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Sponsorship and Appreciation

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The unique relationship between research and practice is appreciated, recognizing the mutual benefit to those educators who conduct the research and seek out evidence-based practice and those educators whose responsibility it is to carry out the mission of school districts in the education of children.

Without the support of AASA and Kenneth Mitchell, the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* would not be possible.

Opportunities for Trust Building in Times of Discord

Ken Mitchell, EdD
Editor
AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice
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We are in a moment of opportunity. The struggle over who controls the future of America's public schools may come down to a matter of trust.

Ken Mitchell

Trust, built over time, can be lost in a moment. Temporal and fragile, it is vulnerable to missteps, miscommunication, and mischief. Today's school leaders operate in charged political environments fraught with controversies often sparked by design to sew discord and skepticism. Even for established and respected leaders with strong school-community relationships, today's climate makes trust a tenuous commodity.

Public schools have been under scrutiny for at least since the *A Nation at Risk* report was published in 1983 and perhaps before that when in 1954 economist Milton Friedman called for reduced investment in "government schools" while providing parents with choice through vouchers (Friedman, 1955).

Orchestrated efforts to undermine public education to achieve ideological, religious, and entrepreneurial agendas, while often out of the public's eye, have been unrelenting. Attacking school leadership is a pervasive tactic that can be effective, especially when leaders, enveloped by complex and demanding work, struggle to develop close and trusting relationships with their communities.

Successful leaders understand these conditions and recognize the importance of and means for developing trust that is founded upon honesty and reliability. The importance of a substantive entry process for a leader at any level cannot be overstated. Too often and too soon, however, the momentum is lost, as the demands and events of the moment redirect a focus from the plan for information gathering.

Yet, entry is merely the initial phase of a broader approach for continuous improvement via an inquiry and adaptation cycle that engages all stakeholders – and not just at the outset. Such a process, if characterized by an active, predictable, and transparent exchange of information, can create and fortify multiple layers of trust among the community, staff, parents, and students.

When crises arise or accusations, often seeded by outside adversaries, are made, school leaders can be buffered by authentic relationships that have been fostered across the community through such a process. As families enter the system, they are brought into an inclusive cycle of continuous improvement.

They learn that problem solving is not done by a few "experts" huddled in an office, but through an open and engaging process that celebrates what has succeeded and reflects transparency about what needs to improve. Such an approach to building trust requires authenticity of sentiment and patience.

The axiom that trust begets trust and fear begets fear, at times, seems to favor those using the latter to usurp the educational mission of the public schools. Earning trust takes more than issuing such hackneyed promises as,

> "Trust me. I am in it for the kids."
> "Trust me. I am the leader of the school or the district."
> "Trust me. I am the educational expert."

Nichols (2017), in *The Death of Expertise*, warns:

> Any assertion of expertise from an actual expert, meanwhile, produces an explosion of anger from certain quarters of the American public, who immediately complain that such claims are nothing more than 'fallacious appeals to authority,' sure signs of dreadful 'elitism' and an obvious effort to use credentials to stifle dialogue required by a 'real' democracy" (p.5).

In this "post-truth" era, those spreading fear, decry the school authority's use of "evidence" as elitist and in conflict, for example, with a parent's liberty to make decisions about their child's educational experience, whether that pertains to curriculum, pedagogy, socio-emotional supports, or health and safety. Under the mantle of "parental rights," groups, such as Moms for Liberty, have formed chapters across the nation, while exploitative and manipulative politicians (e.g., FL and VA) have capitalized on the dissension to get votes.

Ironically, the 54th annual Phi Delta Kappan poll that examines the perceived levels of public trust in schools and teachers, shows that confidence in the local schools has not diminished as one might infer from media accounts of disruptive board meetings and superintendent firings.

Amid post-pandemic recovery for schools and culture wars about diversity, equity, inclusion, and related curricular content, 54% of Americans graded their community's public schools as an A or B, the highest since rating since 1974 (The lowest rating – 31% - was after *A Nation at Risk* in 1983.). 63% of all adults signaled "trust and confidence in their community's schools"; of that group, 72% were public school parents. Familiarity breeds trust – for the most part.

Times of Distrust as Opportunity to Build or Rebuild Partnerships

Families trust their local schools. This represents an opportunity for school leaders. These past few years have been tumultuous and unprecedented. Pandemics, culture wars, and the cynical and paranoid politics of "fear of the other" have contributed to partisan discord that has spilled into schools where, even at the local levels, organized political minorities have been attempting, in some cases successfully, to seize control of education agendas. Disengaged, distracted, or

disenfranchised families have been left out of the discussion. There is perhaps no better time than now to bring them into it.

The Carnegie Corporation's report, *Embracing a New Model Toward a More Liberatory Approach to Family Engagement,* suggests a variety of approaches that will contribute to trust building via a family's engagement with the schools through partnerships among educators and families that create or strengthen structures and conditions for such work.

A recent Brookings report (Perera, Hashim, & Weddle, 2022) suggests that "family engagement has many benefits, including promoting the success of school reform efforts, deepening leaders' and educators' understanding of stakeholder perspectives, and supporting child development outcomes."

Seek out families and other caregivers in the community. Engage community agencies. Build and connect coalitions in small ways to transform the school and district in bigger ways. The work of engagement for trust needs to be proactive, public, strategic, and continuous. It must also be substantive and sincere.

Trust from Within

But such values undergirding the development of trust with the community must exist within the institution. The Winter 2023 issue of the AASA *JSP* examines a theme related to trust among stakeholders within the organizational hierarchies: principals and superintendents; school boards and the superintendents they hire.

Benna and colleagues, in their study, "Superintendent Trustworthiness: Elementary School Principals' Experiences and

Perceptions," examined how principals make sense of superintendent trustworthiness through the question, *What are indicators of superintendent trustworthiness as experienced and perceived by elementary school principals?* They cite Tschannen-Moran (2001) and Hoy et al. (2006) to describe how a culture of trust can provide a setting in which people are not afraid to openly admit errors, take risks, and share ideas.

In a nationwide study of 532 female school district superintendents, the largest such sample to date, Dr. Julia Drake offers compelling evidence that unconscious gender bias exists on the job and further inhibits equitable female representation in the superintendency. Her study, "Female Superintendents' Perceptions of Unconscious Gender Bias in The Superintendency: An Exploratory Quantitative Study," also raises questions about trust. Even though 76% of public school teachers are women, only about 27% of superintendents are female, according to findings released from the School Superintendents Association's (AASA) 2020 Decennial Report.

Drake's findings support Joan Acker's (1990) theoretical assertion that gender inequality is deeply embedded within organizational structures, patterns, and processes. Respondents reported that gender bias occurs more frequently than the profession acknowledges and suggested that it derives primarily from sources other than superintendents' colleagues.

How is it that the nation's educational hierarchies – central administrations and boards of education – are not entrusting the role of leading schools to more women? Drake's study suggests that barriers include the social roles of men and women with the

general belief that management is a man's job, masculine corporate culture, stereotypes against women, and gender bias in recruitment and promotion. This important study raises questions about whom is entrusted to lead our school systems.

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Superintendent Trustworthiness: Elementary School Principals'Experiences and Perceptions

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Abstract

While teachers' trust in principals is the most commonly studied trust relationship between and among school stakeholders, left largely unexplored is trust between leaders within a school system. Findings presented answer the question: What are indicators of superintendent trustworthiness as experienced and perceived by elementary school principals? Four broad themes were found to capture superintendent characteristics relating to trustworthiness: 1) the nature and strength of a superintendent's support; 2) the extent to and ways in which a superintendent engenders a sense of autonomy in a principal's school-level leadership; 3) a superintendent's presence in the work of the principal and the principal's school; and 4) a superintendent's openness. Principals' perspectives of the role of superintendent trustworthiness in their school leadership is explored.

Keywords

trustworthiness, superintendent leadership, elementary school principals, principal-superintendent relationship, educational leadership

Prior investigation has brought to our attention the important role that matters of trust hold between and among school stakeholders. The extant literature provides strong evidence that teachers' trust in a school principal has a positive impact upon such things as student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000), school climate (Tarter et al., 1989), collaboration among teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2001), collective teacher efficacy (Goodard et al., 2000), organizational citizenship (Tschannen-Moran, 2003), shared decision making (Forsyth et al., 2011), school mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006), and school improvement efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011).

Sergiovanni (2005) points out that trust is "the tie that binds roles together and allows for the creation of role sets that embody reciprocal obligations" (p. 117).

While teachers' trust in principals is the most frequently studied trust relationship in schools (Forsyth et al., 2011; Schmidt, 2010), less is understood about the nature and role of trust between and among educational leaders (Samier, 2010).

Notions of *trustworthiness* are, unsurprisingly, frequently intertwined in writings on *trust* (Hardin, 2002; Samier, 2010). In this study, trustworthiness includes perceived characteristics (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), behaviors (Rodgers, 2010), and interpretation of intention (Mayer, et al., 1995). In this way, "one's perception of another's trustworthiness—whether through cognitive or affective processes, or a combination of both—serves as grounds for one to grant trust to another" (Benna & Hambacher, in press, p. 3).

The relationship between principal and superintendent is an asymmetrical but critical relationship. In most school districts, principals and the superintendent form a relationship team in which the goals of the school district are pursued in collaboration across schools and upward with the school district personnel (West and Derrington, 2009).

Because of the hierarchical nature of relationships within schools, it is the responsibility of the person with the greatest power to take the initiative and build and sustain trusting relationships (Kochanek, 2005). Kouzes and Posner (1995) further note that the "leader's behavior is more critical than that of any other person in determining the level of trust that develops in a group" (p. 166).

