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American Association of School Administrators, 801 N Quincy St., #700, Arlington, VA 22203; 703-875-0748;  
[membership@aasa.org](mailto:membership@aasa.org)

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## A Message From the Editor

**Frederick Dembowski**  
*Southeastern Louisiana University*

This issue contains a variety of different topics of concern to school administrators and their professors. The initial article on the research study of homeschooling conducted by Lenford C. Sutton and Yolanda K. H. Bogan provides a description of home-based education in the state of Florida and addresses the financial queries that often arise in the debate regarding the probative value of homeschooling and its effects on the financial coffers of state legislatures. It determined that the state reaps a small financial benefit due to homeschooling and recommends that state legislatures embrace the emergence of homeschooling as “a viable alternative, which may play a significant role in diminishing the cost of public education for taxpayers in their respective states.”

The second article entitled “Teaching Social Change Agents in Educational Leadership, School and Agency Counseling and Human Service Administration,” by Jenny S. Tripses, Kevin Hatfield and D. Michael Risen, describes changes made to a required graduate course in educational administration (principal), human service administration and school and agency counseling programs. Course revisions were based on research conducted by two of the authors (Tripses and Hatfield, 2004). The purpose of the study was to understand the processes by which graduate students develop capacity as agents of change. The findings of that original study were used in the development of more concise desired outcomes for graduates of the program. Based on these outcomes, the course was revised using the backward design process (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998) that begins with identification of desired results, moving next to determination of acceptable evidence and finally, planning learning experiences.

The third article, “Self-Efficacy Development in School Leaders: An Alternate Paradigm,” by Kimberly O. Truslow and J. Craig Coleman, reports the results of two research studies investigating conflict management modes of superintendents and the effects of relations with school boards. They found that superintendents in three of the five conflict management mode types reported external forces as a source of conflict and incongruence with their school board within their position. Knowing that there is a lack of congruence may help superintendents and school board members, and those aspiring to these positions, by allowing them to become aware that this incongruence exists and help them to find ways in which to make the superintendent/school board relationship more congruent in the future. University preparation programs must also prepare aspiring superintendents to deal with conflict that arises within the superintendent/school board relationship.

Research in the area of best practice includes not only best practices in the field for K-12 school administrators but also what works in the delivery of instruction in the preparation programs of the administrators. The article entitled “The Application-Based Doctoral Comprehensive Examination for Educational Administration Programs” by Laura E. Schulte examines the role of the comprehensive

examination as a method for ensuring that students are able to analyze, synthesize and evaluate data in order to make the best decisions for the students they serve. Using an innovative case study approach, an educational administration doctoral program at a Midwestern metropolitan university developed a two-day application-based comprehensive examination for their students. The students, who were all practicing administrators in K-12 school districts, developed their own case studies based on their interests and work situations. On the first day of the examination, students answered questions related to the research methods courses by analyzing and interpreting their data using SPSS for Windows. On the second day, students applied theory and existing, related research to the results from the analyses. Drawing on material studied in their courses, their own experience and their review of research articles, students placed their findings in perspective and assessed how they might most effectively present their findings and the implications of those findings to appropriate audiences in their districts to improve practice. All of the students reported they have used or will use the information they gained from the comprehensive examination at their schools or district.

In “Addressing the Special Education Crisis,” Walter G. Amprey, discusses the use of technology as a means of providing increased efficiency and fiscal control in the area of special education. He states that educational leaders must continuously look for better ways to administer educational programs, improve business processes and increase the use of data in management and decision making. By more effectively managing the administrative complexities and critical decision-making processes inherent in programs for special populations, administrators can create a positive impact on the bottom line in our schools and make a profound, positive impact on teaching, learning and student achievement.

In the final article, Greg K. Gibbs proposes “Growing Your Own Versus Mentoring” school administrators. He states that the practice of “growing your own” appears to be largely driven by specific district needs and finding someone who can best fill those needs in a timely fashion. Minor grooming and limited training is done to help that individual fill a given situation or need that the district requires. He believes that this is more suitable for many smaller school districts and those in rural areas.

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## School Choice: The Fiscal Impact of Home Education in Florida

Lenford C. Sutton, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Education  
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical  
University  
Tallahassee, Fla.

Yolanda K. H. Bogan, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Education  
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical  
University  
Tallahassee, Fla.

Over two decades after the nations' public schools were declared "at-risk" Americans remain focused on its public schools. Most attention has been directed towards increasing student performance in academic areas, efficient use of tax dollars and obtaining a substantial return on investment in human capital. Accordingly, scholars, policymakers and state legislators have responded with efforts to increase the availability of educational alternatives via an education marketplace (Berne and Steifel, 1994). Federal legislation, in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, has ushered in an era of school accountability that provides previously unavailable educational alternatives and opportunities for children assigned to low performing or failing neighborhood schools. During this period of increased school reform, the national increase of student participation in home education programs, as an alternative to public education, has inconspicuously escalated as more parents are exercising their right to educate their own children, with their own methodology (Ray and Gordon, 1996).

In *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) the United States Supreme Court validated the existence of non-public education programs as a viable mechanism of complying with school attendance statutes. Currently all 50 states have laws mandating that require students, ages five to 16, either attend public schools or a state-

approved non-public alternative. Parents are generally obligated to adhere to these compulsory attendance laws as failure to do so could result in criminal prosecution and/or the removal of children from their homes. In light of that, an inherent struggle exists between the states' responsibility to provide educational programs for children and their parents' right to decide the terms upon which the programs are made available.

In the fall of 2004, when school began in the Sunshine State, there were fewer students than usual in some classrooms and it was not due to the class size amendment (Amendment IX) approved by Florida's Congress. Some of Florida's children were kept at home for schooling. In increasing numbers, parents all over the country are deciding to take greater control of their children's education through homeschooling by acting as their children's primary teacher. Findings from the 1999 Parent Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (Parent-NHES, 1999) estimated that nationwide there were 850,000 or 1.7 percent of students, ages five to 17 being homeschooled. To increase validity of the estimates, the sponsoring agency, National Center for Education Statistics, defined homeschooling as the education of students who were not enrolled in a public or private school, did not participate in public or private school more than 25 hours per week, and were

not being homeschooled exclusively due to a temporary medical illness (NCES, 2001).

