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Sponsorship and Appreciation

District Leaders Must Empower Parents in Trump's America

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On the morning of November 8, 2016, Reuters announced that Hillary Clinton had a 90 percent chance of winning the presidential election.[i] Many people could be excused for not having studied Donald Trump's thoughts on education given the apparent unlikelihood of his victory or his scattered remarks about Common Core or privatizing education. Yet he won the presidency, and superintendents and school board members, like the rest of us, must figure out how to advocate for public education in the new political climate.

My advice to school leaders is to invite parents to help chart the course of public education or watch them switch to the side of school choice. As a result of No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Every Student Succeeds Acts, many families believe that key educational decisions about standards, testing, and accountability are made in Washington, D.C. rather than local communities.

Trump has tried to channel parental dissatisfaction with this state of affairs into support for vouchers and charters. The task facing district leaders is to forge alliances with parents and convince them that they can find a remedy within public education.

Trump and His Education Policy Team

At the 2016 Republican National Convention, Donald Trump, Jr. criticized public education for depriving children of the opportunity to enter the middle class. Public schools, he announced, are like "Soviet-era department stores that are run for the benefit of the clerks and not the customer" and are "more concerned about protecting the jobs of tenured teachers than serving the students." In September 2016, the Trump campaign released a $20 billion federal plan to support private, charter, magnet, and independent schools.[ii]

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[i] Maurice Tamman, "Clinton has 90 Percent Chance of Winning: Reuters/Ipsos States of the Nation," *Reuters* (November 8, 2016).
[ii] Andrew Ujifusa, "Appraising Trump's School Choice, Child-Care Plans," *Education Week* 36, no. 7 (2016a).

Trump has said that he would like to cut the U.S. Department of Education and that "there's no failed policy more in need of urgent change than our government-run education monopoly."[iii] In *Great Again*, Trump says that he believes in letting schools "compete for kids" through options such as school choice, charter schools, vouchers, and opportunity scholarships.[iv]

We can learn more about the likely direction of education policy during the Trump administration by studying the views of the two people he chose to lead his education team: Williamson Evers and Gerard Robinson.[v]

Williamson Evers is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Last year, he wrote an article arguing that the Common Core standards were created in secrecy and "increased the alienation of the public from schools as institutions worthy of loyalty."[vi] As Mercedes K. Schneider shows in *Common Core Dilemma*, a small group of economic and political elites did craft the Common Core behind closed doors.[vii] And as the test refusal movement shows, many parents are no longer going to do whatever the schools tell them they must.

Even if Trump does not display an intimate awareness of education policy, he does appeal to certain parents with his statement that he will get rid of the Common Core.[viii]

Trump's other education team transition leader, Gerard Robinson, is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. In a recent article, Robinson notes that black city leaders and state representatives helped launch Milwaukee's voucher program in the 1990s.

The "goal of these school choice 'patriots' was to free teachers to practice their craft in new and innovative ways, including by opening their own public or private schools, and to empower parents with greater choice and influence over their children's education."[ix] Like Evers, Robinson thinks that school choice can be a remedy for the ills that many parents see in public education.

[iii] Cory Turney and Eric Westervelt, "Donald Trump's Plans for America's Schools," *nprED* (September 25, 2016).

[iv] Donald Trump, *Great again: How to Fix our Crippled America* (New York: Threshold, 2016), 53.

[v] Andrew Ujifusa, "See Who's been Tapped to Lead Trump's Transition Team for Education," *Education Week* (September 19, 2016b).

[vi] Williamson M. Evers, "Exit, Voice, Loyalty-and the Common Core," *Education Week* 34, no. 17 (2015).

[vii] Mercedes K. Schneider, *Common Core Dilemma–Who Owns our Schools?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2015).

[viii] On how public support for the Common Core plummeted between 2013 and 2015, see Michael B. Henderson, Paul E. Peterson and Martin R. West, "The 2015 EdNext Poll on School Reform," *Education Next*, no. 1 (2016), 8-20.

[ix] Gerald Robinson, "School Reform Family Feud," *EducationNext* (October 13, 2016).

The Choices Facing District Leaders

At this critical juncture in the history of American education, district leadership must think carefully about how to address the anger about top-down education reforms. If parents are going to fight for public education, they need to be partners who have a meaningful voice in conversations about standards, curriculum, and accountability mechanisms. Otherwise, parents may reject the public education system and join the school choice movement.

Here are two examples of public education leaders alienating parents who could be their allies, and a positive example of superintendents building an army of advocates.

The first negative example is from the spring of 2016 when a New York supervisory district sponsored a workshop on "dealing with critics at public meetings."[x] The speaker offered to "help school leaders handle the chronic critic, relentless gadfly, and anyone else who seeks to use your district as a forum to promote their own agenda."

True, there are occasions when unreasonable people speak too long at public meetings. At the same time, these "chronic critics" and "relentless gadflies" are often concerned parents who will do anything for their children. Talking about parents as objects to handle is wrong in itself and a missed opportunity to create public education lobbyists.

A second negative example of engaging parents is the New York State Education Department (NYSED) "Assessment Schoolkit."[xi] The purpose of the toolkit is to give districts resources to convince families to take the Common Core tests. A sample letter from a superintendent to parents offers reasons to take tests, including the need for teachers to acquire "a fair and accurate assessment of your child's learning." The letter, however, does not mention the Common Core or high-stakes testing, two of the main reasons that parents refuse these tests.[xii]

The Common Core's emphasis on "close reading," for instance, gives children few opportunities to share their own thoughts, and high-stakes testing has the practical effect of narrowing the curriculum to the tested subjects. District leadership should acknowledge informed critiques of the Common Core and listen respectfully to parents who point out the flaws with the standards themselves and not just their implementation. Today, test-refusing families are among the most knowledgeable, connected, and passionate about education in the district.[xiii]

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[x] Jeff Oleson, *Dealing with Critics at Public Meetings* (Putnam | Northern Westchester, New York: The Center for Educational Leadership PNWBOCES, 2015).

[xi] "Assessments Toolkit."New York State Education Department, http://www.nysed.gov/assessments-toolkit (accessed November 10, 2016).

[xii] Oren Pizmony-Levy and Nancy Green Saraisky, *Who Opts Out and Why? Results from a National Survey of Opting Out of Standardized Tests* (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 2016).

[xiii] Ibid.

A positive example of district leadership mobilizing parents is the iRefuse rally at the Comsewogue school district in the spring of 2014.[xiv] The superintendent, Dr. Joseph Rella, hosted the event and invited state politicians, local teachers, activists, social workers, principals, and parents to speak about the harm of high-stakes Common Core testing.

People became inspired by the cause and informed and mobilized others. Dr. Rella and other superintendents on Long Island changed the national conversation about Common Core testing, and many people in the test refusal movement continue to campaign for candidates sympathetic to public education.

District leadership should also encourage teachers to exercise free speech about education policies. In the spring of 2016, the New York Times ran an article on how the city's education department was telling teachers not to talk with students about refusing the tests.[xv] Silencing teachers, however, comes with a cost: teachers feel disempowered and may not be inclined to speak up on behalf of public education when you need them. Superintendents and school boards should defend teacher tenure as a safeguard for free speech.

