Superintendent Leadership: Comparative Case Studies of Four Superintendents of Broad Prize Winning School Districts

by

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Superintendent Leadership: Comparative Case Studies of Four Superintendents
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DEDICATION

To God, from whom all blessings flow. Thank you for never forsaking me and always reassuring me with your words—“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

To my husband, who has been my rock and constant support throughout this doctoral program. Thank you for supporting my personal and professional growth and allowing me the opportunity to pursue my dreams. Your calm and loving spirit always provided me a sense of peace and reassurance that I could do it all. Your gracious nature and patience over the past 3 years of practically raising our daughter alone allowed me to commit myself to this program, as well as accept a new position as an area superintendent.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of these comparative case studies was to understand how superintendents in urban districts use reform strategies to leverage systemic change to improve student achievement. The study focused on four effective superintendents of Broad Prize for Urban Education winning school districts. It examined leadership traits, core beliefs, behaviors and actions, leadership qualities, and identified commonalities and differences amongst these nationally recognized superintendents. The research questions provided a focus for evaluating the superintendent’s selection of reform strategies, the district context in which they were implemented, and the influence of the superintendents’ background and experience.

The researcher gathered evidence by conducting individual interviews with each superintendent and members of his or her cabinet and by reviewing selected artifacts related to the districts demographics, professional development practices, reform initiatives, and student performance data. The researcher reviewed the data, seeking common themes, while watching for disproving evidence. The central themes related to the leadership profiles of these effective superintendents were: (a) longevity and breadth of service; (b) providing focused professional development; (c) building leadership capacity; (d) utilizing data driven results/monitoring data; (e) differentiating resources; (f) building relationships; (g) hiring the “right” people; (h) building strong board relations; and (i) launching only a few highly focused and impacted initiatives. These findings were consistent across all four superintendents.

The findings and conclusions from this study generated recommendations for practice and policy making and recommendations for future research in support of leading
and improving schools for increased student achievement. The recommendations are presented as they relate to specific areas of responsibility: school and district administrators, school board members, and policymakers and superintendent preparation programs. Recommendations from this study include: having a strategic plan that is aligned with district goals and actions and supported by stakeholders, hiring “the right leadership team,” differentiating resources based on need, hiring a highly qualified superintendent, and providing mentors and coaches to aspiring administrators and superintendents. Recommendations for future research include: conducting additional case studies on the actions of other urban superintendents, possibly including a discrepancy analysis to determine if struggling districts are implementing the successful strategies identified in these four Broad Prize winning districts; examining effective superintendents who took a nontraditional path to the superintendency; and a study of superintendents of large urban districts who are home grown and brought up through the system.
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You’ve gotta dance like there’s nobody watching,

Love like you’ll never be hurt

Sing like there’s nobody listening,

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always being there for me!

never letting me quit or fall down!

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_The only way of finding the limits of the possible is by going_ beyond them into the impossible.

—Arthur C. Clarke
CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education is a national priority, leading to increased pressures of accountability for student performance. The job of the superintendent has become increasingly complex with the advent of these accountability measures that include consequences for failing to increase student achievement levels from year to year (Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005). Today’s high stakes accountability and unprecedented social and political environments require urban school system leaders with the knowledge and ability to address the pressing challenges of low-performing schools and gaps in student achievement. In order to improve educational quality and advance student achievement, urban school superintendents must be prepared to implement effective reform strategies.

The superintendency is a unique role that requires specialized leadership skills. The public demand for educational reform has not only heightened the awareness of the role of superintendent in sustaining systemic reform initiatives but it has also raised concerns about how the next generation of district leaders are recruited, identified, prepared, selected, evaluated, and retained over time (Björk et al., 2005). This dissertation examines the leadership profiles and actions of four superintendents of Broad Prize for Urban Education winning districts. This study looks at what it is really like to be a superintendent in today’s challenging environment, with the increased awareness of enormous responsibility and the difficulties associated with the role. Specifically, it identifies the leadership characteristics and prevalent dispositions of these nationally recognized superintendents; it also explores the commonalities and differences among these district winning Broad Prize superintendents.
Background of the Study

One of the biggest challenges in American education today is how to improve student performance in America’s urban public schools. Students are leaving schools prepared to work only in the kinds of jobs that are fast disappearing from the American economy (Wagner, 2008). The future economic and social well being of our nation is dependent on how well we are preparing our students, and we are not succeeding with expanding our student population (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Childress, Elmore, and Grossman (2006) contend that school-based solutions are not enough and that, in order to achieve excellence on a broad scale, there must be implementation of district-wide reform strategies.

Students in the United States’ urban districts lag students in the nation as a whole in achievement and graduation rates. Urban schools educate a disproportionate share of the country’s African-American and Hispanic students, who by age nine are already three grade levels behind in reading and math. (Childress et al., 2006, p. 56)

Public schools serve all students, regardless of academic levels or all other factors. Additionally, they are held accountable to many diverse stakeholders, including parents and elected officials.

In 2003, the Harvard Business School in conjunction with the Graduate School of Education launched the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP). This project focused on the work in urban school districts. The PELP team spent hundreds of hours reviewing and observing the accomplishments and failures of 15 urban school districts across the United States (Childress et al., 2006). The PELP team created a framework for
developing an effective strategy for school districts to achieve higher performance results. This framework was used to implement new management strategies by 9 of the 15 school districts. The PELP study found that district leaders did not view the organization as an integrated system that directly impacted learning inside a classroom. The PELP framework was developed to help district managers understand the complexities of their organization and how they serve an integrated system to support student learning. The framework allowed managers to see how the culture, stakeholders, and structures all supported one another across the district.

In the 2000 State of the Union Address, President Bill Clinton voiced his concern regarding the status of education and student performance. He posited that states and school districts should be held accountable for student achievement. Consequently, in the future, all states would be required to implement standards-based instruction and assessment programs to monitor student achievement. Shortly after becoming the next president, George W. Bush signed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) which called for the success of all children within the United States Educational System. In order to achieve this success each state would operate under the plan entitled No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). The plan is based on four principles: (a) accountability for results; (b) local control and flexibility; (c) expanded parental choice; and (d) effective and successful programs. This plan requires all students to achieve success regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and academic ability. President Bush expressed, “As America enters the 21st century full of hope and promise, too many of our neediest children are being left behind” (Bush, 2010, p. 1).
The NCLB (2001) legislation established a new definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all states, local education agencies (LEA), and public schools, by mandating that 100% of all students score proficient or above in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics by the year 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) collects reading and math data for students in Grades 4, 8, and 12. These reports published every 4 years by the U.S. Department of Education, the Nations Report Card focus additional scrutiny on the performance of urban school systems. The reports have revealed that growth has occurred amongst students in Grades 4 and 8, with little to no measurable growth for Grade 12 students (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005). The NAEP reports also revealed that, from 1975 to 2004, the achievement scores for minority groups have risen; however, there remains an achievement gap between White and minority (Black and Hispanic) groups (Perie et al., 2005). Achievement gaps as great as 20 percentage points exist between White and minority subgroups (Black and Hispanic). Large urban school districts across the nation experience challenges resulting from diverse populations with specific needs, such as those of English language learners. Fifty percent of students of color live in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), and students of color are nationally the fastest growing demographic group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

The role of the school district and school systems in carrying out the mandate of NCLB is critical to improving student achievement in American public schools (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Many urban school and school districts are struggling, and students are failing (Kopp, 2011; Payzant, 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Whitmire, 2011). One reason for this failure may be attributed to the fact that policymakers, researchers, and
educators all too often view the district office as part of the problem versus part of the solution (Childress et al., 2006; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

District leadership is crucial when addressing the barriers of low-performing schools and the needs of struggling learners. District leaders must identify best practices to be implemented, provide opportunities for stakeholders to develop leadership capacity, as well as develop systems to monitor student improvement and hold all individuals accountable for results (Childress et al., 2006; Payzant, 2011). By doing so, districts transform themselves into agents of “serious instructional improvement” focused on raising student achievement for all students (Chrispeels, Gonzales, & Edge, 2006).

Philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad have expressed a deep concern about the condition of America’s urban schools. They formed the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation to advance the leadership of such districts. One initiative led to the development of an elaborate and calibrated means of identifying districts and superintendents that are able to successfully narrow their achievement gaps. In recognition of this accomplishment, the Broad Prize for Urban Education was established in 2002. It has evolved into a highly coveted recognition among urban districts. Each year successful districts are identified and awarded $2 million in scholarships for graduating seniors in the winning district. The $2 million prize is the largest education award in the country (The Broad Prize for Urban Education, 2010b).

The Broad Prize for Urban Education (2010b) has four goals:

- Reward districts that improve achievement levels for disadvantaged students.
- Restore the public’s confidence in our nation’s public schools by highlighting successful urban districts.
• Create competition and provide incentives for districts to improve.

• Showcase the best practices of successful districts. (para 2)

The Broad Prize Review Board consists of prominent education experts from across the country. They determine the five finalists based on the following criteria:

• Performance and improvement results from mandated state tests.

• Performance and improvement of the district (based on poverty levels) compared to similar districts within the state.

• Performance and improvement compared to other districts statewide.

• The reduction of achievement gaps between various ethnic and income groups.

• Graduation rates.

• Advanced Placement exam participation and passing rates.

• SAT and ACT participation and scores.

• Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results.

• District demographic data—student enrollment, income, language, special education, ethnicity. (The Broad Prize for Urban Education, 2010c, para. 3)

Prior to the final phase of the selection process for the prestigious Broad Prize, a consulting team of experts contracted by the Broad Foundation conducts rigorous sight visits to the five finalist districts. This visit is designed to authenticate the independent findings of the Broad Prize Review Board and to seek further evidence of the effectiveness of the districts. These qualitative site visit reports are then submitted for review and analysis by the Selection Jury.

The final phase of the Broad Prize identification process is conducted by a selection jury. The Selection Jury, comprised of nationally prominent business,
government, and public service leaders then determines a winner from among the five finalist districts based on analysis of performance results (as cited above), as well as a review of qualitative site visit reports, and school level variance analyses across proficiency levels. Finalists are not selected through the use of a formula. Rather, professional judgment, experience, and dialogue among members of the Selection Jury are the methods used to determine the Broad Prize Finalists and Prize Winner.

One noticeable commonality amongst past Broad Prize award winning school districts is that there is continuity and longevity of superintendent leadership (Childress et al., 2006; Payzant, 2011; Zavadsky, 2009). The national average tenure of urban superintendents is less than 3 years; they either burn out or are pushed out (Buchanan, 2006; Childress et al., 2006). Could the short tenure in these school districts be attributing to the failure of our urban schools?

Many districts lack a management model in which to operate efficiently, thus creating a system that makes it difficult for superintendents to implement systemic reform strategies that can improve student performance over time (Childress et al., 2006; Ravitch, 2010). Districts with operationally weak structures typically result in superintendents pursuing the latest hot trend or idea for transforming education, thus creating a system that has the district offices focused on a multitude of unrelated initiatives that consume resources that never result in anything (Childress et al., 2006; Payzant, 2011; Ravitch, 2010). Some have argued that, to improve urban school systems, we need to eliminate the district office. An effort to decentralize is the manifestation of the charter school movement.
Childress et al. (2006) argues that districts often focus on specific-structural solutions to transform urban schools, which have resulted in minimal gains in student performance. “For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation spent more than $1 billion in the past few years creating small schools in more than 400 cities across the United States” (Childress et al., 2006. p. 58). In addition, the authors found that, in order for reform efforts to succeed, they must be much broader and address all areas of the districts’ organization (Ravitch, 2010).

**Problem Statement**

Under the accountability provisions of NCLB, most of our urban schools are considered to be failing poor and minority students (Elmore, 2004; Kopp, 2011; Whitmire, 2011). However, there are large urban districts that have changed the business of teaching and learning. These changes have led to significant student achievement gains and the narrowing of the achievement gap amongst ethnic groups and low-income students and their White counterparts (Payzant, 2011; Zavadsky, 2009). The literature related to the study of superintendent leadership primarily focuses on the responsibilities of the superintendent and the indirect effect of these responsibilities on student performance (Robinson, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Wilmore, 2008). The literature has paid little attention to the unique leadership challenges facing the superintendent in light of increasing expectations and how the leadership role of the superintendent has transitioned over time. Despite all the challenges, there are superintendents who are increasing student achievement, as evidenced in the Broad Prize winning districts. This research will add to current literature to inform practice in specific ways: (a) by providing detailed profiles of effective superintendents, and (b) by describing the reform strategies
and district initiatives employed by four urban superintendents of districts that raised overall student achievement and closed the achievement gap.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of these comparative case studies was to understand how superintendents in urban districts use reform strategies to leverage systemic change to improve student achievement. The study focused on four effective superintendents of Broad Prize for Urban Education winning school districts. It examined leadership traits, core beliefs, behaviors and actions, and identified commonalities and differences amongst these nationally recognized superintendents.

**Research Questions**

Additional research is needed on reform strategies and leadership behaviors employed by effective superintendents. A review of the literature revealed that there is limited empirical research on how superintendents of large urban school districts narrow the achievement gaps and sustain high levels of achievement for all students. This dissertation examined the leadership behaviors and reform strategies executed by Broad Prize District Superintendents, as well as describes their leadership profiles. The researcher examined how the superintendents approached systemic reform that led to their districts being recognized by the Broad Foundation for improving overall student achievement while narrowing the achievement gap.

Specifically, the study addresses these three research questions:

1. What is the individual leadership profile (core beliefs, background, actions and behaviors, and leadership qualities) of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts?
2. What systemic reform strategies did these Broad Prize superintendents execute that led to their district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education?

3. What do the leadership profiles of four nationally recognized superintendents have in common, and how do they differ from one another?

**Methodology**

A comparative case study research design was utilized to answer the research questions. According to Creswell (2009), a case study is an exploration of a case (event, process, or one or more individuals) bounded by time and activity. Qualitative research seeks out the “why” of a topic through the analysis of unstructured information, such as open-ended surveys, interview transcripts, emails, notes, and feedback forms (Yin, 2009). This type of research is used to gain insight into people’s values, attitudes, and behaviors (Creswell, 2009). Focus groups, content analysis, and in-depth interviews are among some of the formal approaches used in qualitative research (Yin, 2009). This qualitative case study design was selected because of the nature of the research problem and the questions asked to discover the profiles and strategies of nationally recognized superintendents.

**Participants**

The participants for the case studies included a superintendent and cabinet level administrators from each of the four Broad Prize winning urban school districts. The superintendents were purposely selected for this comparative case study from the list of 10 winning districts identified on the Broad Prize for Urban Education website. The selected superintendents for this study all served as the superintendent or in a cabinet level administrative position in their respective districts for a minimum of 3 years prior to
the district being named as a Broad Prize for Urban Education Winner. Additional individual interviews were conducted with cabinet level administrators within the district who had direct knowledge of the superintendents’ work. The researcher consulted with each superintendent to identify key informants who had direct knowledge of their work during their tenure as superintendent, not to exceed three individuals. The cabinet level administrators interviewed were selected based on the superintendents’ recommendation and availability of the participant.

**Procedures**

The researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the selected superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The interviews examined the leadership profile, reform strategies, and leadership skills utilized by the superintendent to improve student achievement. Participation was voluntary, and all the interviews were conducted on-site at the district, in a private location selected by the participant, or on the telephone. Detailed field notes and digitally recorded interviews facilitated the process of data analysis. Key relevant documents were reviewed, such as board minutes, policy documents, websites, district articles and professional development agendas.

**Challenges**

The challenges in conducting this study included: (a) the availability of the superintendent, (b) access to document reviews, (c) release of district data and information, (d) availability of other district stakeholders, (e) the availability to interview the participants in person, and (f) the collection of unbiased opinions or honest responses.
Limitations

There are specific limitations that impacted this study. First, a research study utilizing a qualitative paradigm faces some common limitations. The legitimacy of findings can be an issue, due to the subjectivity of depending on some degree of researcher judgment for strength and significance of a finding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Second, the comparative case study of four superintendents may limit the findings to other similar districts. Third, the research will be limited to the perceptions of the superintendent participants and other cabinet level district leaders. The study does not focus on public opinion of any individuals or groups of individuals within the organization. The research focuses only on the leadership components of the superintendency. Fourth, there is potential of bias or a reluctance to be candid in the responses of district personnel who are subordinate to the superintendent, and recommended by them. Fifth, based on the assumption that these districts are Broad Prize winning districts, the superintendents are thus considered effective superintendents. Lastly, the researcher assumed that through the interviews and direct observations of subjects that the people involved will be willing to speak freely in their natural environment.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to examining the superintendents of four urban school districts that have won the Broad Prize for Urban Education. In addition, the superintendents selected for the study must have served in that district for at least 3 years prior to winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education, either as the sitting superintendent or in a cabinet level position within the district.
Definition of Terms

The literature commonly uses terms such as profile to include beliefs, background, qualities, skills, and behaviors of a specific individual (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Canales, Delgado, & Slate, 2008; Cotton, 2003; Edwards, 2006; Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman, 2009; Payzant, 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the following terms are operationally defined as follows:

**Background**: The experience, education, description of the districts, teaching experience, work-related experiences, and family background of the superintendents.

**Profile**: A set of beliefs, background, qualities, skills, and behaviors that define the leadership of the superintendent.

**Reform strategies**: Strategies used by superintendents to improve student performance.

**Qualities**: Traits that would describe the superintendents’ communication style, facilitation style, operational competency, instructional leadership, ability to collaborate, and personal persona such as compassion.

Significance

“For decades, the superintendency has long held the reputation for being a difficult profession in which to survive, with a lack of security and many times short tenure” (Edwards, 2006, p. 11). The role of the superintendent has increasingly become more specialized and complex. As increased accountability and pressures to improve student achievement continue to rise, district leaders are searching for research-based solutions. This comparative study of superintendents of Broad Prize winning school districts will contribute to the literature by providing a detailed case description of
effective strategies and practices used to narrow the achievement gaps and increase student achievement for all students. Superintendents and other district leaders could use information from this study to implement similar change strategies for systemic reform efforts and put into practice identified leadership skills that would assist them in improving student achievement within their own districts. Boards of education may consider the findings when recruiting and selecting urban superintendents. Higher education institutions also may consider the results to improve their educational leadership preparation programs.

**Summary**

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. The challenges that face our urban public schools and how their leaders are addressing student achievement have gained the attention of the entire nation. The public demand for greater accountability creates pressure for educators to produce results and measurable gains. The superintendent provides leadership that affects the entire school system. The leadership practices they employ influence and impact teaching and student learning. This study examines the leadership behaviors and reform strategies executed by four superintendents in districts awarded the Broad Urban Education Prize for improving overall student achievement, while reducing achievement gaps among ethnic groups and low-income students.

Chapter 1 introduced the problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study, definition of terms, and concluded with a summary of the chapter. Chapter 2 of the study reviews and analyzes the research and literature in the areas of leadership theories and practices,
effective superintendent leadership, reform efforts employed by urban superintendents, and the criteria and selection process for the Broad Prize for Urban Education. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology used in the study and describes the research questions, the specific data collection and analysis methods, and sampling design. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the data collection and analysis, which demonstrated responses that addressed the three research questions of the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents a more detailed discussion of the findings and results, a discussion of study limitations, and offers implications for future research.
CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Improving the quality of education is a national priority, thus leading to increased pressures of accountability for student performance (National Commission on Excellence, 1983). This push for accountability has resulted in greater transparency regarding student achievement results and increased attention to the failing areas of our educational system. With the advent of these accountability measures, the job of the superintendent has grown increasingly complex (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). Public demands for educational reform often place the superintendent at the flash point of systemic reform initiatives. This has led to concerns about how the next generation of district leaders are prepared, identified, recruited, selected, evaluated, and retained over time (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). The Broad Prize for Urban Education (2010b) honors urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among low-income and minority students. Superintendents of these award winning districts have demonstrated the ability to sustain district-wide instructional improvement.

This review of the literature is divided into five sections that relate to the problem statement, purpose of the study, and the research questions. The first section examines the student achievement trends in urban districts (Fullan, 2003; National Commission on Excellence, 1983). The next section examines the role of the superintendent, leadership behaviors, and the impact they have on student achievement. The third section explores the reform strategies in districts that have demonstrated improved student achievement levels, while reducing the achievement gaps among low-income and minority students (Alsbury, 2008; Olson, 2007; Orr, 2006; Useem, 2009; Wilmore, 2008; Zavadsky, 2009).
The fourth area examines the effects and impact of superintendent turnovers. The final section describes the rigorous Broad Prize for Urban Education criteria, and how the Broad Foundation uses these criteria to determine which districts have demonstrated sustained district-wide transformation leading to increased achievement results and the closing of the achievement gap.

