

Selecting, Preparing and Developing the School District Superintendent

David S. G. Carter, Thomas E. Glass
and Shirley M. Hord



Selecting, Preparing and Developing the School District Superintendent

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Fellows of the Cooperative
Superintendency Program at the University of Texas at
Austin — past, present and future.

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Contents

Preface		vii
List of Acronyms		x
Chapter 1	Smoke, Mirrors or Reality: Another Instructional Leader <i>Shirley M. Hord</i>	1
Chapter 2	Through the Looking Glass <i>Thomas E. Glass</i>	20
Chapter 3	Point and Counterpoint: What is in the Context of What Might Be? <i>Thomas E. Glass</i>	37
Chapter 4	Exemplary Superintendents: Do They Fit the Model? <i>Thomas E. Glass</i>	57
Chapter 5	Superintendent Selection and Success <i>Shirley M. Hord and Nolan Estes</i>	71
Chapter 6	Diagnosis, Self-prescription and Treatment <i>David S.G. Carter and Ben M. Harris</i>	85
Chapter 7	Assessment-based Models for Learning and Growth <i>Judith G. Loreda, Ben M. Harris, and David S.G. Carter</i>	100
Chapter 8	Enter the Neophyte: Preparing Administrators for Leadership Roles <i>Judith G. Loreda and David S.G. Carter</i>	117
Chapter 9	Leadership for Learning — Learning for Leadership <i>David S.G. Carter</i>	132
Chapter 10	The Future: Mapping the Multisite Executive Development Center <i>David S.G. Carter and Thomas E. Glass</i>	150

<i>Contents</i>	
<i>Appendix</i>	165
<i>References</i>	172
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	182
<i>Index</i>	183

Preface

In marked contrast to the intensive scrutiny of the principalship by academics, researchers, representatives of professional bodies, politicians and the public at large, the superintendency has remained relatively immune from the glare of the spotlight, until recently that is. In our view this is a somewhat anomalous situation, if only because there are some 15,000 school districts each headed by a superintendent, as well as other senior executives of equivalent status or above in central education agencies. Collectively, they operate a budget derived from the public purse of quite mind-blowing proportions. Until recently we have known relatively little about them — who they are, what they do and to what effect — except to say they are now the subjects of close scrutiny given that there is today a widespread public dissatisfaction with the quality of schooling across America. What are their needs now and in the future? What makes an effective school system leader and how can potential executive leaders be screened, selected, prepared and further developed? Recent conceptualizations and research focussed on these sorts of question, have provided the motivation for this book.

In the recent past a considerable intellectual effort has been applied to the solution of problems that have emerged from a series of official reports that are commonly referred to in professional circles. Frequently their substance is clouded by media hype. The intellectual effort, however, to problem find and problem solve, has not been uniform across the country. Rather, it has tended to occur in pockets in a somewhat desultory fashion. There are now signs, however, of a consistent body of research and practice emerging that is innovative in nature and scope. This new knowledge base provides us with a more optimistic view of the nature of the superintendency than that which was evident during the last decade. It can inform us about what needs to be done to regenerate and revitalize the superintendency. We consider a dynamic research base to be a vital adjunct to the successful reform of the American public schools and school districts on which the well-being of the nation ultimately depends.

One of the centers of excellence for research and exemplary practice that is probing the substantive nature of the superintendency, supporting the development of superintendents in the field and assisting with their selection and preparation is located at The University of Texas at Austin. This book is the result of collaborative efforts by researchers based mainly at The University of Texas at Austin, and funded by the Meadows Foundation of Texas.

The focus of their work was identifying and mapping out the needs of senior

Preface

educational executives and evolving a system for their ongoing and further professional development in the field. This research and development has taken place under the auspices of the embryonic National Executive Development Center (NEDC) established by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

New findings, stemming from the considerable efforts of the Meadows Project Team, and supported by a growing number of dissertations, prompted us to disseminate this body of research to the academic and professional community as a matter of some priority. This book, however, is but part of that effort. A monograph addressing instructional leadership and a series of papers have been prepared and are in press or published in the relevant journals. This volume represents a coherent synthesis of some intense research activity that is now beginning to appear in journals in a piecemeal fashion.

