is no agreed-upon definition of what a technology-savvy superintendent is, nor any generally recognized means of assessing such a characteristic, we chose a population of superintendents recognized by eSchoolNews, a monthly educational technology newspaper published for practicing educators. Annually since 2001, eSchoolNews has identified and recognized 10
‘tech-savvy’ superintendents. These superintendents have been nominated and vetted by peers within their district and across the United States.

Criteria for selection into this elite group include:

- modeling the effective use of technology in their day-to-day execution of the superintendency,
- ensuring that technology resources are distributed equitably among students and staff,
- insisting that adequate professional development is a component of every school technology initiative,
- demonstrating exceptional vision in leading the development and implementation of a district-wide technology plan, and
- thinking creatively and strategically about the long-term challenges and opportunities that technology provides in their district and in education at large. (eSchoolNews, 2010)

The initial selection process for this award is done annually through the readership at-large. Thus peers must have nominated an award recipient. Once nominated, the eSchool News editors select the ten superintendents who best fit the required criterion.

As the point of collecting data for this article, 100 superintendents were past award recipients. As noted above, each past award winner was peer-identified as a superintendent who has demonstrated a clear understanding of what it means to effectively lead technology-suffused schools.

For this study we believe these superintendents represent a reasonable sample of exemplary district-level school technology leaders across the United States. We also considered these participants to be key informants as defined by Patton (2002).

Once we identified our population, we decided to use a qualitative, phenomenological methodology to understand how these superintendents met the technological needs of their students, staff, schools, and greater communities.

This approach was particularly apt since our goal was to “illuminate and better understand in depth the rich lives of human beings and the world in which we live” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 2).

Further, by examining the meaning of an individual’s lived experiences, a phenomenological lens (as described by Rossman & Rallis, 2003) was determined to be most appropriate. To obtain a deeper understanding of these leaders’ day-to-day practices, we chose personal interviews as our method to collect data.

Personal interviews are a particularly powerful method for “studying people’s understanding of the meaning in their lived world” (Kvale, 1996, p. 105) and can result in thick descriptions of the subject being studied (as described by Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The researchers developed an initial set of questions for the interview protocol via multiple brainstorming sessions. We then requested input from technology and leadership
interested peers using various social network sites, including Twitter and LinkedIn.

Additionally, because of its wide reach and influence within the school technology leadership community, we solicited questions online at one of our blogs, *Dangerously Irrelevant* (http://www.dangerouslyirrelevant.org).

The crowd-sourced feedback that we received was incorporated into the second draft of the protocol, which was then given to a focus group of five experts in the field of educational technology and school leadership.

With the help of these experts, we created new questions and modified the interview protocol further, resulting in a third version of the protocol.

This third version was sent out to the same five experts for further amendment. Their comments were incorporated into a near-final interview protocol.

This fourth version was shared with three practicing superintendents who were not part of the research sample to obtain further feedback. At that point, we made refinements to wording and content to create a fifth and final interview protocol.

To recruit participants, we first compiled the names of all of the award recipients from the *eSchoolNews* website. The website provides the award year, the school districts of the winning superintendents, and short descriptions of what they did to win the award.

By searching the Internet and using social networking sites such as LinkedIn, we were able to locate the email addresses and/or telephone numbers for 59 of the 100 award recipients.

Recruitment of these 59 potential participants occurred through four rounds of emails and telephone calls. For those superintendents who did not respond via email and whose telephone number was available, the researchers attempted to make telephone contact on three separate occasions. Two superintendents declined to be interviewed, reducing our potential respondents to 57.

Eleven superintendents agreed to participate, resulting in a participation rate of approximately 19%. Thus, 19% of the entire population (i.e., award-winning tech savvy superintendents) participated in the study. We are uncertain how many emails and telephone messages reached the 57 superintendents whose contact details were found. Thus, the participation rate is likely much higher.

The 19% participation rate may be a result of the changing nature of a superintendent’s career.

Being that these superintendents were nationally recognized district leaders, it is reasonable to assume that they may become highly sought after by other school districts or in the private sector after winning national acclaim. This was evidenced by the fact that some of the award winners were no longer serving in the same school district as when they were recognized.
Given privacy and legal restrictions, school districts were unwilling to give us the current contact details of superintendents who moved positions. This potentially limits the breadth, scope, and diversity of our results. It was promising however that only two potential respondents refused to participate, indicating that a pattern of non-participation was not evident.

The participants (n=11) represents eight of the ten award years in the eSchoolNews pool. Intensive, 30 to 60 minute, semi-structured, open-ended telephone interviews were used to collect data. The interviews were conducted using BlogTalkRadio, an online podcasting service. With BlogTalkRadio, the interviews were streamed live and recorded for future listening. Participants gave consent prior to their interviews to make their conversations public in this manner. All eleven interviews can be found at http://www.blogtalkradio.com/uceacastle.

Since the interviews have been made public, the names used in this study are not pseudonyms.

Details about each participant can be found in Table 1.
### Table 1

**Demographics of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Exp.</th>
<th>Years as Supt.</th>
<th>Award Year</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Enroll*</th>
<th>Locale*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Eric Conti</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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*Data retrieved from Institute of Education Sciences in the Common Core of Data (www.nces.ed.gov)
Each interview was transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the team of researchers. The team also referenced information from the eSchoolNews website that described the accomplishments of each recipient.

The researchers determined an initial set of codes through ongoing, open, inductive coding. Axial coding was used at a second stage to make explicit connections between categories. Through this process, the initial set of codes were refined and expanded based on the data set. Finally, selective coding was used to validate the relationship between themes against the data. Coding was conducted individually. However, the three researchers iteratively collaborated on the coding scheme until a consensus was reached.

Results
The data revealed that the leaders we interviewed each held five core dispositions.

First, each superintendent understood that technological change requires ongoing collaboration. Second, technology innovations must have clear expectations.

Third, these tech-savvy superintendents were, in their own way, risk-takers. Fourth, these superintendents were personally engaged in technology and stretched themselves to learn the technologies as well as the pedagogies that they advocated.

Fifth and finally, these award-winning innovators had a vision for how technology should be used in their district.