**Student Achievement Trends in Urban Education**

The improvement of our nation’s public education system with respect to student performance has fueled spirited debates for several decades. Amidst growing concern over the nation’s academic underachievement, the National Commission on Excellence published a report in 1983 entitled *A Nation at Risk*. This report became a significant landmark for education, prompting numerous education reform efforts across the nation. Nearly 30 years later, the American education system continues to be perceived as failing.

The implementation of standards-based education systems led to clearer goals and better alignment between teaching and assessment. The federal government’s efforts are manifested in passage of Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 and Goals 2000. In 2002, President George W. Bush, signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which purported to increase educational outcomes along with stronger accountability for results. No Child Left Behind calls for students to demonstrate grade level proficiency in English language arts and mathematics by the year 2014, mandating accountability for all students (Cowan, 2003).

Despite ongoing educational reforms, the achievement gap continues to grow, and is particularly acute in schools located in large urban districts (California Department of Education, 2007; Childress et al., 2006; Perie et al., 2005). A great majority of minority
students are educated in these urban schools that fail to adequately address their academic needs. For example, in 2000 the Education Trust (as cited in McAdams, 2006) found that Latino and African American students were much more likely to drop out of high school. The study found that, nationwide, White students had an 8% dropout rate, compared to 14% for African Americans and 30% for Latinos. In large urban schools, the dropout rate is much higher, with fewer than 50% of ninth graders being retained to become graduating seniors 4 years later (McAdams, 2006). Achievement gaps and low-performing schools remain common within large urban school districts. Urban schools serve the largest number of students and disproportionately serve the greatest share of African-American and Hispanic students, who are achieving at levels below grade-level proficiency targets.

Student performance in these schools continue to fall short of national targets, and the achievement gap between White and non-White students persists (Childress et al., 2006; Hunter & Bartee, 2003; Perie et al., 2005). The minority population of urban schools (the majority of whom are Black and Hispanic) is likely to be 75% or higher of the total enrollment (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). Students living in urban areas and attending urban schools come from communities with higher poverty rates, higher unemployment rates, and higher violent crime rates, and attend larger schools than do their suburban peers (KewalRamani et al., 2007).

A survey of urban superintendents, Fuller et al. (2003) found that 89% of superintendents “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that “the racial achievement gap between students is a critical and chronic challenge” (p. 40). Recognizing the challenge as complex, most superintendents felt that their actions to
close the achievement gap were not enough. One of the most crucial tasks for urban superintendents is to focus on the educationally at risk in order to close this gap (Fuller et al., 2003).

**Leadership Roles and Responsibilities**

The literature in this section addresses three aspects of leadership related to this study: the role of the superintendent, leadership behaviors and the impact they have on student achievement.

**Role of the Urban Superintendent**

The role of today’s superintendent is no longer considered a district figurehead, managing resources and personnel. Today’s superintendents must be able to analyze student achievement data to determine areas of need, identify effective research-based instructional strategies to address the needs, and garner the support of all district level, school, and community stakeholders (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hentschke, Nayfack, & Wohlstetter, 2009; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Wilmore, 2008).

The Washington Post called the school superintendency the impossible job because it is a role in which the forces are so difficult to understand, much less
control. Nowhere is there a job with higher expectations but so little trust and confidence. (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 4)

Waters and Marzano (2006) examined the impact district superintendents have on student achievement in a meta-analysis study. Researchers have found what many educators have long believed to be the case; that school and district leadership is crucial in determining the quality of education received by students. Cotton (2003) performed a narrative review of 81 studies examining the relationship between principals and student outcomes which collectively identified 25 categories of principal traits and actions that contribute to student achievement. In a meta-analysis of 69 research studies, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified a list of 21 responsibilities of the school leader that coincided with Cotton’s (2003) study. If, as these findings suggest, effective school leaders do impact their schools’ student achievement, then what may be known about the influence of superintendents on district-wide student achievement? Waters and Marzano (2006) examined the degree to which superintendent leadership influences student achievement. They sought to address the following questions:

1. What is the strength of relationship between district level leadership and average student achievement?

2. Which district level leadership responsibilities impact student achievement the most?

3. What leadership practices are used to execute these responsibilities?

4. What is the variation in the relationship between district leadership and student achievement?
A quantitative meta-analysis was the methodology used for this study of district leadership. A cross-section of research databases was initially used to review district leadership studies in the United States from 1970 until 2005. In order to be included in the meta-analysis study, two primary criterion elements were required; a reported correlation between district leadership and student achievement, as well as a standardized measure of student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Four databases were used to find the qualifying studies: ERIC, PsychINFO, Dissertation Abstracts, and the AERA online search services. Twenty-seven reports met the study criteria, and were examined in the meta-analysis. The demographics for the 27 reports included: 2,714 districts, 4,434 superintendents’ leadership ratings, and 3.4 million student achievement scores. Each study differed in methodology; however, the majority of the studies included superintendents’ perceptions of district level variables. In some cases, the superintendents’ perceptions were combined with those of other related constituents such as board members and site administrators (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The average student achievement results were then correlated with the perceptual data.

Waters and Marzano (2006) found a positive correlation (.24) between district leadership and student achievement. The findings affirmed the long-held belief that strong and effective district leadership makes a difference to the educational system. The findings suggest that when a district leader is effectively assuming his or her leadership responsibilities, a positive increase in student achievement will result across the district. Waters and Marzano identified five district level leadership responsibilities that had a statistical significance ($p < .05$) to average student academic achievement. The five responsibilities related to keeping a focus on teaching and learning goals are:
The goal setting process;

Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction;

Board alignment with and support of district goals;

Monitoring the goals for achievement and instruction;

Use of resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction. (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 11)

According to Waters and Marzano’s study (2006), when establishing district goals, effective superintendents included all stakeholders in the goal setting process. They also ensured that the process itself resulted in the development of nonnegotiable goals. These nonnegotiable goals had specific targets for schools and students and primarily focused on research based instructional strategies. Effective superintendents continually monitored district goals and their progress towards achievement targets.

In addition, Waters and Marzano (2006) observed that superintendents of high-performing districts ensured that district resources were aligned to support the district goals. The findings in this study revealed that a superintendent’s tenure positively affected student achievement. Lastly, the findings concluded that although there may be a number of explanations contributing to variation in the relationship between district leadership and student achievement, effective leadership behaviors did have a discernable effect on student achievement.

Waters and Marzano’s 2006 study was an extension of the research previously used in the “what works” books by Marzano et al. (2005). The findings of the Waters and Marzano study directly aligned with the responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. Principal leadership has been proven to have an effect on student achievement, and, in
this study, Waters and Marzano identified that district-level leadership had similar correlations of .24 to student achievement. The leadership behaviors identified in this study coincided with those found in Marzano et al. and Cotton (2003). Cotton (2003) identified that a principal’s strong focus on high levels of student learning directly impacts student achievement results. In addition, effective principals carefully monitor student progress, which coincided with the finding of Waters and Marzano. Much of the findings in this study were directly aligned with Cotton (2003) and Marzano et al.’s study of principal leadership behaviors and the impact on student achievement.

Specific limitations of the Waters and Marzano (2006) study included broad categories that did not fully describe the evidence one would observe in a district if the behaviors were present; nor were any specific examples provided of effective district leadership responsibilities and behaviors that lead to positive student achievement results. The Waters and Marzano study left many questions unanswered. Some relate to the details of the samples and methodologies used in each of the 27 reports. Specifically, how did these findings and results differ? The study did not provide sufficient details of the 27 reports used to reconstruct this meta-analysis. Furthermore, what were the attributes of an effective superintendent? What sorts of methods were used to evaluate the districts’ effectiveness, other than state achievement results? Did the studies of the different districts represent only large urban districts, or a variety of types and district sizes? What was the superintendent looking for when monitoring district progress? How could the superintendent use the achievement results to drive program improvement? How could district leaders determine which programs and goals to specifically align their resources to support? How could district level leaders determine which programs or
interventions do not have a direct impact on student achievement? What are the attributes that determine the success rate of selected programs? Did the school board in all 27 reports hire the superintendent? Did the relationship of the superintendent with the school board effect their leadership behaviors, ability to execute leadership responsibilities, and ultimately, affect student achievement results?

The implications that superintendents’ leadership as a predictor of school performance are notable. Waters and Marzano (2006) identified a number of actions and responsibilities that successful superintendents embody in their work and data indicated that these have connections to positive student outcomes. They posited that it is time for the development of a district-wide accountability policy and programs that better educate school boards and district-level leaders to focus their efforts on creating goal oriented districts. Waters and Marzano “have found a substantial and positive relationship between district level leadership and student achievement when the superintendent, district office staff, and school board members do the ‘right work’ in the ‘right way’” (p. 20). Finally, they went on to indicate that it is imperative that school boards recognize the correlation between length of superintendent service and student achievement. Superintendents should be committed to remain in a district long enough to see the positive impact of their leadership on student achievement. District goals for student achievement and instruction need to be a priority for all district-level leaders. When focused on effective district practices, instructional goals, and effective leadership responsibilities, the performance of the school district can result in positive student outcomes.
Correspondingly, the Council of Great City Schools found that superintendents with “clear vision, strong leadership, relentless focus, political acuity, personal accountability, effective management, and fortitude” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 27) were able to reduce the achievement gap in their urban school settings. In addition, Johnson (1996) suggested that superintendents were dependent upon principals and teachers to carry out their vision and reform efforts. “Only when superintendents prove themselves to be well-informed educators, wise change agents, and deserving of respect and trust do constituents seriously consider responding to their call for change” (Johnson, 1996, p. 121).

The complex and competing roles of the urban school superintendent make it one of the most challenging leadership positions. Historically, superintendents eschewed participating in partisan politics. Rather, superintendents were expected to use their technical and organizational skills to implement policies and programs decreed by others, such as school boards, governors, state legislatures, and Congress (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Cuban, 1998; Edwards, 2006). According to Cuban (1998), modern urban superintendents do practice politics, but such practice occurs most frequently within their own organizations. For instance, to promote their agenda, build coalition, and secure resources, superintendents negotiate with the school board, employee unions, principals, parent groups, and community stakeholders (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Cuban, 1998; Edwards, 2006). In addition, superintendents must effectively utilize their political leadership to garner support for school improvement, negotiate, build coalitions and empower others (Edwards, 2006; Johnson, 1996; Payzant, 2011).
Traditionally, stakeholders expected superintendents to be well versed in curriculum and instruction. During the past two and a half decades, widespread interest in school reform heightened expectations that urban school superintendents would provide leadership and expertise to improve student academic achievement (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). Urban school superintendents are now expected to be curriculum reformers, engineers of teacher development, and guarantors of significantly higher academic standards (Usdan & Cronin, 2003). Johnson (1996) maintained that superintendents must increasingly use their professional knowledge and experience to diagnose local educational needs, discern problems of educational improvement, and recommend strategies to improve teaching and learning.

Despite the heightened pressure placed on urban superintendents by NCLB to improve learning outcomes of all students, relatively little research exists that identifies the specific leadership strategies and functions carried out by superintendents to improve student achievement (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 2006). In fact, a query of ERIC, a database of journal articles and reports on educational-related topics, for research on urban superintendents and student achievement yielded only 16 relevant matches.

The increasing diversity and poverty levels of students in urban districts and schools require leaders to think differently about how to meet the needs of their students (Payzant, 2011). Payzant (2011) suggests that a superintendent’s plan needs to include: (a) visiting 1-2 schools each day; (b) facilitate a board retreat to address roles and responsibilities, and communication protocols; (c) meeting with community and business leaders; (d) meeting with individual central office managers; (e) meeting with union
leaders, the media, and other elected officials. He asserts that superintendents need to be prepared to discuss his or her core values and beliefs with district and community stakeholders.

**Leadership Behaviors and Student Achievement**

Effective or “outstanding” school leaders are committed to strongly held personal, moral, and educational values (Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin, & Collarbone, 2003). These values greatly impact the leadership practices of school leaders (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Leithwood, 1999; Sarros & Santora, 2001). Gold et al. (2003) conducted case studies of 10 schools in an attempt to learn how principals integrate educational values into their leadership practices. Data at each school were collected through interviews with key leaders and triangulated with document analysis and nonparticipant observations. Several themes emerged from the data about the school leadership. The case studies revealed that, in almost all the schools, the site leaders communicated their values through articulating the need for change to improve, increasing communications among staff, encouraging shared leadership, and developing leadership capacity within the school. Although the roots of the principals’ value were not studied, the data indicate they were concerned with elitism, equity, social justice, high academic expectations, collaboration among stakeholders, and commitment to the mission of education. The personal qualities of the principals that exemplified their values included transparency, integrity, accessibility, consistency, social intelligence, and the openness to take risks. Gold et al. notes that successful leaders are clear on their institutional purpose, are able to clearly articulate their values with conviction, and possess strong passion for their jobs.
In a qualitative study of nine elementary schools in San Diego Unified School District, Graczewski et al. (2009) found evidence that a connection between instructional leadership practices and professional development leads to improved instruction. The study also revealed that a connection between the school leader’s direct involvement with instructional improvement directly impacts the effectiveness of the professional development being focused and relevant. Graczewski et al. maintained that there is a connection between the coherence of a school’s vision and the coherence and relevance of schools’ professional development opportunities. The need for school and district leaders to expand beyond their administrative role and become instructional leaders was highlighted by the emergence of standards-based accountability and the accountability for student performance.

Leithwood and Riehl (2005) described successful leadership as one that creates a compelling sense of purpose through a shared vision and having high expectations for their colleagues. They also posited that the leader must provide support to colleagues’ ideas and initiatives and provide an environment that stimulates intellectual growth. Leithwood and Riehl also asserted that building a collaborative school culture that embraces shared decision making and encourages distributed leadership are essential leadership practices that lead to successful schools.

A retrospective case study of three academically high performing districts conducted by Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy (2002) explored the contextual foundation, district-level leadership strategies for reform, definition of change, and implementation for district reform practices that increased the academic achievement of students. The researcher used a comparative case study approach to compare the high performing
districts with other districts that did not yield similar improvements. No conceptual framework for this study was given, and no limitations were stated. The researchers identified the trends in academic achievement and found 10 common leadership actions which district-level leaders employed to facilitate reform: (a) facilitate political and organizational stability during the implementation of the reform strategies, (b) develop a well defined accountability system, (c) make data-driven decisions, (d) focus on specific achievement goals, (e) adopt district-wide curriculum and instructional strategies, (f) support intensive reading and math instruction, (g) focus on the lowest performing schools, (h) start reforms in the elementary grades, (i) organize professional development that supports the reform strategies, and (j) provide intensive central office staff support for the buildings. The intent of this research was exploratory in nature and was not designed to yield definitive conclusions regarding the factors that drove the achievement results in the districts studied.

Shannon and Bylsma (2004) analyzed over 80 reports and articles from the previous 10-15 years that examined districts which had shown significant student academic improvement. The researchers used the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools (Shannon & Bylsma, 2003) as the conceptual framework. Thirteen common themes emerged from across the 80 research studies. The themes were grouped into four general categories: (a) effective leadership, (b) quality teaching and learning, (c) support for system-wide improvement, and (d) clear and collaborative relationships. The conceptual framework illustrates the relationships and interaction of the 13 themes within the four categories. All four themes are integrated and interrelated and prove to all be critical parts to a district’s overall effectiveness.
The lack of clearly demonstrated links between specific strategies and student test scores is a limitation of this study (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). Leadership actions common to the examined school districts were uncovered. They are: (a) focus on the learning of all students; (b) encourage shared leadership; (c) facilitate sustained effort over time; (d) develop a system of accountability; (e) align curriculum and assessment; (f) target professional development; (g) prioritize high quality instruction; (h) use data-driven decision making; (i) reallocate and align resources to goals; (j) work with stakeholders; (k) develop a culture of success; (l) align school board policies, goals, and programs; and (m) clarify school and district roles and responsibilities. This study revealed that what happens in the district level can help to improve schools and impact student learning.

**Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leaders motivate people to do more than they originally intended to by increasing awareness of the importance and values of the group goals. They urge people to look beyond self interest to the interests of the group and encourage people within the group to realize their own potential (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Wilmore and Thomas (2001) offer six characteristics of transformational leaders: (a) define the need for change, (b) create new visions, (c) change the organization to accommodate the new vision verse working within the old one, (d) concentrate on long term goals, (e) inspire others to look beyond their own interests to work towards group goals, and (f) facilitate followers taking a greater responsibility for their own growth and development.

A review of research on transformational school leadership was conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005). The review included 32 school-context, qualitative studies
from 1996-2005. The analysis was done by counting the studies that reported similar results. The results were then compared with earlier studies. The review identified key transformational leadership behaviors which include: (a) supporting staff professional development; (b) fostering staff collaboration; (c) building a culture around high-performance expectations; and (d) cultivating positive interactions between parents, the community, and the school. The review also recognized setting a vision, based on “inspirational motivation” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 181), and modeling key values and practices as essential transformational behaviors.

Schools and districts across the country are searching for creative ways to meet the high demands of school accountability. In Alabama, Montgomery Public Schools leaders have created a new position called “turnaround specialists” (Johnson, 2011). The role of these turnaround leaders is to lead low-performing schools to higher levels of achievement. Johnson (2011) identifies turnaround leaders to be change agents. They need to be data savvy and very assertive. Turnaround leaders need flexibility to act on the basis of what works for their schools’ and students (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). “Transformational leadership provides an effective approach to leading our schools in today’s complex global community” (Larson, 2009, p. 58).

Reform Efforts and Strategies Employed by Urban Superintendents

Superintendent Tom Payzant of the Boston Public Schools took nearly a decade to bring his reform efforts to scale (The Aspen Institute, 2006). He launched a reform program focused on literacy and mathematics instruction that would improve learning for all students. Payzant (as cited in Russo, 2006) has been described as a superintendent who tried a few things at a time: “He could have made more substantial, dramatic, or
even radical changes, but instead made only small moves that produced marginal achievement” (p. 32).

Superintendent Payzant was able to avoid significant resistance from teachers through his systematic and careful approach to implementing new strategies and approaches. Although his approach to reform maintained a sense of urgency, he claims “there’s not a lot of evidence that the strategy of trying to blow up a place and start over will gain the long-term results that can come from continuity of leadership” (Russo, 2006, p. 36). Much of his success as an effective urban superintendent is attributed to keeping a laser-like focus on teaching and learning, hiring quality leaders, making slow and steady progress, and maintaining a collaborative leadership style (Russo, 2006).

Superintendent Arlene Ackerman of San Francisco Unified School District led a district of 64,000 students. Upon her arrival to the district, student performance was stagnant, and the achievement gap between Hispanic and African American students was widening (Childress et al., 2006). Ackerman and her team created a strategy to allocate resources based on student learning needs. Principals were given the authority to align the monies towards programs and instructional activities that would best meet the needs of their students. Although schools and principals were given more authority, funding, and flexibility to align resources as they saw fit, higher accountability measures were put into place; whereas, in the past there was no formal accountability system (Childress et al., 2006). In short, Ackerman sought to strengthen teaching and learning, set clear objectives, and establish accountability. Within Ackerman’s first year as superintendent of SFUSD, she implemented this new strategy across all 115 schools. “Over the next five years, SFUSD’s rate of academic improvement (as measured by statewide tests)
consistently outpaced California’s as a whole” (Childress et al., 2006, p. 61). In addition, the gap between African American and Hispanic students narrowed.

Texas’s Aldine Independent School District is an urban school district that serves 56,000 students; 77% are low-income families, and Hispanics and African Americans account for 91% of the district’s total enrollment. Superintendent M. B. Donaldson developed a turn-around strategy, focused on changing the working relationships among teachers. “He sought to instill a new culture that encouraged teamwork and accountability for raising students’ ‘performance’” (Childress et al., 2006, p. 64).

Donaldson sought teacher input, and empowered them to develop district curriculum that was aligned with the state standards. Site principals then built leadership capacity amongst the teachers to implement the new curriculum and lead professional development. As a result, a collaborative learning environment was created; teachers shared ideas, visited each other’s classrooms, and sought out advice from colleagues (Childress et al., 2006).

Long Beach Unified District, the 2003 winner of the Broad Prize for Urban Education, had made impressive gains in its elementary and middle schools. The district instituted such strategies as: adopting a standards-based curriculum and a common assessment system, enforcing a mandatory uniform policy in grades K-8, hiring instructional coaches, focusing on strong professional development, and conducting key results walk-throughs (Olson, 2007). Long Beach Superintendent Chris Steinhauser had an open door policy, held monthly public meetings, and maintained a collaborative working relationship with the teachers union. The Long Beach way was to place student needs first. High school office administrative assistant Cheryl Cornejo describes the
Long Beach way as “it’s not a top down approach. It’s top-down support with bottom-up leadership” (Olson, 2007, p. 2).