For a school to experience the benefits of a trusting culture, principals hold the responsibility to build and sustain trusting relationships (Whitener, et al., 1998). This study posits the same is true for the broader context of a school district—for a district to experience the benefits of a trusting culture, superintendents hold the responsibility to build and sustain trusting relationships.

Building on the assertion that trust is valueless without trustworthiness (Baier, 1996; Hardin, 2002), reported here are the findings to one question embedded in a broader investigation of ways in which principals make sense of superintendent trustworthiness: *What are indicators of superintendent trustworthiness as experienced and perceived by elementary school principals?*

Research Design
The research design for this qualitative inquiry included purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998), data collection through in-depth interviews

(Seidman, 2006), and data analysis shaped by constructivist grounded theory guidelines (Charmaz, 2014).

Purposeful sampling
Criteria were delineated to frame the study and identify a purposeful sample across the population of principals in one New England state: 1) the participants recruited and selected were public elementary school principals with sixth grade as an upper limit of grade level, and 2) the participants selected had worked under the direct supervision of more than one superintendent. Using databases publicly available through the state's Department of Education, I generated a list of possible participants.

With the exception of known colleagues, I sent e-mails of invitation to participate in the study to all elementary principals in the state who I anticipated could meet the identified criteria. Twelve principals responded to my invitation, and I arranged a time to meet with each to determine if they met participation criteria, to review the purpose and steps of the study, and to answer questions they had about the study. Five of these principals met the criteria and joined me in exploring the research question. It is important to note that given the sample size, the study findings are not fully generalizable. Nonetheless, the findings do offer valuable insight into the nature and role of trust.

The principals of this study led schools in different school districts ranging from small rural to large suburban settings across all regions of the state. None of them had worked with common referent superintendents. Table 1 presents a cursory introduction to the participants.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Number of Years as Principal	Number of Principalships	Number of Superintendents
Michaela	16	4	5
Jan	3	1	2
Carol	9	3	3
James	12	2	4
Fred	15	1	6

Data collection
Each principal and I engaged in three semi-structured interviews spaced approximately one week apart. The interviews followed Seidman's (2006) protocol for phenomenological in-depth interviewing which aims to "understand the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). While interviewing, however, I remained open to explore responses and emergent themes in greater depth. Each interview was recorded and

transcribed verbatim and I used pseudonyms to protect the participants' confidentiality.

Data analysis

Data analysis followed constructivist grounded theory guidelines (Charmaz, 2014). In approaching data analysis, I remained mindful the recommendation of Strauss and Corbin (1990): "do not be so steeped in the literature as to be constrained and even stifled in creative efforts by our use of it" (p. 50).

While Tschannen-Moran's (2004) five facets of trust—benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness—were utilized as sensitizing concepts, they were not used as a priori codes because I wanted the codes to emerge from the participants' own words.

I coded the data from incident-to-incident in the initial cycle of analysis (Charmaz, 2014). I inductively generated descriptive codes when appropriate, however I focused on: 1) In Vivo coding to honor the voices of the participants, and 2) on the use of gerunds to preserve action.

I then conducted a second cycle of analysis—focused coding—to categorize the data and to identify the most salient codes to generate emergent themes (Charmaz, 2014).

For example, the initial codes "quickly returning call" (a gerund code) and "There when I needed her," (an In Vivo code) were indicative of ways principals made sense of superintendent trustworthiness. Along with other initial codes, these examples were organized conceptually under the larger focused code: "availability."

Ten focused codes were organized into four core themes and identified, for the principals of this study, as Indicators of Superintendent Trustworthiness.

Findings

Four broad, interrelated, and recurring themes—what I am calling "Indicators of Superintendent Trustworthiness"—emerged from the data. For the principals in this study, perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness are predicated on demonstrations and discernment of: 1) the nature and strength of a superintendent's *support;* 2) the extent to and ways in which a superintendent engenders a sense of principal's sense of *autonomy* in school-level leadership, 3) a superintendent's *presence* in the work of the principal and their school as well as "being there in that moment," and 4) a superintendent's *openness* with the principals and with the broader school community. Figure 1 identifies the Indicators and briefly illuminates each core theme with sub-categorical themes.

Figure 1

Indicators of Superintendent Trustworthiness
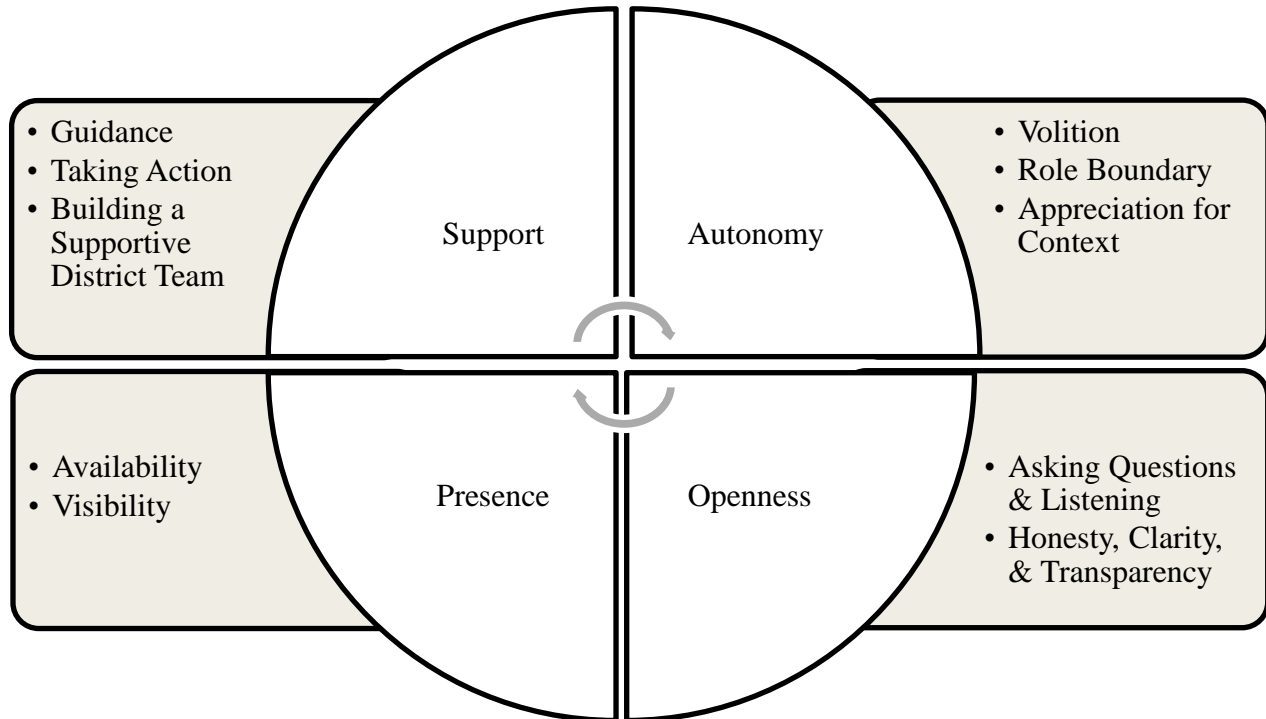
While the Indicators are represented separately, I emphasize that they were found to be interrelated and overlapping with one another and at times contradictory to one another. *Support,* for example, stands juxtaposed and in tension with *autonomy*.

Superintendent support promotes a sense of superintendent trustworthiness only to the extent to which the perception of support does not violate principal autonomy. Carol got to the heart of the connection between support

and autonomy commenting upon perceptions of trustworthiness in superintendents who "provide lots of space for me to lead the way I feel like is my style, but with lots of support if need be."

As expressed by the participants, each of the Indicators and exemplars have an inherent range. "Taking action," for example, can contrast with "not taking action." Depending upon a principal's interpretation, this might engender *or* detract from perceptions

of trustworthiness. Principals' interpretations are situational—while in one moment taking an action (e.g., providing reinforcement or protection) may be interpreted as superintendent support, in another moment the same action might be interpreted as diminishing a principal's sense of autonomy.

Furthermore, the principals of this study referred both directly and inferentially that their understanding of trust includes a reciprocity that either strengthens or diminishes their perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness.

Michaela noted, "If trust doesn't go both directions, it's not a true trusting relationship." Jan suggested, quite simply, "You have to give some to get some."

The following subsections elaborate upon each of the Indicators. While they are identified separately for the purposes of description and presentation, it is important to note that there is overlap as the Indicators frequently interact with one another—shaping and influencing principals' perception of superintendent trustworthiness. I aim to illustrate this overlap through the examples and voices of participants.

Support

Support denotes ways in which principals perceive and experience superintendent leadership that enhances and reinforces the principals' own school leadership. Support was found to be characterized by the three roles or courses of action: 1) providing guidance, 2) taking action, and 3) building a supportive district team.

Guidance

The principals of this study referred frequently to guidance—a particular kind of support whereby superintendents offered suggestions,

answered questions, or helped generate options for the principals as they navigated the problems, opportunities, and projects of school leadership. Regardless of the principal's years of experience in the role, perceptions of the guidance superintendents provide were dependent upon principals' impression of a superintendent's competence. Whether sought by principals or shared by superintendents without request, there was a threshold of guidance that once reached, became understood by principals as a directive.

In turn, the directive was understood by principals as a superintendent's expected course of action and that they—happily, begrudgingly, or somewhere in between—lost, or to some extent relinquished, their own agency in determining a course of action. This threshold varied across the participants and their superintendents; however, once the threshold was crossed, they perceived superintendents as being directive and those directives may or may not have been welcomed.