In examining the characteristics of homeschooled families, the survey (Parent-NHES, 1999) found that homeschoolers were more likely to be white (non-Hispanic), less likely to be African-American and least likely to be Hispanic compared to non-homeschoolers. Families who had two well-educated parents with only one working parent, and three or more children were more likely to be homeschooling families. While one may think that these families were more financially disadvantaged because only one parent earns an income, the data did not support this idea; family income did not significantly differ from non-homeschooling families (NCES, 2001). Thus, larger, well-educated, primarily Caucasian families represent the majority of homeschooling families nationwide.

Nationally, research on home-based education has revealed several reasons why parents may opt to educate their children at home: (a) greater chances of academic acceleration than in public schools, (b) improved relations in the family via more time spent together, (c) a more individualized education program, (d) minimum or little pressure from peers, (e) a safer learning environment and (f) an opportunity to shape the religious and cultural values of their children (Ray, 2002). Some may argue that homeschooling families express their concern about educational accountability and familial social concerns by resolving to directly address these concerns themselves. The purpose of this article is to provide a description of home-based education in the state of Florida and address the financial queries that often arise in the debate regarding the probative value of homeschooling and its effects on the financial coffers of state legislatures.

Provisions for home-based education as an educational alternative is set forth in Florida Statute 1002.20(6)(c). In view of these provisions, parents, absent of any certification requirements, are required to provide, in writing, to the superintendent of their resident county, the demographic information of all children who are to be enrolled in home education. Notification shall be provided 30 days within the establishment of the home-based education program. Parents are also required to maintain academic records, select and provide a method of evaluation and provide the superintendent with the results of the evaluation of student progress. Home-based education students are also assessed by a state of Florida certified teacher, chosen by the parent, who administers nationally norm-referenced tests, state assessment tests, portfolio assessment or any other valid assessment tools agreed upon by the parent and the superintendent of schools. The superintendent reviews the student's annual assessment to ensure "academic progress commensurate with his/her ability" and provides directives for remediation or continued enrollment in the program. (FL School Code Ch. 1002 § (4), 2004).

Alternately, some Florida homeschooling families enroll in private schools that provide programs and services such as a curriculum or report card to home educators. This type of school arrangement is also known as an umbrella/satellite school (Home Education in Florida, 2003) and allows the family to home educate their child without the requirement of registering with the local school superintendent. This option provides for no outside academic accountability, including by the state of Florida, except as allowed by the parent. Likewise, the state is unable to keep an accurate tally of the number of families who engage in homeschooling.

The ratio of Florida's school-age children registered in home-based education programs to regular schooling increased 300 percent in the decade between 1993 and 2003 (Pocket Digest of Florida Education Data, 2003). Under current statutes, home-based education programs are excluded from the school day requirements associated with compulsory attendance laws and the Florida Education Finance Program. State law also provides these same students with the right to exceptional student services, opportunity to participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities, compete for Bright Future Scholarships and take part in dual enrollment courses at the 28 community colleges in the state of Florida. Home-based education students are also eligible for admission to any academic institution that is a part of Florida's division of Colleges and University System. (FL School Code, ch.1002 § (4), 2004).

Consequently, it is incumbent upon the home educator to provide an appropriate curriculum for mastery of the requisite subject matter so that the child meets all necessary college admission requirements including acceptable scores on college entrance examinations (Foster, 2000a).

The usual litany of school choice opponents is often applied in the conversation regarding home-based education. Adversaries of school choice have long speculated that market competition for school services would divert resources away from the public schools with the greatest need. Critics of public school alternatives have also claimed that such programs only serve the most talented students, leaving behind those students who provide the greatest challenges to educate (Cookson, 1992). Homeschool critics espouse the belief that public school education is superior because of the advanced course offerings and socialization opportunities and that the curriculum used by

homeschooled families should be state-approved (Foster, 2000b).

This simple analysis of home-based education and its financial implications for Florida is significant because Florida is a leader in providing school choice options for parents. Also research has consistently shown the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), the state-funding mechanism, to be one of the most equitable in the nation (Chambers, 1996; O'Laughlin, 1992; Starke, 1991; Sutton, 1998). Established in 1973, the foundation program provides for the equalization of educational opportunity "by adjusting for (1) varying local property tax bases, (2) varying program cost factors, (3) district cost differentials and (4) differences in per student cost for equivalent education programs due to sparsity and dispersion of student population."

Categorical programs are also funded. These include funding for Comprehensive School Construction and Debt Service, Developmental Research Schools, Capital Outlay and Debt Service, Charter Schools Facilities and Equipment, School Lunch Match/Breakfast Supplement, Instructional Materials, Public School Technology, Student Transportation, Teacher Training and Florida Teachers Lead. Special allocations were provided for Instructional Materials (non-formula), Public School Technology (non-formula), School and Instructional Enhancements, Exceptional Education, Excellent Teaching Program, School Recognition/Merit Schools, Assistance to Low-Performing Schools, Extended School Year, Florida Virtual High School and School and Instructional Enhancements (FEFP, 2003). However, for the purposes of this case study, which estimates the fiscal impact of the enrollment of all home-based education pupils in Florida public schools, we shall focus primarily on the collective average revenues

and expenditures reported by the 67 school districts in the state of Florida for fiscal year 2002-2003.

According to the FEFP, over 2.5 million students were served in Florida's public schools during fiscal year 2002-03, while 45,333 students were registered as homeschoolers. Net revenues generated via the FEFP totaled \$6,752,706,094 resulting in approximately \$2,658 of revenue per public-school pupil in the state. Expenditures totaled \$15,715,252,228 resulting in approximately \$6,187 expenditure per public-school pupil. In the scenario in which the 45,333 homeschooled students were to enroll in the public schools during this fiscal year, an additional \$120,517,765 would be needed from the state budget to maintain the same revenue per pupil level. Conversely, the addition of the same number of home-based students would have resulted in an additional \$280,475,271 in total expenditures for public education. The balance of the combination of additional revenues and expenditures associated with the addition of home-based education students to the public school system would result in a state cost of \$159,957,506. It is also important to note that property tax revenues remain somewhat inelastic in response to fluctuations in student enrollment. More specifically the parents of home-based students contribute to the FEFP regardless of school choice, an important consideration in their right to receive special education services, participate in extra-curricular activities and be provided non-discriminatory college admission policies.