Based on a national report of a colloquium for former urban superintendents, Harvey (2003) provided insight and offered two major strategies to address the Superintendency and student learning, namely: organizational leadership and instructional leadership. He outlined seven organizational prerequisites necessary for superintendents to lead:

1. You must have the right people in leadership roles.
2. You must be able to access and analyze performance data.
3. You must have effective delivery systems in place.
4. Logistical and organizational structures must be in order.
5. You need to be an effective communicator.
6. You must have a means to evaluate every aspect of the organizations operations.
7. You must engage in continuous improvement and understand that leadership success is a process not a destination.

Harvey states that “leading the learning” or instructional leadership translates to being visible in classrooms and becoming proficient in the areas of teaching, learning, assessment, and curriculum. According to Harvey, superintendents themselves must establish a visible presence in classrooms, facilitate the development of long range professional development plans, offer a variety of learning opportunities and trainings, visit schools regularly, and focus on teaching and learning.
A qualitative study using a grounded theory approach was conducted by Parramore (2004) to explore superintendents’ strategies and leadership acts, their perceived effectiveness, and their effect on student performance. This study was limited by the nonrandom, voluntary selection of participating districts and the generalizations that might be drawn. Parramore found that the superintendents’ interpretation of the reform policies, their assessment of the district needs, and pressures for change influenced their leadership strategies and actions. The superintendents’ plan for restructuring included developing a system of accountability, focusing on performance, transforming district culture, organizational restructuring of roles and responsibilities and decentralizing the district hierarchy.

Bredeson and Kose (2007) conducted a study that used a role theory and educational accountability for its conceptual framework when they explored the internal and external accountability factors and work priorities that influenced superintendents’ response to reform. Questionnaire data from a study done in 1994 and then again in 2003 were collected. A total of 349 superintendents responded to the survey in 1994, and 320 responded in 2003. Face-to-face interviews with 12 superintendents in 2003 added to the collected data. No limitations were stated. The current emphasis on external accountability supported the superintendent role as an instructional leader. Superintendents stated that they often used external accountability factors to help move forward reform efforts. The researchers also concluded that, although the superintendents valued being instructional leaders, the managerial aspects of their positions often took priority. This was a result of school board members who say that they value instructional
leadership in their superintendent but often hold superintendents more accountable for managerial tasks.

According to the Great Schools Inc. (2011) website, they list qualities of an effective superintendent to: (a) have a clear vision; (b) be an instructional leader; (c) be an effective communicator; (d) be a good manager; (e) be a good listener; (f) be a risk taker, and (g) be flexible. They further call out two effective superintendents, Dr. Frank Till and Dr. Laura Schwalm. Dr. Frank Till was charged to be the superintendent of Broward County Public Schools in Florida. Fourteen schools were designated as low-performing. Dr. Till focused resources on improvement, increased the number of students taking the PSAT, and ultimately was able to raise the achievement of 13 of the 14 low-performing schools from a state rating of a D or F to a C or above. Dr. Laura Schwalm is the superintendent of Garden Grove Unified School District in Orange County. Under her tenure, the district has made great strides in increasing student achievement, while closing the achievement gaps amongst minority and low-income student groups. Garden Grove Unified School District was awarded the 2004 Broad Prize for Urban Education. Dr. Schwalm attributes the district’s success to the people in the district having a laser like focus on clearly aligned expectations.

**Urban Superintendent Turnover**

Stability of district leadership appears to be a contributing factor in the success of some districts. Superintendents play an important role in providing the vision and direction for district-wide reform efforts (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The stability of district leadership influences the success and implementation of reform strategies (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Nationally,
superintendents in urban school districts average only 2.5 years, compared to the national average of 5.6 years among other superintendents (Edwards, 2006; Renchler, 1992). “During 1991, approximately 30 school boards governing some of the nation’s largest school systems replaced their superintendents” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 6). In 1989, the National School Board Association conducted a survey of urban school districts and discovered that 27 out of the 54 urban superintendents surveyed had only served a term of 3 years or less. “This is a job that can chew people up and spit them out in an unpleasant and very public fashion” (Harvey, 2003, p. 26).

Various factors contribute to a superintendent’s longevity. Some of the leading challenges for superintendents include conflict with the school board, lack of fiscal resources, and increased politics and bureaucracy (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Renchler, 1992; Waters & Marzano, 2006). San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent Arlene Ackerman raised students’ performance on state standardized tests from fourth to first among California’s urban school districts (Childress et al., 2006). Nonetheless, the school board forced Superintendent Ackerman to resign due to personality conflicts, and for keeping teaching and learning a priority over district politics (Childress et al., 2006). For example, “she refused to release classes for a daylong protest against the Iraq war that the school board had authorized” (Childress et al., 2006, p. 58).

The schools in Seattle, Washington had experienced a frequent turnover of superintendents, as well as board members. William Kendrick, superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, suffered the negative impact of these turnovers: “It’s very difficult when you don’t have continuity and stability, first at the board level, then at the superintendent level. You start to get some new initiatives going and then there are new faces”
Seattle school board member, Ellen Roe, recommended that all board members should attend training that includes learning about: financial data, educational organizational structures, and boardmanship issues (Renchler, 1992).

Although there are no magic formulas guaranteeing the survival of any superintendent, veteran urban superintendents shared these five key recommendations:

- Be prepared and plan for success, not failure.
- Create conditions that would allow for positive collaboration between Superintendent and Board Members.
- Establish win-win situations with the union.
- Involve the community.
- Establish a culture of respect on all levels of the organization (Harvey, 2003).

Urban superintendents benefit from targeted learning opportunities and in depth information on the particular nature of the urban superintendency, the diverse situations that emerge, and the diverse populations which they serve.

Successful implementation of a change strategy may require more time than the length of an average superintendent’s tenure in order to yield measurable positive outcomes. Waters and Marzano (2006) identified effects as early as 2 years; however, in other estimates, reform initiatives generally take 4 to 5 years before producing results. Districts cannot successfully implement system change with such frequent turnover of superintendents. Without stable district leadership, a district will be unable to successfully implement any reform efforts from beginning to end (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Buchanan, 2006; Edwards, 2006; Renchler, 1992; Waters & Marzano, 2006).
After serving in Chicago and Philadelphia, Paul Vallas became the superintendent of New Orleans Recovery School District and was quoted:

What happens with turnaround superintendents is that the first two years you’re a demolitions expert. By the third year, if you get improvements, do school construction, and test scores go up, people start to think this isn’t so hard. By year four, people start to think you’re getting way too much credit. By year five, you’re chopped liver. (Cuban, 2010, para. 4)

When a school board expects the superintendent to turn around a failing district, such as Rudy Crew in Miami-Dade County, the superintendent begins to gain enemies after having to make tough decisions that include: budget retrenchment, closing schools, teacher layoffs, and employee pink slips.

**Recognition of Success—Broad Prize for Urban Education Award**

Although urban school systems face greater challenges than suburban districts in ensuring that all their students graduate high school prepared for post secondary education, there are schools and school districts that have been successful in beating the odds (Chenoweth, 2007; Zavadsky, 2009). The Broad Prize spotlights urban school districts that have demonstrated substantial progress toward improving schools district-wide (Zavadsky, 2009). These award winning districts have sustained reform efforts over time. Broad Prize winning districts include: Houston Independent School District, Long Beach Unified School District, Garden Grove Unified School District, Norfolk Public Schools, Boston Public Schools, New York City Department of Education, Brownsville Independent School District, Aldine Independent School District, Gwinnett County Public Schools, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (The Broad Prize
for Urban Education, 2010a). These school districts discovered how to bring reform to scale in order to gain systemic alignment and improve student achievement district-wide. Each of these districts has shown evidence of significant improvement in helping all students. They have employed successful practices that can serve as models for other urban American school districts. Because this proposed study will be limited to studying four superintendents of Broad Prize-winning districts, it is important to understand the criteria for awarding this prestigious prize.

One hundred urban school districts across the country are identified as eligible candidates for the Broad Prize each year (The Broad Prize for Urban Education, 2010c). The selection process for the Broad Prize is very rigorous, and districts must meet certain criteria to be eligible. The eligibility criterion is related to size, poverty levels, minority enrollment, and urbanicity. The $2 million Broad Prize for Urban Education is the largest education award in the country.

The Broad Prize for Education has four goals:

1. Reward districts that improve achievement levels for disadvantaged students.
2. Restore the public’s confidence in our nation’s public schools by highlighting successful urban districts.
3. Create competition and provide incentives for districts to improve.
4. Showcase the best practices of successful districts. (The Broad Prize For Urban Education, 2010b, para. 2)

The Broad Prize Review Board consists of prominent education experts from across the country. They determine the five finalists based on the following criteria:

- Performance and improvement results from mandated state tests.
• Performance and improvement of the district (based on poverty levels) compared to similar districts within the state.

• Performance and improvement compared to other districts statewide.

• The reduction of achievement gaps between various ethnic and income groups.

• Graduation rates

• Advanced Placement exam participation and passing rates.

• SAT and ACT participation and scores.

• Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results.

• District demographic data—student enrollment, income, language, special education, ethnicity. (The Broad Prize For Urban Education, 2010c, para 3)

Prior to the final phase of the selection process, a consulting team of experts contracted by the Broad Foundation conducts rigorous site visits to the five finalist districts. This visit is designed to authenticate the independent findings of the Broad Prize Review Board, and to seek further evidence of the effectiveness of the districts.

The final phase of the identification process is conducted by a selection jury. The five qualitative site visit reports are submitted for review and analysis by the Selection Jury. The selection jury, comprised of nationally prominent business, government and public service leaders then determines a winner based on analysis of data performance results (as cited above), as well as a review of qualitative site visit reports and school level variance analyses across proficiency levels. There is not a formula used to select the finalists or winner. Professional judgment, experience, and dialogue with other Members of the Review Board and Selection Jury are the methods used to determine the Broad Prize Finalists and Prize Winner.
The Broad Prize winning district receives $1 million in scholarships, and the four finalist districts each receive $250,000 in scholarships. Superintendent Payzant, former Superintendent of Boston Public Schools wrote:

The Broad Prize finalists and winning districts provide hope for the future of urban education in America and challenge all who accept the responsibility for improving them to learn about what it takes to improve a whole system of schools and to stay the course to ensure that it happens. (Zavadsky, 2009, p. xviii)

Summary

The review of the literature provides a foundation for the development of the current study. The review began by examining the current status of student achievement. Concerns over student academic performance have led to increased expectations, increased accountability, and, thus, increased pressures for the nation’s superintendents.

The review of the literature contributed to the understanding of the impact district superintendents have on advancing student achievement and creating sustainable learning organizations that increase student learning for all subgroups. The superintendent was identified as a key player in advancing student achievement while wearing many hats as manager, politician, and instructional leader.

In order to transform an organization in ways that achieve large-scale sustainable reform, system leaders must understand the change process, practice organizational leadership skills, and engage in leading a learning organization (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003; Senge, 1990). Superintendents whose districts improved academically and were successful in reducing the achievement gaps were identified as having “a clear vision, strong leadership, relentless focus, political acuity,
personal accountability, effective management, and fortitude” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 27).

The consequential realities uncovered in the literature illustrate the need for a clearer understanding of the work of the superintendent. Superintendents are found to play a critical role in advancing student achievement while addressing the complexities of the position. The ability of the district leader to develop systemic coherency that drives alignment of district action to a well articulated vision is considered essential to sustaining reform efforts (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Childress et al., 2006; Hallinger, 2003; Larson, 2009).

Broad Prize winning districts are improving student achievement across all groups. More information is needed about the leadership profiles and specific strategies employed by the superintendents in these districts that are achieving results in order to inform and prepare other superintendents to bring about similar results in other districts.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methods and procedures employed for this study of effective superintendents. Specifically, it describes the qualitative research design, including data collection and analysis procedures for this comparative case study of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts.
CHAPTER 3—RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the qualitative case study research design used to examine the role of the superintendent in improving student achievement. The purpose of these comparative case studies was to understand how superintendents in urban districts use reform strategies to leverage systemic change to improve student achievement. The study focused on four effective superintendents of Broad Prize for Urban Education winning school districts. It examined leadership traits, core beliefs, behaviors and actions, and identified commonalities and differences amongst these nationally recognized superintendents.

Research Design

This study applies a qualitative approach. Qualitative research seeks out the “why” of a topic through the analysis of unstructured information, such as open-ended surveys, interview transcripts, emails, notes, and feedback forms (Yin, 2009). This type of research is used to gain insight into people’s values, attitudes, and behaviors (Creswell, 2009). Focus groups, content analysis, and in-depth interviews are among some of the formal approaches used in qualitative research (Yin, 2009). Traits of Qualitative Research:

• Takes place in the natural setting, where the participants experience the topic under study. The researcher interacts face-to-face with the study participants.
• Relies on the researcher as the key instrument. The researcher collects the data, analyzes the documents collected, interviews the participants, and observes participant behaviors.
• Has multiple forms of data that are collected, rather than relying on a single source. Such forms of data include interviews, observations, feedback forms, and surveys.

• Utilizes an analytical and interpretive framework that helps the researcher make sense of what is going on in the social setting being studied.

• Allows for data collection of real-life activities using interactive methods and descriptive interpretation (Creswell, 2009; C. Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 2009).

A comparative case study approach was used as the primary qualitative method for this study. The case study method allowed the researcher to examine the interrelatedness of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning school districts, as well as identify a leadership profile for each participant. This study examined the prevalent leadership profiles and actions employed by four nationally recognized superintendents. A comparative analysis of the participants identified their commonalities and differences. Yin (2009) points out that the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations. A case study approach does have some limitations:

• Data collection is dependent upon questioning and listening skills of the researcher.

• The interviewing process is psychologically demanding.

• A high degree of research expertise is required by the researcher when using a wide variety of data sources and methods.
• The presentation of data can be problematic as the researcher determines the prominence of the data presented.

• The data collection procedures are frequently not routinized (Yin, 2009).

The decision to use a qualitative case study approach provided the researcher with a natural setting to conduct the research. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to act as a key instrument. Gathering up-close information by talking directly to the participants and seeing them behave provided the researcher multiple sources of data rather than replying on a questionnaire or instrument developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) posits that in qualitative research, the “researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher bring to the research or writers express in the literature” (p. 175).

**Research Questions**

This dissertation examined the leadership behaviors and reform strategies executed by Broad Prize District Superintendents and determined their leadership profiles. The researcher examined how the superintendents’ approached systemic reform that led to their districts being recognized by the Broad Foundation for improving overall student achievement while narrowing the achievement gap.

Specifically, the study addresses these three research questions:

1. What is the individual leadership profile (core beliefs, background, actions and behaviors, and leadership qualities) of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts?
2. What systemic reform strategies did these Broad Prize superintendents execute that led to their district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education?

3. What do the leadership profiles of four nationally recognized superintendents have in common, and how do they differ from one another?

**Population/Sample/Participant**

The superintendents under study were selected from the population of all superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts, an accomplishment that illustrates effective leadership. There had been a total of 10 Broad Prizes awarded when this study began in 2011. The Broad Prize Award eligibility criteria are: (a) district size—K-12 districts serving more than 100,000 students; (b) low-income enrollment—K-12 districts serving between 37,500 and 99,999 that more than 40% are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and (c) minority enrollment—more than 40% of student enrollment comes from minority groups and have an urban designation (with locale codes 11, 12, or 21 in the National Center for Education Statistics’ Common Core of Data; The Broad Prize for Urban Education, 2010a). The four superintendents included in the sample were selected based on accessibility, availability, geographic convenience, personal knowledge and interest, and recommendations from professional colleagues.

The superintendents selected for this research met the following additional criteria:

- Served in the district as the superintendent or cabinet level administrator of the award winning district for a minimum of 3 years prior to being awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education.
- Reside within the United States.
This study’s participants were purposefully selected according to the above criteria and were willing to participate in the study. The participating superintendents were chosen because they were considered key informants in their respective districts. A key informant is defined as an individual able to provide in depth information and knowledge that other professionals in the field of education do not have (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999). Qualifications and experience of key informants make them uniquely qualified to discuss what characteristics make an effective superintendent of a high performing district (M. N. Marshall, 1996). The key informant interviewees included cabinet level administrators who were familiar with the work of the superintendent. The superintendents were asked to suggest individuals based on their familiarity with his or her work.

**District Profiles as Context for the Study**

The district profiles are organized according to when they were awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education and presents the context of each district and their superintendents.

**District 1**

Beachside Unified School District (BUSD) is located in Southern California. Beachside Unified School District educates 87,449 students in 93 public schools. The district’s student demographics are as follows: 53% Hispanic, 17% African American, 16% White, 14% Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino, 68% Socio-Economically Disadvantaged, and 24% Language Learners.

Superintendent 1 (S1) was appointed superintendent of BUSD in 2002. Superintendent 1 is a 21-year veteran of the district, where he began as a teacher and has
since served as a vice principal, principal, and director of special projects services. Prior to his unanimous appointment as superintendent, he served as deputy superintendent for 3 years in BUSD.

Beachside Unified School District won the Broad Prize for Urban Education in the 2003-2004 school years and was one of the top finalists in 2002, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Beachside Unified School District is the only school district in the nation to be nominated for the award during each year it was eligible to compete, since the inception of the award in 2002. Once a school district wins the top award, it is not eligible to compete for 3 years (The Broad Prize for Urban Education, 2010a).

District 2

Orange Unified School District (OUSD) is located in southern California, and is the 12th largest district in the State. Orange Unified School District’s enrollment boundaries allow the district to serve students in many central, and northern Orange County communities including: Anaheim, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Garden Grove, Santa Ana, Stanton, and Westminster. Orange Unified School District includes 47 elementary schools, 10 intermediate schools, 9 high schools, and 2 special education schools. The district student demographics at the time they were awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education was: 50% Hispanic, 29.8% Asian American, 18.7% White, 1.2% African American, 0.3% Native American, 59% Socio-Economically Disadvantaged, 50% English language learners (ELLs), and the graduation rate is 78%.

In 2004, OUSD was honored with the Broad Prize for Excellence in Urban Education as the best urban school district in the United States. As a result, $500,000 in scholarships was awarded to OUSD graduates. Twice before, the district had been a
Broad Prize finalist. The superintendent of OUSD is Superintendent 2 (S2), Ph.D., an Orange County native who joined the OUSD in 1973. She served as an elementary and high school teacher, moving to administration in 1979, assumed superintendent’s position in May 1999 after serving as associate superintendent for business/personnel; graduate of Laguna Beach High School, B.A. from UC Riverside, M.A. from Cal-State Fullerton, Ph.D. from USC.

**District 3**

Red Sox Public Schools educates 57,900 students in 145 schools. The student demographics comprise 44% African American, 33% Hispanic, 14% White, and 9% Asian American. Of the 57,900 students 73% are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and 17% are designated as ELLs. In 2006, Red Sox Public Schools earned the Broad Prize for Urban Education and has qualified as a finalist for the award five times.

Superintendent 3 (S3) was appointed as the Superintendent of Red Sox Public Schools in 1995 and served until 2006. Prior to his appointment as superintendent of Red Sox Public Schools, he served as the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the U.S. Department of Education for 2 years under the Clinton administration. S3 worked as a high school teacher for 2 years and then was asked to work as the administrative assistant to the superintendent of New Orleans Public Schools. After 2 years as an administrative assistant, Superintendent 3 moved directly to a superintendent position with School District of Springfield (4 years), Eugene Public Schools (5 years), Oklahoma City Public Schools (3 years), San Diego Unified School District (11 years), and then Red Sox Public Schools (11 years). He worked as a district superintendent for five different districts over a span of 34 years. Superintendent 3 would
be considered a “nontraditional” superintendent due to the fact that he never held a site administrator position prior to becoming a district superintendent.

**District 4**

Hornet Valley Schools educates 135,638 students in 178 schools. The student demographics include 41% African American, 33% White, 16% Hispanic, 5% American Indian/Multiracial, and 5% Asian. Of the 135,638 students, 53% are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and 10% are designated as ELLs. Hornet Valley Schools earned the Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2011 and has qualified as a finalist for the award three times.

Superintendent 4 (S4) served as superintendent for Hornet Valley Schools (HVS) from 2006-2011. He began teaching in Orlando, Florida and worked as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent of curriculum & instruction, area superintendent, chief operating officer, and chief information officer, all within the Hornet Valley County Public Schools. His first superintendent position was with the Tustin Unified School District in Tustin, California for 5 years. He then became the superintendent for HVS for the next 5 years. He currently has retired from school superintendency, and is now employed as the Senior Vice President of educational services for News Corporation in New York.

**Instruments**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews of four superintendents and one to three cabinet level administrators who served in his or leadership team. These interviews served as the primary source of data for this study. Although all four superintendents were interviewed in person, three of the eight total cabinet level
administrators were interviewed over the telephone. The researcher developed and field tested the interview protocols to ensure they would examine all aspects of the research questions. The interview protocol for the superintendents (Appendix A) included six questions. The interview protocol for the cabinet level staff members (Appendix B) included eight questions. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed using a professional transcription service company.