These five dispositions are explored in more detail below.

Collaboration
Each of the superintendents in this study talked about the need to collaborate with teachers and other leaders to ensure the successful implementation of their technology initiatives.

Tom explained that his school district had teachers who were at both extremes.

He said that there are teachers who are always going to be pushing the envelope and stepping up front. We have teachers who are going to be compliant and who are going to go along and just do what they are asked to do. We have another set of teachers who are going to come along kicking and screaming.

Jan also described differences among teachers in her schools. Initially, teachers were classified as either walkers or runners for their technology training group. She added a third group however after receiving input from one teacher. “One of the teachers said ‘well, I don’t
fit either one, I’m a crawler. I’m not a walker and I’m not a runner.’ That’s what she decided.” These unique needs were very important for the superintendents to consider as each advocated, collaborated, and prepared personalized and relevant professional development for their teachers.

Many of the superintendents discussed collaboratively working to support the learning needs of teachers. For example, Lorraine said, “My philosophy is I don’t evaluate teachers ... I walk in to see what I could do to help them, and they realized that.”

Tom commented that his school district made classrooms more like 21st Century learning spaces by “providing the tools to all of our teachers.” Tom made a similar remark when he stated, “My job is to clear roadblocks” for his teachers so they can successfully implement technology innovations.

Tom shared his experiences with technology innovations noting how staff required ongoing, collaborative support. “We didn’t just put it [technologies] in our rooms because we wanted to make sure they were going to be used.”

Additionally Lorraine stressed that it was very important that she and her staff were comfortable making mistakes. She said, “You got to be able to get out of that comfort zone and try things.” Cameron also talked about how his school district did not force technology on everyone at the same time. He said, “I started with two schools and we went to four and then we went to eight. I did that incrementally based on the staff and the administration and the community saying they wanted to do it. So it was a base of support, not a level of antagonism going into the program.”

Manuel highlighted how it was important to involve and collaborate with the right people at the right time. He aptly stated that an important part of his job was “to get the right people on the bus.”

**Setting expectations**

Each superintendent understood and embraced the notion that innovation adoption involved real people with real needs. Each of the superintendents discussed how setting expectations for their teachers, themselves, and school leaders around technology use was essential to the success of a technology innovation.

Setting clear expectations with regards to how technology will be used for teaching and learning, as well as modeling technology use, were noted by each of the superintendents. For example, Cameron explained that his school district developed expectations for leaders by identifying competencies for leaders and then holding them accountable for achieving those competencies. He noted, “They had to pass and show competency in all of the different areas that we had designated as being important.”

These tech-savvy superintendents also discussed the importance of modeling as a way of demonstrating expectations. Tom stated, “It’s my job as a superintendent to model these types of usage and these types of programs.” Cameron added his thoughts on the importance of modeling when he stated, “It’s just being willing to roll up your sleeves and jump in or beside the teacher. It’s walking the talk with the teacher that makes all the difference.”
Eric used a blog not only to model technology use but also to communicate with his staff. Similarly, Lorraine said that “I try to model what I ask people to do.”

These superintendents understood that supporting educators in the innovation adoption process was an ongoing effort, not a fixed point in time. Each superintendent described the efforts they made to support the staff to ensure that technology initiatives were implemented as expected.

Many of the superintendents in the study had empathy for the educators who were involved in a major change process. Participants in the study talked about how the change process regarding any new technology was a journey. Cameron shared that “I have often compared our story to the journey of Lewis and Clark. I stress that we have to continually be flexible and change as we go through the journey.”

For this set of technology-savvy superintendents, valuing the need for clear expectations and outcomes was a strong yet resounding theme.

A core disposition of each of these change agents was that they understood that technology innovations exist within organizations of people who in turn have unique needs. This nurturing attitude helped these leaders navigate the innovation process.

These leaders set clear expectations for both teachers and leaders and stressed the importance of modeling and providing resources that enable everyone to succeed on their own terms.

**Being a risk-taker**

A core disposition that emerged from the interview data was that the superintendents in the study were each risk-takers. When describing tech-savvy superintendents, Sharon stated that they “tend to be risk-takers.” This disposition was reiterated by almost all of the superintendents in the study.

Robert described a challenge facing many superintendents that may impede them from being more tech-savvy. He said, “Some superintendents are not risk-takers. They don’t want to shake up the status quo and they are in here to survive.”

John talked about how it was important for a superintendent to create an atmosphere where it was acceptable to take risks. He stated, “You can’t do it by yourself. You have to create the environment that, first of all. It’s okay to take risks. It’s okay to move us forward.” Tom similarly commented that “I kind of embrace change. I mean I kind of almost enjoy it.”

A statement from Cameron also highlights this risk-taking disposition. He remarked, “I think you need to get out of your comfort zone and allow yourself to become immersed in what’s out there, whether you completely understand it or not.” Lorraine echoed Cameron’s comment when she said, “You have to be able to change and get out of your comfort zone.”

When describing the characteristics of a tech-savvy superintendent, Jan said that it “takes a lot of courage and energy and desire to move forward and do something that is big—that makes a big difference—and so I think
these people [tech-savvy superintendents] have the desire to go above and beyond and not just keep things as they are, but to try to make them better.”

Manuel talked about how, although standardized tests are important, he believes it is vital to transform teaching and learning and that technology can be used to accelerate that process. He described his thinking when he said “There is a little risk there. Why am I prepared to take that risk [when others are not]? I can’t answer that. But I know it’s a deliberate decision that people have to make, and when they make it then they will feel better about it and they can jump in. That’s really what it’s about.”

The willingness of these leaders to take risks certainly was one of the major reasons they were selected to receive the award of being a tech-savvy superintendent. Each of these superintendents implemented some type of large-scale technology initiative that was beyond the status quo for most school districts.

The superintendents in this study each discussed how district leaders must be willing to continually take risks, which often equates to a paradigm shift where one thinks outside of the norm in order to move their schools forward with technology.

**Personal learning**

Through analysis of the interviews, it became apparent that the participants each had different proficiencies with technology. A common disposition emerged however: Each superintendent was a lifelong learner who constantly sought out opportunities to enhance his or her own learning.