Amendment IX of the Florida constitution requires a reduction in class size over the next several years beginning in 2004-05. By 2010, teacher-pupil ratios will be constitutionally capped at 18, 22 and 25 pupils for primary/elementary grades (PK-3), grades 4-8 and high school respectively (9-12). Therefore the addition of home-based students to the

current student population may result in a greater need for additional teachers and/or facilities beyond present-day levels. It appears that the state of Florida reaps a financial benefit by having a nominal percentage of their families exercise their right to home education.

Florida remains at the fore in providing parents with an array of educational alternatives to choose from to address the unique needs of their children. Fiscally responsible school officials and policymakers are compelled to acknowledge the public savings attributed to home-based education in the Sunshine State. Available data should be used to respond to misguided propaganda concerning the fiscal impact of home-based education as a viable school choice option that does not harm the fiscal capacity of the current public education system.

Nearly 30 years of school finance litigation in 45 of 50 states intended to address equality, fairness and more recently adequacy of education opportunity is consistently the process which determines constitutionally acceptable levels of funding for public schools. Accordingly, state legislators are constantly challenged to examine their own school finance programs in an era of increased school accountability and limited resources. State variation in student education needs and wide disparities in regional cost differences for education programs remain at the nucleus of the inability of states to provide comparable education opportunity for all of their children. The altruistic nature of fiscal support for the education of America's children juxtaposed with reluctant taxpayers creates a conundrum for the full development our nation's human capital. In the meantime, state legislatures should embrace the emergence of homeschooling as a viable alternative, which may play a significant role in diminishing the cost of public education for taxpayers in their respective states.



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## Teaching Social Change Agents in Educational Leadership, School and Agency Counseling and Human Service Administration

Jenny S. Tripses, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Educational  
Leadership and Human Development  
Bradley University  
Peoria, Ill.

Kevin Hatfield, Ed.D  
Former Assistant Professor of Educational  
Leadership and Human Development  
Bradley University  
Peoria, Ill.

D. Michael Risen, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership  
and Human Development  
Bradley University  
Peoria, Ill.

This article describes our journey as three educational leadership professors implementing a program to improve teaching for social justice. The social change agents we seek to nurture in our graduate program are individuals who are keenly aware of inequities in society and possess the knowledge, skills and will to make a difference in the lives of others. We expect graduates of our program to be motivated by the moral purpose of their work and to regard the policies and rules of organizations to exist to serve the needs of students and families. We encourage students "... to hold visions that are not in the social mainstream ... it is exactly that courage to take a stand for one's vision that distinguishes people of high levels of personal mastery." (Senge, 1990, p. 150). Graduates become credible school leaders through multiple opportunities in the programs to develop congruence between values and behavior (Covey, 1990; Goldman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002) and to have the interpersonal, managerial and leadership skills that result in efficient schools that are also responsive learning communities.

Early in the graduate program, students are required to take a course entitled Legal and Social Change. The culminating assignment in the course, the Social Change Agent paper, requires students to apply what they have learned about poverty and equity to their personal and professional practice. Revisions described in this article are based on a study that analyzed student papers to understand the processes by which students develop their capacities as social change agents (Tripses and Hatfield, 2004).

Student papers were analyzed using inductive qualitative content analysis (Creswell, 1994; Sowell, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Analysis of the student Social Change Agent papers revealed three categories that we called Purposeful Change Agents, Emerging Change Agents and Compliance Change Agents. Descriptors of each change agent category, moral purpose, social toolkit and empathy are explained in the Desired Results section. Table 1 describes the characteristics of each group.

Table 1 Extent to Which Graduate Students Are Becoming Social Change Agents

Category of Social Change Agents	Descriptors
Purposeful Change Agents	<p>Moral purpose of work reflects necessary changes in the profession and is clearly defined including influencing others to action. Tolerance for ambiguity and risk is clear.</p> <p>Social toolkit theory has clear application to professional practice.</p> <p>Empathy for others guides behavior; assistance is informed and skillful.</p>
Emerging Change Agents	<p>Moral purpose of work is emerging. Necessary changes required for social justice are explained in general terms that are not clearly related to profession. Tolerance for ambiguity and risk is emerging -- coming to terms with idealized and actual self.</p> <p>Social toolkit theory is explained in general terms.</p> <p>Empathy for others is emerging; learning to suspend judgment.</p>
Compliance Change Agents	<p>Moral purpose of work is not a consideration. Following the rules of the profession motivates work. Changes required for social justice seen as problematic because of predicted behaviors of others. Capacity for ambiguity and risk is not evident.</p> <p>Social toolkit theory is either not addressed or is focused on self.</p> <p>Empathy for others is not evident.</p>

Adapted from Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership, 2002, p. 9; Fullan, 2003; Furman, 2003; Henze, et al., 2002; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2000; Sergiovanni, 1999; Wiggins and McTighe, 1998.

## Redesigning the Course

### *Desired results*

Moral purpose requires leaders who are willing and capable of action (Fullan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1999). Such leaders “believe that injustice in our schools and communities is neither natural or inevitable” (Larson and Murtadha, 2002, p. 135). Leadership in this context requires continuous work towards greater opportunity and justice for all children and clients. The creation of schools and other social agencies where gaps are closed between those who are served well by the system and those who are not requires leadership that is clearly focused on addressing injustice and finding ways to make a positive difference for the oppressed. Self-conscious about the nature of change, social change agents are purposeful about the types of change that they promote and support (Fullan, 2003, 1993). Change agents have a strong participative and collaborative style that includes active listening and gathering information about needs, conflicting ideas and possible solutions to mold innovations and create coalitions. Tolerance for ambiguity and risk are important for change agents (Kanter, 1983).