In order to ensure content validity, the interview protocols were piloted with three different area superintendents in California who did not participate in the formal study. Each area superintendent reviewed the interview protocol for wording, readability, clarity, and validity. Feedback and recommendations were used to revise the interview protocols. Based on the review, the interview protocols were presented to the members of the dissertation committee for approval. Feedback and recommendations from the dissertation committee were considered, revisions were made, and the protocols were approved for use in this study.

Following an extensive re-examination of the literature related to superintendent leadership and student achievement, interview questions were designed to address the three research questions. The researcher evaluated each research question to determine the possible responses each question would elicit. The interview questions were developed using a backwards design approach, mapping each question back to address the research questions (Appendices C and D). A six-item open-ended superintendent interview protocol (Appendix A) was constructed to determine the leadership profiles of each superintendent, and identify the reform strategies initiated by each of them. The eight-item open-ended cabinet level administrator interview protocol (Appendix B) was
constructed to gain additional knowledge of the superintendent’s profiles and reform strategies.

**Procedures and Data Collection**

This study consisted of a series of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with four selected superintendents, and one to three cabinet level administrators who served during the superintendent’s tenure. The interviews examined the leadership profiles: core beliefs, background, actions and behaviors, and leadership qualities of the four superintendents. In addition, the interviews elicited reform strategies the superintendent initiated that led to the improvement of student achievement and the narrowing of the achievement gap.

A comparative case study design was employed allowing for a holistic representation of the participants experiences (Creswell, 2009). Using an emergent format of asking guiding and follow-up questions based on the participant’s responses, the researcher focused on the participants’ own perceptions and experiences probing for deep understanding of the participants’ meaning in their natural setting. This method allowed the researcher to initiate conversations, identify themes based on the participants’ experiences, and continuously observe the participants. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were permitted to opt out at any time (Appendix E). Interviewees signed an informed consent documenting all possible risks of participating in the study. Research findings were made available to participants upon request. Confidentiality of subjects was maintained throughout every aspect of this research.

The researcher began and ended each interview with a brief introductory script (Appendix F). The interviews were conducted during a single site visit or phone call for
each district in a secure location within the district offices or in a private location selected by the participant. The interviews took place at the convenience of the superintendents and cabinet level administrator. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Interviews were digitally recorded, and the researcher noted observable behaviors of the interviewee on comment sheets. Detailed field notes and digitally recorded interviews facilitated the process of data analysis.

A semi-structured interview format was used to allow the researcher the flexibility for the interviewees to elaborate when necessary and appropriate. For example, if the interviewee started to add potentially significant data to the interview, the researcher may probe for more detail and elaboration on the topic. Although semi-structured interviews may have many benefits in a qualitative methods case study, there are limitations to also be acknowledged. The data captured are often lengthy and time consuming, and it is possible that the reliability of the information created through this method could be questioned (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). The success of the interviews depends to a great extent on the interviewer’s skills of asking, listening, and determining appropriate probing questions to be asked in a timely manner (Yin, 2009). Thus, the interviewer was prepared with an interview design that supports one’s abilities to make those critical decisions and questioning techniques that can affect the significance of the quality of the interview and the responses.

The sequence of the interview was designed to identify the superintendents’ leadership profile that has led to the districts’ recognition as a Broad Prize for Urban Education winner. The interview protocol specified that, prior to asking the interview questions, the researcher introduced herself, explained the purpose of the study, reviewed
the procedures, and asked if the participant(s) had any questions or concerns. This was done in order to establish rapport with the interviewees and set the interviewee at ease. Any follow-up questions were directly related to the three research questions. Open-ended questions allowed the interviewee to use his or her own words to answer the question with as little or as much detail as deemed necessary.

In addition, during the site visits relevant documents were reviewed in order to compare, contrast, and further catalogue data. This use of triangulation methods is known to reduce risks and biases associated with a singular approach (Creswell, 2009; C. Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Cabinet level administrator interviews and document analysis of strategic plans and professional development schedules were reviewed to verify that the reform strategies and initiatives that were identified by the superintendent had actually been implemented. Such documents included: meeting minutes, newspaper articles, professional development notes and agendas, and other related field notes.

The data gathered from the interviewees’ statements, researcher’s observations and notes from the documentation review at site visits were captured on a personal digital recorder and transcribed by a professional transcription company. A copy of the transcription was shared with each participant to insure accuracy and to provide the participant an opportunity to expand or clarify their interview responses. The use of a digital recorder enabled the interviewer to focus on the responses, body language, and facial expressions of the interviewee. The researcher also used comment sheets to document significant experiences during the interview that were not recorded, such as illness, interruptions, or other details that may have affected the interviewees’ ability to answer the questions.
Data Analysis

The researcher hand analyzed the transcriptions. Using the constant comparative method drawn from the grounded theoretical approach, the researcher analyzed the data independently and then compared responses from the superintendents’ interviews, cabinet level administrators’ interviews, and documents when appropriate. The reviewed documents were related to district context and were reviewed to verify implementation of strategic reform strategies. The research employed the constant comparative method allowing the researcher to move in and out of the data collection and analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher then identified the emerging themes and patterns and constantly compared the data until no new themes and patterns emerged. Frequency of responses related to each theme were also calculated and analyzed. Once the data were analyzed, the researcher documented the common themes and patterns that described the leadership profiles of these superintendents and any reform initiatives they employed to earn their district recognition as a Broad Prize winner. Data are illustrated in a table format to show the commonalities and differences.

Limitations/Delimitations

The challenges in conducting this study included: (a) the availability of the superintendent and other staff members, (b) access to document reviews, (c) release of district data and information, (d) availability of other district stakeholders, and (e) the collection of unbiased opinions or honest responses.

The six limitations that impacted the study are: First, the legitimacy of findings can be an issue, due to the subjectivity of the researcher’s judgment of the strength and significance of a finding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Second, the comparative case study
of four superintendents may limit the findings to other similar districts. Third, the
research is limited to the perceptions of four superintendents and eight cabinet level staff
members. The study did not seek out opinions of any individuals or groups of individuals
within the organization, other than the input from the key informants whose input was
used to triangulate the data from the superintendent’s input. The research focused only
on the leadership components of the superintendency. Fourth, there was potential of bias
in the responses of district personnel who are subordinate to and were recommended by
the superintendent. Fifth, based on the assumption that these districts are Broad Prize
winning districts, the superintendents were thus considered effective superintendents for
the purpose of this study. Lastly, the researcher assumed that through the interviews and
direct observations of subjects that the people involved were willing to speak freely in
their natural environment.

This study was delimited to examining superintendents of four urban school
districts that have won the Broad Prize for Urban Education. In addition, the
superintendents selected for the study must have served in that district for at least 3 years
as the superintendent or in a cabinet level position prior to their district winning the
Broad Prize for Urban Education.

**Ethical Issues Regarding the Study**

The design, planning, and reporting of research must be conducted in accordance
with ethical standards of behavior and in accordance with the San Diego State University
and district guidelines. The researcher sought and acquired approval by the San Diego
State University Institutional Review Board (IRB, Appendix G) prior to collecting any
data not considered public information. Approval from the four school districts’ internal
review board was not necessary. The superintendents’ advised the researcher that district approval was not necessary given that this was a self-contained study inclusive of only the superintendent and cabinet level members. The researcher exercised extreme care to ensure that the study participants’ identities are protected and that there are no posing threats to any study participants.

Superintendents and other district administrators involved in the study were provided with written detailed information as to the study’s purpose, method, and data analysis procedures and any risks involved by participating in the study. The confidentiality of the participants and any names discussed are kept confidential. All interview participants were informed that pseudonyms will be used. A pseudonym (Superintendent 1, 2, 3, 4) was assigned to each participant in order to provide useful qualitative data.

Participants were given an informed consent form, detailing the purpose of the study, the data gathering activities, the voluntary nature of the study, provisions for confidentiality, assurances that they could withdraw at any time, and a statement that their participation or withdrawal would not affect their standing in the district in any way. The form explicitly stated that they would be given no compensation or other tangible benefits as a result of their participation in this study. All participants signed the informed consent form prior to participation in the study (Appendix E).

The data collected were used for the sole purposes of this study, and they were not shared with any employee’s supervisor or any other district senior management. The researcher is aware of the ethical issues involved in the study and assures that the proper data analysis was completed. Additionally, appropriate conclusions were drawn from the
data collected (Creswell, 2009). All data were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home office and on the researcher’s personal password protected computer. Additional access was limited solely to the researcher’s dissertation advisor.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology for this study, a comparative case study of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning school districts. It included the three research questions and the rationale for the research type and design employed for this study. It also describes the data collection and analysis procedures, delimitations, limitations, and ethical considerations associated with the study.
CHAPTER 4—RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of these comparative case studies was to understand how superintendents in urban districts use reform strategies to leverage systemic change to improve student achievement. The study focused on four effective superintendents of Broad Prize for Urban Education winning school districts. It examined leadership traits, core beliefs, behaviors and actions, and identified commonalities and differences amongst these nationally recognized superintendents. The driving force behind this study was to develop an understanding of the background, core beliefs, reform strategies, and actions of Broad Prize District Superintendents which resulted in improved student achievement while narrowing the achievement gap for targeted student populations.

This chapter presents the results in five sections: introduction, a summary of the methodology, case studies based on the context and the qualitative interview data, the comparison data across districts and superintendents, and the summary of findings. Each case study begins with the description of district to provide context. The next section presents the results of the superintendent responses to questions 1-6, and the cabinet level administrators’ responses to questions 3-8 on their respective interview protocol (Appendices A and B). The researcher will present the demographic data and qualitative descriptive data gathered during the interviews. Each district’s data are presented in chronological order according to when the districts won the Broad Prize for Urban Education Award. The data are organized by research question and by categories and themes that emerged from the participants interviews. The researcher triangulated multiple sources of data to compare perspectives and sources based on the same units of
inquiry (C. Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The next section includes comparative data of the four superintendents, as well as the qualitative description of the findings that demonstrate commonalities and differences amongst the superintendents included in this study.

**Methodology Summary**

The research study was guided by three research questions:

1. What is the individual leadership profile (core beliefs, background, actions and behaviors, and leadership qualities) of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts?

2. What systemic reform strategies did these Broad Prize superintendents execute that led to their district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education?

3. What do the leadership profiles of four nationally recognized superintendents have in common, and how do they differ from one another?

The researcher selected superintendents of four Broad Prize winning school districts. Two were in southern California, one on the east coast of the United States, and one on the mid-Atlantic coast. The specific selections were based on the researcher’s access to the individuals. The researcher conducted interviews with the four superintendents and eight cabinet level administrators. Each superintendent provided the names of key cabinet level administrators to serve as knowledgeable informants. The superintendent interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. The cabinet level administrator interviews ranged from 40 to 60 minutes. The cabinet level administrators all served under the superintendents during the time in which the districts received recognition as Broad Prize winners.
Three cabinet members were interviewed for Superintendent 1, two cabinet members were interviewed for Superintendent 2, one cabinet member was interviewed for Superintendent 3, and two cabinet members were interviewed for Superintendent 4. The subjects included sitting and retired superintendents. The superintendent interviews were conducted face-to-face over a period of 8 weeks. Superintendent interviews 1 and 2 were conducted in the superintendents’ office at their current district. Superintendents 3 and 4 were retired; therefore, the interviews took place at alternate locations selected by the superintendents. Of the eight cabinet-level administrators, five interviews were conducted face-to-face, and three over the telephone. Two of the cabinet-level administrator have since moved on to superintendent positions in other districts.

Participants were provided a consent form prior to the interviews (Appendix E). Confidentiality was assured, a condition particularly important to the cabinet level administrators who were subordinate employees or former employees of the superintendents. The intention was to reduce the risk factor for these participants, thereby allowing for greater candor in their responses. A copy of the interview questions was provided for the participants’ reference during the interviews. Six questions were used for the superintendent interviews:

1. Please describe your background:
   • Education (degrees earned and where).
   • Previous roles (profiles and tenure with each district/organization).
   • Other related training, or certifications (professional development, Broad, Harvard Institute, etc.).
• Family background (where were you raised, family structure, upbringing, family income and education level).

2. What are your core beliefs that guide you as a superintendent?

3. How are those core beliefs reflected in your actions and behaviors?

4. What leadership qualities do you think have made the most impact on your success as a superintendent?

5. Share any reform strategies or initiatives that you think have made the most impact on your district winning the Broad Prize Award?
   a. How did your relationships with the board of education, the community and school site leaders contribute or detract from achieving your goals?

6. How do you think these reform strategies contributed to narrowing the achievement gap and raising student achievement? (Appendix A)

Eight questions were used for the cabinet-level administrators:

1. Please describe your role and relationship to the superintendent and school district?

2. How long have you known and/or worked with the superintendent?

3. What are the core beliefs that you believe guide the superintendent?

4. What are the most prevalent behaviors that the superintendent exhibits?

5. What leadership qualities do you believe the superintendent possesses that have contributed to the district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education?

6. Share any reform strategies or initiatives that the superintendent initiated that you believe have contributed to your district winning the Broad Prize Award?
7. How do you think the relationships between the superintendent and the board of education, the community, and school site leaders contributed or detracted from achieving his goals?

8. How do you think these reform strategies contributed to narrowing the achievement gap and raising student achievement? (Appendix B)

The first two questions in the cabinet level interview protocol were designed to explicate the relationship between the individual and the superintendents. The first two questions were also designed to make the interviewee more comfortable with the researcher during the interview process because the questions are more familiar in nature. Triangulating the data by interviewing multiple sources strengthened the case study findings or conclusions. Utilizing a corroboratory method of triangulation of the data makes the finding and conclusions more convincing and accurate when it is based on multiple sources (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), the potential problems with construct validity can also be addressed with data triangulation, because multiple sources of evidence are collected to corroborate the same fact or phenomenon. Questions 3-8 were designed to triangulate the data collected from the superintendent’s responses in order to increase data credibility and validity of the result and to not solely rely on a single source of information.

In addition, during the site visits the researcher reviewed relevant documents to compare, contrast, and further catalogue data. This use of triangulation methods is known to reduce risks and biases associated with a singular approach (Creswell, 2009; C. Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Cabinet level administrator interviews and document analysis of strategic plans and professional development schedules were reviewed to
verify that the reform strategies and initiatives that were identified by the superintendent had actually been implemented. Such documents included: meeting minutes, newspaper articles, professional development notes and agendas, and other related field notes. The researcher can be more confident with the findings or conclusions if different sources lead to the same result.

The next section will present each of the four case studies in the chronological order in which the districts were awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education.

**Case Studies**

The case study section is organized by district and presents the context of each district and the results of the interviews of the superintendents and their cabinet level administrators. While analyzing and reviewing the interview transcripts of all subjects, the researcher identified recurring themes and patterns related to core belief, actions and behaviors, leadership qualities reform strategies, board relations, and narrowing the achievement gap. Following the context section of each district, findings will be presented according to these themes and patterns.

**Case Study 1: Superintendent 1—Beachside Unified School District**

Beachside Unified School District (BUSD) educates 84,000 students at 84 schools in the Southern California area. Beachside Unified School District is the third largest district in California, with over a dozen languages spoken by students. The student demographics include 17% African America, 14% Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino, 52% Hispanic, 16% White, and 1% other. Of those 84,000 students, 68% qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 24% have the designation of English language learners (ELLs).
In 2003, BUSD earned the national Broad Prize for Urban Education and has qualified as a finalist for the award five times.

Superintendent 1 (S1) has served as superintendent for BUSD since 2002. He has been with the BUSD for 30 years. Superintendent 1’s tenure includes being a teacher for 3 years, a program facilitator for 4 years, a vice principal for 1 year, and a principal for 3 years. Following his principalship, he was appointed to be a year round coordinator and then served as director of special projects for 3 years. Next, he became an Area Superintendent followed by 3 years as Deputy Superintendent and subsequently was unanimously appointed to be the next Superintendent of BUSD. Superintendent 1 held nine different positions in the district before becoming the superintendent. He was raised in Beachside and was a product of Beachside Unified School District, where he attended Kindergarten through high school. Superintendent 1 attended Beachside City College and California State University Long Beach, earning a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies and a master’s degree in educational administration. Superintendent 1’s wife also teaches 5th grade in the district. Both his children also attended and graduated from BUSD.

**Core beliefs.** The researcher identified reoccurring core beliefs in the responses of the superintendent and cabinet level administrators. The core beliefs were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and three cabinet level administrators. Table 1 (Appendix H) illustrates the core beliefs that were identified by Superintendent 1 and the three cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3. The left hand column of the table states the core beliefs that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.
Superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3 revealed that Superintendent 1 and all cabinet level administrators recognize the superintendent’s high expectations for all students. He is committed to ensuring a high quality education for all students. One cabinet member (S1CL1) stated that the superintendent’s core beliefs support “continuous improvement, high quality instruction for all kids, not just some, but all.” S1CL1 also stated that “the superintendent has a very strong commitment and passion to the work, and I really do believe for him its way more than a job. For him, it’s a calling for him to lead this school system and try to make it as good as he possibly can.” Another cabinet level administrator (S2CL2) stated that the superintendent’s leadership is “all about kids.” S1CL3 states, “He can make this system work effectively so that students can learn every single day and achieve.” The superintendent believes strongly in “walking the talk”; placing his own children in the second lowest performing school in the district. His actions communicated to the community that he was serious about providing a quality education in every school.

Superintendent 1 states:

My core beliefs are real simple. Would I put my own kid in that class? I want every classroom to be a classroom I’d put my own kid in. We also need to provide every kid with the tools he or she needs to be successful. We don’t decide who goes to college, who’s going to become a doctor, or who’s going to become a trade’s person. They decide that! So our job is to give them the tools, get them ready, and help them to succeed!

A total of two cabinet level administrators concurred with the superintendent in the need for great teachers and leaders in every school. They agreed that results come
from using data and accountability systems, and that leaders must provide the needed tools for every student to succeed, whether it be from differentiation of resource allocation or aligning resources with specific student needs. One cabinet level administrator (S1CL2) reflected about the flexibility of the superintendent with the budget: “I think that goes back to his desire to move money to better the lives of kids.” S1CL3 noted that a core belief is that the superintendent treats people like family stating, “He definitely knows how to combine the heart and head together.”

Two of the three cabinet level administrators also identified continuous learning, professional opportunities for teachers, and having strong community engagement as core beliefs of Superintendent 1, although he did not identify these traits in his interview. S1CL1 stated, “I don’t think I have ever seen a superintendent that is so well-known and respected in the community. He spends a lot of time in the field and he grew up in the community.”

**Actions and behaviors.** The researcher identified reoccurring actions and behaviors in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The actions and behaviors were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and three cabinet level administrators. Table 2 (Appendix H) illustrates the actions and behaviors that were identified by Superintendent 1 and three cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 3 and cabinet level interview question 4. The left hand column of the table states the actions and behaviors that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.
Responses to superintendent interview question 3 and cabinet level administrator interview question 4 reveal that both the superintendent and all three of his cabinet level administrators concur about the six prevalent actions and behaviors exhibited by the superintendent. They all confirmed that the superintendent is: a “hands on” leader, gives top down directives when needed, consistently makes decisions based on what’s best for kids, acts as an instructional leader, uses data to inform his decision making on how to align and differentiate resources, places the best principals and teachers in the lowest performing schools, and provides supports (common planning time, mentors, coaches, ongoing professional development) to teachers. Superintendent 1 states:

There are times I don’t ask for any input at all. I will just say we’re going to do it and then tell people they can figure out how to do it. That can be their input. For example, I came back and said number one, everybody in the 10th grade will take the PSAT, it’s a nonnegotiable. Number two AP will be open to anybody who wants to take AP. Students are not prepared, not passing grades, etc. . . . so we will set up a thing called the AP Leadership Team to address those concerns. I am proud to say fast forward now 6 years later our AP passage rates continue to increase.

Superintendent 1 goes on to say, “At times I can probably be too top down, because in my eyes it’s an urgency issue.” S1CL1 professes that, instructionally, the district has grown tremendously under Superintendent 1’s leadership: “He brought in a strong focus as an instructional leader.” All three cabinet level administrators indicated the superintendent’s active involvement in both the business and academic sides of the
district. The cabinet level administrators stated, “he just rolls up his sleeves and gets in, even breaking out the chart paper.”

S1CL2 states that the superintendent “aligns the resources to always follow the needs of the kids.” S1CL1 shares that there are a lot of data meetings where they analyze data to determine how and where to differentiate resources. S1CL1 describes the superintendent as being “very systematic and strategic.” It was also asserted by S1CL1 that in reforming low performing elementary and middle schools, the superintendent brought in new teachers and strong instructional leaders. Additionally, he provided support to teachers, coaching and mentorship, and held them accountable for results.