Shirley Hord opens the account in Chapter 1, taking research on the principal as instructional leader as her model and inspiration, and partialling out the implications and relevance of this for the complementary but distinctive role of superintendents. It is fashionable to talk today of leadership forces. It seems not unreasonable from this standpoint, to infer that it is the interaction of these forces, represented by those who fulfill the roles of principal, superintendent and school board official, as being instrumental in providing the needed vision, guidance and leadership for the achievement of desired educational ends. Each player can learn off the other in this regard.

The focus becomes more narrow in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 4, where Tom Glass distills a selected body of research, chosen for its pioneering nature in initially contributing to a map of the superintendency territory, with no claims for comprehensiveness. In Chapter 3, he takes an unashamedly normative stance in considering current practices and realities in the light of what ought to be, to achieve and maintain excellence in the superintendency. Just what are the characteristics of superintendents who have been designated as being 'exemplary'? Surely, these are the successes of the profession and those preparing future superintendents should look hard and carefully at the profiles of these individuals.

In Chapter 5, Shirley Hord and Nolan Estes examine the highly problematic area of superintendent selection by school boards. The premise of this chapter is that preparation of superintendents must be configured to, at least partially meet, the needs and perceptions of the consumers, namely, the school board. In Chapter 6, David Carter and Ben Harris consider some conceptual and empirical problems related to the diagnosis of executive knowledge skills and competencies, as well as the potential use of highly focussed diagnostic data for professional growth planning.

The use of assessment methods for selection and screening and, rather uniquely, for personal development plans in which executives retain control over their own self-energized assessment data, is treated by Judith Loredó, Ben Harris and David Carter in Chapter 7. Judith Loredó and David Carter extend this perspective to the selection and preparation of administrators for senior executive roles in Chapter 8.

In a text such as this, one might expect a chapter entitled *Leadership for Learning — Learning for Leadership* to open the dialogue. Instead, we have preferred to leave this until the end of the book in Chapter 9. In this chapter David Carter synthesizes and integrates the knowledge base developed at The University

of Texas at Austin with what we know about the nature of leadership and its much needed transformative power to realize the reinvigoration of American education.

As a research team, we felt the need to include an epilogue. As well as looking retrospectively at the work already done and currently underway, we also wished to project ahead, to present a future of what has yet to be accomplished and the infrastructure being put in place to facilitate this. From early beginnings centered around the Texas pilot site, the still-evolving National Executive Development Center is embodied in various sites across the nation. A decentralized approach with a suitable division of labor was conceived expressly to research and develop packages and processes in an open way for the ongoing professional development of superintendents. The form, nature and organizational arrangements to achieve this goal are presented by David Carter and Tom Glass, last of all in Chapter 10.

If we have accomplished the task we set out to do, it should leave the serious reader with a sense of what has been completed thus far, what remains to be done and the magnitude of the tasks involved. Above all, from our perspective, we would like to impress readers with a sense of *how* a high quality, diagnostic and action-oriented, professional growth system that meets the present and future needs of the superintendency might be achieved in a realistic fashion.

This manuscript has been completed in several locations ranging from Texas and Illinois to England and Australia. We would like to thank especially Angela Smith and Kathleen McDaniel at the University of Texas at Austin for word processing early sections of the manuscript; Sheena Carter, Laurie Coonan, and Jayne Piscioneri at the University of Notre Dame Australia for important middle-stage revisions; and Lori Kitchens and Lonne Parent, on staff at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, who produced the final copy for publication. All contributed and participated so competently and cheerfully.

Finally, we have had colleagues and graduate students too numerous to name individually, who have read and constructively commented on sections of this book. We are most grateful for the advice and commentary they gave. Any deficiencies in the final product, however, are of our own making — not theirs.