Both James and Michaela related experiences of school employee supervision and the guidance offered/provided by their superintendents. These examples help to demonstrate a fine line and a point of tension between the way that principals look for superintendent guidance and how this pushes up against instances where a perceived need for support is met with superintendent directives. The concern for principals is not necessarily whether superintendents have the authority to issue directives, but rather, fits within a broader power dynamic where in a search for autonomy principals seeks distinctness.

James acknowledged his frequent frustration with one superintendent, characterizing him as controlling and directive. Such an approach to educational leadership

conflicted with James's own vision and values of school leadership.

James recognized, however, that in seeking and following through with this superintendent's guidance, he could achieve the intended, and in his opinion, necessary outcome of terminating an ineffective teacher:

> His level of control was do it his way and he'll support you. Don't do it his way and he'll tell you, 'You didn't do it my way'. For example, the teacher who we ended up firing … We sat down and I just said to him, 'Tell me what you want me to do.' He told me, I did it, and he fired her. We both got what we wanted.

Michaela noted that perceptions of one superintendent's trustworthiness were in part shaped by his competence and guidance; she shared an example of where she was struggling with "some really difficult custodial issues" and what her superintendent offered to her:

> The follow through of what needed to happen and his thoughtful thinking behind the steps I needed to take … He was just making sure that the plan was effective, meaningful, and going to potentially have a lasting effect. I wasn't just gonna hang out there with this individual.

While James perceived his request for guidance as simply the most effective way to achieve an end, Michaela perceived her request for guidance as one of support to resolve a problem.

On Michaela's account, her superintendent's guidance prompted growth in her problem-solving skillset, and furthermore, his support indicated trustworthiness in his attention to Michaela's vulnerability in the situation and his willingness to take action to help.

Taking action

The principals in this study perceived trustworthiness when their superintendents acted to support them by either mitigating or taking control of a situation. The principals interpreted such superintendent action as: 1) reinforcing the principal's decisions or courses of action, and/or 2) protecting them from potential negative consequences.

Michaela shared an experience of a superintendent who did not take any action in a moment when Michaela perceived that she needed the additional authoritative leverage inherent in the superintendent's role to resolve a personnel problem.

Michaela spoke with exasperation about an incident involving a custodian who was not following through with identified job responsibilities and clear directives she had given him. She was confused and surprised by the superintendent's inaction when she pleaded for support in addressing the issue and help in resolving the problem.

> You just couldn't turn a blind eye to the custodian. He wasn't cleaning. Like if people would poop on the bathroom floors or whatever, he would just lock the bathroom up. He wouldn't put salt down on sidewalks in the winter. had people fall and crack their heads. Weird things like that—one thing after another. So, I'm thinking, 'This is an easy one.' I can just remember the night I called my superintendent. 'I need your help!' and I can remember him going off on me like, 'This is your school and this is your job and you need to deal with it.' I'm like, 'Okay. I've tried.'

On Michaela's account, the superintendent failed to reinforce the course of action she was taking to protect the wellbeing of the school community and only further deepened Michaela's sense of vulnerability and distrust.

Building a supportive district team
The administrative team a superintendent builds at the district level and the extent to which this team is perceived to assist principals emerged as another kind of superintendent support.

James, for example, pointed out, the district-level team is "our support system. They help us navigate the law, they help us navigate state requirements, they help us navigate curriculum, because they can pull lots of people together or they can bring in people to support us."

Michaela also heighted her impression of how a superintendent "built such a great team" noting:

> I would say that the role of support from the district has continued to just get stronger, and again I think it's with the hiring of just more and more amazing individuals… Whether it's the bus liaison or whatever, our superintendent has been very clear with everybody that their role is to allow principals to do what they need to do, which in turn is do what's needed for kids.

Autonomy
Autonomy includes ways in which superintendents make room for principal leadership that includes volition, role boundaries, and validations of a school's unique context.

For the principals of this study, superintendents are perceived to be

trustworthy when they provide a balance of support to a principal while also respecting a principal's need for some freedom to enact building level leadership. A superintendent who strikes this balance sends a powerful message to a principal—that the principal is trusted.

Volition
Principals emphasized a desire to have a sense of control in their own leadership practice, and their perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness were enhanced when superintendents made the space available for the principals to practice self-determination in their school leadership.

James shared: "If a superintendent's approach is philosophical, big picture, direction-setting, and inclusive in conversation then it works. But not if someone is an authoritarian, 'This is how we're going to do it. It's your job to make it work.' Reflecting upon his time working with one superintendent he noted: "I think a lot of my work with her was satisfying because I could experiment with my thinking and my staff's thinking without doing it her way or the same way somebody else did."

Similarly, Carol spoke of her experiences with another superintendent:

> I really felt like there was a lot of space for me to do what I needed to do to get my bearings, learn about the school, learn about the staff and he was pretty much fine with all of that. It was sort of like, 'If you feel like you're good, then go ahead–but if you feel like you need any support let me know.' I felt like I'd died and gone to heaven. I was like, 'What could be better than that kind of supervision?' where I really can try out my leadership role but

always know that I had that support if I needed it.

Role boundary
Closely related to perceptions of volition, role boundary refers to principals' perceptions of the specific job responsibilities of superintendents and principals and how they relate to one another. This includes a shared understanding of when, how, and/or why it may be appropriate for a superintendent to act by stepping in to provide the principal with protection or reinforcement.

Fred discussed his appreciation for organizational role boundaries commenting that he thinks "it's really important to understand your role in how everything works and so I'm a principal. I'm not a superintendent. I'm not a school board member … those positions are higher than mine in authority level."

While each of the participants spoke of role boundary and delineation, they also reinforced a recognition of interdependence in the principal-superintendent relationship.

Jan captures a notion common across the study participants: "Yes, the superintendent is the boss, but I also feel like it should be more of an open partnership. You're both directing different parts of the district, but for the same goal. There shouldn't necessarily be a ton of friction."

Appreciation for context
Participants expressed appreciation when they noticed how superintendents approached and validated the unique context of the principals' schools.

Perceptions of trustworthiness were strengthened when superintendents acknowledged the particulars of a school's

context and recognized the importance of a principal's autonomy in leading the school given the school's needs, culture, and community.

Superintendents who sought to understand and demonstrated an understanding of a school's context were also perceived to be better positioned to provide principals with support.

From Fred's perspective, superintendents who he perceives as most trustworthy enact leadership with an expressed and authentic interest in learning about his school. He sees this as a key action for the superintendent to provide informed and meaningful district-level leadership. Extending the notion,

James discussed one superintendent's arrival and how he valued her approach:

> When she came in we were pretty disjointed. Not many decisions were made district wide. It was a lot of individual schools doing individual things. She was always interested in 'What are you doing? What do you see? How do you know who we were?' She didn't come in with any programs—she didn't come in with an agenda. She was building on each school, recognizing the difference and not saying, 'We're all going to be the same.' But saying, 'You're different. You're trying to reach the same goals different ways.'

Presence
For the participants in this study, perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness were influenced by *presence*—a willingness "to be there" and in how a superintendent's "being there" was interpreted as meaningful and supportive rather than obtrusive.

Carol characterized one superintendent's presence as frequent and obtrusive (rather than supportive): "When her car would pull in the driveway I would start to be like, 'Oh gosh, now what?'"

Contrasting her experiences and perceptions of presence across superintendents, she noted an impact in the way in which she monitored her interactions with this superintendent. This influenced her attention and energy in her own school leadership:

If I'm not distracted and not having to worry…then it gives me more energy to put into what is going on here at school. If I see the car pull up and that sends an emotional reaction through me, it takes away from the next things I need to do in the building and drains my energy. I have to focus extra hard on protecting my building from my own reaction and from anything else that's going on.

To illustrate the ways in which presence was perceived and experienced by the participants, examples shared in this section describe superintendent: 1) availability, and 2) visibility.

Availability

Availability refers to the ability for a principal to reach a superintendent and perceptions of how attentive, invested, and/or responsive a superintendent is in the moment.

Availability is felt by principals as Carol noted, "to have the superintendent immediately there for me" and that as a principal they are not "dangled out there with no support." She concluded, "I think it boils down into that, being available and then being in the moment."

Perceptions of availability include spontaneous moments as problems, questions, or concerns emerge for principals. They also include how superintendents go about arranging ways to make themselves available regularly and predictably to principals.

For Carol, one superintendent's presence—immediate availability and support—in a "horrendous emergency situation" was key in perceiving that he was trustworthy.

Recognizing that superintendents are busy and not always available instantaneously, Carol elaborated on the way in which her perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness have been influenced by response time: "If you get a response quickly, like that equates to caring. 'I know this is on your mind right now and I care enough about you that I'm going to communicate with you about this right now'…and it builds trust."

Visibility

Perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness are strengthened when principals perceive a superintendent is in tune with the heartbeat of both a school and the larger organization. For this to occur, a superintendent needs to actively seek out face-to-face interactions as a demonstrative act of concern, interest, and commitment to those who comprise the school system.

James contrasted his experiences with superintendent visibility not only in the frequency of visits to his school, but also in the purpose of the visit. "[One superintendent] was aware of and wanted to know what was going on, so she spent time in the school. She would come in." For James, this demonstrated a desire to

understand the triumphs and struggles of day-to-day life in an elementary school.

Alternatively, perceptions of another superintendent's trustworthiness were compromised and consistently reinforced as he rarely visited school and when he did, the perceived purpose of the visit was not aligned with reasons that James would expect.