**Leadership qualities.** The researcher identified recurring leadership qualities in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The leadership qualities were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and three cabinet level administrators. Table 3 (Appendix H) illustrates the leadership qualities that were identified by Superintendent 1 and the three cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5. The left hand column of the table states the leadership qualities that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5 reveal that the superintendent and the three cabinet level administrators all agree that the superintendent’s leadership qualities include being honest, transparent, welcoming of constructive feedback and criticism, collaborative, and approachable. S1CL3 states about the superintendent “He’ll talk to anybody.” Superintendent 1 expressed, “I am so accessible to everybody that it drives my staff crazy.”
The superintendent and two cabinet level administrators expressed that Superintendent 1 has a passionate commitment to kids and the community, is a continuous learner, positively models desired behaviors, and possesses the strong ability to build relationships with people at all levels. Superintendent 1 states:

It would be terrible if I directed my staff to do something, didn’t provide them support, and then it failed. So one thing I never ever do is blame my staff for anything! If something didn’t work or something wasn’t communicated, I always take full responsibility for that. I feel strongly that’s what a leader needs to do. I will never ever throw anybody under the bus for a board member or anyone else!

S1CL3 stated, “He’s been around throughout the district and he’s built relationships with people at all levels within the district. So he always knows what you’re talking about because he’s got his hands in just about everything.” S1CL3 also claims that the superintendent is “pretty decisive” because he came up through the system as a principal and served in various district positions, thereby lending him the ability to “make decisions on his own about some things.” Superintendent 1 posits:

What I see happening in some places is new superintendent comes in and they over promise big time. They don’t take a litmus test of what’s out there and what’s going on. They don’t take the time to learn the culture of that place. The biggest mistake is when you see a new superintendent come in cleans everybody out, a whole new group of people come in. He or she lasts 2 to 3 years, then they’re gone, and another person comes in with another whole new group. So you never have continuity or even a baseline for historical knowledge in that district. And so then that becomes a problem.
Three cabinet level administrators identified the following three leadership traits that the superintendent did not express about himself: being collaborative, flexible, and having strong communication skills. S1CL 3 noted that the superintendent “doesn’t get flustered by difficult conversations.” S1CL1 shared that “if you want to go in and bounce things off and go back and forth, he’s very good with that.”

Reform strategies. The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and three cabinet level administrators. Table 4 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 1 and three cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6 reveal that the reform strategies of implementing a few good initiatives and sticking to them, having a clear strategic plan, having clear expectations of accountability, and focused professional development were essential reform strategies implemented by Superintendent 1. S1CL2 articulates, “He doesn’t go from thing to thing every year changing. He finds something and will stick with it.” S1CL1 states that the superintendent developed a “strategic plan that was collaboratively developed by all stakeholders.” S1CL1 and S1CL3 also indicated that “we provide structured professional development for teachers and leaders.” Superintendent 1 stated, “We continue to build
upon what we’ve learned. We are never satisfied with the status quo.” S1CL1 emphasized, “There’s a lot of focus on data meetings and analyzing data.”

Superintendent 1 and two cabinet level administrators identified the importance of building administrators’ capacity to be strong instructional leaders and for administrators to conduct regular classrooms observations for accountability and monitoring. S1CL2 states, “The Beachside way is support will be aimed at the problem along with accountability.” S1CL2 also articulates that they have a longstanding culture of promoting from within. The district has developed a system that includes professional development, coaching, modeling, and mentorship for their site leaders. The district also nurtures a relationship with the local universities identifying it as Seamless Partnership because it is PK-16. S1CL2 claims:

The Seamless Partnership has been really instrumental in the reform over time in this district, because 80% of our teachers come out of Cal State Long Beach. Thus our staff works with their program and their students work in our schools. And when they come out of the teacher education program they are already aligned and familiar with the work in our schools.

Both the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator identified the professional learning communities (PLCs) and building a team culture as having an impact on student achievement results for the district. The superintendent says, “It’s not about the superintendent, it’s not about individual board members, and it’s not about the team. It is really about the entire community, everyone working together.” S1CL2 discussed the PLC movement being implemented at the middle schools, whereby they were receiving differentiated support and teacher training. According to S1CL2, the
schools implementing the PLC model were showing significant student academic growth compared to the non-PLC schools.

The superintendent identified the following reform strategies as having an impact on student achievement in the district, but they were not communicated as such by the cabinet level administrators: hiring the “right” people and placing the best teachers and leaders in the most challenging schools. Superintendent 1 stated, “The number one thing that has contributed to my success is that I have surrounded myself with people that are brighter and smarter than I am.” He postulates that you surround yourself with extremely bright people so that you can build upon all their strengths.

**Board relations.** The researcher identified reoccurring board relations strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. Their board relations strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and three cabinet level administrators. Table 5 (Appendix H) illustrates the board relations strategies that were identified by Superintendent 1 and three cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7. The left hand column of the table states the strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7 reveal that Superintendent 1 and all three cabinet level administrators concur on how to develop and maintain strong relations with the board of education. Keeping board members informed, meeting with them individually, investing large amounts of time building relationships with each individual board member, and board training have
allowed Superintendent 1 to have a successful relationship with the board of education according to his support staff. Superintendent 1 claims the board of education does not distract him from achieving his goals because they “all work as a team and keep open lines of communication.” Superintendent 1 states:

We send our board members through the Broad Institute for School Boards, and hold several workshops throughout the year to help them understand their role and responsibilities. It’s all about culture. When I say culture, I’m talking about adult, student and community. The board truly knows their goals and responsibilities. For example, they hire and fire the superintendent. They set policy, and they do not drop below that line to micromanage. They never do that!

The superintendent attributes the successful relationship between board and staff is the layers of communication that has been established within the culture of the district. He claims, “We have very short board meetings. They average 45 minutes. We don’t have major push back because of the layers of communication that we have built in. It’s all about trust.”

**Narrowing the achievement gap.** The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies that contributed to the narrowing of the achievement gap in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies that led to the narrowing of the achievement gap were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and three cabinet level administrators. Table 6 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 1 and three cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 6 and cabinet level
interview question 8. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 6 and cabinet level interview question 8 reveals that Superintendent 1 and the three cabinet level administrators all identified two reform strategies that were instrumental in narrowing the achievement gap. They include: monitoring data and using data to inform teaching practices to ensure that every student makes at least one year’s academic growth at every grade level; and the necessity to build teacher and administrator leadership capacity. Superintendent 1 postulates that it is all about consistency and going back to the data stating, “Data drives everything that we do, and some people would tell you we have too much data. The data is [sic] just getting more sophisticated all the time.”

Superintendent 1 was also very clear about the importance of highly qualified leaders and staff. He stated:

We’ve had to be very creative on how we develop our aspiring leaders. We provide mentoring to all new and aspiring administrators. We have some very formalized and not so formal programs. I would say 90-95% of our promotions are from within. You need to understand the culture and how it’s done here. So when we have openings, we have a very deep bench. It goes back again to the importance of culture. So we have a strategic plan to bring people from the elementary to the middle, then to the high school levels so that we all have a common understanding and are working from the same frame of instruction and expectations.
S1CL3 claims that the key to narrowing the achievement gap is to build leadership capacity because “strategic leaders are so important.”

The cabinet level administrators identified two other strategies that the superintendent did not mention. These strategies are: coaches in the classrooms supporting teachers, and using strategy and research-based teaching practices. S1CL3 states, “It’s assumed that everybody’s going to have the essential elements of effective instruction; and, if not, then leaders should know what to do by backing it up with professional development that is research based that models effective teaching strategies.”

**Case Study 2: Superintendent 2—Orange Unified School District**

Orange Unified School District (OUSD) is located in southern California, and is the 12th largest school district in the State. It serves over 49,000 students and has 66 schools. The student demographics include: 50% Hispanic, 29.8% Asian American, 18.7% White, 1.2% African American, and .3% Native American. There are 59% of students eligible for Free/Reduced lunch, and 50% of the students are designated as ELLs. In 2004, OUSD was awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education and has qualified three times as a finalist.

Superintendent 2 (S2) grew up locally in the Orange Unified School District and joined OUSD in 1973. Superintendent 2 attended all public schools in the Orange area, received her teaching credential from the University of California Irvine, a Master’s degree from Cal State Fullerton, and completed her doctorate at the University of Southern California. She served as an elementary and high school teacher, and became an assistant principal and principal. Superintendent 2 later served as the assistant superintendent of personnel and associate superintendent of business prior to her
appointment as Superintendent of OUSD. Superintendent 2 started as a student teacher in OUSD and has currently served 39 years in the district.

In this case the superintendent’s responses to the questions were briefer and less detailed than the other three. However, the cabinet level administrators’ responses were more similar to those of the respondents’ from the other districts.

**Core beliefs.** The researcher identified reoccurring core beliefs in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The core beliefs were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 7 (Appendix H) illustrates the core beliefs that were identified by Superintendent 2 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3. The left hand column of the table states the core beliefs that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

In this case, the superintendent and key informants were very brief and concise in their responses. The researcher attempted to probe for more detailed responses, but this pattern prevailed throughout both sets of interviews. Table 7 (Appendix H) illustrates the core beliefs that were identified by Superintendent 2 and the two cabinet level administrators.

Table 7 (Appendix H) reveals that both cabinet level administrators identified the same core beliefs that were consistent with the ones Superintendent 2 identified for herself. Both the superintendent and her cabinet level administrators identified the core beliefs that guided the superintendent were holding high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn, and providing every student the needed tools to succeed.
Superintendent 2 states, “You have to be smart and strategic and think about how to frame things. But in the end, if your decisions are made on what you really feel, it’s going to be best for kids in the end.” S2CL2 states, “Our purpose is to develop strong educational programs to help students have opportunities for the future, to know that we are here to serve students, and that all our decisions are made around that.” S2CL1 said, “What guides the superintendent is that all kids can learn and that we make a difference in their learning and achievement.” Superintendent 2 states “with high expectations and the appropriate support from the adults who are responsible the kids can do whatever it is and more than we even think is possible.”

**Actions and behaviors.** The researcher identified reoccurring actions and behaviors in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The actions and behaviors were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 8 (Appendix H) illustrates the actions and behaviors that were identified by Superintendent 2 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 3 and cabinet level interview question 4. The left hand column of the table states the actions and behaviors that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Table 8 (Appendix H) depicts that Superintendent 2 and the two cabinet level administrators all concur that the superintendent makes decisions based on what is best for kids. Superintendent 2 describes herself as passionate, honest, smart, strategic, and someone who does not quit when things get tough. Superintendent 2 states, “All my decisions are based on what’s best for kids. I think I’m passionate about our kids and what our kids can do.” S2CL1 describes Superintendent 2 as an “amazing listener, smart
and logical, and very passionate about children.” S2CL2 states, “What’s important is to serve our kids, and community.”

The data reveal that both cabinet administrators identified that a prevalent behavior the superintendent exhibited was that she builds relationships, and is very collaborative. Superintendent 2 did not identify this type of behavior for herself. Both cabinet administrators described the superintendent as collaborative and very relational. S2CL2 states, “We take a lot of time to make decisions because we know how it affects others.” S2CL1 says “She sees that she doesn’t see that she can do her work without all of us. She’s like the center cog and we all work around and with her and with each other.” S2CL2 describes the superintendent as “down to earth, brilliant, focused, and very people oriented.”

**Leadership qualities.** The researcher identified reoccurring leadership qualities in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The leadership qualities were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 9 (Appendix H) illustrates the leadership qualities that were identified by Superintendent 2 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5. The left hand column of the table states the leadership qualities that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5 reveals that Superintendent 2 and the two cabinet level administrators concur that the leadership qualities the superintendent possess are: honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected, passionate, committed to kids, and collaborative.
Superintendent 2 states, “I have the reputation that I am honest and that I am as good as my word, which is the good news. The bad news is that the things people don’t like they know I am going to do it if I think its right.” The superintendent went on to say, “I’m passionate about our kids and what they can do.” S2CL1 states, “She is sort of legendary because she’s been in the district almost 40 years, and everybody knows her. She’s very relational so everyone thinks they all know her really well.”

Superintendent 2 and one cabinet level administrator agree that the superintendent is approachable and models desired behaviors. S2CL1 says the superintendent has an open door policy and that, “She’s accessible to everyone, and anyone could just pop in to see her.” S2CL2 describes the superintendent as an excellent role model and mentor. S2CL2 states, “She stays focused on what’s important, and that’s serving the children.”

**Reform strategies.** The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 10 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 2 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6 reveals that both the superintendent and the two cabinet level administrators concurred on the adopted strategies. The strategies included implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives, having a clear and strategic plan that has clear expectations and
systems of accountability, and building administrators’ capacity to be strong instructional leaders. Superintendent 2 describes “having a strategic clear plan is like having a map.” Superintendent 2 further states, “We don’t talk about a lot of initiatives or reforms. We just keep trying to take what we do, look for ways to do it better, and look at where it’s not.” S2CL1 states, “Under the superintendent’s leadership we came up with this great plan. We were looking at data and we established two goals to help kids make a year’s growth.” Superintendent 2 states:

We’re going to be building capacity of all our principals and assistant principals to calibrate when they go into classrooms what are you seeing, what evidence do you have it’s working, is it? What would it look like taking the instructional rounds idea?

Two cabinet level administrators identified two reform strategies that the superintendent did not, which was the use of best practices and research based strategies that worked in other districts. S2CL1 shared that they implemented Doug Reeves (2005) 90/90/90 studies, and have used Marzano’s (2003) work from his book What Works In Schools. The district also implemented instructional strategies such as the gradual release of responsibility, Swan math, Susana Dutro’s constructing meaning and systematic English Learner Development approaches. S2CL1 also stated, “We used a lot of models of good work people have done around the country. We didn’t invent anything. We took ideas then made them work for our teachers and students.”

Superintendent 2 talks a lot about building a culture of teamwork. She states:

It used to be kind of the Orange Unified family. Well, I figured out real fast that’s not probably the best analogy. A family can have some really dysfunctional
people and you’re always in that family even if they disinherit you. Family is not a good term to use in organizations. Team is a good one. I can like you and want to sit down with you after work. But if you can’t pass the ball and help us get our kids down the goal line, I can like you a lot, but you can’t be on the team.

**Board relations.** The researcher identified reoccurring board relations strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. Their board relations strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 11 (Appendix H) illustrates the board relations strategies that were identified by Superintendent 2 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7. The left hand column of the table states the strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7 reveal that Superintendent 2 and both cabinet level administrators agree on how to develop and maintain strong relations with the board of education. The superintendent invests a large amount of time building a relationship with the board of education, keeps them informed and meets with them individually. Both cabinet level administrators agree that it is important to have a good solid relationship with your board. They describe the superintendent as having to build relationships with them individually, for example by spending time going out to dinner, attending community functions in order to keep them informed, and being supportive of their efforts and work.
Narrowing the achievement gap. The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies that contributed to the narrowing of the achievement gap in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies that led to the narrowing of the achievement gap were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 12 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 2 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question six and cabinet level interview question eight. The left hand column of the table represents the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question six and cabinet level interview question eight reveals that Superintendent 2 and both cabinet level administrators agreed on the reform strategies that led to the narrowing of the achievement gap. They included: monitoring data and using data to inform instructional practices, and building teacher and leadership capacity. Superintendent 2 states, “Goal one is for all of our kids to make a year’s growth every year. So the end of 5 years in our schools, even if you come in at the very bottom, we ought to be able to have you at proficient.” S2CL2 comments, “There is strong data-driven decision making at our district level. Looking at instructional programs that we implement and instructional strategies to making sure that they are research-based.” The superintendent and cabinet level administrators remarked that teachers and leaders are provided multiple opportunities to work with colleagues and observe best practices. Superintendent 2 states:
When we go back into the data we can say we have grade levels, like third grade, is at 40%. And so we can ask, what’s going on there? It’s about going back and looking at why the kids aren’t getting where we need them to be and then what do we need to do to get them there.

**Case Study 3: Superintendent 3—Red Sox Public Schools**

Red Sox Public Schools is located on the east coast side of the United States, and educates 57,900 students in 145 schools. The student demographics comprise of 44% African American, 33% Hispanic, 14% White, and 9% Asian American. Of the 57,900 students 73% are eligible for free/reduced lunch and 17% are designated as ELLs. In 2006, Red Sox Public Schools earned the Broad Prize for Urban Education, and has qualified as a finalist for the award five times.

Superintendent 3 (S3) was appointed as the Superintendent of Red Sox Public Schools in 1995, and served until 2006. Prior to his appointment as superintendent of Red Sox Public Schools, he served as the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the United States Department of Education for 2 years under the Clinton administration. Dr. Payzant worked as a high school teacher for 2 years and then was asked to work as the administrative assistant to the superintendent of New Orleans Public Schools. After 2 years as an administrative assistant, S3 moved directly to a superintendent position with School District of Springfield (4 years), Eugene Public Schools (5 years), Oklahoma City Public Schools (3 years), San Diego Unified School District (11 years), and then Red Sox Public Schools (11 years). He worked as a district superintendent for five different districts over a span of 34 years. Superintendent 3 would
be considered a “nontraditional” superintendent due to the fact that he never held a site administrator position prior to becoming a district superintendent.

**Core beliefs.** The researcher identified reoccurring core beliefs in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The core beliefs were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator. Table 13 (Appendix H) illustrates the core beliefs that were identified by Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator in response to superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3. The left hand column of the table states the core beliefs that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3 reveal that Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator concur that the superintendent possesses four core beliefs that guide him. The core beliefs are: holding high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn and is committed to the highest quality education for all students; ensuring a strong leader, and teacher in every school and classroom; implementing a results-driven accountability system; differentiating resources to align with needs; and maintaining a focus on teaching and learning. S3CL1 stated that the core beliefs that guide the superintendent are his focus on teaching and learning. Superintendent 3 states, “I have always taken most seriously the appointment of principals. It is the whole issue of human capital. Teacher effectiveness is the most important variable that impacts student achievement.” He also believes that the human capital issue is one of the most important challenges we face in public schools in America. Superintendent 3 believes that it is about instructional leadership and the
implications for what we do to build capacity with our site leadership and candidate pool. He postulates that we need to shift our focus to the allocation of time, resources, and the improvement of teaching and learning.

**Actions and behaviors.** The researcher identified reoccurring actions and behaviors in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The actions and behaviors were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator. Table 14 (Appendix H) illustrates the actions and behaviors that were identified by Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator in response to superintendent interview question 3 and cabinet level interview question 4. The left hand column of the table states the actions and behaviors that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 3 and the cabinet level administrator interview question 4 reveals that they both agreed on the prevalent actions and behaviors that the superintendent exhibits. The actions and behaviors exhibited by Superintendent 3 include: he is hands on, identifies a problem and takes action, acts as an instructional leader, uses data to inform decisions and align resources, places strong principals and teachers in the lowest performing schools, and provides supports to teachers and leaders. Superintendent 3 states, “I started a residency program for teachers and aspiring principals. The teacher program focuses on the hard to fill fields, and models a 6-week curriculum-based boot camp.” S3CL1 says about the superintendent, “He walks the talk.” S3CL1 also comments, “The superintendent is deeply engaged intellectually in key decisions around curriculum, assessment, and professional
development. He is very grounded in the daily work.” Superintendent 3 believes that superintendents have to really demonstrate by the allocation of their time, presence in conversations, their clarity around what’s important and why, if they are to change the culture of an organization. He claims that to change the culture of an organization one needs to examine instructional leadership, which includes teacher leaders in classrooms and principals in schools. He provided the example of how he wanted to implement common planning and had to negotiate with the union. Therefore, making the shift in expectations and providing support in common planning time, and getting people together in teams to examine student work, required them to challenge the existing system.

**Leadership qualities.** The researcher identified reoccurring leadership qualities in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The leadership qualities were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator. Table 15 (Appendix H) illustrates the leadership qualities that were identified by Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator in response to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5. The left hand column of the table states the leadership qualities that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5 reveals that Superintendent 3 and the cabinet level administrator agree that the superintendent embodies the following leadership qualities: honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected, has a passionate commitment to kids and community, is a continuous learner, models desired behaviors, welcomes constructive feedback and criticism, and is approachable. Superintendent 3 states, “Effective leaders model the
behavior that they want people they are leading to follow.” Superintendent 3 shares, “One of the hardest things for leaders is to give people permission to tell you what you don’t want to hear.” He further states, “I always try not to just say that, but by the way in which I act provides evidence that I am serious about it.” Superintendent 3 emphasizes that it is important for leaders at all levels to behave in a way that lends credibility to what your expectations are. Superintendent 3 shared, “Something I learned early on because of my nontraditional path that I took is the whole notion of continuous learning. Leaders who are going to be effective have to understand the work.” Emphasizing the point that because he never was a principal he had to learn how to become an instructional leader.