University of Massachusetts-Amherst political science professor Jesse H. Rhodes makes an important argument in his article, "Learning Citizenship?" Rhodes combined data from a survey of public school parents and information on states' policies on standards, testing, and accountability. His research shows "that parents residing in states with more developed assessment systems express more negative attitudes about government and education, and are less likely to become engaged in some forms of involvement in their children's education, than are parents who live in states with less developed assessment systems."[xvi] In other words, top-down education reforms such as the Common Core and high-stakes testing induce parents to give up on public education and politics in general.

In states that have gone the farthest down the road of education reform, you see parents stop running for the school boards, volunteering for the PTA, or participating in community affairs. The same principle applies to teachers: if you discourage them from speaking about education policy in public, they will stop, even when they could be your best advocates.

We would be having a different conversation if Hillary Clinton had been elected president. Clinton and her education team envisioned a strong role for the federal government in reforming public education.

A Trump administration, by contrast, will try to channel rage against high-stakes Common Core testing into support for privatizing measures. Public school leadership must now decide whether to become allies with parents upset by education reform or risk watching them join Trump's team in its mission to dismantle public education.

[xiv] The flyer is here: https://deutsch29.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/irefuse_rally-flyer.pdf

[xv] Kate Taylor, "Teachers are Warned about Criticizing New York State Tests," *New York Times* (March 24, 2016).

[xvi] Jesse H. Rhodes, "Learning Citizenship? how State Education Reforms Affect Parents' Political Attitudes and Behavior," *Political Behavior* 37, no. 1 (03, 2015), 181-220.

(Author's note. This article was written before Donald Trump nominated Betsy DeVos as the United States Department of Education Secretary of Education. Given her prominent advocacy for school choice, the main point of this article remains: public educators need to reach out to parents, including those in the test refusal movement, as allies in the fight against privatization.)

Author Biography

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Does Money Really Matter? Investing in the Future of Hispanic Students

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students. Data from a purposeful sample of 147 Texas school districts identified as having a student Hispanic population greater than 75% were examined. Additionally, superintendents were interviewed to provide an in-depth understanding of the potential influence of school funding on the graduation rates of their district's Hispanic students. Results concluded that a relationship existed between: (a) school funding and graduation rates in small school districts; (b) school funding invested on dropout prevention programs and graduation rates; and (c) school funding and graduation rates for districts reporting up to a 50% LEP student population. Superintendents differed in their perceptions of what contributed to their district's graduation rates and school funding concerning graduating Hispanic students.

Key Words

academic programs, district size, graduation rates, Hispanic students, LEP students, Pre-Kindergarten, school funding

Introduction

Graduation rates represent one of the most powerful indicators in education to measure success, which in practical terms means complying with all the requisites to finalize an educational program (Roza, 2009). In the United States (U.S.), approximately 7,000 students drop out of high school every day (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). This measurement tool is even more illustrative when it portrays Hispanic students; the second fastest growing minority (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). For instance, in 2012, only 82.8% of Hispanics completed high school; well below their racial/ethnic counterparts: Asians/Pacific Islanders (94.9%), Whites (94.6%), and Blacks (90.0%) (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015).

One of the most significant tendencies among Hispanic students is the growth of the limited English proficiency (LEP) population (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). For example, in Texas, the LEP student growth rate has virtually doubled that of the total student population. From 2000 to 2013, the LEP student population grew by 55.6%, while the total student population only grew by 26.7% (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2015). English spoken as a second language has been reported as just one of the risk factors that educators have used to predict whether a student will potentially drop out of high school (Rumberger, 2011).

The decline of graduation rates of Hispanic students has also been blamed on several other factors, with student funding documented to be one of the most important (Bost, 2007). Considering this reality, educational investments to increase high school graduation rates have been reported to not only produce higher employment and earnings, but less expenditure on health care and welfare as well as less involvement in the criminal justice

system (Belfield & Levin, 2007). Although studies have been conducted in an effort to understand the influence of funding on academic outcomes (Konstantopolous & Borman, 2011), there is much less research on the specific relationship between graduation rates and funding allocated per Hispanic student. As a result, in an attempt to close this literature gap, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students.

Methods
Participants

Utilizing the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), a purposeful sample of 183 Texas school districts, identified as having a student Hispanic population greater than 75%, were chosen for participation in this study.

To ensure the accuracy of estimates and error rates, outlier analysis was conducted on yearly graduation rates. Outliers can lead to substantial distortions of parameter and statistic estimates and inflated standard errors, thus causing invalid findings (Osborne & Overbay, 2004). The resulting sample consisted of 147 school districts: 82 small, 32 medium, and 33 large. Small districts were defined as those enrolling less than 1,600 students, medium school districts enrolling between 1,600 and 5,000 students, and large school districts reporting more than 5,000 students in attendance.

Regarding student demographics, 86.3% were Hispanic, 18.7% LEP, 78.7% economically disadvantaged, and the number of pupils per district varied from 48 to 63,133. In addition to archived TEA district data, a purposeful sample of 15 district superintendents (5 small, 5 medium, 5 large) participated in a 30-minute semi-structured interview in an

attempt to provide a more in-depth understanding of the influence school funding may or may not have on the graduation rates of the district's Hispanic students.

Data collection and analysis
Using TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), eight years (2004-2012) of district data (e.g., district size, percentage of LEP, per pupil expenditures in state/local/federal funding, graduation rates, dropout prevention programs, and career and college readiness programs) were downloaded and merged into a SPSS database for further analysis.

The quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlations, while the qualitative data, obtained from the interviews, were analyzed using an inductive coding process in an attempt to build an empirical understanding of what influence, if any, school funding has had on the graduation rates of Hispanic students. Member checking and extensive peer-review coding were used to validate the qualitative findings.

Results
School funding and graduation rates
Regarding the potential relationship between school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students, findings from this research suggested that a statistically significant positive relationship existed between state/local school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students, $r(147) = .331$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .110$. Findings also suggested that a statistically significant positive relationship existed between all school funding[1] and graduation rates of Hispanic students, $r(147) = .343$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .118$. In other words, as the amount of school funding increased, so did the graduation rates.

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[1] All school funding includes state, local, federal, and grant money allocated per student expenditure.

The proportion of variation in graduation rates attributed to school funding varied between 11.0 % and 11.8% respectively.

District size: small, medium, & large
When examining the relationship between school funding and the graduation rates of Hispanic students across small, medium, and large school districts, findings indicated that for small school districts a statistically significant positive relationship existed between state/local school funding and graduation rates, $r(82) = .391$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .153$, and between all school funding and graduation rates, $r(82) = .418$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .175$.

This would suggest that for small school districts, as school funding increased, so did their graduation rates. The proportion of variation in graduation rates attributed to school funding varied between 15.3% and 17.5% respectively. A relationship was not found to exist between school funding and graduation rates for medium and large school districts ($p > .05$).

Dropout prevention and college readiness programs
In addition to examining the data across district sizes, the data were analyzed to determine whether or not a relationship existed between school funding invested in dropout prevention programs and the graduation rates of Hispanic students. Findings indicated that a statistically significant positive relationship existed between state/local school funds invested on dropout prevention programs and graduation rates, $r(147) = .174$, $p = .036$, $r^2 = .030$.

In other words, the more state/local money invested in dropout prevention programs, the greater the graduation rates. Three percent of the variation found in the graduation rates was attributed to the state/local funding spent on dropout prevention programs.