When he walked through the door at my school I was always surprised. I just didn't expect to see him there. When he did come, it was never to see a classroom … It was delivering something or talking with someone or following up on something … but it wasn't about education.

Fred's account of superintendent visibility also links presence and purpose noting that it necessarily includes building relationships:

I don't think that you build relationships superficially. I think that you have to show you're open. You have to come over and watch the kids in some kind of a performance or some kind of presentation that we have. Get involved with them. I know it has to be hard because there are so many schools in the district, but they need to be out there. They can't just be sitting in their office mandating things.

Openness

The final perceived Indicator of Superintendent Trustworthiness emerging from the data is *openness* and it describes the stance or approach from which superintendents enact their leadership. As characterized by the principals, openness refers to both receptive and expressive communication.

Illustrative examples in this section include: 1) the value and role of

superintendents asking questions and listening, and 2) the importance of honesty, clarity, and transparency.

Asking questions and listening

Asking questions and listening were two of the most noted codes in this analysis. Principals repeatedly referred to the value they hold in superintendents who ask questions and listen.

Furthermore, perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness were bolstered when the purpose of questioning and listening is interpreted as a genuine interest in knowing about individual schools, educators, students, and families who comprise the district. Such openness indicated to principals that a superintendent sees the principal-superintendent team as interdependent and that superintendents relied upon knowing and learning from others to inform the course of their own leadership.

Connecting this to a core value of his own school leadership, Fred noted that superintendents should "Ask a lot of questions. Get to know the feel of the place. That exudes that lifelong learner type mentality. I would trust them going forward."

Enduring the turnover of six superintendents in his 15 years as principal, Fred offered advice to superintendents new to a school system: "Come in and do a lot of listening and asking questions before they try to put an imprint on the organization." He also highlighted how one superintendent's openness helped build perceptions of trustworthiness.

He came in a little rough, but he's really wanted to expand his horizons. It took him about a year and half, but he said, 'You know, Fred, I don't have any elementary experience.' I looked at him and I said, "I know.' So, it was out there.

Fred perceived that this superintendent demonstrated trustworthiness by acknowledging vulnerability—a limited understanding of elementary schools—and by asking questions and listening opened himself to "meaningful conversation."

Honesty, clarity, and transparency
Three closely related ideas regarding superintendent communication were expressed by principals in the study help to illuminate the theme of openness and promote perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness: 1) honesty, 2) clarity, and 3) transparency.

Although participants did not talk at extended length about their interpretations of superintendent honesty, it was clear that for each participant honesty was an important characteristic of superintendent trustworthiness.

Fred noted of school leaders: "If we're not honest, we won't last very long in our jobs." He shared the details of one superintendent's early departure from the district with the School Board terminated his contract before its end.

He wasn't truthful, and he was pretty ineffectual. Put those two together and it catches up with you pretty quickly. He would tell people that he was doing things that he was not doing. People know what's happening so if you start telling stories and don't keep 'em straight, which nobody can really do for a long time, you're going to get caught… and he got caught.

Carol addressed the challenge she felt in having honest and open discussions in her interactions with one superintendent. Carol's collected interpretations of interactions led to suspicion in what the superintendent shared with her and with other school constituents:

I wonder how [the work Carol was doing at her school] got represented to the Board. I felt like there could be some problems with, I mean, manipulation is a really negative word … I did not trust what she was saying to me. I never felt like I could trust what I said to her to be relayed in any kind of a form that I meant it in.

For Carol, the growing perceptions of dishonesty were amplified by the other challenges she interpreted of her interactions with this superintendent. In turn, this compelled her to be cautious in the extent she was open with the superintendent. With lack of trust in the relationship, "There were too many indications that it was unsafe to share anything other than what I had to with her."

James commented directly about his perceptions of superintendent trustworthiness and the importance of clarity in superintendent communication and leadership:

I'll go back to what I said, trust is saying what you mean and doing what you say. I think that's at the heart of it. When a superintendent is clear with their vision and clear with their structures, so you know where you're operating within the structure of the whole—you get to carve out and do what you do—understanding the expectations. But when they're not clear—when they say one thing to one crowd and another thing to another crowd and when you're talking to them individually it's another message, it's just too much. You have a real hard time trusting.

Role of ssuperintendent trustworthiness
In addition to findings which answered the research question, related findings emerged as

salient and their importance warrants discussion.

In this section, I turn to the voice of the principals as they shared how their perceptions of and experiences with superintendent trustworthiness play out in their own school leadership.

While each of the principals indicated that superintendent trustworthiness is important and a quality they desire in their leader,

Michaela was most emphatic as she concluded, "I have to have it in order to be able to work and be successful." She made a clear connection between her experiences of superintendent trustworthiness and her own employment decisions: "I quickly left those schools because of the element of trust… Those two places I bolted quickly, I had no sense of loyalty and trust."

On Michaela's account: "A sense of superintendent trustworthiness allows you to fully participate and not be afraid. You have to be able to do that in order to grow and push yourself. You have to be able to take risks… And I think that I've been a better leader because of it."

This parallels the findings of Tschannen-Moran (2001) and Hoy et al. (2006) that a culture of trust can provide a setting in which people are not afraid to openly admit errors, take risks, and share ideas.

Carol described this culture as a setting where: "People become more light-hearted, and they go about their day because an assumption is there that you've built that relationship and so there's much more energy for other things."

While not discounting its importance, Carol indicated that "trust can only go so far."

Like each of the participants in the study, Carol expressed how a keen focus upon children and the people who comprise the school she leads remain her priority even in the absence of a trustworthy superintendent:

The stakes are too high with the children …You're not going to let that outside stress get in the way of the care and the compassion and the determination you have to do a good job with those children and the people in your building. I have to have the strength to help this community be healthy even if under adverse times or relationships. So, if you have a superintendent who's not supporting you, who you don't have trust with—that's adverse. That's not great. But that to me was not anything I was going to let effect my own school leadership.

While Fred agrees that superintendent trustworthiness is important and desired, in his experience it is also rare. He noted:

The trust factor, while very important, is not something that I've experienced a whole lot of. So, while we would all want a superintendent that we trust, that's not the end all and be all. Sometimes you don't have that person and you just have to make sure that you surround yourself with supportive staff, supportive parents, a supportive School Board and keep on going doing the right thing.

Consequentially, on Fred's account, "You have to roll with it. There's no other way around it. You have to keep going." Furthermore, "You either work with the

superintendents that you have or you work around them. I mean—that's the reality of the situation."

James poignantly noted, "I don't think I've worked with a superintendent who ever cared if I trusted them … I think they probably—and maybe this is going to sound maybe too cavalier—they didn't ever consider trust. Maybe they just assumed it." Contemplating the importance of trust in the principal-superintendent relationship, James shared his perspective which reflects Baier's (1986) observation that "There is such thing as unconscious trust" (p. 235).

James commented in our final interview:

> Certainly, as we've talked, I've reflected more about my relationship with superintendents and it's really interesting because there are times where I feel like the superintendent-principal relationship really isn't a focus. I don't really care what the superintendent's doing when I'm doing this work until it gets in the way. [laughs] Then it matters. Thinking about trustworthiness as a factor in that relationship, it's almost like the times when I am doing what I like or I feel like is beneficial to my practices, the relationship almost goes unnoticed. When superintendents do something that interferes with the work that I do that trust has the most impact.

In the end these findings present a somewhat conflicting picture of superintendent trustworthiness. While the principals consistently conveyed that trustworthiness has value and importance, each principal brought to the study their own perceptions and experiences—the good, the bad, and the ugly—which in turn influenced their own perception of just how much superintendent trustworthiness matters. Participants valued working with trustworthy superintendents. If such trust was not there, however, they were still going to do their jobs to the best of their ability.

The principals of this study have an abiding and unwavering commitment to their role as leaders for their teachers, students, and community. Superintendent trustworthiness is desired and perceived to enhance the principals' work and professional lives, but it is not something that they depend upon. In other words, a principal's perception of superintendent trustworthiness is *complementary to but not required for* a principal's own sense of efficacy, commitment, and resolve as a school leader.

Directions for Future Inquiry and Implications for Practice

There are many interesting questions about the role and impact of trust between and among school stakeholders that future studies could address. How does trust in a superintendent correlate with other valued outcomes and processes for a school and/or school system? What barriers exist in developing relationships characterized by trust between and among school stakeholders who are not under the same school roof? What are the stories of superintendents who are identified by others as successful leaders and what role does trust have in their leadership?

A deeper understanding of the way superintendents make sense of and characterize principal trustworthiness, including an exploration of how superintendents perceive the processes and outcomes of schools that trustworthy principals lead, would bring a

deeper understanding of trust in the principal-superintendent relationship. How do indicators of principal trustworthiness as characterized by superintendents compare with the indicators principals pointed to as evidence of superintendent trustworthiness?

In addition to the advice inferred from the participants' perceptions and experiences, the findings provide some practical insights for superintendents by identifying specific leadership behaviors and characteristics that build trust. An understanding of how the elementary principals in this study made sense of superintendent trustworthiness sheds light into how superintendents might frame their approach to learning about and working with principals. Superintendents should anticipate that building and sustaining perceptions of trustworthiness will take time and effort.

For superintendents who wish to be perceived by principals as trustworthy, there is value in quickly assessing the context in which they lead, learning about the contextual differences across schools within the district, and reflecting upon the level of trust/mistrust in their relationships as well as the contributing factors. The superintendents perceived as most trustworthy, on the account of the principals in this study, intentionally developed relationships with principals as individuals and differentiated their work and communications with principals in response to principal and individual school needs.