The cabinet level administrator also identified forthright/candor, and being a risk taker as two other leadership qualities of the superintendent that were not noted by the superintendent. S3CL1 states:

He took risks. He always hired people to push both on him and on the public school system. He wasn’t afraid of identifying new young leaders and giving them full scope and responsibility. He was playing the long game; therefore he was innovative and willing to take risks.

S3CL1 explains that the superintendent behaved in a way that demonstrated that he was running in a marathon, not doing a sprint, thus eliciting more commitment from people with whom he worked and interacted. The cabinet level administrator also described the superintendent as being forthright, “not ducking the hard conversations.” He was also described as someone who listens very carefully and spends a lot of time listening and talking to people throughout all levels of the organization.
Reform strategies. The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator. Table 16 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6 reveals that the reform strategies that both the superintendent and the two cabinet level administrators identified as contributing to the district winning the Broad Prize are: implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives; sticking with them; having clear systems of accountability; building administrative capacity to be strong instructional leaders; hiring the “right” people; having focused professional development; and placing the best teachers and principals in the most challenging schools. Superintendent 3 states, “Principals need to become instructional leaders so that they could lead the work at their schools and have the strategies to be effective.” S3CL1 states, “The superintendent is evidence driven and quite aggressive in identifying new school leadership.” The cabinet level administrator also shared that the superintendent was not afraid to bring in outside organizations to partner with the district to test new ideas. He described the superintendent in speaking often about “the creative tension that
kind of inside outside relationship would help prompt and improve a large public system.” Superintendent 3 emphasized:

I still think the human capital issue is the most important challenge that we have to face in public schools in America. We need to shift principals from focusing on management and operations, but those things don’t go away. It’s about instructional leadership and the implications for what to do to build capacity. We need to shift more focus on the allocation of time and resources around the improvement of teaching and learning. I just underscore the fact that superintendents have to really demonstrate by the allocation of their time, their presence in the conversation, their clarity around what’s important and why if you are going to change a culture in an organization, we must really look at instructional leadership and challenging the existing systems and structures.

**Board relations.** The researcher identified reoccurring board relations strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. Their board relations strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator. Table 17 (Appendix H) illustrates the board relations strategies that were identified by Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7. The left hand column of the table states the strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7 reveal that both the superintendent and the cabinet level administrator believed
that, in order to establish positive working relationships with board members, the superintendent must keep them informed, meet with them individually, and invest a large amount of time building a relationship and repertoire with board members. Superintendent 3 states, “One of the biggest mistakes I see new superintendents make on the front end is not establishing relationships with the board and being cognizant of the culture and environment that they inherited.” The superintendent shared that many superintendents meet weekly with individual board members to bring them up to speed on issues so that they are not blindsided. S3CL1 described the superintendent as working very closely with the board to ensure that there was a coherent plan for improving the system. He stated that the superintendent spent a great deal of time ensuring that the alignment with the board was intact, and he also spent a great deal of time outside the district in community meetings.

**Narrowing the achievement gap.** The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies that contributed to the narrowing of the achievement gap in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies that led to the narrowing of the achievement gap were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and one cabinet level administrator. Table 18 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 3 and one cabinet level administrator in response to superintendent interview question 6 and cabinet level interview question 8. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.
Responses to superintendent interview question 6 and cabinet level interview question 8 reveals that Superintendent 3 mutually agree that the reform strategies used to narrow the achievement gap were monitoring data and using it to inform instructional practices, and coaching and building teacher and leadership capacity. Both the superintendent and cabinet level administrator emphasized the focus on teaching and learning and math and literacy. They both talked about the importance of using diagnostic assessments to determine the professional development needs for teachers and leaders. S3CL1 stated, “Superintendent 3 made professional development for teachers and leaders his top priority as an investment in human capital.” They both articulated that the focus on literacy and math, building community support, the use of diagnostic assessments, and professional development for teachers and leaders were all instrumental to making the gains and narrowing the gaps.

**Case Study 4: Superintendent 4—Hornet Valley Schools**

Hornet Valley Schools is located on the Mid-Atlantic coast of the United States, educating 135,638 students in 178 schools. The student demographics include 41% African American, 33% White, 16% Hispanic, 5% American Indian/Multiracial, and 5% Asian. Fifty-three percent of the students are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and 10% are designated as ELLs. Hornet Valley Schools earned the Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2011 and has qualified as a finalist for the award three times.

Superintendent 4 (S4) served as superintendent for Hornet Valley Schools (HVS) from 2006-2011. He began teaching in Orlando, Florida and worked as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, area superintendent, chief operating officer, and chief information officer, all within the
Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Florida. His first superintendent position was with the Tustin Unified School District in Tustin, California for 5 years. Superintendent 4 became the superintendent for HVS for the next 5 years. He has retired from the school superintendency and is currently serving as the Senior Vice President of educational services for News Corporation in New York.

**Core beliefs.** The researcher identified reoccurring core beliefs in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The core beliefs were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 19 (Appendix H) illustrates the core beliefs that were identified by Superintendent 4 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3. The left hand column of the table states the core beliefs that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 2 and cabinet level interview question 3 reveals that both the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators agreed that the core beliefs that guided the superintendent were that you need a great leader and teacher in every school, and you need to differentiate resources. Superintendent 4 stated, “We gave flexibility and freedom to the schools as they earned it. So if you’re making progress we’re going to give you more freedom with your allocations and budget. But we expect great results.” Superintendent 4 shared that they had to come up with ways to measure progress and success and then hold people accountable. S4CL1 stated, “The superintendent’s primary platform was that there were two key levers for reform, an effective principal leading every school and an effective teacher in every classroom.
One cabinet member concurred with the superintendent that another of his core beliefs is that all kids can learn, and data and accountability systems must be in place. S4CL2 stated that he believed that the superintendent’s core beliefs that “every kid can learn, and effective principals and teacher were the only way to move the district forward.”

**Actions and behaviors.** The researcher identified reoccurring actions and behaviors in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The actions and behaviors were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 20 (Appendix H) illustrates the actions and behaviors that were identified by Superintendent 4 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 3 and cabinet level interview question 4. The left hand column of the table states the actions and behaviors that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 3 and cabinet level administrator interview question 4 reveal that Superintendent 4 and the two cabinet level administrators concurred on two prevalent behaviors. The superintendent exhibited his use of data to inform his decisions when aligning and differentiating resources, and he ensured that the best principals and teachers were in the lowest performing schools. S4CL1 described the superintendent as always framing issues around three points: clarity, context, and candor. S4CL1 claimed, “He put the best leaders in the struggling schools, and allowed them to bring a team of highly effective proven teachers with them.” This was later called the strategic staffing initiative, which was described by S4CL1 as “bold, and courageous.” Superintendent 4 stated, “We are going to steer our best principals and finest teachers to
our lowest performing schools.” This was identified by the superintendent as their “turnaround method” for their lowest performing schools. He further shared that he developed a system where they convinced the highest performing principals to take on the lowest performing schools based on student data and growth. Each principal was also allowed to bring a team of up to five teachers, an assistant principal, and an academic facilitator. They were also permitted to pick any five teachers to be removed from the lower performing schools to be placed elsewhere or terminated.

**Leadership qualities.** The researcher identified reoccurring leadership qualities in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The leadership qualities were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 21 (Appendix H) illustrates the leadership qualities that were identified by Superintendent 4 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5. The left hand column of the table states the leadership qualities that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses.

Responses to superintendent interview question 4 and cabinet level interview question 5 reveals that Superintendent 4 and the two cabinet level administrators only concurred on one leadership trait. That leadership trait related to transparency and honesty. The superintendent described himself as having the ability to “work harder than anyone else, smarter than anyone else, and to focus on key parts.” Superintendent 4 also posits that he has the ability “to hire great people and get out of their way.” S4CL1 describes the superintendent as being transparent and extremely visible as a leader. S4CL2 said, “His level of honesty and transparency is a key leadership quality.”
The two cabinet level administrators identified other leadership traits that the superintendent did not identify for himself. They include being: forthright and candid, courageous, a good communicator, a good listener, visible; and having the ability to balance pressure and support, and build relationships. S4CL1 stated, “The superintendent was skillful at listening, a good communicator both in the written word and the spoken word. His message was always consistent and he was able to clearly articulate a vision.” S4CL2 said, “He knew how to work the room. He knew how to build relationships and partnerships that would push his agenda.” S4CL2 further states:

I have never met anyone better than Superintendent 4. He has the courage to make the tough decisions. Whether it was laying off thousands of teachers, or closing 10 schools, he had the courage to do it based on performance and need.

**Reform strategies.** The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 22 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 4 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 6 reveals that the two cabinet level administrators concurred with all the superintendent’s responses. They agreed that the reform strategies that contributed to
the district winning the Broad Prize were: implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives and sticking to them; having a clear strategic plan; having clear systems of accountability; building administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders; hiring the “right” people; and placing the best teachers and principals in the lowest performing schools. S4CL1 indicated that their state does not have collective bargaining, so they did not have particular hurdles when moving principals and teachers to struggling schools. S4CL1 claims moving the best leaders and teachers to the most struggling schools “was a data-driven decision.” He further states:

This wasn’t about the hardest working principals, nor the most popular. This was about selecting the principals who have moved the dial in terms of student achievement. This was about moving teachers who had a proven track record with students, moving them more than a year’s growth.

S4CL2 stated that their reform strategies were “all around instructional practices, and anything around building human capital.” District leaders created their strategic staffing initiative to invert the system of getting new principals into struggling schools. They had teachers and principals start their careers in the suburbs. And as they improved and gained more experience, they had an “opportunity” to serve the low performing kids. The superintendent believes that the reform strategy that made the most impact on their district winning the Broad Prize was the differentiation of resources; people, time, and money. Superintendent 4 stated, “You need to have the finest teachers working with the neediest students.” He further posits, “We became evangelical about having a star principal at our most impoverished schools, because then you can get people there.” Superintendent 4 shares that they put structures and systems in place that allowed them to
get more resources to where it as needed most. Superintendent 4 also stated that he conducted regular site visits with area superintendents. This practice allowed the area superintendents to “use him” to “bring up the heat” if they needed to move principals or school performance. S4CL2 shared that they have been focused on professional learning communities (PLCs) for the past several years. In the PLCs, teachers engaged in collaboration meetings, and every 2 weeks teachers were doing common assessments. S4CL2 stated, “We didn’t jump from thing to thing. We just stuck with a few good initiatives and tied it all back to PLCs.”

**Board relations.** The researcher identified reoccurring board relations strategies in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. Their board relations strategies were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 23 (Appendix H) illustrates the board relations strategies that were identified by Superintendent 4 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7. The left hand column of the table states the strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 5 and cabinet level interview question 7 reveal that both the superintendent and the cabinet level administrator believed that, in order to establish positive working relationships with board members, the superintendent must keep them informed, meet with them individually, and invest a large amount of time building a relationship and repertoire with board members.

Superintendent 4 states:
When I was interviewing, the board was in a place where they knew they had to do some things differently or they were going to bring the district to their knees. So the board went through some training with Don McAdams, and the Center for Reform of School Systems, where they pledged that they were going to run things in a different way. So it was decided that I would become the face of the district, and the board would no longer be the face of the district. We had a pretty good run for 5 plus years.

S4CL2 describes the superintendent as spending a great deal of time nurturing and developing relationships with the board of education and called it “the caring and feeding of the board.” S4CL2 stated, “Superintendent 4 spent a lot of time coaching the board up. They knew a lot about instructional leadership and what he was trying to accomplish. The superintendent invested a lot of time in their training to help them.” Superintendent 4 indicated that he felt his job was to protect the staff from the board. He met with the board every other week, in small groups and one on one. He did twice a week phone calls to each board member, and with nine board members, that was 18 calls every week. In addition, he met with them in person every other week. He stated:

There were just hours and hours of working the board. But then I knew what was on their mind, and they knew what I was thinking. And if they misbehaved at a board meeting, I could say Mr. Happy Board Member, we met three times in the last 6 days, and you never brought this to my attention.

**Narrowing the achievement gap.** The researcher identified reoccurring reform strategies that contributed to the narrowing of the achievement gap in the responses of the superintendents and cabinet level administrators. The reform strategies that led to
the narrowing of the achievement gap were derived from the interviews with the superintendent and two cabinet level administrators. Table 24 (Appendix H) illustrates the reform strategies that were identified by Superintendent 4 and two cabinet level administrators in response to superintendent interview question 6 and cabinet level interview question 8. The left hand column of the table states the reform strategies that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. In this case, there was full agreement in the responses of all those interviewed.

Responses to superintendent interview question 6 and cabinet level interview question 8 reveals that Superintendent 4 and administrators mutually agree that the reform strategies used to narrow the achievement gap were monitoring data and using it to inform instructional practices, and coaching and building teacher and leadership capacity. In addressing how his district was able to close the achievement gaps, Superintendent 4 states, “We used coaches in a different way. We gave more money, time, and people to the schools that needed it the most.” He further explained that they provided a sliding scale of differentiated resources to schools based on need. He further states, “We convinced people to support our theory of action. And told them that we cannot close the gap if we can’t do more.” Soliciting the community, parents, and staff to support their effort he claims, “We developed a team spirit, making each area part of the urban core. Everyone looked at the district as one district, understanding that we were all in it together!”

Cabinet level administrators indicated that a performance management infrastructure, which included a district-wide approach to data called Data Wise, was used centrally and at the sites to closely monitor student progress. S4CL2 explains:
The data wise process whereby small teams of experts at each of the schools would essentially learn how to take a look and find patterns and begin to track different ways to approach whatever the issue was, whether it was a reading gap or whatever else. The more robust the data decisions became, the better the principals were at diagnosing and then applying the right kinds of pressures to the system.

S4CL1 stated, “We came out of district improvement, which is really unheard of for a large urban district our size.” S4CL1 believes that the district was able to exit program improvement because of their laser like focus on people, time, and money. They focused on the schools that were in need and the students who needed it the most. S4CL2 stated, “The narrowing of the achievement gap was attributed to their strategic staffing, bringing the top talent into the lowest performing schools, and the differentiation of funding based on need.” S4CL2 posits, “To close the gap, not lower the ceiling, but simultaneously raising the ceiling but raising the bottom faster than raising the top.”

The next section will discuss the findings in each case and make comparisons across cases.

**Superintendent Comparisons**

This section will discuss, compare, and contrast the superintendents related to the research questions. Research question 1 dealt with the individual superintendents’ leadership profile. Research question 2 dealt with reform strategies exercised by the superintendents. Finally, research question 3 sought to identify the similarities and differences among the four superintendents. The section will be organized according to the interview questions which were designed to address the three research questions. The
discussion will also include the findings related to research question 3 with regard to differences and similarities among the four superintendent participants.

**Leadership Profile**

Superintendent interview question 1 was designed to collect data on the collective background of the four superintendents. The purpose was to identify the leadership profile of superintendents who led districts to earning the Broad Prize for Urban Education Award. The interview question focused on the each of the superintendents’ education (degrees earned and where), related training, certifications earned, professional development attended, and family background. The following summarizes the responses from each of the four superintendents collected during the interviews.

All four superintendents hold a minimum of a Master’s degree, taught in the public school system, served as district administrators, and participated in extensive trainings/professional development. Only three were site administrators. Three of the superintendents hold doctorate degrees. Two of the four superintendents were the first to go to college in their family, held all of their education-related jobs in the district in which they served as superintendent, grew up locally in the districts which they served as superintendent, and the districts in which they currently sit as superintendent is the only district they have served in the role of district superintendent. Superintendent 1 states, “I’ve never been anywhere else. I grew up here, went to college here, met my wife here, taught here, sent my kids to school here, and held nine different jobs here before becoming superintendent here.” Superintendents 1 and 2 both served in numerous different positions within the same district that they currently serve as superintendents. Superintendent 2 states:
I have worked in a variety of capacities. I started as a student teacher and never left. It is extremely valuable to understand the perspective of different levels, the needs of the kids, as well as, how the teachers look at things a little differently. I have walked in everyone’s shoes, pretty much every shoes, other than driving a bus.

Superintendents 3 and 4 held their education-related jobs in multiple districts, and have also served in more than one district as a superintendent. They both became superintendents in their early thirties, shortly after receiving their doctorate degrees. Superintendent 3 was the only one who did not take a more traditional path to the superintendency. He never served as a site administrator. He went directly from teaching to a district level administrative position. Superintendent 3 states, “I was a nontraditional superintendent. I never was a principal. I taught for 2½ years, and became a superintendent early on.” Table 25 (Appendix H) depicts the overall background of the four Superintendents.

Core Beliefs

Superintendent interview question 2 focuses on identifying the core beliefs that guide the superintendents’ work and decision making. All four superintendents were consistent and true to their beliefs. All four expressed the core belief that “all kids can learn,” we must hold high expectations for all, and every student must be provided the tools to succeed by differentiating resources (time, people, and money) to be aligned with the needs. Superintendent 2 states:

I really have a strong belief that kids can do whatever we expect of them and provide support. You can’t set high expectations and then give no support. With
high expectations and the appropriate support from the adults who are responsible, kids can do whatever it is and more than we even think is possible.

All four superintendents emphasized that their decisions were consistently based on data and results, and that strong leaders and teachers in every school are critical. The use of data and having accountability systems in place were essential. Table 26 (Appendix H) presents the summary of findings related to the four superintendents’ core beliefs.

**Actions and Behaviors**

Superintendent interview question 3 was designed to identify the actions and behaviors that reflected the superintendents' core beliefs. All four superintendents indicated that the prevalent behaviors they exhibited were: they use data to inform decisions and to align and differentiate resources; and they place the best principals and teachers in the lowest performing schools. Superintendent 4 states:

> We came up with something called strategic staffing, steering our best principals and our finest teachers to our lowest performing schools. It was our turnaround methodology for our lowest performing schools. We came up with a system where we convinced our highest performing principals, based on student growth data, to take on the lowest performing schools. They could bring teams of teachers, up to five with them, an assistant principal, and an academic facilitator.

Two of the four superintendents indicated that their actions and behaviors revealed that they make decisions based on what’s best for kids, act as an instructional leader, and provide supports for teachers and leaders. Superintendent 3 states:
Teacher effectiveness is the most important variable that controls, or provides an impact on student achievement. I spend a lot of time in schools and have always taken most seriously the appointment of principals. If I wasn’t in 3–4 schools a week, it was a bad week.

Table 27 (Appendix H) presents the summary of findings related to the four superintendents’ actions and behaviors.

**Leadership Qualities**

Superintendent interview question 4 was designed to identify the leadership qualities that attributed to the superintendent’s success. All four superintendents identified the qualities of being honest, transparent, trustworthy, and respected as attributes necessary to be successful. Three of four superintendents stated that they are passionate and committed to kids and the community, and are approachable. Superintendents 1 and 3 articulated being a continuous learner, and modeling desired behaviors as essential qualities that contributed to their ability to be a better leader.

Superintendents 1 and 2 discussed having the ability to be collaborative as an essential superintendent leadership trait. Superintendent 1 articulated that having the ability to build relationships was paramount to lead successfully. Superintendent 3 shares that a superintendent needs to be able to accept criticism and constructive feedback in order to grow and learn as a leader. He put it this way:

> Effective leaders model the behavior that they want the people they are leading to follow. That means transparency; so that people know what they see is what they get. One of the hardest things for a lot of superintendents and leaders is to give
people permission to tell you what you don’t want to hear. We must behave in a way that lends credibility to what your expectations are.

Table 28 (Appendix H) presents the summary of findings related to the four Superintendents’ leadership qualities.

**Reform Strategies**

Research question 2 related to reform strategies employed by the participant superintendents. Interview question 5 focused on identifying the reform strategies that had an impact on the district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education. All four superintendents were consistent in agreeing that they focused on a few good initiatives and stuck with them. They also concurred that it is essential to have a clear strategic plan with clear expectations aligned with systems of accountability. Superintendent 4 states, “There are four key parts to running a school district. You need great leaders, you need great teachers, you need data and accountability systems, and you need to differentiate resources.”

All four superintendents focused on building district and site administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders, expecting administrators to conduct regular classroom observations, hiring the “right” people, and surrounding yourself with a team of people who are smarter than you. Superintendent 1 states:

Number one, I’ve surrounded myself with people that are brighter and smarter than I am. Number two is you’ve got to, for the most part and as much as possible, let them run with it once you’ve come up with the targets and goals.