This was not the case when the data were analyzed using all student funding ($p > .05$).

Finally, when analyzing the relationship between school funding invested in career and college readiness programs and the graduation rates of Hispanic students, findings concluded a relationship did not exist between school funds invested on career and college readiness programs and graduation rates of Hispanic students ($p > .05$).

ELL/LEP students
To determine whether the district percentage of students classified as LEP made a difference, ranges of LEPs were created (0-25%, 25-50%, 50-75%, 75-100%[2]). For districts reporting a 0-25% LEP student population, findings concluded a statistically significant positive relationship existed between state/local school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students, $r(104) = .349$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .122$, and between all school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students, $r(104) = .384$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .148$.

For districts reporting a 25-50% LEP student population, results also indicated a statistically significant relationship existed between state/local school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students, $r(37) = .348$, $p = .035$, $r^2 = .121$. For districts reporting up to a 50% LEP student population, as school funding increases, so do the graduation rates.

The proportion of variation in graduation rates attributed to school funding varied between 12.2% and 14.8% respectively. This was not the case for those districts comprised of greater than a 50% LEP student population ($p > .05$).[2]

Superintendents' perceptions
In an attempt to capture a more in-depth understanding of the influence school funding may or may not have on the graduation rates of the district's Hispanic students, district superintendents were interviewed for their perceptions concerning this issue. The qualitative analysis derived three distinct themes or categories of responses concerning school funding and its relationship to student graduation rates: (a) contribute to graduation rates, (b) role of school funding, and (c) investment of additional funds.

Contribute to graduation rates
In regards to superintendents' perceptions about the factors contributing to the graduation rates of their district's Hispanic students, 100% of the small district superintendents felt that their district size was a factor in their graduation rates, whereas 0% of the medium and large districts did not feel the size of their district was a factor in their graduation rates.

When asked, "*How does the size of your district make a difference in the graduating rates of your Hispanic students*?" One small district superintendent claimed, "A small district such as ours can track and keep one-on-one performance standards to ensure that the students do not fall through the cracks."

Comments representative of the responses received from the medium and large district superintendents included "In my opinion, the size of our district does not play a major role." and "This is one instance where I do not believe size matters. You either have systems in place to address all students or you do not."

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[2] None of the school districts reported 75-100% LEPs.

When the superintendents were asked "*What do you contribute to making a difference in the graduation rates of your Hispanic students?*" responses varied across the size of the school district. Forty percent of the small district superintendents claimed having high student expectations as one contribution. One such superintendent commented "I believe that providing an atmosphere of high expectations and having personnel that will believe in students is important." The medium and large district superintendents, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on the "how" and "where" funding should be invested. For example:

> The budgetary process makes a difference. There is a process in place in the district where each school receives a certain amount of money per pupil by local and federal budgets. If a principal requires funds beyond the assigned amounts, there is a procedure in place to explain the request … The way that principals invest those resources makes a huge difference.

Although there were some differences in the perceptions of the small, medium, and large district's superintendents in terms of what they contributed to making a difference in the graduation rates of their Hispanic students, 46.7% of all the superintendents interviewed agreed that the academic programs put in place within their district were a contribution to their graduation rates.

Role of school funding
Although 86.7% of the superintendents agreed school funding played a role in the graduation rates of their Hispanic students, when asked, "Do you think having additional funding would assist your district in graduating a greater percentage of Hispanic students?," one of the superintendents claimed, "Absolutely not. This is a mistake that legislatures are constantly making, because they tend to attack the problem from the wrong perspective." Another echoed, "No, you can't eliminate racism with more funding. The system is too complex…the government and legislatures, it is an old system, and it just doesn't work."

Despite the fact that there was some debate as to whether additional school funding would influence graduation rates, 93.3% of the superintendents agreed additional funding allocated towards implementing academic programs would have a considerable influence on the graduation rates of their Hispanic students.

Examples of such academic programs were specific to college and career readiness, dropout prevention, and Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K). Sample superintendent responses:

> "More money can always help, especially funding college readiness and dropout prevention programs;"

> "I would invest in full day Pre-K programs and college and readiness courses at the junior high and high school;" and

> "Those extra funds would serve to implement full day Pre-K programs, career and college readiness programs, and intensify the dropout prevention programs."

These comments show a clear alignment of opinions across the districts regarding the potential influence academic programs could have on the graduation rates of Hispanic students.

Investment of additional funds

When analyzing where "best" to invest any additional funding to order to graduate more Hispanic students, superintendents differed on here to spend/allocate those extra funds: full day Pre-K, dropout prevention, and/or college readiness programs. Sample comments:

> "More money can always help, especially funding college readiness programs. During the last budget cuts, the district created a program to prepare the students for college, especially for students with low income. Even when facing massive cuts in resources, we had to continue with the program and invest in the program, because we promised it to the students. More money can also contribute to dropout prevention programs."

> "Funding is needed to provide access for students to visit colleges and universities. Funding for dual credit courses and books for the classes would be great. I believe that the students who are able to experience some college life early on during their high school years will be more likely to succeed and make plans to attend a college or a university."

To summarize, 93.3% of the superintendents stated they would invest any additional funding into academic programs. Forty-percent of the superintendents shared the opinion that investing in a full day Pre-K program would be where they would invest the extra funds. The consensus was the problem should be addressed early on instead of waiting until much later to find a solution.

This notion was supported by a superintendent of a medium school district when he said, "I would invest in Pre-K

programs. This way we would attack the problem from the beginning, and not with remediation programs to close instructional gaps. Providing a full day Pre-K program could produce great progress."

A similar sentiment was echoed by a superintendent of a large school district, "Full day Pre-K programs may be the answer. These programs help close the instructional gaps within the early ages and can save the district money and headaches in the future."

Discussion

Throughout this investigation, the collected evidence predominantly indicated a relationship existed between school funding and the graduation rates of Hispanic students. This evidence is supported by the Education Production Function Theory, where educational inputs, such as funding invested, influence final outputs, such as high school graduation, on students' lives (Baker, 2012).

These findings were consistent with research conducted by Sanford and Hunter (2011) and Houck and Kurtz (2010) who concluded funding levels may influence educational results. This conclusion also corroborates findings from Baker (2012) where it was clear that school districts having more money have a bigger capacity to offer "better" educational prospects to their students.

Given that the relationship between school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students has been historically controversial and debatable (Baker, 2012), it was important to analyze several intrinsic factors influencing funding.

This study found there was a relationship between the size of a district, more specifically small districts, and the level of school funding on the graduation rates of its

Hispanic students. This may be connected with the fact that small districts might have a greater ability to communicate their students expectations, because of possibly having less bureaucratic processes, fewer administrators to disseminate their messages, and less institutional barriers to execute their policies and reach their students.

Small district superintendents, who were interviewed for this research, claimed having high expectations was one of the main factors contributed to the graduation of their Hispanic students. This was in agreement with Stewart (2009) who found small schools tend to produce better academic results than the larger ones. Additionally, it was also critical to analyze the relationship between the level of LEP students and the graduation rates of Hispanics as well as the particulars about "how" school funds are invested and their effect on graduation rates of Hispanic students.

This study found school funds invested on dropout prevention programs had a relationship to the graduation rates of Hispanic students. This was consistent with findings and conclusions reported by Suh, Suh, and Houston (2007). Their research found that the implementation of these types of programs can positively influence academic achievement.