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Female Superintendents' Perceptions of Unconscious Gender Bias In The Superintendency: An Exploratory Quantitative Study

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Abstract

This nationwide study of 532 female school district superintendents, the largest such sample to date, offers compelling evidence that unconscious gender bias exists on the job and further inhibits equitable female representation in the superintendency. A modified version of Tran et al.'s (2019) Perceived Subtle Gender Bias Index (PSGBI), was confirmed as a valid instrument for assessing female superintendents' perceptions of unconscious gender bias and produced the same four factors as the original PSGBI. Findings support Joan Acker's (1990) theoretical assertion that gender inequality is deeply embedded within organizational structures, patterns, and processes. Respondents reported that gender bias occurs more frequently than the profession acknowledges and suggested that it derives primarily from sources other than superintendents' colleagues. Recommendations offered.

Key Words

female superintendent, unconscious gender bias, perception, perceived subtle gender bias index (PSGBI), Joan Acker, theory of gendered organizations

Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), 76% of public school teachers are women. However, only about 27% of superintendents are female, according to the preliminary findings released from the School Superintendents Association's (AASA) 2020 Decennial Report. Data from this report show a less than 3% increase in female superintendents over the past 10 years (from 24.1% to 26.68% in 2020). When one considers the teaching force as the pipeline to the superintendency, the question is why the predominantly female (76%) teaching force does not equally reflect a predominantly female educational leadership force. Despite the slight progress of women filling the superintendency role over the past decade, full parity between men and women in the field is far from present.

Tinsley and Ely (2018) argued sex differences seen in the workplace are not due to fixed gender traits but rather "stem from organizational structures, company practices, and patterns of interaction that position men and women differently, creating systematically different experiences for them" (p. 115). This perspective, which aligns with Joan Acker's (1990) systematic feminist theory of organization, underpins this study. These organizational structures, practices, and patterns can be difficult to describe because they are built into the perceptions people hold about gender and customary societal norms. They frequently are unspoken.

As Fiarman (2016) explained, those who engage in unconscious gender bias may not be aware they are doing so. As such, gender-biased practices then become the norm in the workplace. Female superintendents who perceive unconscious gender bias may well be discouraged enough to consider leaving the superintendency; perceived gender bias might also discourage other women from pursuing the role. This, in turn, contributes further to the gap between the goal of equity in the workplace (i.e., gender parity in the role) and the disappointing reality.

In a 2015 study by the International Labour Organization, "Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum," women reported barriers to their own leadership, including discrimination and unconscious gender bias. Such barriers include the social roles of men and women, the general belief that management is a man's job, masculine corporate culture, stereotypes against women, and gender bias in recruitment and promotion (International Labour Organization, 2017). Unconscious bias is woven into customary workplace norms and is a challenge for women across the world as one of a number of barriers they face.

Through an experimental survey design, this study answered the following research questions: What is the nature of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency as perceived by female superintendents? Are there any demographic differences in how female superintendents perceived gender bias?

Theoretical Framework

Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations, including its notion of the five processes that reproduce gender in organizations, offered the fundamental lens through which the findings of this study were viewed. Acker (1990) explained gendering within an organization occurs in at least five interacting processes: (a) division of labor along lines of gender, (b) cultural symbols, (c) individual identities, (d) workplace interactions, and (e) organizational logic that includes underlying assumptions and practices that reproduce a gendered structure.

This study used the theory of gendered organizations as a lens through which to explore female superintendents' experiences and to understand the relationship between female superintendents' perceptions of the nature of the unconscious gender bias they face in their role, and how such bias relates to certain processes, demographic factors, and subfactors that may contribute to the bias.

For the purposes of this study, unconscious gender bias will be defined as "unintentional and automatic mental associations based on gender, stemming from traditions, norms, values, culture and/or experience" (International Labour Organization, 2017, p. 3). Demographic factors were considered when analyzing how female superintendents perceived gender bias including age of superintendent; superintendent's ethnic group; number of years in education; years of service as a superintendent; care-giving status (i.e., motherhood); and community type (urban, suburban, rural) of the superintendent's district.

Sample

This study's sample was drawn from 41 of the 50 states in the United States. I studied superintendents who identify as women and who are currently employed as public school district superintendents. I aimed to obtain the largest sample size possible for the study to be considered valid, reliable, and generalizable. I did so by recruiting participants through accessing publicly available email addresses, academic listservs, superintendent listservs, personal networks, professional organizations, and social media outlets. The result was a nationwide study of 532 female school district superintendents, the largest such sample to date.

To generate rich data to answer each of the study's research questions, an enhanced version of Tran et al.'s (2019) Perceived Subtle Gender Bias Index (PSGBI), a survey designed to assess perceived and subtle gender bias among women in the STEM field of academia, was created (named the Perceived Subtle Gender Bias Index: Drake Edition or PSGBI:DE).

I emailed the PSGBI:DE to as many female superintendents as had a publicly available contact email, a total of 2,439 of 3,645 female superintendents in the United States. Of these, 532 surveys were returned, a 21.81% return rate.

Method

Specific questions contained in the PSGBI:DE can be found below in Table 1. Two open-ended questions were added to the PSGBI:DE Survey: Question 29 ("If you do receive formal mentoring as a superintendent, please note your mentor's job title") and question 33 ("In your opinion, what are the major causes, if any, of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency?").

All 532 of the respondents answered question 33 and a qualitative approach was used to analyze those responses. Responses were coded and an analysis was conducted to view patterns in the data. The following codes were used most frequently: Traditional (202 times), Division by Gender (132 times), and Cultural Symbols (112 times).

For all other analysis of PSGBI:DE data, quantitative methodology was used to examine the relationships between and among variables to answer the research questions and to identify patterns or trends in the data collected from the survey. This method was

selected for the influence its results could have in the policy arena. Stone (2012) attested to the power of numbers and the need for action that using numbers or measurement creates, such as policy change and development.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to explore the resulting data set that followed administration of the PSGBI:DE to ensure the same four factors identified in the Tran et al. (2019) study were indeed the same four factors observed among female superintendents.

As Table 1 demonstrates, the PSGBI:DE produced the same four factors as the original PSGBI (Tran et al., 2019): Gender Inequality, Collegiality, Institutional Support, and Mentorship. Therefore, the PSGBI:DE was indeed a valid instrument for assessing female superintendent' perceptions of subtle (or unconscious) gender bias.

Table 1

Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis Comparing the 21-Items of the Perceived Subtle Gender Bias Index (PSGBI) and the PSGBI:DE

Scale Items (Women in Academia/Female Superintendents)	Women in Academia				Female Superintendents			
	GI	Col	Ment	IS	GI	Col	IS	Ment
#1/12 In my various interactions with superintendent colleagues, I have observed other female superintendents experiencing gender bias	**.72**	.12	-.03	.19	**.80**	.00	.05	.10
#2/13 I have seen male colleagues (superintendents or otherwise) jump in when a woman is speaking and take over the conversation.	**.74**	.11	.13	.17	**.79**	.04	.10	.06
#3/14 Compared to female superintendents, male superintendents receive more respect from other superintendents.	**.75**	.30	.06	.11	**.82**	.11	.09	.06
#4/15 People see ambitiousness differently for men and women (i.e., "strong minded" vs. "bossy").	**.74**	.14	.07	.13	**.76**	.07	.05	.03
#5/16 Some people are not comfortable being subordinate to a woman.	**.75**	.15	.15	.08	**.66**	.08	.08	.00
#6/17 Men with whom I work are unsure how to treat women superintendents.	**.70**	.26	.14	.11	**.71**	.22	.12	-.02
#7/18 Some of my male colleagues are only superficially supportive of women's struggles with inequities.	**.80**	.18	.24	.15	**.72**	.13	.22	.10
#8/19 There are times when male administrators continue to meet after the women have left the meeting.	**.65**	.11	.22	.14	**.59**	.12	.11	.01

#9/20 More situations of gender bias occur than are acknowledged in my profession.	**.70**	.34	.02	.24	**.82**	.05	.11	.06
#10/21 I receive positive feedback about my abilities from colleagues.	.09	**.74**	.21	.15	.05	**.68**	.02	.25
#11/22 I have a collegial work environment.	.25	**.79**	.14	.21	.12	**.81**	.10	.05
#12/23 I have a good relationship with most of my co-workers.	.19	**.81**	.09	.15	.065	**.81**	.09	.02
#13/24 My ideas are valued within the workplace.	.27	**.77**	.18	.11	.11	**.84**	.11	-.07
#14/25 Many people in my workplace are supportive of my work.	.20	**.72**	.32	.20	.11	**.87**	.10	.03
#15/26 In my profession, female superintendents feel valued.	.42	**.67**	.17	.16	.49	.46	.26	.17
#16/27 Female superintendents receive informal mentoring from colleagues *(consider beyond your specific school district when responding to this question).*	.15	.39	**.71**	.12	.10	.15	.21	**.76**
#17/28 I receive one-on-one formal mentoring *(can consider mentors beyond your specific school district when responding to this question).*	.12	.18	**.82**	.15	.04	-.00	-.04	**.85**
#18/29***PSGBI: I have a mentor who is in a senior leadership position***	.21	.21	**.79**	.09	XX	XX	XX	XX
PSGBI:DE: If you do receive formal mentoring as a superintendent, please note your mentor's job title								
#19/30 My profession is attuned to women superintendents' professional needs for success.	.28	.20	.13	**.72**	.36	.15	**.59**	.35
#20/31 My school district provides supports for balancing work and family demands.	.18	.26	.12	**.79**	.08	.07	**.82**	-.05
#21/32 I work in a profession where policies emphasize equity.	.26	.18	.13	**.77**	.25	.21	**.72**	.11
Cronbach's α	.91	.90	.79	.78	.91	.86	.67	.55

Note. N = 532. Tran et al.'s (2019) PSGBI factors are named as follows: Gender Inequality (GI), Collegiality (Col), Mentorship (Ment), and Institutional Support (IS). Women in Academia refers to women who work in the STEM fields of academia

Since the factors found within the PSGBI:DE results were determined to be the same four factors as Tran et al. (2019) found in their study, I conducted a series of ANOVAs to answer Research Question 2, which asks if there are any demographic differences in how female superintendents perceived gender bias. Specifically, one-way ANOVAs (with post hoc tests, where appropriate), Kruskal-Wallis H tests, and independent samples *t* tests were employed.