Two superintendents identified having focused professional development for teachers and principals as an essential reform strategy that led to improvements.
Superintendents 1 and 2 identified professional learning communities as a concerted reform strategy that was used in his district, as well as the emphasis of building a culture of being part of a “team.” Superintendent 1 states, “One of the strongest things we did in our district was to take our eight lowest performing middle schools and put them under the superintendent as a professional learning community.” The other superintendents did casually mention that PLCs existed and were used as a vehicle to analyze data in their district and schools, but did not identify it as a specific reform strategy. Table 29 (Appendix H) presents the summary of findings related to the four superintendents’ reform strategies.

**Narrowing the Achievement Gap**

Interview question 6 was designed to identify the reform strategies that contributed to the narrowing of the achievement gap and raising student achievement in each district. All four superintendents asserted that they monitored data to ensure every student made a minimum of a year’s growth at each grade level. The superintendents shared that data were used to inform instructional practices, professional development, and their decision making. All four superintendents also focused on the importance of building leadership capacity amongst teachers and principals, ensuring to provide opportunities for professional development, coaching, and mentoring opportunities. Superintendent 4 states:

> It’s all about people. We used coaches for beginning teachers, because we realized that they needed a full time dedicated teacher trainer on site. You can go through the best Ed program but it doesn’t prepare you for the first time Johnny looks at you and says, I don’t get it. So you need a star teacher to say, watch me
teach this lesson and now you do it. I attribute it to a medical model. In some ways, it’s giving the right medicine. In other ways it’s giving a bigger dosage. In other ways it’s the right medicine and a bigger dosage. So more people, the best people, more of the best people, that’s what we did.

They all believed that the single most impact on student achievement was to have great leaders and teachers in every school and classroom. Table 30 (Appendix H) presents the summary of findings related to the four superintendents’ reform strategies that led to the narrowing of the achievement gap.

**Board Relations**

The responses to interview question 5.a inadvertently solicited responses that focused solely on the superintendents’ relationship with the board of education. It appears they all interpreted the question to mean for them to describe what was necessary to ensure that board members did not detract them from achieving their goals; rather than addressing how their relationships with the board, community, and site leaders contributed or detracted them from achieving their goals. The superintendents chose to focus solely on addressing their relationships with the board members. It was clearly evident that all the superintendents felt that the work and relationships between the superintendent and board members occupied a great deal of their time and had huge implications to their work.

The interviews revealed that all four superintendents agreed that it was essential to keep board members informed, and that it is necessary to meet with them individually on a regular basis. Superintendent 3 states:
In my work with coaching new superintendents, one of the greatest mistakes I see is that they do not spend enough time on the front end in terms of establishing relationships with the board and being really cognizant about the culture and environment that they inherit when they take the job.

They all concurred that they had to invest a large amount of time in building individual relationships with board members through meetings, dinners, and various community events. They all expressed that the investment of time on the front end would pay off in dividends with fewer surprises during board meetings and better use of time in discussions at the public board meetings. Superintendent 1 shared that his board is required to attend board retreats and trainings on a quarterly basis. He felt that this was essential in helping them to better understand their roles and responsibilities. Table 31 (Appendix H) presents the summary of findings related to the four superintendents’ beliefs around what they believe is needed to build effective relationships with the board of education.

**Summary of Results**

The researcher gathered data through a series of interviews consisting of structured but open-ended questions with four superintendents and eight cabinet level administrators familiar with the work of their respective superintendent. The researcher also reviewed relevant archival data. This process generated findings related to the districts demographics, professional development practices, and student performance data. The researcher reviewed the data, seeking common themes while watching for disconfirming evidence. Although these several themes for each category emerged from the data, disconfirming evidence did not surface. The central themes that emerged from
the data analysis were: (a) longevity and breadth of service; (b) providing focused professional development; (c) building leadership capacity; (d) utilizing data driven results/monitoring data; (e) differentiating resources; (f) building relationships; (g) hiring the “right” people; (h) developing strong board relations; (i) launching only a few highly focused and impactful initiatives.

It is important to analyze the work of effective urban superintendents as they select and implement reform strategies to improve student achievement for all students. Understanding how their backgrounds and experiences influence their decisions can inform the work of other superintendents struggling to improve academic achievement in other urban districts across the nation. Superintendent 1 shared his personal perspective when he said:

I am the first one in my family to finish college, so for me social justice has always been important to me. Growing up poor you see firsthand the foreclosures, not having food on the table, your dad working three jobs. We had a great family, but at the same time we knew that education is the key to upward mobility, and I wanted to make sure that it was possible for everyone!

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings from the data gathered through interviews and the review of archival materials as a means to address the three research questions of the study. The chapter opened by reviewing the methodology and describing the interview protocols and process, the Broad Prize winning school district as context, and the superintendents. Next, the chapter described in detail the key themes that emerged from the data. Finally, the chapter presented a comparison of the data that emerged from the superintendent interviews and their cabinet level administrators.
The tables throughout this chapter presented the data that emerged from the interviews with each superintendent and their cabinet level administrators. The tables presented frequency data associated with each category or theme identified through analysis of the data. Chapter 5 presents a detailed discussion of the findings, results, and conclusions, identifies study limitations, and offers implications for practice and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 5—SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the general findings of the study. It presents a concise overview of previous chapters by restating the purpose of the study and methodology. The major emphasis of this chapter provides a summary and interpretation of key findings, recommendations for practice and policy, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

**Overview of the Problem**

Increased accountability for student achievement has elevated the pressures faced by larger urban school districts. These urban districts educate a large proportion of the nation’s students and must contend with the additional challenges often associated with poverty, population density, and diversity. There is much to be learned about how positive change is enacted by urban school district superintendents in these high-stakes accountability environment.

While research on superintendent leadership does not offer a single solution or a “magic pill” to positively impact student performance, research does reflect that superintendents have an impact on student and district performance (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Therefore, it is critical to gain greater understanding and knowledge of what effective urban school superintendents do to create and sustain systemic change that increases student performance, while reducing the achievement gaps. There is much to be learned about the superintendent’s leadership role within an organization, as well as how these leaders are best prepared to leverage the various dimensions of reform. It is important to analyze the work of effective urban superintendents as they select and
implement reform strategies to improve student achievement, as well as to understand how their backgrounds and experiences influence their decisions. This added knowledge and understanding could lead to better preparation of urban superintendents and enable replication of effectiveness in support of the improvement of academic achievement in other urban districts across the nation.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of these comparative case studies was to understand how superintendents in urban districts use reform strategies to leverage systemic change to improve student achievement. The study focused on four effective superintendents of Broad Prize for Urban Education winning school districts. It examined leadership traits, core beliefs, behaviors and actions, and identified commonalities and differences amongst these nationally recognized superintendents.

Findings from the qualitative case study research of the four urban superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts are presented. The driving force behind this research study was to develop an understanding of the background, core beliefs, reform strategies, and actions of Broad Prize District Superintendents that resulted in improved student achievement, while narrowing the achievement gap for targeted student populations.

**Methodology**

This section will present an overview of the research methodology.

**Research Design**

A comparative case study design was employed allowing for a holistic representation of the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2009). Using an emergent
format of asking guiding and follow-up questions based on the participant’s responses, the researcher focused on the participants’ own perceptions and experiences probing for deep understanding of the participants’ meaning in their natural setting. This method allowed the researcher to initiate conversations, identify themes based on the participants’ experiences, and continuously observe the participants.

**Sample**

The superintendents studied were selected from the population of superintendents of all Broad Prize winning districts, an accomplishment that illustrates effective leadership. There had been a total of 10 Broad Prizes awarded when this study began in early 2011. Four superintendents were selected; three were male and one was female. The Broad Prize Award eligibility criteria are: (a) district size—K-12 districts serving more than 100,000 students; (b) low-income enrollment—K-12 districts serving between 37,500 and 99,999 that more than 40% are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and (c) minority enrollment—more than 40% of student enrollment comes from minority groups and have an urban designation (with locale codes 11, 12, or 21 in the National Center for Education Statistics’ Common Core of Data; The Broad Prize for Urban Education, 2010a). The four superintendents included in the sample were selected based on accessibility, availability, geographic convenience, personal knowledge and interest, and recommendations from professional colleagues.

The superintendents selected for this research met the following additional criteria:
• Served in the district as the superintendent or cabinet level administrator of the award winning district for a minimum of 3 years prior to being awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education.
• Reside within the United States.

The superintendents were chosen to be interviewed in this study because they were considered key informants. A key informant is defined as an individual able to provide in-depth information and knowledge that other professionals in the field of education do not have (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999). Their qualifications and experience make them uniquely qualified to discuss what characteristics make an effective superintendent of a high performing district (M. N. Marshall, 1996).

The districts and superintendents in this study were purposefully selected according to the above criteria and were willing to participate in the study. Other key informant interviewees included cabinet level administrators who were familiar with the work of the superintendent. The superintendents were asked to suggest additional key informants based on their familiarity with his or her work.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews of four superintendents and one to three cabinet level administrators who served in his or leadership team. These interviews serve as the primary source of data for this study. Although all four superintendents were interviewed in person, three of the total of eight cabinet level administrators were interviewed over the telephone. The researcher developed and field tested the interview protocols to ensure they would examine all aspects of the research questions. The interview protocol for the superintendents (Appendix A) included six
questions. The interview protocol for the cabinet level staff members (Appendix B) included eight questions. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed using a transcription service company.

The interviews examined the superintendents’ leadership profiles: core beliefs, background, actions and behaviors, and leadership qualities. In addition, the interviews elicited reform strategies the superintendent initiated that led to the improvement of student achievement and the narrowing of the achievement gap.

The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription company. The researcher hand analyzed the transcriptions. Using the constant comparative method drawn from the grounded theoretical approach, the researcher analyzed the data independently and then compared responses from the superintendents, cabinet level administrators, and documents when appropriate. The research employed the constant comparative method involving the researcher to move in and out of the data collection and analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The researcher then identified the reoccurring themes and patterns and constantly compared the data until no new themes and patterns emerged. Frequency of responses related to each theme were also calculated and analyzed. Once the data were analyzed, the researcher documented the common themes and patterns that describe the leadership profiles of these superintendents and any reform initiatives they employed to earn their district recognition as a Broad Prize winner. Data were illustrated in a table format to show the commonalities and differences.
Findings and Discussion

Several key findings related to these four effective superintendents resulted from the data collection and analysis processes:

• Longevity and breadth of service.
• Providing focused professional development.
• Building leadership capacity.
• Utilizing data driven results and monitoring data.
• Differentiating resources (time, money, people).
• Building relationships.
• Hiring the “right” people.
• Building strong board relations.
• Launching only a few highly focused and research based initiatives.

They are presented and discussed in relation to the research questions.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, “What is the individual leadership profile (core beliefs, background, actions and behaviors, and leadership qualities) of four superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts?”

Broad Prize Superintendents believe that all kids can learn. This is evidenced by their drive for high expectations from all adults who interact either directly or indirectly with students. They believe that it is critical to differentiate resources for higher need students and schools. Thus, resources of time, money, and people, are allocated disproportionately depending on greatest need. Superintendent 1 states:
As a superintendent, and educator, I want to make sure that everybody has the
same tools that I have been given in my life. No matter where a kid comes from,
they need to know that they can achieve the American dream just as I have!

These superintendents believe that strong principals and teachers are essential in
every school. Higher student achievement is the result of the effectiveness of the adults
who work directly with students. Thus, focusing on hiring and retaining the highest
quality teachers and principals is critical. These superintendents believe that results are
driven by data. Therefore, honing in on the data, learning from it, and responding to it is
directly linked to an increase in student achievement. Finally, they all agree that
accountability is paramount. Holding those that work with students directly or indirectly
accountable is the key to success.

The backgrounds of these superintendents are strikingly similar. They all have
earned Master’s degrees, taught in the classroom, and were district administrators prior to
becoming a superintendent. Three of the four have doctorates. The one who does not
have a doctorate appears to have served in nearly every level of leadership position in the
district and is “homegrown.” They all grew up passionate about education and wanting to
make a difference for kids. Three of the four of the superintendents grew up in poverty.
Information gathered from the interviews indicated that this influenced their commitment
and passion to improving the public education system so that all children can succeed.

How these superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts act and behave
appears to play a critical role in student achievement and success. The findings reveal
that not all four of the superintendents act and behave exactly the same. But their actions
and behaviors were consistent in supporting their core beliefs. For example, three of the
four superintendents indicated that they regularly used data to inform decisions, particularly in relation to the alignment and differentiation of resources. Superintendent 4 states:

We decided we were going to differentiate resources, meaning time, people, and money. By people I mean, if Johnny needs a better teacher than Sally because he has greater needs, or has special ed needs, or is an English language learner, then his teacher needs to be phenomenal, otherwise he’s never going to close the gap and reach the highest levels that we want for him.

Three of the four specifically reported that they placed their most effective principals in the lowest achieving schools. Two of the four superintendents expressed that they are hands on, and will initiate top-down reforms when necessary. Even though only two articulated that they act as instructional leaders, all four of them implied that playing a role in instructional leadership is paramount.

The qualities of these Broad Prize winning district superintendents should be noted. All four of the Superintendents identified the leadership qualities of being honest, transparent, and trustworthy as critical to their district’s success. Superintendent 3 claims:

Effective leaders model the behavior that they want the people they are leading to follow. That means transparency; so that people know what they see is what they get. One of the hardest things for a lot of superintendents and leaders is to give people permission to tell you what you don’t want to hear. We must behave in a way that lends credibility to what your expectations are.
Passionate commitment for the students and the community was identified as important by three of the four superintendents. Another leadership quality that was consistently expressed by the district staff, as well as three of the superintendents, is that of accessibility. Being highly visible and accessible seemed to make a difference to their colleagues. Although the superintendents did not identify this about themselves, their cabinet members portrayed them as forthright, candid, and courageous risk-takers. Being a good listener was also a quality these colleagues considered important to their superintendent’s effectiveness and success. While being a good listener, a continuous learner, collaborative, and a modeler of desired behaviors were not identified by all four superintendents as critical leadership qualities, these qualities surfaced as important by one or two superintendents and their cabinet level administrators.

**Research Question 2**

Research question 2 asked, “What reform strategies did these Broad Prize superintendents execute that led to their district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education?”

All four superintendents emphasized the point of implementing and focusing on only a few research-based initiatives and sticking with them. They allowed the initiatives to take hold and produce results that could be fairly evaluated and built upon. All four also agreed that it was essential for the district and superintendent to have a clear strategic plan in place that included clear expectations and accountability structures.

Superintendent 1 states:

Our strategic plan goes in 5 year cycles. I appointed two of our very bright administrators, who plan to move up the ladder later in life. They ran the whole
committee. There were board members, teachers, parents, business leaders, and higher ed people also on the committee. They presented the plan to the board at the last workshop for 15 minutes, the board was very supportive, and this becomes our bible and the basis of my evaluation for the next 5 years. The plan has very specific metrics, accountability standards, and the schools have their plans and goals. There is no hoopla, because all stakeholders are involved. There is no push back because people had a voice in it. And this gave individuals an opportunity to show up their leadership skills in a different venue other than leading a school site.

Another key reform strategy that all four superintendents employed was the hiring of the best and the brightest. Ensuring that they were only hiring and placing the strongest principals and teachers for every school was of utmost importance. They also intentionally surrounded themselves with staff that was smarter and brighter than they were.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked, “What do the leadership profiles of four nationally recognized superintendents have in common and how do they differ from one another?”

Two of the superintendents grew up in the districts in which they served as superintendents. As a result, they seemed to have an easier time working within the community, with board members, and with staff. Implementing reform strategies and initiatives appeared to come more easily. The other superintendents had a more difficult time building trust, building capacity, and building relationships. The two
superintendents who worked in multiple districts seemed to spend more time working to build relationships, trust, and capacity. Superintendent 4 states:

I worked very hard to make sure I met with the school leaders regularly. I did monthly principal’s meetings where I spent at least an hour talking with them about the direction of the district, what we’re doing, and how we are moving and progressing.

As a result, the data reflected that these superintendents implemented fewer initiatives and reform strategies. It appears that these superintendents had to do a lot more selling of ideas to implement change strategies and create a more bottom up approach to change; whereas, it appeared that the two superintendents who were “home grown” and held various positions in their districts had more latitude to be more top down, resulting in the ability to initiate new initiatives at a quicker rate. Cabinet level administrators would say, “People just trusted him/her so no one questioned it and we just did it.” While all four superintendents talked about hiring the right people and putting them in the right spot, the two who were home grown locally spoke about building capacity within the organization. The other two spoke about being risk-takers and bringing in new staff from the outside to help drive change and reform efforts.

**Limitations**

Six limitations impacted the study. First, the legitimacy of findings could have been an issue, due to the subjectivity of the researcher’s judgment of the strength and significance of a finding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Second, the comparative case study of four superintendents limit the findings to other similar districts. Third, the research was limited to the perceptions of four superintendents and eight cabinet level staff
Recommendations for Practice and Policy

The findings from this study led the researcher to make recommendations for those responsible for leading or improving schools for increased student achievement. They are also consistent with the literature. The recommendations listed below are presented as they relate to specific areas of responsibility, including school and district administrators, school board members, and policy makers and superintendent preparation programs.

School and District Administrators

1. Reforming districts to become high performing organizations requires the focus and coordinated action of all in the organization. A good strategic plan aligns the actions of divergent departments in support of the district’s vision by providing goals, timelines, activities, and ongoing assessment. It is important to assess not only for performance of action items, but also for progress
towards the vision. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of Snipes et al. (2002) and Marzano and Waters (2009).

2. Large-scale reform requires significant investments in systems, technology, training, research, and evaluation. District administrators, especially principals, need training in standards, assessment, data integrity, and the use of data to map progress leading to student improvement. This recommendation is congruent with the literature (Chen, 2010).

3. Closing student achievement gaps and creating high performing districts require the right leadership. The superintendent must have freedom to choose all senior staff and key positions to form a diverse senior cabinet team whose strengths and expertise match the strategic priorities. This recommendation supports the work of Payzant (2011).

4. All district resources (fiscal, human capital, materials, and time) should be allocated according to need in order to achieve desired goals and outcomes (Childress et al., 2006; Graczewski et al., 2009).

**School Boards**

1. Board members might consider hiring a highly qualified superintendent from within the district. It appears this might mitigate the significant investment of time a newcomer superintendent seems to need to make second order change in a timelier manner. This recommendation supports the work of Petersen and Fusarelli (2005).

2. The relationship with the school board demands a large amount of the superintendent’s time and energy on a weekly basis. Board training programs
and in-services are paramount to assisting members in understanding their policymaker roles in the school system and focus work where it will be most effective in supporting the district vision and goals. This recommendation is congruent with the work of McAdams (2006).

3. Superintendent turnover is counterproductive to promoting continuous improvement. The effective superintendents believe that the quality of relationships between the superintendent and the school board is a significant variable in improving performance. Efforts to improve the quality and functionality of board and superintendent relations appear to be significantly beneficial for all stakeholders in the long run and a wise investment for the future district. This recommendation supports the findings of Renchler (1992).

4. It is essential for district leaders to understand the positive and negative impacts of the internal and external political powers and processes on district efforts to enhance student learning. The development and use of a strategic planning process provides opportunities for internal and external stakeholder groups to collaborate and mitigate or at least anticipate these political factors. Allowing the stakeholders to have input in the development of district goals and initiatives paves the way for the reform initiatives to be implemented in a shorter period of time and with greater buy in and support. This recommendation is supportive of the current literature (Fullan, 2010).

**Policymakers and Superintendent Preparation Programs**

1. Superintendents need extensive skills and knowledge in understanding how to accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of a district upon entry. All
aspiring superintendents need to be trained or have experience serving in roles that allow them opportunities to launch strategic plans and reform initiatives, monitor their effectiveness, and correct missteps to avoid sustaining ineffective initiatives. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of Eller and Carlson (2009) and Waters and Marzano (2006).

2. Mentoring and coaching provides valuable insight in terms of solving issues that relate to improving student achievement in a large urban setting. University based leadership/superintendent preparation programs should provide practicum experiences, as well as networking services that ensure the success of all new aspiring superintendents. This recommendation builds on the work of Wilmore (2008).

3. Professional and community organizations may need to consider lobbying policymakers to evaluate possible changes in the role of the superintendency. Researchers have traditionally viewed the role of the superintendent as instructional leader, manager, and politician (Cuban, 1998; Eadie, 2003; Johnson, 1996; Useem, 2009; Zavadsky, 2009). These changes would necessitate policy leaders to consider ways to help district superintendents’ balance the accountability demands with the instructional expectations.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data, findings, and conclusions generated in response to the research questions suggest several areas for further research:
1. The study was limited to the actions of four large urban superintendents. Additional case studies should be conducted to continue building the literature on effective superintendents.