List of Acronyms

AACTE	American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
AASA	The American Association of School Administrators
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
CAI	Competency Analysis Inventory
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSP	Cooperative Superintendency Program
DECAS	Diagnostic Executive Competency Assessment System
EAEP	Educational Administrator Effectiveness Profile
ESC	Education Service Center
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
ISD	Independent School District
LEAD	Leadership in Educational Administration Development
MBO	Management by Objectives
NASE	National Association of School Executives
NAESP	National Association of Elementary School Principals
NASSP	National Association of Secondary School Principals
NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
NCEI	National Center for Educational Information
NCSI	National Curriculum Study Institutes
NEA	National Education Association
NEDC	National Executive Development Center
NPBEA	National Policy Board for Educational Administration
NSBA	National School Boards Association
PAL	Peer-assisted Leadership
PDP	Professional Development Program
PPBS	Performance-based Appraisal and Program Budgeting
REDS	Regional Executive Development Satellites
TAI	Task Analysis Inventory
TASA	Texas Association of School Administrators
TEA	Texas Education Agency
UCEA	University Council of Educational Administration

Chapter 1

Smoke, Mirrors or Reality: Another Instructional Leader

Shirley M. Hord

The current interest in, and attention to, leadership appears to be unprecedented in this nation's history. Not only is the analysis of corporate executive officers' 'leadership' the focus of much of the television and other media coverage, but leadership at all levels is being recognized and publicly applauded: the high school sports team leader, the community's women volunteer leaders, even 8-year-old cub scouts are singled out and valued for their demonstrated leadership. In this milieu educational leadership has not escaped attention. The surfeit of national commission reports are all clear in their demands for a new view of educational leadership that will solve current problems and bring new visions to address pressing societal concerns both now and for the future. There are those who believe that the role of the school, and of those leading the school, is tied inexorably to the common 'good', and that preparing young people to function successfully and to contribute maximally to an improved social order will benefit all citizens.

High-sounding rhetoric! Nonetheless, it is not over-dramatic to assert that the nation's economic and cultural survival and hopes for the future ride in large measure on the shoulders of our schools, and thus *inter alia*, on the leadership of school superintendents. Such a relationship suggests a requirement for superintendents who are looking beyond buildings, buses, and bonds to students and instructional improvement. Thus, the superintendent's priority attention is on the schools' thirteen-year student 'product' and 'consumer', and on how each student is prepared to fit as an effectively functioning adult now and in tomorrow's society. Some contend that such administrative leadership is a critical factor in effective schools. For example, Coleman (1986) maintains:

This component (administrative leadership) has emerged from virtually all the effective school studies as critical, even when the initial expectations did not include it as a factor. Any consideration of school district processes necessarily must include leadership as a primary linking mechanism. (p. 93)

What is bold leadership? While the concept is developed in Chapter 9 of this book, a simple definition characterizes leadership as guidance for movement from an

Shirley M. Hord

existing to a preferred state. Assuming that to be the case, a vision of the preferred state is required, as are change strategies for inducing the organization to move toward the preferred state. What is known about superintendents operating in these modes? Not very much, but a knowledge base is evolving as is made clear in this chapter and elsewhere in this book. The role explication of the effective, improvement-oriented principal has been the focus of much study and consequently a burgeoning research base. Unlike the study of principals, disciplined inquiry into the superintendent's effectiveness is still in its infancy (Hord, 1990; Muller, 1989); there is a lack of models to support such intellectual work. Can the instructional leader principal serve as a model prototype paralleling the role of the superintendent in this area?

Utilizing the emerging research base that examines superintendents' problem-solving processes and roles in effective districts, this chapter explores the evolving literature and the underlying imperative of superintendents' leadership both now and in the future.

The chapter is organized in three sections:

- (i) the first provides a brief review of the chief education officer's various publics and their current expectations for superintendent's performance;
- (ii) in the second section, the new findings emerging from research on effective superintendents are presented; two paradigms that portray the effective principal are introduced, and the 'fit' between superintendents' findings and principals' frameworks is explored;
- (iii) finally, for increasing the effectiveness of instruction district-wide, the relationships between superintendents and principals are examined, noting the implications for the education of the school board and community and for the continuing professional development of superintendents.

Finances and Facilities vs. the Future

Depending on just who is responding, the role definitions of superintendents vary widely. Those who occupy the role adhere to differing definitions from those outside the office — school boards, school staff, and the public at large. The chief education officer is a resident in the ever-widening contexts of these constituents. How the latter perceive the role and what they value most about it can significantly influence the way it is exercised by incumbents, but let us look first at the CEO's views.

The Superintendent Looks at Herself/Himself

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Just what am I, after all?