Participants talked about how they learned from other educators and how they used technology tools to help themselves learn. Although the ways in which they learned were not all the same (i.e., conferences, peers, personal learning networks, etc.), they each discussed their commitment to ongoing learning about and through technology.

In his recommendation to other superintendents, Manuel highlighted ways that he and his staff continued to learn. “People have to read, they have to stay current, and they have to change. I think that’s what we do it here and it works.”

Mark remarked that “superintendents who are effective have a predisposition for continuous learning. One of the things that we’ve done … is to work very intentionally and deliberately toward building leadership capacity and understanding that leadership involves using 21st Century tools.” John remarked that “you just have to have that desire to continue to learn, to continue to move forward. I think that helps keep you moving. You can’t stand still.”

Many of the superintendents talked about how they learned from other staff members, students, and colleagues. John said, “I try to stay as much ahead as I can, but I’m never very far ahead of it. I have to rely on my folks to bring ideas to me.”

Larry made a similar remark in reference to learning from his staff. What worked for Larry is “sitting down and working with my team to learn how to take that technology and turn it into something that's effective.” Likewise, Tom spoke about how he learned to create podcasts from students after he had
publicly stated he did not know how to create podcasts. Tom was invited to a fourth grade classroom to learn about podcasting.

Learning from other administrators and colleagues (even students) was one way that these tech-savvy superintendents continued to learn and hone their skills. Cameron said that not only did he go to conferences, but he also would “call up principals and say we are going to this conference and I would like you to come with me.” Eric said that he relies “more on my colleagues than anything” else.

Some of the superintendents talked about specific tools they used to continue their own learning. Jan shared that she likes to “follow different people through Twitter or sometimes I will put a Google alert on somebody or on organizations that I want to follow.”

Eric noted that he had a blog and that “most of our principals have blogs.” Eric added that he used Google Reader to monitor his principals’ blogs so that when they “add something new, I can easily sort of scroll through and see what they are doing.”

John shared that he subscribed to a number of technology RSS feeds and he makes an effort to send relevant sites to his administrators. Tom said that he accesses his personal learning network on his iPad and he has a “mashable app that keeps up with all the social media changes.” When using his iPad, he is constantly developing and refining his own learning needs.

In referencing tools used, Tom added that “I certainly think that the tools ... make it fairly easy to be tech-savvy now, and it’s a lot easier than it used to be.” Larry also talked about his learning process when he said, “What you learned today is probably obsolete tomorrow. So it’s always evolving.”

Most of the superintendents in the study discussed how going to conferences or engaging in professional organizations helped support their learning while, at the same time, expanded their personal learning network. Those conferences and organizations typically had a state or local focus.

John said, “When I go to conferences I purposely attend sessions with technology ... I can always bring back a new technology idea.” Larry also noted that eSchool News “is a great resource that I use all the time to see what’s out there, and see what’s changing and where it’s headed. I do clippings and send those out to my staff saying here is the way to use this to enhance teaching and learning.”

The disposition of finding ways to create one’s own personalized learning network was central to this group of tech-savvy superintendents. As an example, Jan described a tech-savvy superintendent as one who “reads, one who is hungry for more knowledge. I mean this would be a person who is a lifelong learner.”

Each of these leaders in this study was indeed a consummate consumer of information who epitomized the notion of a lifelong learner.

Setting a vision
Although the participants in the study did not hold the same vision of technology leadership, they each clearly articulated a strong vision that was personal and unique to their setting. They used their visions as a driving force for the
various technology initiatives that they implemented. In many ways, this disposition connects directly to the previous four themes that have been described in this article.

For many of these tech-savvy superintendents, an important part of implementing their vision involved surrounding themselves with the right people. Tom said “My job ... is to get the right people on the bus as they say in Good to Great, get them in the right seat and then probably just get out of their way.”

Manuel likewise remarked, “I surround myself with very, very passionate and excited leaders who drink the same Kool-Aid.” Along with the staff, Cameron talked about how important his governing board was to implementation of technology initiatives.

Cameron described how the district would “never be able to do any of this to the degree we are doing it without a governing board first of all that takes the risk with me.” Cameron further said, “I don’t have a plan fully developed, but I have a vision, I have a passion, and I have a commitment to improve our opportunities for our kids. They trust me. They run with it. That has been so rewarding in my last four years.”

Robert also had a vision for technology leadership. Robert shared that in his district they “changed the conversation to change the culture.” He explained that a tech-savvy leader must focus on “where we are going, and what are the building blocks to get there.” John additionally talked about how his district “created problem-solving and critical-thinking kinds of folks. We want to create an environment so that those folks take pride in that kind of a working environment.” Each of these comments hint at distributed leadership and a system-wide vision of technology leadership.

When describing his vision for technology infrastructure, Eric said, “Everyone expects us to have electricity available … and that funding is sort of built into our annual operating budget. What we said is we need to have that same sort of mentality when it comes to our technology infrastructure.”

Manuel also talked about how his vision impacted his leadership. “I think probably the most important difference is the belief that technology is here today and can transform the classrooms, transform student learning, and transform your community. You put … your money and your programs and your vision in all of that, and that's it.”

When detailing his vision, Tom talked about the change process. For Tom, vision was about urgency to change. Tom said “Sometimes this means creating a sense of urgency so that the others see the need to change; sometimes it may mean having some difficult conversations because a lot of times ... people are really going to experience some form of loss because that means they are not doing things that they used to do, or not in the way they used to do them.”

Jan’s words summed up the beliefs of many of the superintendents in the study when she said, “You can be a babysitter, or you can be a visionary leader. I think that tech-savvy superintendents are those who look for the next step and know where we go from here.” This disposition of a vision of technology leadership seems to impact every other disposition. Thus
the vision drives professional development, human interactions, and being a risk taker with a commitment toward change and continuous improvement.

Conclusion
Good technology leadership is essentially just good leadership for our digital, global era. As the 11 award-winning technology-savvy superintendents in this study demonstrated, there is nothing earth shattering about their dispositions towards technology leadership.

Their acts, thoughts, and beliefs are simply centered on learning how to use the modern tools at their disposal. If we reflect on what makes an effective district-wide leader, we must ask ourselves, what dispositions should be at the core?