Analysis
Descriptive analysis of the categorical variables
Of the 532 female superintendents who completed the PSGBI:DE, 87.2% identified as being older than 45. The most common age

band of respondents was the 45- to 54-year-old age group, which represented 53.2%.

The predominant majority (88.2%) of respondents identified as White, with Black or African American (5.8%) and Hispanic or Latinx (3.9) as the next most common ethnic groups. The majority of respondents (61.1%) indicated they were *not* a mother or guardian to non-adult child(ren). Of those who indicated they were mothers, 72.4% had two or more children. The majority of respondents (422, or 79.3%) identified as being married. Additionally, 74 or 14.1% identified as being divorced, and 22 or 4.1% reported being single (never married).

Most respondents identified as working in rural school districts (58.3%). Suburban districts were the next most common; 30.6% of respondents indicated working in suburban districts. The northeastern and midwestern regions both received roughly the same number of responses with 183 (34%) and 174 (33%), respectively, and together represented approximately two thirds of the overall sample (67%). Of the 50 United States, 22 were represented by more than five responses.

The average number of years superintendent respondents worked in education was 27, ranging from 3–51 years of experience. Despite the fact that superintendents spanned a 49-year range of years of experience working in education, surprisingly, of the 532 responses, respondents most frequently reported that they had only been superintendents for 2 years.

Analysis of the PSGBI:DE responses
RQ#1: *What is the nature of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency as perceived by female superintendents?*

As evidenced by the responses depicted below in Table 2, unconscious gender bias is a problematic issue in the superintendency. PSGBI:DE respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each question from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *agree strongly* (results reverse coded where necessary).

An analysis of the descriptive statistics (see Table 2) demonstrates PSGBI:DE respondents indicated the greatest perception of subtle gender bias when answering Question 4/15: "People see ambitiousness differently for men and women (i.e., "strong minded" vs. "bossy")" with a mean score of 5.12 out of 6. This was followed closely by respondents' answers to Question 5/16: "Some people are not comfortable being subordinate to a woman," which resulted in a mean score of 5.02 out of 6. The third highest response was to Question 9/20: "More situations of gender bias occur than are acknowledged in my profession," with a mean score of 4.69 out of 6.

All three of these questions are found in the Gender Inequality subscale, which describes subtle gender biases respondents perceived in their current workplace. Therefore, it appears that the nature of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency as perceived by female superintendents equates to the notion of gender inequality.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Subtle Gender Bias Index (Female School Superintendents) /
PSGBI:DE

Scale Items	M	Mdn	Mode	Min	Max	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
#1/12 In my various interactions with superintendent colleagues, I have observed other female superintendents experiencing gender bias	4.02	4	4	1	6	1.37	-0.60	-0.45
#2/13 I have seen male colleagues (superintendents or otherwise) jump in when a woman is speaking and take over the conversation.	4.20	5	5	1	6	1.48	-0.57	-0.74
#3/14 Compared to female superintendents, male superintendents receive more respect from other superintendents.	4.48	5	5	1	6	1.36	-0.72	-0.32
#4/15 People see ambitiousness differently for men and women (i.e., "strong minded" vs. "bossy").	5.12	5	6	1	6	1.09	-1.50	2.23
#5/16 Some people are not comfortable being subordinate to a woman.	5.02	5	5	1	6	0.98	-1.18	1.73
#6/17 Men with whom I work are unsure how to treat women superintendents.	3.58	4	4	1	6	1.31	-0.27	-0.65
#7/18 Some of my male colleagues are only superficially supportive of women's struggles with inequities.	3.95	4	4	1	6	1.35	-0.37	-0.684
#8/19 There are times when male administrators continue to meet after the women have left the meeting.	3.58	4	5	1	6	1.48	-0.05	-1.15
#9/20 More situations of gender bias occur than are acknowledged in my profession.	4.69	5	5	1	6	1.16	-0.93	0.71
#10/21* I receive positive feedback about my abilities from colleagues.	2.14	2	2	1	6	0.96	1.30	2.45
#11/22* I have a collegial work environment.	1.84	2	2	1	6	0.82	1.46	4.01
#12/23* I have a good relationship with most of my co-workers.	1.66	2	2	1	5	0.63	0.78	1.60

Item								
#13/24* My ideas are valued within the workplace.	1.70	2	2	1	5	0.72	1.29	3.43
#14/25* Many people in my workplace are supportive of my work.	1.73	2	2	1	5	0.70	1.03	2.20
#15/26* In my profession, female superintendents feel valued.	2.83	3	2	1	6	1.06	0.73	0.55
#16/27* Female superintendents receive informal mentoring from colleagues *(consider beyond your specific school district when responding to this question)*.	2.68	2	2	1	6	1.16	0.90	0.41
#17/28* I receive one-on-one formal mentoring *(can consider mentors beyond your specific school district when responding to this question)*.	3.35	3	2	1	6	1.65	0.17	-1.35
#19/30* My profession is attuned to women superintendents' professional needs for success.	3.62	4	4	1	6	1.22	-0.03	-0.70
#20/31* My school district provides supports for balancing work and family demands.	3.09	3	2	1	6	1.35	0.51	-0.56
#21/32* I work in a profession where policies emphasize equity.	2.91	3	2	1	6	1.13	0.57	0.049

Note. $N = 532$. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each question from *strongly disagree* (1) to *agree strongly* (6). *Items are reverse coded. #18/29 excluded (open-ended)

PSGBI:DE respondents indicated the lowest perceptions of subtle gender bias when answering Questions 11/22–14/25, with mean scores ranging from 1.66 – 1.84, all of which fell within the Collegiality subscale that describes gender biases respondents perceive in their relationship with colleagues. This suggests that although female superintendents did perceive gender bias in the superintendency, it came primarily from sources other than colleagues.

Therefore, when considering the source of the perceptions of gender bias in the workplace, attention should be paid to those in the workplace who would not be identified as colleagues; in the superintendency, this might include members of the community, elected officials, parents, and board of education members. In their open-ended PSGBI:DE responses, female superintendents do indeed report a number of these sources as being responsible, in their opinion, for the major causes of gender bias in the superintendency.

This is not to say female superintendents perceive no gender bias from colleagues; Questions 1/12 and 2/13 indicate a

mean score of 4.02 and 4.19, respectively, which indicate superintendents agree slightly with the following statements: "In my various interactions with superintendent colleagues, I have observed other female superintendents experiencing gender bias" and "I have seen male colleagues (superintendents or otherwise) jump in when a woman is speaking and take over the conversation."

More detailed descriptive statistics for Question 14/25 ("Many people in my workplace are supportive of my work") were calculated to provide an even deeper explanation of results.

Upon comparing results to this specific question against demographic information, differences were found between responses when compared to ethnicity. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(30, n = 532) = 45.56$, $p = 0.034$, with Cramer's V effect size = 0.13, which revealed slightly more Black or African American respondents "strongly agreed" with the statement, "Many people in my workplace are supportive of my work," than was expected. Conversely, there was also disproportionality among responses to this question for White respondents, however, to a lesser degree: Fewer Whites than expected "strongly agreed" with the statement, "Many people in my workplace are supportive of my work."

Question 15 ("People see ambitiousness differently for men and women [i.e., "strong-minded" vs. "bossy"]") is notable because its mode (6 = *agree strongly*) is the highest of all the questions, meaning most superintendents strongly agreed with the statement. Upon closer examination for any demographic differences within this question, significant difference was found between the way superintendents answered this question depending on the type of community (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) in which they work. A *t* test revealed superintendents who work in urban communities ($M = 5.53$) showed significantly more agreement with the statement, "People see ambitiousness differently for men and women," than superintendents who work in rural communities ($M = 5.02$), $t(118.39) = 4.29$, $p < .001$.

A deeper look at the descriptive statistics for Question 31 ("My school district provides supports for balancing work and family demands") sheds light on the mother/superintendent experience. Of the 532 respondents, 61% are not mothers. Of the 39% of superintendents who are mothers, 67% agree (i.e., chose "agree slightly," "agree," or "agree strongly") with the statement that their school district provides support for balancing work and family. This is an important finding because of its juxtaposition with a subsequent finding about motherhood and mentorship where non-mother superintendents showed a generally greater level of agreement that they received mentoring than mothers.

Analysis of ANOVAs
RQ#2: *Are there any demographic differences in how female superintendents perceived gender bias?*

Demographic comparisons
One-way ANOVAs (with post hoc tests, where appropriate), Kruskal-Wallis H tests, and independent samples *t* tests were employed. Table 3 presents those variables that produced significant findings against the four factors (Gender Inequality, Collegiality, Institutional Support, Mentorship) and those that did not. An explanation of significant findings follows.