The social toolkit metaphor rejects culturally prevalent and relatively pessimistic stereotypes about the poor with a more optimistic perspective that moves beyond judgment and blaming to couple high expectations with informed support by the professional. The second use of the toolkit metaphor describes the professional knowledge, skills and understandings that graduate students will need to make a difference in the lives of others. Knowledge, skills and understanding include understanding of poverty in America, networking, looking beyond bureaucratic rules and structures, mentoring and effective communication. The basis, then, of the social change agent plan is to understand the social toolkit theory, apply it to

the profession for which the graduate student is preparing, and develop an explicit plan to impact the negative consequences of poverty.

The final aspect of change agency is empathy. Empathy is defined as a learned ability to grasp the world from someone else’s point of view that requires respect for people different from oneself (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998). In this context, empathy requires that students go beyond compassion for the poor and oppressed to informed assistance. Empathy is the thread that connects moral purpose and the social toolkit. Introspection about self, in relation to one another and to society at large, creates the initial foundation for all the other necessary work on social justice (Carter and Goodwin, 1994; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2002).

The development of empathy as informed assistance to poor or oppressed students or clients requires serious introspection. Students in our programs are at different points in their careers and development. Some are relatively inexperienced professionally and may struggle with newly recognized discrepancies between their espoused beliefs (i.e, I am a good person who wants to help others) with the harsh realities of societal inequities that may include stereotypes of the poor that they themselves hold. We recognize that some students in this course confront deeply held beliefs about the poor or have limited experience with diversity. In refining the content of the course, we were aware of these issues and attempted to provide appropriate learning experiences that simultaneously recognized difficulties students encounter when confronting personal biases and at the same time, maintained high expectations that students work towards resolution of conflicting beliefs about the poor.

### *Acceptable evidence*

After careful consideration of the three broad categories of desired results in the course (moral purpose based on knowledge about poverty and accompanying societal issues, professional social toolkit including skills to effectively assist diverse constituents, and empathy that includes continual re-evaluation of personal values and behavior), we refined the assessments. Assessments were designed as appropriate for the type of learning we sought (Stiggins, 2005).

The first two assessments are “assessments for learning” (Stiggins, 2005). Students are encouraged to refer back to these assignments when writing the final change agent paper. Students write reflection papers on three of the required readings in the course. In these reflections, students confront previously held beliefs with portrayals of the lives of the poor in the readings.

The other assessment for learning requires students to work in teams to explain an aspect of the social toolkit. The topics are selected from one of the books used in the course, *Bridges Out of Poverty* by DeVol, Payne, and Smith. The groups are instructed to “teach” other students skills in mentoring, collaborating with other agencies, effective communication with diverse individuals and developing trust in working with diverse clients/students. Assessment of this assignment focuses upon presentation and explanation skills.

The culminating assignment for the course is an assessment of learning (Stiggins, 2005). The rubric for the Social Change Agent paper was redesigned to include the three categories of social change agents (purposeful, emerging and compliance) with accompanying performance descriptors. The rubric was designed to ensure content coverage, clarity and detail, practicality and interrater reliability.

(Arter and McTighe, 2001). See Appendix A on page 17 for the rubric.

### *Planning learning experiences*

Revision of instructional activities was the final stage of course improvement. The most important change was to explicitly state our expectation that graduates acquire the knowledge and skills to make a positive difference in the lives of others. We recognized that previously we engaged in the practice of “teaching by mentioning it” (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998, p. 21). Instructional revisions provided a new emphasis on guiding graduate students to apply professional skills acquired in other coursework to the development of effective interventions when working with students or clients of poverty emerged.

Required readings for the course were changed in two ways. We added a book, *Bridges Out of Poverty* by DeVol, Payne and Smith to provide students with a stronger background in the professional skills of understanding poverty, mentoring, collaboration and networking. We adjusted the sequence of required reading, to begin with *Amazing Grace* by Kozol in order to heighten student awareness of the effects of poverty. Duncan’s *World’s Apart* compares class mobility opportunities in three communities. The social toolkit theory is introduced in this book. The next book, *Bridges Out of Poverty* by DeVol, Payne, and Smith further develops the social toolkit concept through insights into the culture of poverty as well as professional strategies to help the poor. The last two books, *Unafraid of the Dark* by Bray advocates for welfare and *Schooling Homeless Children* by Quint provides students with a model of a change agent in the story of a principal who refused to accept the status quo and collaborated far outside the bounds of regular schools to provide hope to the homeless students in her school. The third change was to employ the rubric for the final Social Change Agent assignment throughout the course to

focus students' attention on the importance of continual confrontation and reflection upon beliefs about the poor and oppressed and application of professional skills (management, leadership, interpersonal) learned in other courses.

### **Conclusions**

Through a more focused understanding of the nature of social change agent that emerged from the examination of student work, we refined our capacities as teachers of social justice. We emerged from the experience with a stronger appreciation for the social nature of learning. Each of us brought wisdom about the nature of poverty and effective teaching along with blind spots due to the solitary nature of teaching, our own biases (about poverty and teaching graduate students) and our professional experiences. Collectively, we clarified a critical assignment in our graduate program, acknowledging that this work will continue.

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## APPENDIX A

**Social Change Agent Plan:** Students will apply their understanding of cultural issues related to diversity and poverty as developed in ELH 605 to their professional or personal life to make a positive difference in the lives of others. (ELCC 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.3, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1). 40 points possible. Paper should be 6-8 pages in length.