Ironically, this study did not conclude school funding invested in career and college readiness programs had any relationship to the graduation rates of Hispanic students. This finding was in agreement with Lombardi, Seburn, and Conley's (2011) study where they concluded implementing career and college readiness programs may not necessarily increase graduation rates for Hispanic students.

A deeper analysis concerning the relationship between the level of funding and graduations rates of Hispanic students included the level of influence some populations may have on this dynamic, specifically LEP students. This study found the percentage of LEP students in a school district had a relationship to its graduation rates of Hispanic students. This was consistent with 83.3% of the interviewed district superintendents where they stated additional funding above and beyond what they were already being allocated would make a difference in graduating not only LEP students, but also second and third generation Hispanics who have been raised in poverty. Findings were also in agreement with those reported by Alexander and Wall (2006), Roberts, Brunner, and Bills (2006), and Dowdy, Dever, DiStefano, and Chin (2011) where it was established there are clear and implicit additional costs to educate and graduate Hispanic students.

When analyzing Pre-K programs, 40% of small districts' superintendents were of the opinion full day Pre-K programs were critical to increasing the graduation rates of their Hispanic students, while the percentage was much higher (80%) for the medium and large districts' superintendents.

A common denominator within the superintendent responses were Pre-K programs act as a proactive solution by contributing to the closing of the instructional gaps during the early ages and avoiding expenditures on dropout prevention programs at the secondary level. This was in agreement with findings reported by Gormley (2008) and Wong, Cook, Barnett, and Jung (2008) where it was found that Pre-K programs had a social rate of return between 7-10% and may increase reading, mathematics, and cognitive skills, especially with Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students, by increasing their opportunities to graduate from high school and possibly go on to college.

Implications

In order to increase the graduation rate of Hispanic students, policy makers may want to consider the configuration of the school districts, specifically their size, when determining districts' level of funding. This may be justifiable when considering small districts may have a greater ability to communicate their student expectations, may have less bureaucratic processes, fewer administrators to disseminate their messages, and in the end, less institutional barriers to execute their policies and reach their students. At the same time, it may be critical to consider the percentage of LEP students in a district and increase the level of funding according to this percentage.

In regards to dropout prevention programs, one might consider expanding these programs by providing more funding and support. As corroborated by this study, there is clear evidence that dropout prevention programs seem to be a valuable tool to not only keep students in the classrooms and diminish juvenile delinquency, but also to increase graduation rates.

On the other hand, policy makers may want to analyze in-depth the configuration, application, and funding of career and college readiness programs. As this study showed, there was no clear evidence that these programs are having the desired effect on students. This antagonized with recent efforts from the Federal Government by encouraging all states to implement state-developed standards in English language arts and mathematics that consolidate toward college and career readiness by the time the students graduate from high school (Struhl & Vargas, 2012). It would seem the configuration, implementation, and alignment of these programs with the newly created or adopted career and college readiness standards

play a protagonist role on influencing graduation rates of Hispanic students.

School superintendents and educators should consider research-based evidence when exploring and implementing ways to influence graduation rates of Hispanic students, more specifically in how they invest school funds. A clear example from this study was the overall consensus from medium and large district superintendents that investing in a full day Pre-K program would be a highly effective way to close instructional gaps between populations, diminish dropout rates, and increase graduation rates of Hispanic students.

As shown in this study, there is plenty of evidence to corroborate those premises.

However, even with the considerable amount of research showing the positive influence of Pre-K programs in all populations, especially on Hispanic students, Pre-K programs are still not mandatory and most of them are only half day programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Policy makers may want to reconsider the mandates and funding for Pre-K programs not only because there seems to be a general consensus among educators about the benefits of early childhood education, but because it is financially-wise based on the tremendous amount of money the federal government and state can save in the long term.

Finally, school districts may want to consider investing a considerable amount of time investigating the best ways to invest educational resources. This approach is similar to the one applied in the corporative world in regards to research and development. Successful companies in the private sector spend a substantial amount of time and resources consolidating their research and development departments (Baker, 2012).

By having a clear road map regarding where to invest current and additional resources, school districts may considerably reduce the level of uncertainty in regards to student performance, which may put pressure on policy makers to increase level of funding based on proven results.

Conclusion

The societal impact of high school dropouts has been well researched. Dropouts are more likely to consume drugs, rely on welfare, and be incarcerated (Beauvais, Chavez, Oetting, Deffenbacher, & Cornell, 1996).

The rhetoric around the potential influence money has on student performance has been re-visited during the past decades throughout a vast amount of literature and studies exposing the role of school finance reform in the aggregate matters (Baker, 2012). Given that the Hispanic population is the second fastest growing minority in the U.S., comprising a total population of 55 million (Census Bureau, 2014), it is imperative to increase the knowledge and understanding of the relationship between school funding and graduation rates of Hispanic students.

Considering the fact that the national dropout rate among Hispanics is the highest among all the ethnicities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), this study could potentially provide a significant contribution, not only to a 17% of the U.S. population, but to the overall discussion about the impact money has on academic achievement.

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Innovative Online Doctoral Course on the Pre-Service Exploration of the Superintendency

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to illustrate an innovative online doctoral course on the pre-service exploration of the superintendency in order to advocate for effective teaching practices in response to calls from the field. To this end, a review of literature was utilized in order to frame and illustrate the course, bringing forth key concepts, ideas, and needs in the areas of superintendent preparation, pedagogy, and the superintendency. The value of this article is two-fold: 1) to illustrate innovative online teaching practices in the preparation of school leaders, and 2) highlight through a focused review of the literature, the need for academic programs to respond to national and local trends to enhance student preparation.

Key Words

superintendency, pre-service exploration, on-line teaching practices

Introduction

In this era of educational accountability and standards, superintendents are charged with one of the most extraordinarily challenging (Bierly & Shy, 2013) and important jobs in America (CGCS Urban Indicator, 2014). They are responsible for "making visible and rapid improvements in the academic achievement" of all children (CGCS Urban Indicator, 2014, p. 1).

Educational reform involves empowering good teachers and building the capacity of quality teaching and learning in schools. It also includes uniting and steering key stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, business and community leaders) toward a purposeful vision. Superintendents work in highly politicized environments while serving as "collaborators, visionaries, communicators, and agents of change" (CGCS Urban Indicator, 2014**,** p. 1).

As Bierly and Shy (2013) state transformational leadership is vital to school turnarounds and research demonstrates that "leadership" was second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affected learning (p. 5). Great leadership requires "a broad range of skills and competencies" (p. 5).

Nationally, in the 2014 Annual Survey of School Superintendents, Finnan, McCord, Stream, Petersen, and Ellerson (2015) found 13% of respondents reporting being in their first year of the position of superintendent and 52.5% of respondents reporting being between years one and five in the position of superintendent. This national trend in the superintendency mirrors North Carolina during the 2015-2016 school year where 17 out of the 115 or 14.78% of the superintendents in the state were first time superintendents and 80 out

of the 115 superintendents or 69.6% of superintendents in the State of North Carolina will have less than five years of experience according to Jack Hoke, Executive Director, North Carolina School Superintendents' Association (personal communication, June 9, 2015). There is an overarching need to increase the pipeline of qualified superintendents.