Such might be the query of many superintendents currently active in the position. In a study to learn if gender influenced the superintendent's view of

his/her role (Youngs, 1988), it was discovered that half of the men and half of the women sampled viewed themselves as leaders, while the other 50 per cent of each group perceived themselves as managers. Furthermore, age was the factor that served to differentiate most between the different views across the study sample. Men and women under the age of 45 saw themselves as leaders while those over 45 viewed themselves as managers. Much attention and space has been given in the literature to differentiating management from leadership (see Chapter 9). Suffice it to note here that, as already suggested in the introductory passages, leadership can be thought of as entailing a visionary or symbolic dimension that addresses movement and change, while management is seen as securing an orderly *status quo* or the smooth operation of routines.

Additional studies addressing superintendents reported that aspects of their role identified as most important to them involved financial issues, building a positive climate to support and facilitate the work of staff and students, and an effective curriculum (Collier, 1987). How superintendents are influenced by self-perceptions of their careers and role(s) may be characterized by the place-bound and career-bound categories of superintendents: the place-bound superintendent, who does not see him/herself moving onward and upward or in leading the district forward, curbs change and maintains the *status quo*; the career bound or upwardly mobile superintendent, conversely, guides the system in new ways through the development and adaptation of new policies and practices (Crowson, 1987).

Given the disparate views of the role held by superintendents, it is not surprising that boards, also, differ among themselves and in contrast to the chief education officer. Of special significance is the influence the board can exercise on the superintendent's role. Such divergent perceptions impact and create tensions when superintendent role perspectives compete with the board's. It is instructive to consider, then, what views are characteristic of boards?

The Eye of the Board

One-hundred-and-fifty school board presidents representing districts of various size, geographic region, and amount of wealth, were studied by Pringle (1989), who found that board presidents agreed 'skills considered most critical for selection and contract renewal . . . (were) those of providing information to board members and building a relationship of trust and respect with the board' (p. vii). Other areas deemed important (beyond the boards' self-interests) were those of professional staffing and evaluation, together with attention to the ways in which central office staff were organized. In Pringle's study, board presidents were found to be less concerned about operations and auxiliary services, results that differ from other studies of boards and their views of the superintendent. Pringle reported that the literature available for review reflected priority roles for the superintendent in the areas of 'finances, facilities, operations, personnel management, board relations and community relations'.

In contrast, narrative responses solicited in his study revealed that board presidents were also interested in the instructional-related abilities of superintendent-as-candidate and superintendent-as-incumbent. In a concurrent review of the literature, Hord (1990) also found boards' interest in superintendents' capabilities

Shirley M. Hord

to manage finances and personnel to be a high priority consideration. At the same time, it appears that boards generally are not in agreement about the area and degree of the superintendent's license to demonstrate leadership, thereby providing the potential for superintendent/board conflict (making it easy to understand why boards prefer superintendents who 'build a relationship of trust and respect'). Alvey and Underwood (1985) described a 'tug-of-war going on in many school systems (with) board members . . . and superintendents . . . each trying to edge more responsibility . . . especially concerning personnel'. Hentges (1986), however, reported a balance of power with the superintendent's role predominating on internal policy issues where his/her professional technical expertise is of importance, and boards taking a stronger decision-making role in external policy issues.

And Others

The advent of politics and the emergence of militant action-oriented interest groups have significantly impacted the superintendent's activities. The politics of community groups with particular interests to pursue, and the district's influential professional staff associations and unions, have had a profound effect on policies and practices in some school systems. This 'politicization' of public education (Lupini, 1983) has resulted in more than the usual active involvement of board members and others, further complicating the superintendent's role. How all these activities play out in the public press on a slow news day is easily observed.

On a more positive theme, there are some, like Tucker, who propose that superintendents adopt a role of managing people who think for a living as distinct from those who are just told what to do and expected to get on with it as directed (Tucker, 1988). With this view, Schlechty and Joslin (1986) maintain that knowledge work will be the most dominant occupation of our country, with teachers undertaking a decision-sharing role, requiring the redesign of authority relationships in a school system. In describing this new model, Schlechty and Joslin portray 'the superintendent . . . as the chief teacher . . . who defines problems and inspires others to solve them. Leadership, then, is more important than managerial skill, though managerial skill is not to be discounted'.