Table 3

Demographic Differences in How Female Superintendents Perceive Gender Bias

Are there demographic differences in how female superintendents perceived gender bias?	
YES	NO
- Age of Superintendent - Number of Years in Education - Number of Years as Superintendent - Mothers vs. Non-Mothers - Community Type	- Ethnicity - Number of Children - Age of Children - Marital Status - State/Region

Age of superintendent

When comparing the age means against each factor, significant differences were found between the age-range group and the Mentorship factor, $F(4, 527) = 2.97$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = -0.02$. Scheffé post hoc tests revealed differences among the means between the 65+-year-old group ($M = 0.44$) and those in the 45- to 54-year-old age group ($M = -0.07$) with the 65+-year-old group reporting more mentoring.

Number of years in education

There was a significant difference between respondents' self-reported number of years in education and their perceptions of Collegiality, $F(2, 529) = 3.122$, $p = .045$, $\eta_p^2 = -0.01$. Scheffé post hoc testing revealed a significant difference ($p = .045$) between the 3–25 years of experience group ($M = .11$) and the 31–51 years of experience group ($M = -.15$). Respondents with the fewest years in education reported more collegiality than those with the greatest number of years in education. However, the breadth of the range of experience (23 years) must be considered when interpreting these results.

There was a significant difference between Number of Years in Education and their perception of Mentorship, $F(2, 529) = 5.099$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = -0.02$. Scheffé post hoc

testing revealed a significant difference ($p = .010$) between the 3–25 years in education group ($M = -.16$) and the 31–51 years in education group ($M = .16$). This suggests those with more years of experience reported a higher level of mentorship. However, the mentorship factor did not approach "good" in internal reliability, so analyses regarding this factor should be taken with caution.

Number of years as a superintendent

Significant differences were found when comparing the means between Collegiality (Factor 2) and Number of Years as a Superintendent, $F(3, 527) = 4.639$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = -0.03$. Scheffé post hoc testing revealed a significant difference ($p = .008$) between the 0–2 years as superintendent group ($M = .1779161$) and 9–35 years as superintendent group ($M = -.2514484$), and a significant difference ($p = .043$) between the 3–4 years as superintendent group ($M = .1092219$) and 9–35 years as superintendent group ($M = -.2514484$). Respondents who reported the least amount of experience as a superintendent reported greater collegiality than superintendents with more experience.

There was also a significant difference between Mentorship (Factor 4) and Number of Years as a Superintendent, $F(3, 527) = 7.409$, p

$< .001$, $\eta_p^2 = -0.04$. Scheffé post hoc testing revealed three significant differences. There was a significant difference ($p = .015$) between the 0–2 years as superintendent group ($M = -.29$) and the 5–8 years as superintendent group ($M = .09$). There was a significant difference ($p < .001$) between the 0–2 years as superintendent group ($M = -.29$) and the 9–35 years as superintendent group ($M = .25$). There was also a significant difference ($p = .040$) between the 3–4 years as superintendent group ($M = -.11$) and the 9–35 years as superintendent group ($M = .25$). Respondents with the greatest number of years as a superintendent tended to report higher levels of mentorship. This squares with the earlier finding that those with more years of experience in education reported higher levels of mentorship.

Mothers and non-mothers
To examine possible differences between superintendents with children and those without, in relationship to the four constructs of gender bias, I conducted an independent samples t test. There were no differences between three of the factors; however, the test revealed there was a significant difference between mothers ($M = -0.11$) and non-mothers ($M = 0.07$) for Factor 4 (Mentorship), $t(530) = -2.08$, $p = .038$, with non-mothers showing a generally greater level of agreement that they received mentoring.

Community type
Significant differences were found when comparing means between community type and both the Gender Inequality and Collegiality factors. Superintendents in urban communities reported more gender inequality than those in suburban and rural communities. Additionally, superintendents in rural communities reported more collegiality than those in suburban communities; those in urban settings reported marginally more collegiality than those in suburban settings as well. Figure 1 shows the comparative means between community type and both the Gender Inequality and Collegiality factors from the PSGBI:DE.

Figure 1

Comparative Means Between Community Type, Gender Inequality, and Collegiality
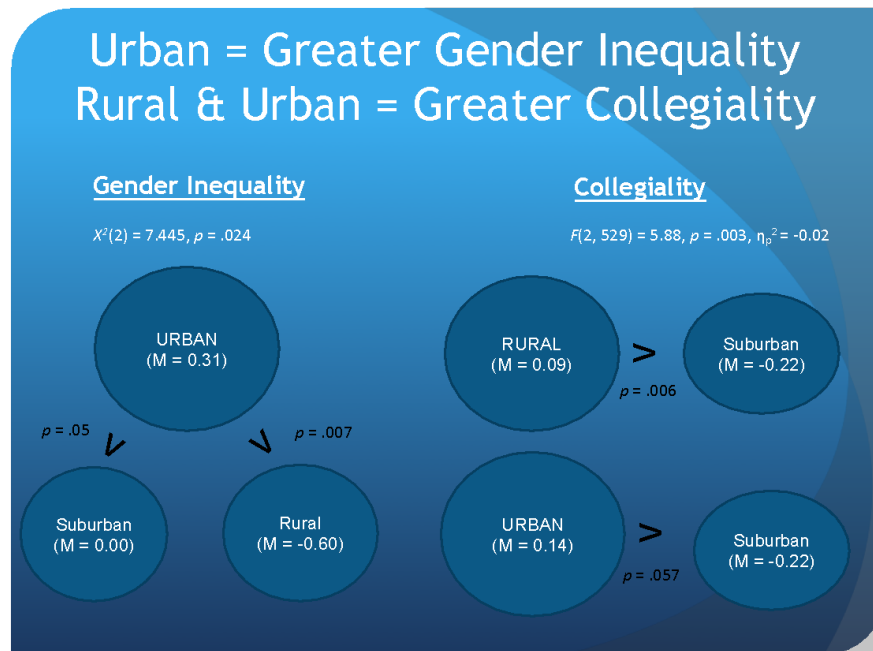
Conclusion

Research question 1: What is the nature of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency as perceived by female superintendents?

Overall, survey findings concluded unconscious gender bias in the superintendency is best described by the notion of gender inequality.

Here, female superintendents reported male superintendents receive more respect than women do and exhibit greater discomfort with female than with male leaders. To add to this, female superintendents reported people view ambitiousness differently for them than for their male counterparts. They also pointed to

men's tendency to interrupt women and take over conversations.

It then follows that these responses aligned with respondents' agreement that more situations of gender bias occur than are acknowledged in their profession.

Research question 2: Are there any demographic differences in how female superintendents perceived gender bias?

Demographic differences were found in how female superintendents perceived gender bias. In particular, differences were found in the following demographic categories: age, ethnicity, number of years in education, number of years as a superintendent, mothers and non-mothers, and community type.

Disrupt the norm, raise awareness, call out the issue, and intervene

Members of the organization will continue to reproduce what they know and are used to until they are introduced to something new and better. There is a need to disrupt the norm and deliberately work to flatten the gendered hierarchy. This can be done by empowering women of all administrative levels to lead and give them authority to affect change. The resulting exposure of more women in power can help to shift mental models of what women are capable of. Ways to achieve this might include establishing power or hierarchy in organizations based on scope of influence rather than position (i.e., tapping into the plethora of female educators/leaders in the ranks below the superintendency), deliberately holding more gender-inclusive networking events, and/or giving women in the lower ranks of the educational hierarchy opportunities to lead.

Education officials should seize the opportunity to utilize the PSGBI:DE, a valid tool for measuring perceptions of gender bias, to measure unconscious bias more broadly. State level Departments of Education should administer PSGBI:DE to all the female superintendents in their state, analyze results, raise awareness, and design targeted interventions.

With this enhanced awareness of unconscious gender bias, it is incumbent on all stakeholders to call out the issue and intervene. Broadly publish results of PSGBI:DE administration, offer explicit training and exercises to educate and remediate, design longevity plans to deliberately support female superintendents' success in the role, offer female-specific mentoring (especially for mothers), establish branches of state administrators' associations specifically in support of female administrators if one does not already exist, and enlist men to participate in the effort.

The data contained in this study demonstrate that unconscious gender bias in the superintendency is indeed a problematic issue. Unconscious bias exists and has a significant impact on the lived experiences of women. However, to date, there has not been a study focused specifically on female superintendents' perceptions of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency. As such, there has been a need for more empirical evidence to demonstrate the existence of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency; the results of this study help to fill that void.

Author Biography

A knowledgeable and passionate advocate for gender equality in educational leadership, Julia DiSalvo Drake began her career as a teacher, coach, and principal in New York City. She currently serves as Springhurst Elementary School principal in Dobbs Ferry, NY. E-mail: drakej@dfsd.org

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Native American Bilingual Education: An Ethnography of Powerful Forces

Written by Cheryl Crawley, PhD

Reviewed by Art Stellar, PhD

This book, as an ethnography, comes straight from the author's perspective of her eight years working and observing the Crow Tribe in Montana. It also covers a thirty-year period when education in the United States was undergoing a critical time of trying to understand how to best approach teaching members of the Crow Tribe within the context of the dominant society, as well as address the matter of race in America. The political and social dilemmas at large make the prospects of educating American Indians even more complex.

The author, Cheryl Crawley, is a third generation Montanan with sensitivity to this sub-population. She has worked on and off the Crow Indian Reservation of Montana. From 1978 to 1986 she worked directly with the indigenous population during this study. She spent a year at the University of California at Berkeley doing graduate work for her doctorate. Afterwards she entered the field of school administration as director of student services for the Salem Oregon Public Schools. She later assumed the role of superintendent of schools for two other Oregon school districts.