The pipeline begins with preparing potential applicants for this critical leadership role. This article focuses on a course designed specifically for doctoral students as a pathway to the superintendency in response to the need based on national and state trends.

Relevant Literature

This literature review provides a succinct overview of preparing superintendents and pedagogy in higher education. The literature review included contributions between 2004 and 2015 from educational databases (e.g., ERIC, PsycINFO, SAGE Journals Online, Sociological Abstracts).

First, we searched for relevant peer-refereed journal articles and books using specific search queries.

Second, we analyzed the results from this search activity and identified additional sources and key researchers in this area of interest, which were in turn included in the review process. Although these criteria, for inclusion strongly guided the review process, sources were included that did not fulfill these criteria, because they were perceived as good or important examples relevant to this specific contribution.

Preparing superintendents

Bierly and Shy (2013) discuss the need for extraordinary leaders and the challenges inherent in developing strong school leaders.

They acknowledge that the number of well-prepared candidates "will be severely limited without formal systems to encourage talented individuals and create meaningful pathways for their development," p. 4). Petersen, Fusarelli, and Kowalski (2008) also recognize the need to prepare good leaders for successful educational reform efforts. They focus specifically on the preparation of superintendents as a critical and essential element despite the focus on principals in most administrator preparation programs.

Although Bierly and Shy (2013) address the preparation of principals many of the same facets apply, the combination of knowledge and skills "can only be developed through on-the-job experience, high-quality training and day-to-day mentorship. It also requires the right mindset" (p. 3).

Tripses, Hunt, and Watkins (2013) conducted a study of superintendents in Illinois seeking input on the content of superintendent preparation programs. Results from 369 respondents about the knowledge and skills that should be included in such programs are explicit instruction on finance, communication, politics, curriculum and instruction, superintendent self-care and self-awareness, applied learning of theory not applied learning vs. theory, the realities of the position, an emphasis on internship programs, faculty credibility, and the use of sitting superintendents to augment classroom content.

In particular, Kowalski and Brunner (2011) highlight the disjunction between superintendent preparation and practice in the area of communication. Specifically, (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011, p. 150), stated, "… communication skills are listed in standards for practice and routinely cited as required qualifications for superintendent vacancies yet most administrators never complete a graduate-level course in communications."

This does not speak to the need for the even more specific need for superintendents (and all administrators) for course work and training in leadership communications (Anonymous, 2012). Petersen, Fusarelli, and Kowalski (2008) surveyed novice public school superintendents from California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio. Overall they felt adequately prepared yet a few novice superintendents wanted better preparation in regards to school finance, school law, and school board relations.

In light of Petersen, Fusarelli, and Kowalski (2008)'s admission that most doctoral programs in educational administration contain minimal coursework tailored for the superintendency, we need to "actively promote, monitor and support the talent pipeline" (Bierly & Shy, 2013, p. 17).

We need a "purposeful pathway" to the superintendency "for those that are interested" (Bierly & Shy, 2013, p. 8). "… promoting the opportunity to the right candidates is an essential first step in developing a more robust supply of strong leaders" (Bierly & Shy, 2013, p. 7).

A formal process for "developing and putting in place more transformational school leaders is among the clearest and most effective ways to create a higher number of exceptional schools" (Bierly & Shy, 2013, p. 4).

Courses used to prepare such leaders should incorporate experiential education such as internships and guest speakers to increase knowledge and skill acquisition and ultimately employment outcomes. "Nothing is more

important to leadership development than a rich set of real-world leadership experiences" (Bierly & Shy, 2013, p. 13).

Pedagogy
Instructional strategies for fostering motivation include teaching content worth learning, integrating goals, activities, and assessments, as well as using praise and criticism effectively (Barkley, 2010). Meanwhile, strategies for promoting active learning include promoting active transfer, and articulating learning goals.

In engaging learners, it is equally important that students are appropriately challenged (e.g., assessing starting points, self-assessment) (Barkley, 2010). According to Fink (2013) significant learning experiences should involve different kinds of learning, have a high energy level, and add content to student's "life file" (p. 7).

The tenets of significant learning (i.e., foundational knowledge, application, integration human dimension, caring, and learning to learn) in conjunction with the eight principles of good practice for experiential learning activities (e.g., intention, preparedness and planning, and reflection) can be used as the basis of course development. The importance of assessing learning outcomes is addressed by many scholars such as Bain (2004), Barkley (2010), and Fink (2013).

In particular, Fink (2013) focuses on educative assessment, which consists of forward-looking assessment, self-assessment, criteria and standards, as well as fidelity feedback (Fink, 2013). Forward-looking assessment "incorporates exercises, questions, and/or problems that create a real-life context for a given issue, problem, or decision to be addressed" (Fink, 2003, p. 13).

As Bain (2004) states, "The best teachers carefully constructed learning tasks and objectives to build confidence and to encourage, yet to give students strong challenges and a sense of accomplishment" (Bain, 2004, p. 41). This sense of accomplishment is provided via fidelity feedback. It is frequent, immediate, discriminating, and delivered with care (Fink, 2013).

In addition to being timely, relevant, learner-centered, and helping students connect to their professional practices, Lehman and Conceicao (2014) detail the use of technologies to increase presence in the online environment. They also recommend the use of teaching methods that encourage interaction, foster community, and motivate students to participate in flexible and convenient environments that allow them to control their learning process.

Best practice reveals that critical reflection coupled with applied learning, is a means of generating, deepening, and documenting student learning and course outcomes (Ash & Clayton, 2009).

Purpose and Context
Given the importance and increasing need for Superintendents in North Carolina and the disconnect between professional preparation and practice particularly in Educational Administration programs Dr. Anonymous decided to build a solution.

In the summer of 2015, an elective course entitled "Pre-service Exploration of the superintendency" was offered to students. This significant learning experience has had a lasting impact (Fink, 2013). The purpose of this article is to describe the pathway to the superintendency course and to discuss the implications for effective teaching.

This course is taught at a Master's Comprehensive Public University of 13,000 students in Southeastern North Carolina. The mission of the university centers on teaching excellence, and the Quality Enhancement Plan aims to improve the quality of learning for students through applied learning.

This approach "places students in experiences requiring them to integrate theories, ideas, and skills they have learned in new contexts, thereby extending their learning" (About ETEAL, n.d., para 4). The University has an Educational Leadership doctoral program, which began in 2007, designed to prepare aspiring leaders to be informed, proactive, and reflective change agents. Doctoral students enrolled in the program take leadership, research, and business courses and are required to complete several internships as part of their core requirements (EdD, n.d.).

The Course: Pre-service Exploration of the Superintendency

A fully online elective course exploring the superintendent position from a pre-service perspective was developed and implemented utilizing standards-based content delivered with support from sitting superintendents and culminating in an applied learning application in which students engaged in a technology-driven simulation. This involved students applying for a superintendent position inclusive of online interviews and peer evaluation resulting in deep levels of impact for all those involved in the course.

Course preparation began with the utilization of the proposed ISLLC Standards (2014) and North Carolina Standards for Superintendents (2007). The integration of research and content on aspiring superintendents with the instructor's personal experience gained from superintendent academy training, the instructor's personal

experience in going through two superintendent searches, and the instructor's network of contacts in the superintendent field provided the foundation for the course.

Finally, the instructor aligned the standards and content to the university's Experiencing Transformative Education through Applied Learning (ETEAL) Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Through the ETEAL plan, students participate in experiences requiring Intention, Application of Knowledge, and Reflection/Evaluation of Impact.