Criteria for points awarded	Unacceptable (Compliant Change Agent)	Acceptable (Emerging Change Agent)	Target (Purposeful Change Agent)
	<p>Response misses the point, rambles, is confusing, contains inaccurate information, or otherwise demonstrates a lack of mastery of issues related to facilitating social change. Bureaucratic compliance of profession is given precedence over moral purpose. Cultural differences of others are perceived on basis of superiority/inferiority ... Professional skills to address cultural difference are lacking. Empathy coupled with professional skills to address issues related to diversity/poverty is not apparent. Points are unclear, support is missing and/or no insights are included.</p> <p>(30 points or less)</p>	<p>Development of concepts is clear and somewhat focused, but not compelling. Moral purpose of work may be clearly stated, but is not fully supported by professional skills to make a difference in the lives of others. Empathy for individuals coming from diverse/poor backgrounds is evident, but support of points made is limited. The explanation drawn of a future professional making a difference in the lives of others lacks some details. Reflection upon personal areas needing continued growth is emerging, but not fully developed.</p> <p>(31-35 points)</p>	<p>Applies knowledge of diversity/poverty to professional/personal life. Moral purpose of work is well defined on the basis of clearly formulated personal values. Moral purpose is supported by professional skills to make a difference in the lives of others. Empathy for individuals coming from diverse/poor backgrounds is evident and supported by professional action. Reflection upon personal areas needing growth reveals solid self-understanding.</p> <p>(36-40 points)</p>

## Self-Efficacy Development in School Leaders: An Alternate Paradigm

Kimberly O. Truslow, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor of the Graduate School  
of Management, Leadership, and  
Administration  
University of Central Arkansas  
Conway, Ark.

J. Craig Coleman, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor of Educational  
Leadership  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Nacogdoches, Tex.

The role of the school superintendent encompasses many facets of leadership behaviors and interpersonal skills. Conflict resolution and personnel issues, accompanied by the drive for increased student achievement, have placed increased pressures on superintendents and may be a contributing factor to the high turnover rate within the superintendency. The manner in which superintendents confront, control and adapt to conflict is reflective of their personal conflict management modes. Conflict management modes often explain the characteristics of superintendents (Pardini, 1999).

Managing conflict is often a major reason for superintendents leaving their jobs. Conflict with school boards often creates friction resulting in approximately 12 percent of superintendents forced out of their positions (Pardini, 1999). In a study of school superintendents conducted by the Association of School Administrators (AASA), 14.6 percent reported leaving their last position as a result of conflicts with school board members (Glass, Bjork and Brunner, 2000). Further, 83 percent of the superintendents indicated they faced significant challenges in regards to their relations with school boards. In order for school districts to maximize student achievement, the superintendent and school board must form a leadership team that puts student achievement above all else (Goodman and Zimmerman, 2000).

### Literature Review

In today's schools the challenges that face educational leaders, especially superintendents, are ever-changing. The push for standards-based reform has increased the demands on school leaders and raised their accountability levels. School leaders must perform and show gains in students' academic performance. School leaders' contracts and salaries are often tied to student performance and gains (Olson, 2000). Research has shown that for an organization to change to meet its needs there must be a vision that is shared throughout the organization (Smith, 1999). If there is a lack of congruence in the vision between the superintendent and the school board members, then student achievement will suffer and conflict will arise.

The manner in which a superintendent identifies and handles conflict is a significant factor in the success of a superintendent (Gmelch and Toreili, 1993). Sources of stress as perceived by school superintendents add to the superintendency turnover rate (Richardson, 1998), which leads to a lack of congruence in the superintendent/school board relationship.

The Administrator Stress Cycle identifies conflict-mediating stress as the first stage in the cycle of stress for administrators (Gmelch and Swent, 1984). School board relations, politics, personnel issues, workload, time, crisis management, complying with

mandates, high visibility, dealing with angry parents, lack of feedback, lack of recognition and community demands all contribute to the conflict-mediating stress described in the Administrator Stress Cycle (Richardson, 1998). Administrative role conflict, ambiguity with identifying sources of stress and burnout are highly associated. Professional burnout has led to recommendations that mediation training and conflict management training be included in administrator preparation programs (Gmelch and Toreili, 1993).

Several theorists have tried to explain the concern of short superintendency tenure. Conflict in external forces can be perplexing throughout a superintendent's tenure (Largent, 2001). Callahan's (1962) vulnerability theory is perhaps the most common theory. This theory has been widely accepted as the major cause of the high mobility experienced by superintendents (Lutz, 1990). Callahan's theory maintained that the mobility is caused by a superintendent alienating a majority of the school board, which then demands his resignation or refuses to extend his contract. Callahan saw the vulnerability of superintendents as a product of local support and local control. He surmised that most educators' decisions are survival decisions. When pressure is applied to superintendents as the result of public criticism, they respond in a way that will appease the critics. This need to appeal to the critics is the beginning of the conflict within external forces. Callahan described the pattern of vulnerability in the following steps: (a) the school board holds a strong business orientation, (b) superintendents are trained to be school executives, (c) the school board becomes dissatisfied with the superintendent over business decisions or a political shift of the board and (d) the school board fires the superintendent (Callahan, 1962).

Over 30 years following Callahan's research, Lutz (1996) viewed the conflict

within the external forces as a result of a shift in school board turnover. He believed most superintendent turnover was a direct result of public discontent and incumbent defeat in school board elections. Lutz added to Callahan's theory with his own dissatisfaction theory (1990). In his theory, Lutz stated superintendents are often pushed out or fired because they fail to see changes in community values and ignore community demands, not because they make poor business choices. Unlike Callahan, Lutz viewed the pattern of change as follows: (a) the community becomes dissatisfied with school policies, (b) incumbents on the board lose in the election, (c) a new board fires the superintendent, (d) new policies and programs are established and the district returns to stability (Lutz, 1996). Lutz's dissatisfaction theory suggested a new dimension to the direct conflict between an external force, the board and the superintendent.

## **Methodology**

The interests of the researchers involved studying conflict management in relationship to superintendent turnover and congruency with the school board. One research study included all public school superintendents in the United States. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the Thomas-Kilmann Inventory (TKI), an open-ended interview protocol, and the Organizational Leadership Effectiveness Inventory. The research study sought to answer questions related to the conflict management modes of superintendents. A Chi-square test was conducted to identify if there was a larger proportion than expected in any one of the five conflict management modes.

The purpose of the second study was to determine if the congruence between the ideal/actual and expected/ perceived roles of the superintendent (based on the eight State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC)

standards between the superintendents and school board presidents in Texas) had an effect on student achievement. The subjects for this study were those responding superintendents and school board presidents, as identified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), that have served together for a period of three or more years as a district's leadership team. Of the 1,042 school districts in Texas, 189 reported having such a leadership team. A Pearson-r correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the similarities between superintendent and school board responses. An ANOVA was also used to determine congruence between superintendents' and board members' responses pertaining to SBEC standards.