Most of us in the field of educational leadership would agree that the superintendent should:
- have a robust vision for the future,
- be collaborative and empathetic about the needs of staff,
- push the envelope and risk doing great things for the purpose of continual improvement,
- set clear expectations about the learning needs of teachers as well as students, and
- engage in learning about the pedagogies and techniques in which they espouse.

These dispositions are ones we want in every effective superintendent and school leader. The five dispositions noted in this study are not divergent from those found in the literature review above.

In fact, our findings mirror many of the previous studies that indicate that effective school leaders:
1. Focus on social justice, school improvement, democracy, and are risk-taker (Cornell, 2005; Crawford, 2004).
2. Build vision, understand and develop people, understand the learning environment, and are instructional leaders (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2013).

Nevertheless, ample cases exist where a superintendent may be seen as an effective leader who espouses these qualities but who is completely disconnected from technology.

However, in today’s technologically suffused environments, superintendents cannot neglect technology. To be an effective technology-savvy leader, a superintendent must hold those dispositions that we know about effective leadership while including technology at the core of teaching and learning.

Effective superintendents have a forward-leaning vision that aligns with the modern times. For the technology-savvy leader, this means focusing on current and future digital tools that are or will be ubiquitous outside the school walls. For the superintendent, this equates to understanding the modern climate, understanding the clientele, and understanding the needs of the community.

The only difference for technology leadership with regards to visioning is the understanding that students live in a
technologically suffused world where the separation between humans and machine will only decrease over time. As advances in artificial intelligence, haptic feedback, contextual devices, wearable computing, and adaptive learning systems improve, technologically driven learning will become the norm. It is thus essential that leaders respond to these shifts with a vision that fits the times.

Effective superintendents are collaborative. The literature tells us that leadership must be distributive (Daresh, 2007; Fullan 2001; 2002; Hall & Hord, 2011). These effective, tech savvy superintendents each noted how they continually collaborate with teachers, technology support staff, students, parents, and the community.

It is through ongoing collaborations that these leaders were better prepared to serve the needs of the stakeholders while increasing the momentum of their initiatives.

Effective superintendents set clear, forward-thinking expectations. Setting expectations around how technology will be used if vital. The literature is abundant with failed technology initiatives. It is through having a clear understanding of how technology will impact teaching and learning that principals, teachers, and students and can embrace these powerful tools. Linking these expectations to applicable professional development and the vision of the school is imperative.

Effective superintendents understand that change centers on the needs of individuals. As Jan noted, teachers are busy people with families, children, and outside interests. Thus professional development should be personalized to the needs, interests, and availability of the individual teacher. These needs and interests are sometimes about the technology, but sometimes they are just about being heard and valued. Each of these tech-savvy superintendents valued and understood that the change process was essentially about changing human perceptions, beliefs, and actions.

Effective superintendents should be cutting edge risk-takers who focus on how to push the district forward in ways that motivate both students and teachers.

Larry stated that a key to being a tech-savvy superintendent is to “create a collaboration plan that recognizes the impact technology will have on student learning. Larry additionally said that superintendents must “take your administrative leadership, or a team of teachers, and sit down and spend 30 minutes or so every other week talking to them about how to use technology.”

Additionally Larry said that tech-savvy district leaders must “learn more about the system because then you will be more effective in coaching people on how to use technology in the classroom.” Cameron also noted that superintendents must make these decisions based on what teachers and students are doing and thus must have an intimate understanding of the needs at the classroom level.

Effective superintendents should be lifelong learners who stretch themselves and expand their comfort zone. Jan’s words accurately elucidate this point:

I don’t profess to be an expert about any of these things we’ve talked about. I mean we are in this
journey together with many people who are just trying to get better every day, and we make mistakes every day. We are very honored that we’ve had some recognition because of our effort, but we don’t profess to be the experts.

Being a tech-savvy superintendent is not easy. Gone are the days when this district leader was merely a manager of a large organization.

The modern superintendent’s job is situated in a digitally suffused world where students and teachers have access to resources and information (print, audio, and visual) like no other time in history.

Although it is impossible to know the work environment in which today’s kids will find themselves tomorrow, we are certain that it will be more digital, more technologically laden, more connected, and more chaotic.

It is the district leader’s responsibility to ensure that the P-12 educational experience prepares students for such a challenging world.

Good district-wide leadership by the superintendent is thus synonymous with good district wide technology leadership.

Just as the part cannot be disconnected from the whole, technology cannot be disconnected from the job of the superintendent.

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References


Comparing the Ideal Dispositions of Administrative Internship Candidates

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Abstract

This research will examine the dispositions of Instructional Leader Residents/interns (ILR/I’s) at a State Department of Education (SDE) mandated redesigned masters principal preparation program at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Once the dispositions' findings were tabulated they were compared with the dispositions findings of administrative intern candidates (AICs) at a pre-redesign master’s principal preparation program at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) within the same Deep South State capital. These two universities service areas include the State Capital with average daily membership (ADM) of 33,000 students and competing 17 private/parochial schools with an ADM of approximately 12,000 students. This area's school system has a P-12 school system that has a recent history of notoriously low-performing schools, constantly entangled in the revolving door of the state department of education (SDE) intervention, and it lacks quality leadership. The looming shortage of school leadership presents us with both a crisis and opportunity to redefine what it means to be an instructional leader (Bottoms & O’Neil, 2001). Our aim is to identify the right school leadership dispositions to create mentor models that meet the many challenges facing school leadership.

Key Words

school administration, school leadership, administrative internship
**Introduction**

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 principal preparation programs. However, there is limited research on the topic.

Research on the topic of educator dispositions is a growing field of study supported by institutions to meet the practical needs of P-12 partners. The Instructional Leadership Residency (ILR) is the capstone experience for principal preparation programs.

It is a time when residents/candidates are immersed in an intense and often financially difficult 10-day residency in an authentic school setting. Residents/candidates are guided through this process by a university-trained seasoned mentor (principal), usually from their local districts, and university professors, to complete selected activities in the eight state mandated standards based knowledge areas.