In summary, school boards as instruments of public policy have articulated roles and expectations for their superintendents to perform in certain ways. In addition to the way superintendents and boards view the role, others outside or peripheral to the confines or restraints of the school system promote extensive lists of skills, tasks and responsibilities they consider should accrue to the superintendent's role. The efforts of community interest groups and political action add further to the demands placed on the chief education officer for performance and accountability. In short, the modern superintendent is required to be all things to all people.

These multiple and frequently competing perspectives, role expectations, and demands do not bode well for the person in the 'catbird' seat. With mixed perceptions, an unrealistic array of expectations, and multiple role definitions abounding, it is not surprising that the art of politics has taken precedence over the craft of instruction in the superintendency. If instruction is to be accorded the highest priority by our schools, it would seem important at least to discover which role requirements of superintendents relate most powerfully to effective instruction — a topic to be examined in the next section.

Effective Leaders

There is an extensive research base on effective principals (Duttweiler and Hord, 1987) but a critical lack of much research-based knowledge about the effects that superintendents have on their districts that relates to student outcomes, the presumed focus of district programs. Wimpelberg (1988), Leithwood and Steinbach (1989), and others (Hord, 1990) have called attention to this fact, exhorting researchers to contribute to a much needed research base. Modestly and increasingly, study findings are accumulating, and though the quantity of results is still relatively small, they commonly exhibit a great potential to increase understanding about superintendents' effects on instruction. See for example, Harris and Wan (1991) and Muller (1989).

Superintendents: Their Work in Effective Districts

Most of the recent studies reported here have gone beyond the short self report survey method and have employed multiple data collection techniques including interviews with subjects, colleagues, subordinates, and community members; examination of documents; ethnographic field studies to observe the subjects *in situ* and so on. Further, most of the subjects and samples studied have been identified on the basis of their *effects* on district policies and practices and, more specifically, on student academic outcomes. Such study samples, though small, stand in contrast to those selected on the basis of 'reputation' by persons not in direct contact with the district and its daily operations. The work of these subjects, superintendents in effective districts, has been examined and reported by several researchers and a brief review of their findings follows.

In a series of three reports of twelve effective districts, Hallinger, Murphy and Peterson (1985, 1986, 1987) provided clear information about the role of the superintendent in district effectiveness. According to Murphy and Hallinger (1986), the superintendents of these twelve effective districts were characterized as setting goals and establishing expectations and standards, selecting staff, supervising and evaluating staff, establishing an instructional and curricular focus, ensuring consistency in curriculum and instruction, and monitoring curriculum and instruction.

Some of the superintendents collected products of the schools' work and used meetings of various sizes, formats, and composition to investigate implementation of instructional processes. They inspected curriculum and instruction in operation through visits to schools. Student achievement results were used in teacher and principal evaluations by two-thirds of the superintendents. They were, in a word, seen as being directly involved in the technical core operations of their districts (Murphy and Hallinger, 1986).

Murphy, Hallinger and Peterson's paper (1985) added that the superintendents were also engaged in culture building: communicating with staff; developing team activities, showing concern, and building morale; and resolving problems, cutting through paperwork, and securing rapid solutions to pressing problems. They were the primary actors in linking schools and district offices, promoting closer relationships between district and site administrators, and mandating administrator staff development that focussed explicitly on curriculum and instruction. The superintendents' message was 'every child can learn', and principals were expected to realize this ideal in practice (Murphy, *et al.*, 1985).

Shirley M. Hord

Peterson, Murphy and Hallinger (1987) reported that superintendents in effective districts did not believe that 'instructional technologies are totally idiosyncratic, evanescent and unspecifiable' (p. 18); therefore, they specified instructional models and teaching methods to improve student learning outcomes. To ensure that instruction was attended to, they communicated the expectation that the identified models would be used. They established goals and standards for evaluation, and they put in place support structures through ongoing staff development activities and the allocation of budgets to support these initiatives. They signaled in powerful ways that curriculum and teaching were important (*ibid.*).