### Survey Instruments

The instruments used in the first research study were the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974), the Organizational Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (Irby, et al., 2002), and an open-ended qualitative interview. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974) is a 30-question forced-choice paired instrument. The instrument was configured so that a total could be calculated for each of five conflict modes: accommodating, competing, collaborative, avoiding or compromising. The Organizational Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI) (Irby, et al., 2002) is an instrument with four parts and a total of 96 items which yields categorical data. Each section provided the participant an opportunity to respond to a rating of one through four designed to indicate a range of strong disagreement to strong agreement with a particular statement about values, attitudes, and beliefs, leadership behaviors and organizational structure. An instrument comprised of three open-ended qualitative interview questions was developed

for this study to enable respondents to expand on the answers they provided concerning their conflict modes. The three areas assessed by these questions include: (a) an explanation of how their conflict mode has enabled them to adapt in an organization, (b) an example of a conflict situation within an organization and (c) a description of a time when they had to leave an organization due to conflict with one of the factors of the position.

In the second study the researchers created a survey instrument based on the eight superintendent standards for superintendent certification by the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC). The survey was created to measure superintendents' perceptions of their ideal and actual roles within the school district. A companion survey was also constructed which questioned the school board presidents on their expected and perceived behaviors of the superintendent based on the same eight standards.

### Findings

Public school superintendents have significantly different conflict management approaches. These differences in conflict management modes affect the manner in which superintendents relate to and interact with all facets of leadership.

As illustrated in Table I, more superintendents have compromising conflict management modes. This facet of leadership illustrates the recognition that superintendents must act as agents of compromise in working with school boards and other external forces. Superintendents who have competitive, compromising and avoiding conflict management approaches reported external forces, such as board relationships, as major factors in creating conflict.

Table 1.  
*Frequencies of Gender Responses for Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes*

Gender	TKI Modes					Total
	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating	
Male	44	28	56	28	7	163
Female	8	25	95	22	6	156
Total	52	53	151	50	13	319

Table 2.  
*Ideal vs. Actual Roles of the Superintendent*

Standard I: Learner-Centered Values & Ethics of Leadership	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ideal	4.4536	.82172	6.222	1011	.0004
Actual	4.0968	.99529	6.221	1011	.0004

Table 2 summarizes the data comparing superintendents and school board members ideal versus the actual roles of the superintendent.

The data collected from the survey of superintendents and school board presidents reported that there is a statistically significant difference between superintendents and school boards ideal and actual roles that the superintendent plays within the school district. This lack of congruence could play a major role in the creation of conflict by external forces that must be managed by the superintendent.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

Superintendents in three of the five conflict management mode types reported external forces as a source of conflict and incongruence

within their position. The dissatisfaction theory proposed by Lutz (1990) supports the conclusion regarding the position of superintendent as most often characterized by visible conflict with the school board. This conflict is especially exhausting due to the employer/employee relationship the school board possesses with the superintendent. With the introduction of conflict management modes, superintendents should analyze their conflict management modes and develop professional development plans to address how to build skills and competencies in each of the four factors.

A realization that the relationship between superintendents and school boards can have a direct impact on student learning is essential for today's schools. Knowing that there is a lack of congruence may help our superintendents and school board members and those aspiring to these positions by allowing them to become aware that this incongruence exists and help them to find ways in which to make the superintendent/school board relationship more congruent in the future. Having a realization of this lack of congruence may also help alleviate some of the conflict that

arises between superintendents and school boards.

Superintendents and board members must spend time discussing the ideal role of the superintendent. Superintendent/board teams may wish to measure their level of congruence to help in the reduction of conflict. University preparation programs must also prepare aspiring superintendents to deal with conflict that arises within the superintendent/school board relationship.

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## The Application-Based Doctoral Comprehensive Examination for Educational Administration Programs

### Article of Best Practice

Laura E. Schulte, Ph.D.  
 Professor of Educational Administration and Supervision  
 University of Nebraska at Omaha  
 Omaha, Neb.

Educational administrators must be able to analyze, synthesize and evaluate data in order to make the best decisions for the students they serve. The No Child Left Behind Act signed into law in January 2002 requires school officials to analyze and evaluate data to ensure that all children learn (Center on Education Policy, 2002). Doctoral programs in educational administration could use the comprehensive examination as a way for students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate data from real educational situations, thus requiring students to apply what was learned in their course work to practice (Geltner and Hackmann, 1996). Too often, the doctoral comprehensive examination is viewed by students as a “hoop” or rite of passage (Nolan, 2002). Students spend numerous hours memorizing information, recall it for the examination and forget it soon thereafter if they do not have an opportunity to apply it to a real educational situation (Anderson, Krauskopf, Rogers and Neal, 1984). This type of learning falls within the knowledge and comprehension levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, which represent the lowest levels of learning (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill and Krathwohl, 1956). New assessment models require students to demonstrate learning in the context of real world situations (Spady, 1994; Wiggins, 1993). “Education is not just about acquiring knowledge, but about learning how to do significant things with what you know. It’s not

about dead knowledge, but about bringing knowledge alive.” (Perkins, 2004, p. 18).

Use of the case study method requires students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information in the context of a real educational situation, representing the highest levels of learning in Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). The case study method has been used successfully in the doctoral comprehensive examination process to link theory to practice (Geltner, 1995; Geltner, Price and Tracy, 1995; Hackmann and Price, 1995). Most often the case studies are developed by professors in collaboration with practitioners (Geltner and Hackmann, 1996). Using an innovative case study approach, an educational administration doctoral program at a Midwestern metropolitan university developed an application-based comprehensive examination for students. What makes this program’s case study approach unique is that the students, who were all practicing administrators in K-12 school districts, developed their own case studies based on their interests and work situations.

### **Method**

The application-based doctoral comprehensive examination was piloted during the summer of 2004 with six doctoral students. This two-day, in-house comprehensive examination required the students to submit a proposal about their case and a data file to professors at least three

weeks prior to the scheduled date of the examination.