This guided experience is an opportunity for interns to integrate what they have learned in university coursework. According to Jackson and Kelley, internship programs should “enable future administrators to observe, participate, lead, and dissect important cognitive processes associated with identifying and addressing problems in leadership and management of complex organization” (2002, 5).

This research is a two-part study designed to identify and compare the Ideal Instructional Leadership Residents/Interns (ILR/I’s) beliefs and practices toward the dispositions of professional educators. The results will then be compared to previous published research results from an HBCU.

**Review of Literature**

Richardson and Onwuegbuzie (2003), state that the implications for assessing dispositions are profound because “this area is, by nature, subjective and is often dictated by personal philosophies” (p. 3). Those charged with assessing Instructional Leader Residents/interns (ILR/I’s) candidates’ dispositions must make an effort to use objective measures that minimize bias.

School leaders’ values and dispositions impact the quality of education in their schools (Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin, & Collarbone, 2003). In order to begin the assessment, we will start with a definition of dispositions.

According to NCATE (2006), dispositions are values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues and communities affecting student learning, motivation, and development, as well as the educator’s own professional growth.

As schools are pushed toward increased accountability standards by state boards of education and other accrediting agencies, we must measure why we do what we do in our schools and principal preparation programs. Imig & Imig (2006) state unless candidates are broadly prepared, it is difficult for the field to argue that local practitioners can achieve the reliable results that the public expects from professionals.
On the other hand, state licensing for educators has generally been more one of measuring the utmost important skills “essentialists,” which are limited to technical skills that are easily defined and assessed. Effective schools and appropriate leadership dispositions should be assessed, and standardized models developed to give direction for future professional growth for school leaders.

School leaders should leave preparation programs with the awareness that their dispositions impact the teaching and learning environment in their schools. “In order to implement successful school change school leaders understand that they have to convey honest relationships skills and the ability to hold stakeholders accountable for their actions to the public” (Pritchett & Riley, 2013).

In order for a graduate to develop into believable leaders, ILR/I must understand the impact of how their practices, beliefs, values, standards, ethics and principles make them who they are.

The candidates will face public schools that graduate and educate students who are not career or college ready. A disproportionate number of these high school graduates are being enrolled at this university (PWI) taking remediation courses.

For example, according to the Office of Institutional Research for this university (PWI), during the 2010-2011 academic year of the new freshmen students, approximately 33 percent are college ready or are not confined to enroll in non-credit remediation courses provided by the University.

Purpose of Study
The purpose of the study was threefold: (1) determine if Instructional Leadership Resident/Interns (ILR/I’s) perceptions of their actions were related to their espoused beliefs and practice as school leaders at a city university in a state located in the southeast, (2) to compare candidates (ILR/I’s) results at this PWI with the results of previous candidates (AIC’s) at an HBCU within the same metropolitan area, and (3) to determine if there remains confusion regarding what actions of school leaders are necessary to lead effective schools.

Research Questions
Using the work from the authors’ previously published research on this topic (2008), the foundational research question which unguared this second study was: **What are the dispositions of potential school leaders whose decisions will have a direct impact upon the teaching and learning process?**

Four specific question-sets were posed to participants for the purpose of determining if a relationship existed between potential school leaders’ dispositions at two different principal preparation programs in a deep south state:

1. Do you believe that all children can learn at high levels and if so do you persist in helping all students achieve at high levels?
2. Is it important for you to keep abreast of new ideas in the field?
3. Are you committed to explore, examine, and use research findings in your decision-making?
4. Do you demonstrate the belief that teachers and pupils’ views are important?

**Research Design**

**Method**

This study used a quasi-experimental design, comparing changes in perceptions across time and programmatic change. The quasi-experimental design did not use random assignment, but inferences about the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable are possible.

This study allowed for comparisons of perceptions over time to determine the relationship potential of school leader’s belief and practice. The study allowed for potential school leaders to consider how their daily actions and relationship-building strategies impact effective school leadership.

The researchers used a self-designed instrument containing two sections. This survey was created by a committee of college of education faculty members, who selected key dispositions from the NCATE initial dispositions list.

The initial survey was administered to graduate leadership candidates to test the validity. An online survey consisting of an 18 item double-sided Likert Scale questionnaire was constructed using two domains of focus.

These domains are: (1) section I: demographics and (2) section II: disposition survey questions. Section II consists of a list of 18 disposition statements on each side of which contain a 5-point Likert like scale to assess both the beliefs and decision-making practices of each ILR/I (N-35/70). A total of 70 participants were completing or had completed their administrative internship. Thirty-five (50%) respondents were from a redesigned Principal Preparation Program at an Predominantly White Institution (PWI) who completed a 10-day residency in a major city within a state in the deep south. Thirty-seven residents/interns (N-37/156) completed an online survey of this study at a (PWI) deep south regional university.

These results were then compared to 35 participants who were at an historically black college or university (HBCU) and had completed a 300-hour disjointed internship in that same city. See Table 1. Of the participants at the HBCU, 74 percent were Black (n=26), 20 percent were white (n=7), 3 percent were Native American, 3 percent were international (n=1), (n=1), 26 percent of (n=9) the respondents were in an age range 23-27 versus zero percent (n=0) at the PWI, 20 percent of (n=7) respondents were in an age range 28-32, 17 percent of (n=6) respondents were in an age range 33-37, 23 percent of (n=8) respondents were age range 38-42, 14 percent of (n=5) respondents were in an age range 43-47.

The data at the PWI further revealed that 11 percent (n=4) of candidates were over the age range of 47 and opposed none (n=0) at the HBCU. The majority of candidates completed part-time resident placements at the PWI. Of the participants at the PWI 72 percent were Black (n=25), 32 percent were white (n=12), 77 percent were female (n=27), and 22 percent were male (n=8).
Table 1

*Demographic Representation of Instructional Leader Residents & AIC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PWI (N=37)</th>
<th>HBCU (N=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree</strong></td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teacher</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=37/35. Totals on some tables may vary due to non-responses to some items.