2. The literature related to the range of reform strategies that superintendents employ to promote systemic change and increase student achievement in their districts is relatively limited. Given the consistency and patterns of behaviors, strategies, and reform initiatives implemented by the four superintendents in this study, further qualitative and quantitative research on the implementation of reform strategies that impact student achievement needs to be conducted. A discrepancy analysis of superintendents’ strategies and initiatives employed in struggling districts in comparison to those of the effective superintendents in this study might be worthwhile in gaining greater understanding about the knowing and doing gap. If these strategies are working well for districts in this study to close the achievement gaps, then finding out why such practices are not being implemented widely across districts nationwide could prove useful and informative.

3. While the majority of superintendents have been promoted to the superintendency through the more traditional route (teacher, site administrator, district administrator), one of the participants in this study took a less traditional career path. Further examination of other effective superintendents who took a nontraditional path to the superintendency is warranted.
4. An examination of the impact superintendents of large urban school districts who are home grown and brought up through the system merits further investigation. The positive and/or negative effects of “home grown” superintendents are worthy of further study and analysis.

**Conclusions**

Given the increased pressure on urban superintendents to improve student achievement, it is imperative that educational researchers turn their attention to investigating the leadership practices and strategies that successful urban superintendents have employed to transform teaching and learning in their districts. Ultimately, the men and women who lead urban school districts play a vital role in the future success of the American public educational system (Glass et al., 2000). As Waters and Marzano (2006) concluded, urban school leadership does matter. However, the research base does not provide district superintendents with specific direction on how to make their leadership matter most. Urban superintendents will need resources, mentorship, and training that provides them with current research-based best practices and strategies that have been proven to close the achievement gap and strengthen learning for all children. This study was an attempt to better identify the best leadership practices and strategies of four highly effective urban superintendents so that others can learn from their success.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Superintendent Interview Protocol

1. Please describe your background:
   - Education (degrees earned and where)
   - Previous roles (profiles and tenure with each district/organization)
   - Other related training, or certifications (professional development, Broad, Harvard Institute, etc.)
   - Family background (where were you raised, family structure, upbringing, family income and education level)

2. What are your core beliefs that guide you as a superintendent?

3. How are those core beliefs reflected in your actions and behaviors?

4. What leadership qualities do you think have made the most impact on your success as a superintendent?

5. Share any reform strategies or initiatives that you think have made the most impact on your district winning the Broad Prize Award?
   a. How did your relationships with the board of education, the community and school site leaders contribute or detract from achieving your goals?

6. How do you think these reform strategies contributed to narrowing the achievement gap and raising student achievement?
Appendix B

Cabinet Level Staff Interview Protocol

1. Please describe your role and relationship to the superintendent and school district?

2. How long have you known and/or worked with the superintendent?

3. What are the core beliefs that you believe guide the superintendent?

4. What are the most prevalent behaviors that the superintendent exhibits?

5. What leadership qualities do you believe the superintendent possesses that have contributed to the district winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education?

6. Share any reform strategies or initiatives that the superintendent initiated that you believe have contributed to your district winning the Broad Prize Award?

7. How do you think the relationships between the superintendent and the Board of Education, the community and school site leaders contributed or detracted from achieving his goals?

8. How do you think these reform strategies contributed to narrowing the achievement gap and raising student achievement?
Appendix C

Matrix for Superintendent Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>IQ 1. Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>IQ 2. Core Beliefs</td>
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<td>IQ 3. Actions and Behaviors</td>
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<td>IQ 5. Reform Strategies</td>
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<td>IQ 6. Narrowing the Achievement Gap</td>
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<tr>
<td>IQ 5a. Board Relations</td>
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### Matrix for Cabinet Level Administrator Protocol

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<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
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<td>IQ 4. Behaviors</td>
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<td>IQ 6. Reform Strategies</td>
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<td>IQ 8. Narrowing the Achievement Gap</td>
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Appendix E

Consent Form

Title of Study:
Superintendent Leadership: Comparative Case Studies of Four Broad Prize Superintendents

Study Investigator:
Marian Kim-Phelps, SDSU Educational Leadership Ed.D. Program

Invitation to Participate & Study Description

As participant in this study, your input will help to delineate a leadership profile of effective superintendents. As well as, identify the reform strategies that yielded achievement gains which led to closing of the achievement gap. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are agreeing to be interviewed once this semester in your office. The interview will take about 60-90 minutes to complete and will be digitally recorded. Information about you will not be disclosed.

Risks and Benefits

This study does not involve any type of physical risk; you will be asked to answer questions about your perceptions of the characteristics that define a high quality teacher. Although this study is not designed to help you personally, the information will help me to better understand the characteristics of highly effective superintendents in Broad Prize winning districts. The results of the interview will also be made available to interested research participants. Respondents are welcome to contact me for more information.

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. To protect your privacy, your responses to the interview questions will only be identified with a code number and will be kept by researcher. All project materials will be kept for three years after the study has ended, and will be accessible only to the researcher. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals and presented at professional meetings, but only group patterns will be described and your identity will not be revealed.

Your Right to Ask Questions

You have the right to ask questions about this study and to have those questions answered by any of the study investigators before, during or after the research. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that has not been answered by the researcher you may contact Dr. Kathleen Cohn, Professor at San Diego State University.

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate voluntarily in this study and that you have read and understood the information provided above. Additionally, you may opt out of this study at any point. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Signature of Participant:___________________________________________ Date:_______________

Name of Participant (Please Print):____________________________________________________
Appendix F

Interview Protocol Script

OPENING

As part of the interview protocol I have a script that I will read once I start the recorder to ensure that I am saying the same thing to each participant.

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening, (Name of Participant),

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today and are willing to participate in my doctoral study. My name is Marian Kim Phelps, I am currently a doctoral student with San Diego State University and also employed with San Diego Unified School District as an Area Superintendent.

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviors and reform strategies executed by four urban superintendents in districts where student achievement improved as the achievement gaps among ethnic groups and low-income students narrowed to the extent that these districts were awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education. The study will describe, compare, and contrast the leadership profiles of four nationally recognized superintendents of Broad Prize winning districts.

I have a consent form here for you to review and sign before we get started. (Review and read out loud each section of the consent form to each participant).

Do you have any questions before we get started?

CLOSING

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for your time!
Appendix G

San Diego State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Approval Letter

June 15, 2011

Student Researcher: Marjan Phelps
Faculty Sponsor/Thesis Chair: Dr. Cohn
Department: Educational Leadership

v:IRB Number: 684077
Title: Superintendent Leadership: Comparative Case Study of Three Broad Prize Superintendents
Risk Level: Minimal
Exemption: 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Dear Mrs. Phelps:

The project referenced was reviewed and verified as exempt in accordance with SDSU's Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46.101). This review applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol.

The determination of exemption is final and requests for continuing review (Progress Reports) are not required for this study. However, if any changes to your study are planned, you must submit a modification request and receive either IRB approval (per 45 CFR 46.110 or 46.111) or IRB verification that the modification is exempt (per 45 CFR 46.101). To submit a modification request, access the protocol via the WebPortal, on the protocol Main Page, you will need to click on "Modifications" under Protocol Maintenance and enter a report. Once you have filled in your responses on the report form, click "submit". Additionally, notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student).

Please note the following for all exempt studies:

a) If this research involves the use of existing or secondary data sources, information obtained must be recorded so that subjects cannot be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

b) If information will be obtained from individual medical records, please check with the organization authorized to provide access to these records to determine whether regulations relating to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) pertain to your research. Likewise, if academic records are accessed, Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements must be respected. Notify the SDSU IRB office if protocol revisions are necessary to comply with HIPAA regulations.

c) If recruitment will take place through an outside agency or organization, confirm with that institution that you have permission to conduct the study prior to initiation of any study activities. If this research involves the use of existing or secondary data sources, confirm with the data owner that you have permission to access the data.
d) Approval is contingent upon the completion of the SDSU human subjects tutorial (found at: https://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gra/ogin.php) by all members of the research team. This certification must be renewed every 2 years.

For questions related to this correspondence, please contact the IRB office (619) 594-6622 or e-mail irb@mail.sdsu.edu. To access IRB review application materials, SDSU’s Assurance, the 45 CFR 46, the Belmont Report, and/or any other relevant policies and guidelines related to the involvement of human subjects in research, please visit the IRB web site at http://irb.sdsu.edu/research.php.

Graduate Students: This notification may be used as documentation to register in Thesis 799A. Attach a hard copy of this notice to your Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee form prior to submitting the completed form to Graduate and Research Affairs - Student Services Division.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Nichols  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Brianna Larsen-Mengon  
Regulatory Compliance Analyst

Amy McDaniel  
Regulatory Compliance Analyst

Chyra Washington  
Regulatory Compliance Analyst
### District 1—Interview Superintendent Question 2 and Cabinet Question 3: Core Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core beliefs</th>
<th>Sup 1 (S1)</th>
<th>S1CL1</th>
<th>S1CL2</th>
<th>S1CL3</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents hold high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn and are therefore committed to the highest quality education for all students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need great leaders and teachers in every school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results driven by using data and accountability systems</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide every student the needed tools to succeed and differentiate resources to be aligned with needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learning/ professional development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement—partners in the work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 2

District 1—Interview Superintendent Question 3 and Cabinet Question 4: Actions and Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions and behaviors</th>
<th>Sup 1 (S1)</th>
<th>S1CL1</th>
<th>S1CL2</th>
<th>S1CL3</th>
<th>Totals $^a$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands on. Top down and directive when needed; they identify a problem that leads to action</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions based on what’s best for kids</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as an instructional leader</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses data to inform decisions and to align and differentiate resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places the best principals and teachers in lowest performing schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide supports to teachers and leaders (common planning time, PD, mentors/coaches)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 3

*District 1—Interview Superintendent Question 4 and Cabinet Question 5: Leadership*

**Qualities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership qualities</th>
<th>Sup 1 (S1)</th>
<th>S1CL1</th>
<th>S1CL2</th>
<th>S1CL3</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate commitment to kids, and the community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model desired behaviors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcomes constructive feedback and criticism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to build relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable—open door policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong communication skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
### Table 4

**District 1—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 6: Reform**

#### Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform strategies</th>
<th>Sup 1 (S1)</th>
<th>S1CL1</th>
<th>S1CL2</th>
<th>S1CL3</th>
<th>Totals$^a$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives and sticking with them.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a clear plan, a strategic plan. Having clear expectations and systems of accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders. Regular classroom observations and monitoring by administrators</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCs/Building a culture of “Team”</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring the “right” people. Surround yourself with the best and the brightest—people smarter than you</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 0/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Professional Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place the best teachers and principals in the most challenging schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 0/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
### Table 5

**District 1—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 7: Board Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board relations</th>
<th>Sup 1 (S1)</th>
<th>S1CL1</th>
<th>S1CL2</th>
<th>S1CL3</th>
<th>Totals(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must keep them informed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with them individually</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large investment of time—building relationships and repertoire with BOE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment of time to educate and train board (board workshops)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

### Table 6

**District 1—Interview Superintendent Question 6 and Cabinet Question 8: Narrowing the Achievement Gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrowing the achievement gap</th>
<th>Sup 1 (S1)</th>
<th>S1CL1</th>
<th>S1CL2</th>
<th>S1CL3</th>
<th>Totals(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring data—use data to inform instructional practices and strategies to ensure that every student makes a year’s growth at every grade</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Building teacher and leadership capacity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches in the classrooms supporting teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0; 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy and research based teaching practices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0; 3/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 7

*District 2—Interview Superintendent Question 2 and Cabinet Question 3: Core Beliefs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core beliefs</th>
<th>Sup 2 (S2)</th>
<th>S2CL1</th>
<th>S2CL2</th>
<th>Totals(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents hold high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn and are therefore committed to the highest quality education for all students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need great leaders and teachers in every school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results driven by using data and accountability systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide every student the needed tools to succeed and differentiate resources to be aligned with needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

Table 8

*District 2—Interview Superintendent Question 3 and Cabinet Question 4: Actions and Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions and behaviors</th>
<th>Sup 2 (S2)</th>
<th>S2CL1</th>
<th>S2CL2</th>
<th>Totals(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands on. Top down and directive when needed; they identify a problem that leads to action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions based on what’s best for kids</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as an instructional leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses data to inform decisions and to align and differentiate resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place best principals and teachers in lowest performing schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide supports to teachers and leaders (common planning time, PD, mentors/coaches)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 9

District 2—Interview Superintendent Question 4 and Cabinet Question 5: Leadership Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership qualities</th>
<th>Sup 2 (S2)</th>
<th>S2CL1</th>
<th>S2CL2</th>
<th>Totalsa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate commitment to kids, and the community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model desired behaviors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0; 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcomes constructive feedback and criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to build relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable—open door policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aThis is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 10

District 2—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 6: Reform

**Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform strategies</th>
<th>Sup 2 (S2)</th>
<th>S2CL1</th>
<th>S2CL2</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives and sticking with them.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a clear plan, a strategic plan.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having clear expectations and systems of accountability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular classroom observations and monitoring by administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCs/Building a culture of “Team”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring the “right” people. Surround yourself with the best and the brightest—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people smarter than you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place the best teachers and principals in the most challenging schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use best practices and research based strategies that work in other districts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

Table 11

District 2—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 7: Board

**Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board relations</th>
<th>Sup 2 (S2)</th>
<th>S2CL1</th>
<th>S2CL2</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must keep them informed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with them individually</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large investment of time—building relationships and repertoire with BOE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 12

District 2—Interview Superintendent Question 6 and Cabinet Question 8: Narrowing the Achievement Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrowing the achievement gap</th>
<th>Sup 2 (S2)</th>
<th>S2CL1</th>
<th>S2CL2</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring data—use data to inform instructional practices and strategies to ensure that every student makes a year’s growth at every grade</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Building teacher and leadership capacity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

Table 13

District 3—Interview Superintendent Question 2 and Cabinet Question 3: Core Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core beliefs</th>
<th>Sup 3 (S3)</th>
<th>S3CL1</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents hold high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn and are therefore committed to the highest quality education for all students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need great leaders and teachers in every school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results driven by using data and accountability systems</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide every student the needed tools to succeed and differentiate resources to be aligned with needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 14

**District 3—Interview Superintendent Question 3 and Cabinet Question 4: Actions and Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions and behaviors</th>
<th>Sup 3 (S3)</th>
<th>S3CL.1</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands on. Top down and directive when needed; they identify a problem that leads to action</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions based on what’s best for kids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as an instructional leader</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses data to inform decisions and to align and differentiate resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place best principals and teachers in lowest performing schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide supports to teachers and leaders (common planning time, PD, mentors/coaches)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 15

*District 3—Interview Superintendent Question 4 and Cabinet Question 5: Leadership Qualities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership qualities</th>
<th>Sup 3 (S3)</th>
<th>S3CL1</th>
<th>Totals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate commitment to kids, and the community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model desired behaviors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcomes constructive feedback and criticism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to build relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable—open door policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forthright—candor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taker</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
### Table 16

**District 3—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 6: Reform**

**Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform strategies</th>
<th>Sup 3 (S3)</th>
<th>S3CL1</th>
<th>Totalsa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives and sticking with them. Having a clear plan, a strategic plan. Having clear expectations and systems of accountability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders. Regular classroom observations and monitoring by administrators</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCs/Building a culture of “Team”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring the “right” people. Surround yourself with the best and the brightest— people smarter than you</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Professional Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place the best teachers and principals in the most challenging schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aThis is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

### Table 17

**District 3—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 7: Board**

**Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board relations</th>
<th>Sup 3 (S3)</th>
<th>S3CL1</th>
<th>Totalsa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must keep them informed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with them individually</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large investment of time— building relationships and repertoire with BOE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aThis is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 18

*District 3—Interview Superintendent Question 6 and Cabinet Question 8: Narrowing the Achievement Gap*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrowing the achievement gap</th>
<th>Sup 3 (S3)</th>
<th>S3CL1</th>
<th>Totals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring data—use data to inform instructional practices and strategies to ensure that every student makes a year’s growth at every grade</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Building teacher and leadership capacity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 1/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.*

Table 19

*District 4—Interview Superintendent Question 2 and Cabinet Question 3: Core Beliefs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core beliefs</th>
<th>Sup 4 (S4)</th>
<th>S4CL1</th>
<th>S4CL2</th>
<th>Totals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents hold high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn and are therefore committed to the highest quality education for all students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need great leaders and teachers in every school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results driven by using data and accountability systems</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1; 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide every student the needed tools to succeed and differentiate resources to be aligned with needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.*


### Table 20

**District 4—Interview Superintendent Question 3 and Cabinet Question 4: Actions and Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions and behaviors</th>
<th>Sup 4 (S4)</th>
<th>S4CL1</th>
<th>S4CL2</th>
<th>Totals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands on. Top down and directive when needed; they identify a problem that leads to action</td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions based on what’s best for kids</td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as an instructional leader</td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses data to inform decisions and to align and differentiate resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place best principals and teachers in lowest performing schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1;2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide supports to teachers and leaders (common planning time, PD, mentors/coaches)</td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.*
Table 21

District 4—Interview Superintendent Question 4 and Cabinet Question 5: Leadership Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership qualities</th>
<th>Sup 4 (S4)</th>
<th>S4CL1</th>
<th>S4CL2</th>
<th>Totals⁴</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate commitment to kids, and the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model desired behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcomes constructive feedback and criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to build relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable—open door policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forthright—candor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communicator</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to balance pressure and support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good listener</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0; 1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 22

District 4—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 6: Reform

Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform strategies</th>
<th>Sup 4 (S4)</th>
<th>S4CL1</th>
<th>S4CL2</th>
<th>Totals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives and sticking with them.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a clear plan, a strategic plan.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having clear expectations and systems of accountability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders. Regular classroom observations and monitoring by administrators</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCs/Building a culture of “Team”</td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring the “right” people. Surround yourself with the best and the brightest—people smarter than you</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Professional Development</td>
<td>0; 0/2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place the best teachers and principals in the most challenging schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

Table 23

District 4—Interview Superintendent Question 5 and Cabinet Question 7: Board

Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board relations</th>
<th>Sup 4 (S4)</th>
<th>S4CL1</th>
<th>S4CL2</th>
<th>Totals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must keep them informed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with them individually</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large investment of time—building relationships and repertoire with BOE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.
Table 24

**District 4—Interview Superintendent Question 6 and Cabinet Question 8: Narrowing the Achievement Gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrowing the achievement gap</th>
<th>Sup 4 (S4)</th>
<th>S4CL1</th>
<th>S4CL2</th>
<th>Totals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring data—use data to inform instructional practices and strategies to ensure that every student makes a year’s growth at every grade</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Building teacher and leadership capacity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1; 2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is the frequency of responses. The first number represents the superintendent response and the second set of numbers refers to the cabinet level administrators.

Table 25

**Superintendent Interview Question 1: Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site administrator</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District administrator</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive other trainings and PD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew up locally in same district</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew up poor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First to go to college in their family</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All job positions held in the same district</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents in multiple districts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 26

*Superintendent Interview Question 2: Core Beliefs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core beliefs</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents hold high expectations around the belief that all kids can learn and are therefore committed to the highest quality education for all students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need great leaders and teachers in every school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results driven by using data and accountability systems</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide every student the needed tools to succeed and differentiate resources to be aligned with needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27

Superintendent Interview Question 3: Actions and Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions and behaviors</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands on. Top down and directive when needed; they identify a problem that leads to action</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions based on what's best for kids</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as an instructional leader</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses data to inform decisions and to align and differentiate resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place best principals and teachers in lowest performing schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support to teachers and leaders (common planning time, PD, mentors/coaches)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28

Superintendent Interview Question 4: Leadership Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership qualities</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest, transparent, trustworthy, respected</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate commitment to kids, and the community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model desired behaviors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcomes constructive feedback and criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to build relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable—open door policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 29

**Superintendent Interview Question 5: Reform Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform strategies</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and focusing on a few good initiatives and sticking with them.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a clear plan, a strategic plan. Having clear expectations and systems of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build administrator capacity to be strong instructional leaders. Regular</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom observations and monitoring by administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCs/Building a culture of “Team”</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring the “right” people. Surround yourself with the best and the brightest—</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people smarter than you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Professional Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place the best teachers and principals in the most challenging schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 30

**Superintendent Interview Question 6: Narrowing the Achievement Gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrowing the achievement gap</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring data—use data to inform instructional practices and strategies to ensure that</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every student makes a year’s growth at every grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Building teacher and leadership capacity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31

*Superintendent Interview Question 5a: Board Relations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board relations</th>
<th>Sup 1</th>
<th>Sup 2</th>
<th>Sup 3</th>
<th>Sup 4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must keep them informed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with them individually</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large investment of time—building relationships and repertoire with BOE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment of time to educate and train board (board workshops)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>