The instructor's dual goals for the course were to:

1) provide students with the scholarly content and information necessary to understand the roles and expectations of a Superintendent, and

2) to provide students a real world understanding of the superintendent Search process from both a state and national perspective.

In order to accomplish this in the area of course content, the instructor laid out the North Carolina Standards for Superintendents and aligned course readings, guest speakers, and interactive assignments where the instructor provided both written and video feedback to each student individually.

In terms of real world application, the instructor provided opportunities for students to reflect upon their intentions as potential superintendents, to engage with state and national superintendent search firms live via WebEx, evaluate superintendent candidates from an actual superintendent search in a video case study format, engage in a superintendent search simulation and provide peer feedback to

a class peer (resume, community introduction video, Board of Education video interview, and initial District entry plan), critically reflect upon their learning and next steps in their superintendent journey, and receive an individualized Superintendent Coaching Plan for future course of action from the instructor.

Course content
Within the area of course content, the instructor utilized an 'aspiring to the superintendency' textbook titled, *Achieving Success for New and Aspiring Superintendents: A Practical Guide* by Callan and Levinson (2011) along with scholarly readings in the areas of the superintendent and student achievement, school facilities and student outcomes, the rural superintendency, superintendent tenure, and superintendent ethics. Students, additionally, reviewed the ISLLC 2008 and proposed 2014 leadership standards.

Dr. Robert McCord, Professor Emeritus, UNLV and Professor in Residence at AASA spoke to the students about the State of the superintendency at the National level and Mr. Jack Hoke, Executive Director, North Carolina School Superintendents' Association spoke to the students about the State of the superintendency at the state of North Carolina level.

Sitting superintendents from the Watson College PDS Collaborative spoke to the students about Board-Superintendent Relations and Facilities Management, and Superintendents from across the country spoke to the students about Instructional Leadership (northeast US) and Human Capital Management (western US).

Jack Hoke, executive director, North Carolina School Superintendents' Association informed students that many school districts in North Carolina were hiring earlier career

candidates and offering lower salaries in the superintendent position due to the many factors congruent with other districts nationally (educational reform movements, the graying of the superintendency) and those unique to North Carolina (state economic concerns, state educational reforms, and public pressures regarding superintendent salaries) J. Hoke (personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Over half of the class was female and half of the class was African-American. The disproportionality of males to females in the position of superintendent nationally and in North Carolina as well as the low numbers of African-American females in the position was discussed in the course.

During the interview with the superintendent from the western U.S., an African-American female superintendent, spoke directly to the concerns of these students providing both valuable insight and motivation in response to student interactivity in the course. Students reviewed case studies about ethics in the superintendent position inclusive of actual real world superintendent ethical dilemmas.

Real world application
Within the area of real world application, the instructor stressed to students inside North Carolina and outside North Carolina an understanding of the superintendent position in three distinct parts: an initial development of the superintendent position, an analysis of a superintendent search, and the application for the position of superintendent.

Initial essential understandings and development
Students began comprehensively examining the superintendency by comparing regional licensing requirements of states across the country and comparing them to North Carolina

superintendent licensing in an online licensing Wiki followed by a review of current superintendent searches in progress by search firms across the country identifying the most common themes and most essential themes necessary in a superintendent. Students engaged in two online WebEx interviews with superintendent search firms.

The first interview was with the North Carolina School Board Association who explained the process in detail within North Carolina to the students and then offered the students individualized follow-up mentoring meetings at their discretion in order to support their growth and development.

The second interview was with a regional search firm in the Pacific Northwest *Window2Leadership* and Mr. Greg McKenzie.

The students were led systematically through the application process and informed of how boards of education review applications. Program participants had access to samples for discussion and illustration.

Students reviewed actual superintendent contracts including all 115 from the State of North Carolina.

Students were taught the power of the Superintendent Entry Plan using both material from the text and examples from the field and then asked to complete an entry plan for their current district building due to their familiarity with it.

The characteristics of the guest speakers in the course are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Characteristics of Superintendent Guest Speakers and Districts Represented

Superintendent Guest Speaker	Gender	Race	District Enrollment	Years in Position	Type of District
North Carolina # 1	Male	White	2054	4	Rural City
National # 1	Male	Black	6000	4	Suburban
North Carolina # 2	Male	White	9383	7	Rural County
National # 2	Female	Black	63000	1	Urban

Table 2

Characteristics of Expert Guest Speakers in the Course

Expert Guest Speaker	Gender	Race	Years in Position / Pertinent Experience
National Policy	Male	White	40
State Policy	Male	White	35
National Head Hunter	Male	White	35
State Head Hunter	Female	White	25

Video Case Study

Students were led through an actual superintendent Search gathered as part of the public record from a district in the western United States that is a part of the Council of Great City Schools making it one of the largest 100 school districts in the country in which the students reviewed applicant resumes, applicant introductory videos to the community, applicant interviews with the board of education, and board of education transcripts.

Each of students evaluated two of the five candidates and shared their similarities and differences as part of a discussion board on Blackboard.

The students then shared their findings and thoughts during the final class WebEx online session. The students used the ideas, information, and strategies gained from the case study in their final class project.

Online culminating simulation

Finally, students were given a simulation in which they applied for a position of superintendent.

Specifically, the instructor took the application process in which the class was led in during its WebEx session with Mr. Greg McKenzie and modified it for a small NC school district, asked the students to create a resume, community introductory video, and a three question interview video with one of the questions based upon available district data.

The other two questions based on content unique to the NC school district and submit on a special Discussion Board created by the College of Education Technology Support Unit.

Students utilized a rubric to help frame their work and provided blind peer review

feedback facilitated through the instructor to help support each other's learning and deepen their own processing.

The instructor provided both a community introductory video and interview video for students to provide feedback on and to utilize as a support in their own learning after the process was complete as part of his constructivist approach to the course.

The final real world application piece of the course was for the instructor to provide an individualized coaching plan to each student for possible next steps on their aspiring superintendent journey.

The technology

This online course was delivered via the Blackboard Learning Management System. The course contained both synchronous and asynchronous components.

Students interacted with the course content in the following ways: video presentations, guest speaker interviews, discussion boards, interactive reflective journals with the instructor providing both written and video feedback to students in a one-on-one manner, live WebEx sessions with guest speakers and the instructor, video discussion boards created by the College of Education Technology Support Unit so that students could post extended time video interviews for peer review and evaluation (inclusive of written and video tutorials on video creation), and instructor created models for support.

The students in class created YouTube videos of an extended length (approximately 30-35 minutes long) and were provided extensive tutorials on how to create the videos, how to create the YouTube accounts to post the

videos, and how to post/stream the videos for the most efficient distribution by the class.