The statistical procedures narrative provides demographic information about the Instructional Leader Resident intern candidates who participated in this study. The number of missing variables for responses to each question scored ranged from a low of 1 and a high of 4. On the left side of the scale candidates were to report the level of
importance or their attitudes about beliefs. On the right side of the scale, they were to report the level to which they practiced dispositions associated with their beliefs and practices included in the online survey. Respondents’ opinions could range from 1-5, one being low and five being high.

**Instrumentation**

An online survey was developed by the researcher and several education faculty members. Survey items were based on findings from NCATE literature on initial teacher education dispositions.

The study required the collection and analysis of data regarding two scales: (1) disposition belief reported and defined by NCATE, and (2) disposition practice. The rating scaled use was based on a response of one (low) to five (high) for each survey item. The highest and lowest rated variables were selected and benchmarks for comparison at a PWI and an HBCU toward interns’ beliefs versus practice were compared.

Four variables were created from the larger data set to complete this study. Means, standard deviations, were used for cross tabulations to show the relevance of the independent variables and dependent variables in relation to perceived success rates for instructional leader and administrative intern candidates (N=37/35).

**Significance of Study**

In 2005, Pryor and Pryor stated that research indicated that people’s beliefs greatly impact their actions (practice). Principals espoused beliefs regarding their role as school leaders would have had a significant impact on their practice as school leaders. At the time of this research, the southeastern region of this country has reached another milestone; it serves the majority of low-income students in public education for the first time in 40 years (SEF Research Report-A New Majority, 2007, p.8).

Outside legislative pressures are being placed onto school district daily. Outside pressures come from the following entities, legislation, and policies: (a) SDE, (b) NCLB 2001, (c) private schools, (d) school choice, (d) credit recovery, and (e) increased cheating scandals. These demands for improved student outcomes are being tied to federal funding, which is exacerbated by state legislatures through unfunded mandates.

**Survey Instrument**

The online survey instrument used measured dispositions, practices and beliefs in ILR/T’s decision-making processes. Respondents answered questions pertaining to their beliefs and practice pertaining to educating children, advanced preparation in the field, the utilization of research and practical techniques in the educational environment and their beliefs and practice about views of teachers and pupils being important considerations in the decision-making process.

Outcome measures include: beliefs and practices relative to the ability of all children to learn, success in learning outcomes based on pupil strengths, and the positive effects of research in decision-making.

The findings are reported for each of the four research questions, followed by a discussion and recommendations. The statistical procedures narrative provides
demographic information about the ILR’s/interns who participated in this study. The total number of respondents was N=37/35 respectively. A double-sided Likert –like scale was used to generate responses from those participating in the study. On the left side of the scale candidates were to report the level of importance of their attitudes about beliefs. On the right side of the scale, they were to report the level to which they practiced dispositions associated with the beliefs and practices included in the on-line survey. Respondents’ opinions could range from 1-5, one being low and five being high.

**Findings**
Because of the growing concern in this area of research, there are now more studies being conducted that address the perceptions and dispositions of potential school leaders. It is generally believed that because of advanced training and a desire to be in an educational environment, an individual will automatically be prepared to understand the educational and environmental needs of children and those responsible for providing these services.

Table 2 presents the results related to the participants’ dispositions about whether they thought that all children can learn at high levels and if so and did they persist in helping all students achieve at high levels? The majority of respondents to three of the four survey questions in this section indicated strongly that (a) all students could learn, (b) it is important to keep abreast of new ideas, and (c) valued the use of education technology.

### Table 2

**Instructional Leader Residents Intern Candidates Expectations of Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believes All Children Can Learn</td>
<td>4.66/.64</td>
<td>4.73/.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in Prof. Ed. Development</td>
<td>4.03/.82</td>
<td>4.88/.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values the Use of Ed. Technology</td>
<td>4.79/.41</td>
<td>4.79/.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages in Reflective Discussion</td>
<td>4.63/.42</td>
<td>4.65/.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 37. Totals vary because some respondents did not answer some items. This variable scored the lowest among candidates at the PWI.
The importance of views of pupils and teachers was the highest rated set of variables. See Table 3. Approximately 90 percent of the respondents who answered this set of survey questions indicated that it was very important that they (a) kept abreast of new ideas, (b) were disposed to use students’ strengths, and (c) had a willingness to help peers. The participants thought it was less important to explore and use research.

Table 3

**Instructional Leader Residents Intern Candidates Importance of Views of Pupils and Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher and Pupils Views are Imp.</th>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/SD</td>
<td>M/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps Abreast of New Ideas</td>
<td>4.63/.56</td>
<td>4.54/.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore Examine and Use Research</td>
<td>4.45/.56</td>
<td>4.47/.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposed to Use Students Strengths</td>
<td>4.66/.59</td>
<td>4.70/.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Help Peers</td>
<td>4.91/.28</td>
<td>4.8/.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 37. Totals vary because some respondents did not answer some items. This variable scored the highest among candidates at the PWI.

One key question that arises from the findings in this study revolves around belief and practice that all children can learn.

Variable 1 from Table 1, Expectation of Learning, was a major concern at the PWI and of moderate concern at the HBCU. If the interns at both universities do not put a premium on the expectation of learning for all students how can educators close the achievement gap?

**Answers to Research Questions**

The first research question was: *“Do you believe that all children can learn at high levels and do you persist in helping all students achieve at high levels?”*

The belief and practice of educational leaders has shown to be critical to the continuity of the process to improve student learning and school advancement. The majority (N=23) of the respondents indicated that it is
important to join and participate in professional educational organizations. The majority (N=27) of the respondents indicated that the use of educational technology is important and they indicated that it is important to engage in reflective discussions with fellow candidates, faculty and supervisors.

The second research question was: “Is it important for you to keep abreast of new ideas in the field?”

The results suggested that 26 of the ILR/I candidates valued keeping abreast of new ideas in the field. The majority of candidates also demonstrated the beliefs that it is important to willingness to help peers as well as examine and use research findings.

Although the sample size was small, there are implications for the field. ILR/I and AICs dispositions are directly influenced by their beliefs and practices. The data also suggested that 34 of the AIC candidate interns demonstrated the belief that it is important to interact and relate to others with confidence.