### *Data File Specifications*

Students' proposals contained background information about each of the variables in their data file and explained the questions they wanted to answer or the problems they wanted to solve. The sample was drawn from the students' building/district level and contained an appropriate number of subjects. The requirements for the number of variables studied included a minimum of 10 dependent variables at the ordinal, interval or ratio level and a minimum of five demographic variables, such as gender, grade, program, student socioeconomic status, school size and school level.

### *Application-Based Comprehensive Examination Process*

The application-based comprehensive examination differed from the previously used more traditional two-day, in-house comprehensive examination where students spent the first day writing answers to common questions on leadership, change theory and school culture and the second day on research methods. For the application-based comprehensive examination, the topics selected by the six students included (a) students' transition from middle to high school at a school district, (b) the achievement of a district's ESL/ELL K-12 students, (c) students' achievement in a corrective reading program at a middle school, (d) teachers' perceptions of a districtwide staff development program for school improvement, (e) students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of the climate of an elementary school and (f) students' achievement in reading, writing and math at an elementary school. On the first day of the application-based comprehensive examination, students answered questions related to the research methods courses by analyzing and interpreting their data using SPSS for

Windows. On the second day, students applied theory and existing related research to the results from the analyses. Drawing on material studied in their courses, their own experience and their review of research articles, students placed their findings in perspective and assessed how they might most effectively present their findings and the implications of those findings to appropriate audiences in their districts to improve practice.

### *Sample questions*

Some of the questions for the student who studied elementary students' achievement in reading, writing and math included:

1. How are your students performing on the following: California Achievement Test Reading and Math subscales, a writing assessment and the Test of Cognitive Skills? Please discuss your students' performance relative to other students at the same grade level in your school district. Identify and discuss the implications that follow from your conclusion.
2. Is there a significant difference across (a) gender groups, (b) socioeconomic groups, (c) special education and non-special education groups, (d) ethnic groups, (e) teachers and (f) teachers' years of experience on students' scores on the tests included in the first question? Identify and discuss the implications that follow from your conclusion.
3. What did you learn about the culture of your building as a result of this study of test scores?
4. What is the relationship and value of your study to federal, state or district laws, policies and programs or practices? Discuss how this affects the education of students in your school.
5. Outline your strategy for proposing a major change within your school as a

result of your analyses of test scores. How would you motivate people to change? What research would you use to make data-driven decisions?

### *Evaluation of Students' Responses*

Following a similar process used for the previous more traditional two-day, in-house comprehensive examination, four professors in their areas of expertise evaluated the students' responses with a scale that ranged from high pass to fail. All six students passed all questions of the two-day, application-based comprehensive examination.

### *Student Input*

After the professors' evaluation of the examination, each student met individually with the chair of the department to discuss his/her performance and to sign the application to admit the student to candidacy for the doctoral degree. At that time, each student was asked to discuss the strengths of the application-based comprehensive examination process and to give suggestions for improvements to the process.

## **Results**

### *Strengths of the Process*

All of the students reported that the application-based doctoral comprehensive examination provided a context in which to apply and study the information they had learned in the courses, which helped to ease their anxiety. They said choosing the application-based comprehensive examination removed the rote memory approach to preparing for the examination. All students said it helped to know the background of the educational situation when discussing the implications of the findings. One student reported that there was a reason for completing the examination instead of it being another "hoop." Another student said the format allowed her to take more risks. Instead of focusing on coming up with the "right" answer, she was concerned with figuring out what was

best for her school, based on the data analyses. All of the students reported they have used or will use the information they gained from the comprehensive examination at their schools or district. The application-based comprehensive examination process helped four of the students refine their dissertation topics. All students said in preparation for the examination they organized the course materials by topics, such as leadership, change theory, power, culture and persuasion, which will be useful when confronted with situations/issues in the field.

### *Suggestions for Improvements to the Process*

All of the students were satisfied with the format of the first day and said they enjoyed analyzing the data from their school or district. They all suggested that the second day, which required them to apply material from their courses to their data analysis findings from the first day, should be better organized with fewer questions. The students indicated the questions for the second day should be organized around topics, not courses as was done in the pilot.

## **Discussion**

Implementation of the application-based comprehensive examination has been a very positive change for this educational administration doctoral program. It has transformed the examination process from a test for students to recall as much information as possible to an opportunity for students to showcase the depth and breadth of their knowledge, which has allowed the students to shine. Using the application-based approach, the students' answers were far richer than when using the more traditional format because students applied what they learned in the research and theory courses to their educational situation. They could discuss the implications of the findings in depth because they knew all the factors involved. Mid-way through the first day of the comprehensive examination, one student remarked that she was amazed at how much she had learned in the doctoral program.

Students looked back at what they had learned and, at the same time, moved forward, which provided a great learning experience. The application-based comprehensive examination has provided a link to the dissertation process. Currently, the students who participated in the

pilot are writing their dissertation proposals. The faculty members at the university intend to follow-up with the students to determine whether the application-based comprehensive examination process helps students to complete their degrees.

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## Addressing the Special Education Crisis

### Commentary

Walter G. Amprey, Ed.D.  
President, The KimKeli Group  
Finksburg, Md.

School administrators are facing a crisis in special education delivery. Teacher turnover is high. Paperwork takes an excessive amount of time. Thousands of dollars are wasted or lost because of inefficiencies in public school systems. Yet many educational leaders continue to ignore the problem. Why? Perhaps it is because we have learned to live with the pain. We have come to accept the high cost of administrative and staff resources to manage special education because we think there is no solution. We accept the paperwork burden, low morale and high turnover. We accept losses in revenue reimbursements from Medicaid and other funding resources because we cannot accurately track student data. We continue to use paper-based and outdated technology systems because we think it would be too expensive or difficult to change.

Our schools are overburdened with federal and state rules and regulations that govern special education. It is not only the complexity of these rules and regulations that challenge us; it is the fact that many of these mandates are unfunded. Indeed, with new accountability demands such as the No Child Left Behind requirement that special education students reach the same benchmarks as their mainstream counterparts, the price tag will continue to grow.