At the time this study was completed, Crawley had served in school administration for forty years. She has also made a name for herself as a leadership coach, speaker, and

facilitator of change. There is an autobiographical element herein, although the author keeps her ego out of the main story.

Crawley is unafraid of exposing the realities of life for the Crow Indians and for the white educators who worked with them. There were prejudices on both sides with political skirmishes from time to time. The history of the Crow Tribe was especially difficult for many young white teachers and administrators to comprehend and appreciate. Some were blind to the atrocities inflicted upon the native Americans while others wore cloaks of missionaries. Most entered with a sense of striving for and contributing to student success. In any case the turnover of staff was very high as conditions were bleak with minimum budgets and overwhelming poverty.

The Crow leaders have been dismayed with the steady loss of the Crow language, land holdings, and culture. They taught children to speak Crow in their family setting and community events, while also desiring children to learn English for employment and participate in legal endeavors, including voting. They recognize that the Tribe has lost power and land to the white people, partially because of lack of understanding of English. The Crow leadership has facilitated hiring their

own attorneys and encouraged young men to pursue legal and other professional degrees. There has been progress; however, it has not been easy. Crow students who attend college are often criticized by their peers who stay on the reservation and by those at the college who do not relate to Crow customs.

Policymakers in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere have not adequately attended to the societal issues within the Crow communities. Consequently, there have been numerous legal conflicts over water rights, fish and game, mineral rights, and sovereignty. There has also been cultural miscommunication. The pace of change has been extremely slow as the native American has not been a priority for non-native politicians.

The author cites the fear outsiders have of the reservation and the people who live there. She was often advised to be careful and not to venture onto the reservation without an escort, yet she found no concern for her own personal safety.

From an educational perspective the author delves into specifics of teaching and learning. Student attendance in school is a critical element everywhere; however, the Crow families believe that family needs come before school. She cites problems with communicating an "excused absence "and how to request such a labeling for an absence. This has become more of a concern as Montana has enacted new attendance laws.

The author suggests that although state and Federal policymakers aim efforts at children, focusing on parents would be more productive. Targeting elders can be even more essential with changing the behaviors of Crow children. Crow elders define educational success—a concept that is not appreciated by "outsiders."

Mastery of the English language is key to development of students across the U.S. Studies reveal that 85% of Crow adults still speak Crow, which is more of a spoken language than English. There are significant technicalities with converting English to Crow and vice versa. This affects phonics, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. Math is even more of a barrier as there are no words in the Crow language for "add, subtract, multiply and divide" not to mention other higher order mathematical concepts.

The author is attuned to the challenges of going back and forth between the English and Crow languages, yet dual language is the preferred approach. While there has been funding available for learning English along with Crow, few programs have been very successful. Yet surveys of Crow families demonstrate that 82% want their children to be able speak fluent English.

However, "After a decade of bilingual education in reservation schools, only 50% of parents believed that bilingual education was a good approach … while Bilingual program staff sincerely believed they were providing these parents with the alternative they themselves, as well as the parents desire" (p. 160).

It gets worse: "Only 51% of parents believed their children liked school. And worst, only 15% of parents believed school staff understood and responded in a positive manner to the cultural and language differences of Crow students" (p. 160). The author describes the dichotomy of "Speak English" pushed by non-Indians and "Talk Indian" promoted by the Crow to convey to children that they belong to a tribe. The implications become central to trust between the two cultures. Anecdotes about the

difficulties of maintaining the Crow language clarify the weight of the burden upon Crow families.

There are few dramatic historical occurrences involving the Crow Indians that are significant to the white population. While Custer's Last Stand happened on Crow land, it was not a Crow fight. Thus, the future seems to point to a continuance of the deterioration of the Crow language and the low performance of Crow students in an English dominated

society. The author's hope lies in her belief that "talk Crow' combined with "speak English" when necessary, will remain.

This reviewer regrets that this book was not yet written when he served as superintendent for the Oklahoma City Public Schools in Oklahoma with meaningful numbers of indigenous students. *Native American Bilingual Education* would have given our community a better perspective on this topic.

Reviewer Biography

Art Stellar has served as a superintendent for 25 years in diverse communities. He may be most known for improving educational excellence for all students and for reducing equity gaps. He has demonstrated that leadership is more important than high funding levels as he works with others to maximize available resources, while securing outside money. His new consulting company is StellarAdvantage.com. E-mail: artstellar@yahoo.com

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

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The **scope** for submissions focuses on the intersection of five factors of school and district administration: (a) administrators, (b) teachers, (c) students, (d) subject matter, and (e) settings. The Journal encourages submissions that focus on the intersection of factors a-e. The Journal discourages submissions that focus only on personal reflections and opinions.

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   identify if the submission is original research, evidence-based practice, commentary, or book review
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11. six to eight key words that reflect the essence of the submission
12. 40-word biographical sketch

Please do not submit page numbers in headers or footers. Rather than use footnotes, it is preferred authors embed footnote content in the body of the article. Also note**, APA guidelines are changed so that one space is required after the period at the end of a sentence**. Articles are to be submitted to the editor by e-mail as an electronic attachment in Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, 12 Font.

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- Author
- Publisher, city, state, year, # of pages, price
- Name and affiliation of reviewer
- Contact information for reviewer: address, city, state, zip code, e-mail address, telephone and fax
- Reviewer biography
- Date of submission

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Comprised of school system leaders and business and non-profit leaders, AASA's Learning 2025 Commission was chaired by Daniel A. Domenech, executive director of AASA and Bill Daggett, founder of the Successful Practices Network. A network of educational systems now comprises a Learning 2025 National Network of Demonstrations Systems, whose chief objective is to prepare all students safely and equitably for a workplace and society for the future.

For additional information about **Learning 2025 Network for Student-Centered, Equity-Focused Education,** visit the AASA websitewww.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=45826 or contact Mort Shermanat msherman@aasa.org, Valerie Truesdale at vtruesdale@aasa.org or Debbie Magee, program director, at dmagee@aasa.org.

➢ **AASA's Leadership Network** the School Superintendents Association's professional learning arm, drives educational leaders' success, innovation and growth, focused on student-centered, equity-focused, forward-reaching education. Passionate and committed to continuous improvement, over 100 Leadership Network faculty connect educational leaders to the leadership development, relationships and partnerships needed to ensure individual growth and collective impact**.** A snapshot of over 30 academies, cohorts and consortia is represented in the graphic below. To assist in navigating through the pandemic, AASA has produced and archived over 100 webinars since March 2020 on *Leading for Equity* and *What Works* at aasa.org/AASA-LeadershipNetwork-webinars.aspx. Contact Mort Sherman at msherman@aasa.org or Valerie Truesdale at vtruesdale@aasa.org to explore professional learning and engagement.

➤ **Advocacy Updates: Congress Nears Final FY23 Appropriations Package**
  https://www.aasa.org/advocacy/blog/congress-nears-final-fy23-appropriations-package

➤ **National Conference on Education: Feb 16-18, 2023, St Antonio, Texas**
  https://nce.aasa.org/

➤ **Podcast: Beyond Self Care: Disconnect to Reconnect**
  https://www.aasa.org/news-media/media/beyond-self-care-disconnect-to-reconnect

➤ **Webinar Recordings: A to Z: Getting Started with Electric School Bus Purchasing**
  https://www.aasa.org/resources/resource/a-to-z-getting-started-with-electric-school-bus-purchasing

➤ *School Administrator*: **Measurements in Education**
  https://www.aasa.org/publications/publication/january-2023-school-administrator

➢ **Upcoming Program and Events**
https://www.aasa.org/professional-learning/calendar-of-events

➢ **School District Spending of American Rescue Plan Funding**, an AASA survey of hundreds of district leaders across the U.S. in July (2021) about their plans to utilize American Rescue Plan (ARP) and other federal COVID-19 relief funding to address the pandemic-related student learning recovery. Results: www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/ARP-Survey-Findings-090121.pdf

➢ **Resources on leading through COVID**
COVID Guidance, Strategies, and Resources.
www.aasacentral.org/covidguidance/

➢ **AASA Releases 2021-22 Superintendent Salary Study**
www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=45378

➢ **Official Online Industry Suppliers for Educators**
aasa.inloop.com/en/buyersguide

➢ **ASA Main and Advocacy App**
Both apps are designed for school superintendents, central office staff, principals, teachers, policymakers, business and community leaders, parents and more. The Advocacy app enables advocates of public education to connect, network, communicate with other members, access, and share important information directly from their devices.
www.aasa.org/app.aspx

➢ **Superintendent's Career Center**
aasa-jobs.careerwebsite.com/

➢ **2020 Decennial Study of the American Superintendent**
www.aasacentral.org/book/the-american-superintendent-2020-decennial-study
The study is for sale and available at www.aasacentral.org/aasa-books

❖ **Join AASA** and discover a number of resources reserved exclusively for members. See Member Benefits at www.aasa.org/welcome/index.aspx. For questions on membership contact Meghan Moran at mmoran@aasa.org

❖ **Welcome materials may be found at**
www.aasa.org/welcome/resources.aspx

❖ **Resources for educational leaders** may be viewed at AASA's virtual library:
www.aasathoughtleadercentral.org

❖ Learn about AASA's **books program** where new titles and special discounts are available to AASA members. The AASA publications catalog may be downloaded at www.aasacentral.org/aasa-books

Upcoming AASA Events

AASA 2023 National Conference on Education, Feb. 16-18, 2023, San Antonio, TX

AASA Legislative Advocacy Conference, July 11-13, 2023, Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, WDC