The third research question asked: “Are you committed to explore, examine, and use research findings in your decision-making?” The majority of respondents in both groups agreed or strongly agreed that using research was important when making decisions.

The fourth research question was: “Do you demonstrate the belief that teachers and pupils’ views are important? The results suggest that 34 of the candidates demonstrate the belief that teachers and pupils’ views are important.

### Conclusion

The study of the belief and practice of future educational leaders has shown to be critical to the continuity of the process to improve student learning and school advancement.

The results from the study suggest clearly the importance of understanding the impact that school leaders disposition have on the teaching and learning process. Statistics such as these justify the need to reshape the educational system by redefining the role and responsibilities of people who lead America’s schools.

This research study is a positive step towards identifying the reasons for the gap between belief and practice of dispositions held by ILR/I’s/AICs. The need for quality as well as needs-based professional development can make a difference in instructional leaders’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

All educational policies must support student achievement, and all principal preparation programs must develop the capacity of school leaders who are instructional leader managers (Hale, Moorman, 2003). Bellamy (2007) states that pressure to increase short-term gains (Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP) overshadow the need for the rich knowledge base of local civic dialogue, and a deep repertoire of leadership practices that support adaptation to local circumstances.

### Recommendations

Providing candidates with comprehensive skills enhances the learning experience for both the IL/principal and the schools that they serve. IL/ Principal’s belief and practice can either
positively or negatively impact the actions of teachers. An expectation of learning or variable one of the study was scored the lowest in priority for the PWI responding resident interns and ranked seconded among the HBCU respondents.

This could have occurred due to current policy, which eliminated the add-on/non-degree certification option. If policy is not changed LEA/faculty must continue to stress the standards through coursework, internship, field experiences, and the mentoring process of which candidates must be made aware.

LEA’s representatives from lower performing schools and school districts can attract a better quality of principal to the profession by implementation of performance-based contracts. The redesigned Masters Principal Preparation Program in Instructional Leadership, which eliminated the add-on certification option for master candidates, created unintended consequences when graduating candidates.

The quality of candidates graduating from this program had such a significant decline, the SDE reversed course on this policy decision in the fall of 2014. This policy was changed back to the 2006 option that allowed the add-on leadership certification as an approved option for current master’s candidates.

Lastly, candidates must be engaged in meaningful discussions about their beliefs, norms, and behaviors and how these will affect their actions.

Author Biography

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**Book Review**

**Now You See It: How Technology and Brain Science Will Transform Schools and Business for the 21st Century**

By Cathy N. Davidson

Reviewed by:  
Gregory C. Geer, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Spadoni College of Education  
Coastal Carolina University  
Conway, SC

Is the constant competition for our attention facilitated by digital technologies harmful? How have our schools dealt with such changes? How is technology transforming our workplaces? Is our brain and digital technology compatible?

These and other questions are the subject of Cathy N. Davidson’s book, *Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn*, Davidson challenges those who think that the effects of technology have negatively impacted our ability to attend to the task at-hand.

Through a well-researched and reasoned examination of the brain and its interactions with technology, Davidson makes a convincing case that they are indeed in harmony with each other. She supports her theory by guiding the reader through the similarities described by the neuroscience of brain development and functioning with the workings of the digital networks of the Information Age.

Davidson posits that our attention, efficiently navigating Information Age networks, mimics brain functioning and is fundamental for obtaining digitized information in the modern world. Obtaining and applying this information, she contends, is a valuable component of the skills set essential for knowledge creation crucial for meeting some of the demands of modern life, learning, and work.

The book opens with an account of the now classic visual/perceptual demonstration of attention blindness. The challenge for the demonstration’s observers is to count the number of times the ball is tossed between basketball players with white shirts. The observers focus so intently on the assigned task that most fail to notice a man in a gorilla suit walking behind the basketball players.
Davidson’s point, as illustrated by the invisibility of the man in the gorilla suit, is that we have been programmed to pay attention to phenomena through orderly, linear, and long term sustained focus. Davidson contends that type of thinking and problem solving is a relic of the Industrial Age and poorly addresses contemporary conditions or the world of the future.

Davidson emphasizes the importance of technological innovation and its widespread use by discussing the work of historian, Robert Darton. Darton classifies the current digital Information Age as one of the epochal events of human history commensurate with the inventions of writing, movable type, and mass printing.

Davidson further discusses this important shift from the perspective of futurist Alvin Toeffler—that change is omnipresent in our world. The author contends that digital technology is an important catalyst for cultural and intellectual change, which in turn provides alternatives to the way we think and learn.

As a result, she believes we need to add a new literacy skill to the three R’s comprising the core of our educational systems. This new skill is mastering the process of learning something, unlearning it, and then relearning something more relevant to the issue at-hand. This allows us to deal with constantly altered conditions modified by new information delivered to us at the speed of light, available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone who can connect to the Internet.

The implications of digital technology and constant change for schools are examined at length. The context for the analysis is the dyslexia Davidson coped with as a student that was finally diagnosed in adulthood.

Through her experiences with this learning disability, Davidson criticizes school practices such as standardized testing and grading. By concisely surveying their history the author strips these ubiquitous practices of contemporary schooling of their so-called scientific foundations. Davidson’s analysis supports the disconnect many educators recognize between much of what is deemed important in today’s schooling and the modern, techno-centered, and globalized world students inhabit.

Davidson extends her analysis of technology’s societal impacts by contrasting old thinking on where and when work is done with more contemporary thinking. In the up-to-date workplace the boundaries of where employees perform intellectually based work are crumbling.

For example, telecommuting and digitally delivered meetings are no longer a novel occurrence. Similar to such workplace changes, the application of Information Age tools has implications for location bounded, brick and mortar schools.

Before the innovations of the Information Age schools were limited to delivering instruction through on-site, synchronous, teacher-centered instruction.
Today, however, these ingrained practices of what historically was the monopoly of educational institutions are being challenged by tech savvy students and entrepreneurs.

Although it was published in 2011, an eon ago in technological time, this is still a relevant and thought-provoking book worth reading. The myriad of ideas and information contained in this book concerning Information Age technology and brain functioning merits deliberation by all types of educational leaders.

It can help educators and policymakers create schools preparing students for a dynamic future and not for days-gone-by.