The use of technology was widespread throughout all aspects of the course by both the instructor and students as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Course Technology Usage

Instructor Technology Usage	Student Technology Usage
Instructor Made Content Videos	Interactive Blackboard Discussion Boards
Instructor Made Content Power Points	Blackboard Wikis
Online Journals and Readings	Online Course Content
Blackboard Discussion Boards and Wikis	WebEx Sessions Live and Recorded
Guest Speaker Video Interviews	Video Case Study
Guest Speaker Live WebEx Sessions	Online Video Creation – Superintendent
Video Case Study	Simulation Application
Instructor Video Feedback/Interactive Grading	Online Office Hours
Instructor Video Coaching/Mentoring	Email Exchange
Instructor Made Video Demonstration	Telephone and Voicemail
Online Office Hours	
Email Exchange and Announcements	
Telephone and Voicemail Interaction	

Impact of course

The impact of the course was significant to the students and the instructor. Students were highly engaged in the course and felt that the course met the needs of their learning, and the impact on students were reflected in their critical reflections *(What have you learned, what can you use, and what might you inquire about next?)* written at the end of the course as illustrated in the following comments:

- The superintendency simulation was a priceless activity. The inside view you provided the class with regarding the superintendent search was enlightening and eye-opening. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to see the superintendent interview process from the inside. As an outgrowth [of the class] of preparing myself for the next level, I have identified a few mentors. I have begun to network with a retired Assistant Superintendent and a current Assistant Superintendent as mentors.

- This course has been so valuable to my schema of the superintendency. We discussed and engaged in meaningful, relevant, real-world learning experiences that have impacted how I view the superintendency. The learning activities in the course promoted practical, critical and creative thinking. This course has assisted me with developing personal growth goals for my leadership as superintendent. This course has afforded me the opportunity to better assess my competencies as it relates to the superintendency and has moved my learning forward.

- This course has made me realize I have some work to do ahead of me if I want to pursue a superintendentship on my terms. The most pressing task is that I must gain more experience and knowledge in curriculum and instruction. Specifically, I need more elementary experience.

- For me the most impactful part of the course is what I will take with me moving forward, which is an extensive and comprehensive look at the process

and preparation of becoming a superintendent.

- The instructor gave very meaningful feedback through the quick video clips that felt as if I was truly getting individualized attention that is not present in many classes. This has made me think about my own style of providing feedback when coaching teachers if I cannot have immediate face-to-face time with them. What I can take with me from this point forward is a tremendous amount of resources to place in my "Superintendent's Tool Box". I have been able to reflect on the holes of my own resume and look for ways to identify opportunities to increase my skills in facilities management, online learning, and principal relationships. The careful consideration of the Superintendent's entry plan made me also reflect on the current strategic planning sessions I have for this upcoming year and I have made adjustments. Thank you again for the encouraging feedback throughout this course.

- This course has provided me with the information about the steps required to become and begin my role as superintendent. I have learned how to apply for the position, transition into the new role, get organized to lead, prepare an entry plan, and work with the various stakeholders.

The impact on the instructor was within the area of applied learning and its power to both move students forward in their learning and in the instructor to see immediate benefits to instruction.

As a result of the course, one out of eight students immediately transitioned to a superintendent-focused dissertation and three out of the eight students realigned their planned educational internships to focus on alignment with the aspiring superintendent coaching plan. Fifty percent of the students in the class indicated that they plan to apply for a superintendent position upon completion of the doctorate and subsequent qualification for licensure within the State of North Carolina. In terms of instruction, the simulation as culminating activity combined with critical reflection allowed the instructor to immediately observe the learning, processing, and application of student learning from the scholarly work, interaction with sitting superintendents, interaction with practitioners in the field of superintendent development, engagement with fellow classmates, and independent reflection and internal dialogue regarding the role and work of the superintendent.

Discussion

This superintendency course described has the potential to enhance doctoral students' individual lives, their social interactions with others and their reflexivity and citizenship (Fink, 2013, p. 7). Most notably it helps students prepare for the world of work. It focuses on developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary (Fink, 2013, p. 9) for being an effective superintendent. The course incorporates 6 of the 8 principles for good practice of experiential education espoused by the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE).

A major component of the course featured involved forward-looking assessment, in this case becoming a superintendent. The course also contained self-assessment, criteria and standards, as well as fidelity feedback (Fink, 2013). The course instructor tried to help

each student achieve as much as possible. He outlined what it meant for students to develop, to make them feel good about themselves and their abilities (Bain, 2004, p. 79). The course was designed to stimulate construction of knowledge rather than transmittal (Bain, 2004). For instance, how do you end your existing job, transition, and start your new position as superintendent. Most of the students enrolled in the course indicated that they had not been exposed to this concept of Entry Plans for the first 100 days in North Carolina.

Similar to Copeland's (2013) suggestion for administrative preparation programs in colleges and universities to focus on the superintendency in rural settings in this case we advocate establishing a superintendent pathway course, particularly one that is rich with applied learning opportunities that allow students to construct knowledge and receive quality mentoring that helps gauge their own skills/strengths relative to a clear set of criteria so they have a better sense of where they need to improve (Bierly & Shy, 2013).

As an extension a more focused graduate level preparation program offered specifically for superintendents may better prepare school leaders for this extraordinary leadership challenge and even create a niche that would encourage prospective administrators to pursue the superintendency, this includes minorities and women who are often underrepresented (Brown, 2014; Johnson, 2010) in order to promote critical consciousness and social justice (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006).

In general, this approach "drives a deeper understanding of critical gaps in the existing talent pool and helps build a necessary consensus around the importance of taking bold actions to address those shortfalls" (Bierly & Shy 2013, p. 13).

Summary

As an initial effort to respond to national and state needs regarding superintendent preparation, this course was designed as an elective within the educational leadership doctoral program.

This effort was highly innovative and impactful according to the students who completed the course. Now the students have the knowledge and interest necessary to weather the tenuous process of career development and position navigation so that they can find the "right" fit in order to engage in a fruitful and successful superintendent search process and initial placement as a transformational superintendent. The educational leadership program is pursuing additional opportunities for superintendent education and development as well as expansion of applied learning initiatives based upon the successes of this course.

Implications for Practice

- Communication, in particular oral communication, is an integral if not the most integral and essential component all of the roles and elements of a superintendent's position yet the vast majority of superintendent preparation programs do not require a course in communications (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Therefore, all school leaders and Superintendents in particular should be required to take as part of their program of study a leadership communications course with significant emphasis on oral communications.

- Superintendents can utilized entry plans to assist with the first 100 days of the position. This was shared as best practice from superintendents across the country.

- The implementation of a pre-service aspiring superintendent course designed for the unique needs of the rural superintendency (Copeland, 2013).

- Targeted recruiting efforts by university preparation programs focused on women and people of color in order to address and advocate for social justice issues/concerns regarding the disproportionality of woman and minorities in the position of Superintendent (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011) followed by quality programmatic sustainability practices in order to ensure successful matriculation from the program (advising, concentrated course work, mentoring, applied learning, focused internships, and targeted dissertations) so that the dearth of women and minorities in the role of superintendent can be systematically addressed.

- Implementation of program and curriculum development activities for specific pathways to the superintendency.

- Being more intentional/strategic in regards to educational activities such as internships, mentoring, coaching, and development of dissertation topics in order to provide for maximum engagement and cohesion towards the superintendency.

- Within the course of study provide opportunities for a structured study of self-leadership (Neck & Manz, 2013), spiritual leadership (Houston, Blankstein, & Cole, 2008; Houston &

- Sokolow, 2006), and critical-reflection (Brown, 2004) in order to ensure that aspiring superintendents are able to withstand the rigors of the crucible of the 24/7 demands of the 21st Century Superintendent position.