In 2002, the Center for Special Education Finance published a report that revealed the cost of educating a student with special education needs during the

1999-2000 school year was 1.9 times the cost of educating a general education student. The report went on to cite that over 21 percent of the average school district's budget was spent on educating students with special education needs, even though these children average only 12 percent of a district's population.

In my past work as a superintendent, and in my current capacity as an educational consultant, I have seen hundreds of dollars, per special education student, wasted in unnecessary costs and lost funding opportunities resulting from out-of-date, ineffective management systems every year. In addition to the fiscal implications, consider the costs to our teachers and students every year. Sadly, it is they who pay the price. But it need not be this way. There is a solution: It's technology. Technology has enhanced greatly the ability of school leaders to measure almost all aspects of accountability. What follows are some examples that drive home this point.

In recent years visionary, business-minded school leaders have been turning to specialized technology-based systems to reduce the administrative burden of special education paperwork and compliance, while reducing costs, increasing accountability and achieving mandated gains. The technology is available, it's proven to work effectively, and it can even pay for itself in its first few years of use. So why aren't more administrators jumping on the bandwagon?

Perhaps it is our approach to technology in general. In the business world, technology is typically viewed as an investment that will pay for itself by replacing inefficient systems and increasing productivity. In the education world, however, we tend to view technology as another operating expense that will squeeze more money from our already strained budgets and create more work for our already overworked teachers and staff. I know of one school district that, when faced with a report showing that a Web-based special education management system would save the district \$800,000 in the first year of implementation alone, stated that they could not afford the new system. But could they afford to lose \$800,000 a year, every year?

By automating administrative processes, however, innovative districts, such as Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WSFCS) in North Carolina, are lifting the paperwork burden off the shoulders of teachers and staff and freeing them to spend more time in the classroom helping students make real, meaningful learning gains. There are various options, but WSFCS uses a system from a company called 4GL School Solutions, designed specifically for K-12 school districts. By automatically collecting and storing student information in a Web-based system, rather than a paper-based system, Winston-Salem administrators can instantly access real-time information on each child's special needs and timeline requirements to improve service delivery, and more effectively and efficiently use data to drive decisions.

Having such data available at our fingertips can have a significant impact on the bottom line. In school districts where accurate data are lacking when required or needed, an average of five percent of the child count funding and sometimes up to 50 percent of Medicaid funding can be left on the table. With the right

data, however, we can easily increase revenue recovery by finding services that go unreported and creating documentation that is correct and complete.

I have seen that the right system can typically provide a 100 percent or greater financial return to the district over a three-year period. This means that every dollar that a district spends will result in a dollar of savings and/or increased funding over that three-year period.

As educational leaders, we must continuously look for better ways to administer educational programs, improve business processes and increase the use of data in management and decision making. By more effectively managing the administrative complexities and critical decision-making processes inherent in programs for special populations, we can create a positive impact on the bottom line in our schools and make a profound, positive impact on teaching, learning and student achievement.

## Growing Your Own Versus Mentoring

### Commentary

Greg K. Gibbs, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership  
St. Bonaventure University  
St. Bonaventure, N.Y.

**W**ith the current scarcity of qualified administrative candidates, I hear many districts talking of “growing their own” administrators. As a professor in educational leadership at St. Bonaventure University, we are often involved, knowingly or unknowingly, in helping that process along.

The current practice of “growing your own” appears to be largely driven by specific district needs and finding someone who can best fill those needs in a timely fashion. Minor grooming and limited training is done to help that individual fill a given situation or need that the district requires. For instance, if a district needs a disciplinarian, it searches out the best person they currently have and groom them to fulfill the needs of that position. Mentoring seems to be a broader concept and involves taking many possible candidates and exposing them to multiple scenarios and training them in a much broader fashion for leadership openings that may not yet even be on the horizon. Involving your best and brightest in a genuine professional development plan toward the building of leadership capacity clearly separates the two concepts.

There appears to be a difference between growing your own and mentoring future leaders. Many individuals are singled out

and counseled into taking on administrative duties, often with in-house internships, and encouraged to take administrative coursework at the university. Our general area is populated by many small districts, including some rural areas that have school campuses of just a building or two. Drawing applicants for administrative positions to such places is difficult and hence they have determined that growing their own is the best solution.

That solution often has interesting results. Many potential educational leaders are truly out there but, by the process of singling a few out in a district, you may be overlooking or actually discouraging others who are less public about their intentions. A plan that encourages many leaders to become involved and then guides them while still allowing for some self-selection would be most helpful.

In a small district there is often a short chain of command and a small network of key administrators. This may appear to be difficult to break into and imposing for some potential leaders. If a district could develop a plan for mentoring leaders that is open and publicly known, it would likely better serve the profession perhaps better than what we now experience.



Internships that truly build on strengths and weaknesses of candidates are a key element to talent development. A conscious effort is needed to align elements that will create that “quality” administrator that everyone is looking to hire. Most districts do not have a mentoring plan for administrators and if, they do have such thoughts, they usually are not written for anyone to anonymously access. The universities are certainly willing to help with such a process and can be an active collaborator in developing such a plan in conjunction with the long-term needs of a district.

Often, as university professors, we see students of promise that are NOT connected in their districts. Many of these students think

they will simply move on to get that administrative position or just are not sure how their career aspirations and their current employer-district are compatible. A stronger working relationship between the university and the school district could easily help both parties truly nurture and mentor educational leaders that will be ready and willing to fill future openings.

Growing your own certainly does have promise, but an effort to create a plan that is open, all encompassing and truly accepting to all, is key. Such a plan includes a component that develops and nurtures talented educators within the district who may be overlooked ... people with talents still hidden under that bushel basket.

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Editor, *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*  
 Dr. Frederick Dembowski  
 Southeastern Louisiana University  
 Department of Educational Leadership and Technology  
 SLU 10549  
 Charles E. Cate Teacher Education Center  
 1300 North General Pershing, Suite 1004  
 Hammond, LA 70402  
 Phone: 985-549-5713  
 Fax: 985-549-5712  
 E-mail: [frederick.dembowski@selu.edu](mailto:frederick.dembowski@selu.edu)

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