To accomplish this lofty goal, it is essential to see all of the possibilities in today’s networked, ever-changing, and complicated world by looking in the background for the man in the gorilla suit.

It is there that one may find solutions to complex problems.

Reviewer Biography

Gregory Geer is an assistant professor in educational leadership at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, SC. He earned a master’s degree in economics from Syracuse University, a bachelor’s degree from SUNY at Potsdam and a PhD in educational administration and policy studies from the University of Albany. E-mail: ggear@coastal.edu

Every day school administrators are engaged in the art of persuasion to change behavior. Information is presented and arguments made in various communication channels. Sometimes the persuasion strategy and techniques work and sometimes they do not. When it is important, more time and resources are applied by administrators to change the behavior if the desired result is not forthcoming.

The reality is that with enough resources and time almost anyone can increase his/her influence. The reality in the education world is, of course, one of limited resources and time.

The premise of this book is that instead of throwing massive resources at a problem, there are small changes that can often yield a great return. In fact, the authors issue a challenge to discover the smallest change one can make to an approach which will best increase the chances for success.

Tons of information citing logical reasoning can be piled in front of people along with costly incentives and that may or may not work. Yet, certain small changes can be as effective as applying powerful arguments to influencing behaviors. In fact, in many cases small changes should be tried first.

The idea that people assemble all the available information, analyze the options and make informed decisions about the proper course of action works in some organized environments, but such an approach is not common.

Everyone suffers from information overload without the capacity to process everything. Making minor shifts in the context of how messages are presented can significantly impact how people act.

The authors, university professors, have been studying persuasion for decades with numerous publications to their credit.
They have also harvested the research as well as engaged in practical research on the topic. This book is well written with short summaries of various scientific studies demonstrating the huge impact of small changes designed to alter human behavior. The examples offer real-life uses for the small changes presented.

There are 52 small charters in this book which all ask questions such as “What small BIG can persuade people to pay their taxes on time?”

In this case, the authors use an example from Britain’s Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs when the on time rate of paying taxes was just 57%. By adding one sentence to the annual letter to taxpayers, the rate increased to 86%, which was enough to take a lot of debt off the books.

This small BIG addition informed taxpayers of the large number of individuals who actually pay their taxes on time. The scientific principle for this new sentence is based upon the human behavior of acting on the evidence of the crowd or social proof. Peoples’ behaviors are shaped by the behavior of those around them; however, in this case they had to know that most taxpayers were paying on time prior to emulating the desired behavior.

Each chapter makes a series of points about the related fundamentals behind each small BIG to expand the readers’ knowledge base. For example, after trying to find out directly what would influence taxpayers to pay on time, the authors concluded: “The truth is, not only are people pretty poor at recognizing what will influence their future behavior, it turns out that they are also not that well attuned on what persuaded them after the event either.” (p. 4).

Additional specificity such as how taxpayers in the same zip code responded further increased on time payments—small BIG on top of another small BIG.

Sometimes the effective small BIG has to be framed a certain way to truly influence behavior for specific individuals. In an example associated with the health of those who attend or work in schools; the researchers found that if an individual believed that covering one’s mouth when coughing was the norm, then the best approach to encourage covering the mouth is to stress the negative characteristics of those who do not cover their mouths (“Those who do not cover their mouths when coughing are irresponsible.”)

For those who believe that not covering one’s mouth when coughing is the norm, the message should stress the positive (“Those who cover their mouths when coughing are responsible”.)

They did a similar study with the perception of norms for getting flu shots with the same result. They also indicated that the norm for flu shots should be introduced first and then followed by the appropriate message.

Names are often keys to influence. Hurricanes or storms given scary names or descriptions by the news media generate more charitable contributions than unnamed or neutral named storms. People tend to respond more favorably to a message when their first
name is employed, more so, than their last name. These are small changes with BIG implications.

Getting people to keep their appointments can improve attendance, increase sales and enhance the efficiency of any organization. A small change that is more effective than giving out a pre-filled appointment card is have the persons you are trying to influence fill out the appointment date and time themselves. The underlying principle of consistency is that people are most motivated to be consistent with those commitments they actively make themselves.

In the Small BIG bonus chapter at the end of the book, there are some caveats and cautions. Since a small change can have a BIG impact, it might seem appropriate to simply put together a series of such changes to influence the outcome. Too many small changes to encourage BIG change can increase skepticism: “… the optimal number of claims is ‘Three charms, four alarms’. (p.228)

The Small BIG is a book about influence with hundreds of concrete examples. School administrators will find educational examples which illustrate the fundamental principles of influence. With some reflection, nearly every anecdote describes a situation that could be translated into the educational setting.

This reviewer was enthralled with the prospects of applying similar research techniques within an educational system to identify more effective small BIG changes that work.

Reviewers Biography

Art Stellar is vice-president of the National Education Foundation and CyberLearning with headquarters in McLean, VA. His 25 years as a school superintendent covers urban, rural and suburban school districts where he has raised student achievement and developed sustainable financial systems. A life member of AASA, Stellar is widely published, the recipient of many honors and has held numerous elected positions in professional associations. He has served as president of ASCD, the Horace Mann League, and the North American Chapter of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction. His civic and community service includes being elected vice-president of the New York State PTA. He is a three-time graduate of Ohio University where he remains active as an alumnus.

Mission and Scope, Copyright, Privacy, Ethics, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines & Publication Timeline

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5. School Administrator Quality (e.g., hiring, preparation, assessment, evaluation, development, and compensation of principals and other school administrators)
6. Data and Information Systems (for both summative and formative evaluative purposes)
7. Charter Schools and Other Alternatives to Public Schools
8. Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and Districts
9. Large scale assessment policy and programs
10. Curriculum and instruction
11. School reform policies
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- Full title of book
- Author
- City, state: publisher, year; page; price
- Name and affiliation of reviewer
- Contact information for reviewer: address, country, zip or postal code, e-mail address, telephone and fax
- Date of submission

**Additional Information and Publication Timeline**

Contributors will be notified of editorial board decisions within eight weeks of receipt of papers at the editorial office. Articles to be returned must be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

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