Author Biographies

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Peak Performance Under Pressure: How to Achieve Extraordinary Results Under the Most Difficult Circumstances

Written by Bill Driscoll and Peter Joffre Nye
Reviewed by Art Stellar

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Superintendents are under pressure to perform nearly every day, as nearly anything can happen, and often the unexpected occurs, bringing even more pressure. One can ill afford to have mediocre performances when the pressure is on, as those times are usually accompanied by being in the public spotlight. Maintaining one's composure is only the starting point. Making and executing the right decisions can lengthen one's tenure and career.

Superintendents, of course, are not the only individuals who have pressure-filled lives. Therefore, it makes sense to learn how others in management, sports, politics, the military, and other areas reach or maintain high levels of performance when the pressure is on. For example, this book describes fighter pilots who have to exhibit peak performance when engaging in aerial dog fights with enemy pilots who are trying to shoot them down. Staying alive demands extreme concentration.

The author, Bill Driscoll, is one of only two America naval flight officers recognized as an ace - meaning that he has shot down five enemy planes and pilots. He flew 170 combat missions during the Vietnam War. He received the Navy Cross, the Navy's highest medal for valor.

In addition, he also won two Silver Stars, the Purple Heart and ten Air Medals. These honors make him the highest decorated living former Naval officer. Driscoll has a 40-year history with the elite TOPGUN naval program including four years as an instructor. He carried the lessons learned and taught to a second career as a top selling salesperson in commercial real estate demonstrating the universal nature of certain traits. He is now a consultant and motivational speaker for significant US companies.

The author's most compelling story takes place on his last flight in Vietnam as the reader vicariously experiences a full range of emotions, mental gymnastics, and physical stress. Driscoll knows that he will not fly again and that all he has to do is survive and his combat flying days are over. He had two enemy kills to his credit before this flight. At first he

believes the flight may be uneventful without any interaction with enemy aircraft and he begins to think about the return to base. Then all of a sudden his plane is being pursued by two aircraft and his plane is cut off from any other air support. The author describes recalling the tactics he has repeatedly practiced and of which he employs to shoot down two planes as he counters their attacks. For now, he has survived.

However, another enemy plane closes in on him to take him out of the sky. The pilot of that plane is believed to be the enemy's best ace pilot. As his plane is taking on high caliber bullets with their subsequent damage, Driscoll has a moment of doubt. This pilot may be better than he is.

Driscoll has gone through everything he has ever tried before in actual combat and his foe has not been shaken off his tail. Driscoll has a more powerful plane, but it is being riddled with bullet holes. He remembers a maneuver he has only practiced once previously. It fully taxes his equipment, but enables him to gain the upper hand on his opponent. He shoots the other plane down for his third "kill" on this his last flight, making him an ace.

Regaining his breath and his heart rate, he begins to celebrate even while seeing two enemy planes which are too far out of range to be a danger. His moment of ecstasy is interrupted when he spots white smoke signaling ground to air missiles coming his way. He had celebrated just a bit too long and lost his focus. His countermoves avoided a direct hit, but his plane was hit and he knew he was going down. Enemy territory was below and the sea was miles away. He was losing control of the plane as flames were reaching the cockpit. Somehow he recalled an article in one

of his naval journals in which a fellow pilot described what he had done in a somewhat similar situation.

Driscoll managed to stay in the air for a few more minutes to reach the ocean. With flames at his feet, he had to eject himself in an unorthodox manner which he had never performed in practice. The adrenaline kicked in while he was violently propelled out of his plane. Later he was picked up in the ocean by friendly forces.

This last combat flight story gives this book some entertainment value. The lessons to be drawn from this narrative are especially meaningful even for those of us who do not anticipate being in such a life or death situation.

The author gives his TOPGUN training credit for his survival. The bulk of this book describes the training process of the TOPGUN program. While the resources devoted to the mission of having the best trained pilots in the world are unlikely to be replicated by education administration preparation agencies, there is some healthy food for thought here.

Classroom learning is a key component and similar to preparation for school administrators. The rigor, repeated practice, constant assessment, and open comparison of candidates are way more intense in TOPGUN, than what any potential school administrator goes through.

The closest analogy might be trying out for the NFL after being a star football player in high school and college. Everyone in TOPGUN knows how they compare with every other current or former candidates on every single element of training, as well as the minimum expectations.

The author has distilled the concepts of TOPGUN into these six principles which constitute Peak Performance: Planning, Preparation, Focus, Assessment, Improvement and Self-Discipline. Specific tactics and motivational statements provide practical guidance to readers. The author begins each chapter with a story and closes with a debriefing – series of questions. Much of the content is consistent with good management practices found elsewhere. What differentiates this work is the references and analogies to TOPGUN training. Readers get a peek behind the curtain of one of the most rigorous training regimens that exist along with some practical management tools.

Reviewer Biography

Art Stellar is vice-president of the National Education Foundation and CyberLearning. In these roles he assists superintendents acquire funds and resources. Stellar has received three of AASA top awards: "Distinguished Service Award", "Dr. Effie Jones Humanitarian Award "for promoting diversity and reducing equity gaps and "Leadership for Learning" for advancing student achievement and reducing gaps between student subgroups. He has served as a superintendent for 25 years and became a life member of AASA in 1972. The Horace Mann League elected him president, as did ASCD and the North American Chapter of the International Society for Curriculum and Instruction.
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Peak Performance Under Pressure: How to Achieve Extraordinary Results Under the Most Difficult Circumstances is written by Bill Driscoll and Peter Joffre Nye. It is published by Triple Nickel Press, Bloomington, IN, 2013, 208 pages, hardcover, $24.95.

Mission and Scope, Copyright, Privacy, Ethics, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines, Submissions, Publication Rates & Publication Timeline
The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* is a refereed, blind-reviewed, quarterly journal with a focus on research and evidence-based practice that advance the profession of education administration.

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The **mission** of the Journal is to provide peer-reviewed, user-friendly, and methodologically sound research that practicing school and district administrations can use to take action and that higher education faculty can use to prepare future school and district administrators. The Journal publishes accepted manuscripts in the following categories: (1) Evidence-based Practice, (2) Original Research, (3) Research-informed Commentary, and (4) Book Reviews.

The **scope** for submissions focus 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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Length of manuscripts should be as follows: Research and evidence-based practice articles between 2,800 and 4,800 words; commentaries between 1,600 and 3,800 words; book and media reviews between 400 and 800 words. Articles, commentaries, book and media reviews, citations and references are to follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, latest edition. Permission to use previously copyrighted materials is the responsibility of the author, not the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*.

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✓ **AASA Historical Archives Moving** to George Washington University, Washington, DC AASA's documents, photos, publications and reports describing all facets of the association's 151 years of existence will be part of the Gelman Library's Special Collections and Archives at George Washington University in Washington, DC. The directory is expected to be finished during the first quarter of 2017. In addition, the collection will be available to the general public at the special collections' reading room. Leading the project for AASA are two AASA staff members Sherri Montgomery, retired executive assistant to AASA's executive director, and Jay P. Goldman, editor of *School Administrator* magazine.

Upcoming AASA Events

✓ Quantum Learning Education Conference Series, Jan. 24, Mar. 23, Apr. 20, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Oceanside, Calif. For information, go to aasa.org/qin2017.aspx

✓ 2017 National Conference, March 2-4, New Orleans, LA, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. For information, go to nce.aasa.org