In comparing two small rural districts with similar communities, the characteristics and activities of the District B superintendent appeared to be significant to the district's success (Jacobson, 1986). For example, to improve student performance, teachers' performance was nurtured through professional development, and monitored. If teachers did not perform in accordance with expectations, they were dismissed, pressured into retirement, or denied tenure. In turn, teachers were supported in student achievement efforts through a strictly enforced code of student discipline by the administration. The improved student behavior contributed to improved teachers' working conditions.

Teachers were encouraged to work collaboratively to address problems and to experiment with the curriculum. The superintendent regarded faculty as the agents of change and held them accountable for improvement. To facilitate this initiative, he supported staff as they upgraded course offerings, materials, facilities, and their own professional development. In this small district, the superintendent worked directly with teachers, rather than with principals. Gains in student achievement was the goal of the superintendent and he pursued this outcome aggressively even at the risk of faculty and community opposition (Jacobson, 1986).

Coleman and LaRocque (1988) examined the activities of superintendents in high-performing districts and contrasted them with superintendents in less successful districts. They concluded that the superintendent's leadership was the single most important factor in creating a positive district ethos, with both cultural elements and technical factors contributing to its success. In explaining district ethos, they identified six activity and attitude 'focusses' that were given attention: learning, accountability, change, caring, commitment, and community. For each focus, the superintendents emphasized being accountable, and being improvement and adaptation-oriented. In addition, they consistently established and followed through on their expectations.

The superintendents influenced staff by reference and adherence to the dominant norms of accountability and collegial responsibility for declared objectives. In the high performing districts the superintendent established a consensus through using committees as consultative bodies, accessing teachers through principals, and using principals as reactors to ideas. The superintendents were perceived by the researchers as a presence in the schools and community, modeling energy and effort for the staff and demonstrating accountability to, and on behalf of, the community. Their overall effect was manifested through the 'creation and maintenance of a positive district ethos' (*ibid.*, p. 33). Ethos in this respect may be thought of as the pervading climate or culture.

Superintendents, reported by Pollack, Chrispeels, Watson, Brice and McCormack (1988), were regarded by district and school level administrators as

key players in setting and guiding improvement goals. They were also regarded by themselves and others as modeling instructional leadership, especially in a symbolic sense through the image they projected as they visited schools on a regular basis. They played an active role in monitoring change and improvement efforts, focussing on curriculum issues as the fulcrum for planned change.

Again, direct control over principals' behavior was exercised through selection, supervision and evaluation, and through enhancing professional socialization by means of training and staff development. Indirect influence on principals and improvement efforts occurred through setting goals, allocating resources, developing curriculum and evaluating instruction, and by analyzing test data. This form of district control was not seen by subordinate staff and the broader community to be denigrating of principals who were themselves generally accepting the directives they were given, and being supervised in a developmental and nurturing way. The superintendent's role with principals included setting goals for change, articulating the district's goals, and modeling priorities for change through visibility, proximity and monitoring. They also provided support through staff development, on-site assistance and resource provision.

The cultural characteristic typical of the improving districts was the belief that educators in the schools *could* increase student achievement (*ibid.*).

In identifying the superintendent's role in reform, sixteen district leaders were studied by Paulu (1988), and several generalizations from the results were reported by the investigator. First, the superintendent created an expectant atmosphere where reform flourished by encouraging staff to share ideas and take risks and by rewarding those who initiated change. Fundamental to creating such an atmosphere was to build trust with all staff before the introduction of change efforts. Establishing ties with all constituents was also important, but the relationship between superintendent and principal was identified as particularly critical to outcome success. Also cited was the development of credibility with minority group members and building trust with the media.

Second, superintendents' initiatives for their districts' improvement required a comprehensive vision-based plan. While the superintendent introduced the plan, other participants molded it through their work in committees charged with the development of a fully articulated vision and long-range plans congruent with the shared vision.

Third, communication of the plan was the responsibility of the superintendent, and was done in a variety of ways in order to reach all people who would be directly and indirectly affected by the plan. Because they may be a step ahead of those they lead, successful superintendents communicate plans carefully and in convincing and persuasive ways to their multiple audiences.

Fourth, after plans were made they were executed. Thus, superintendents provided for the training of staff and all those involved in implementation. They delegated responsibilities but remained, however, actively involved in monitoring events. If plans did not proceed as intended, modification or elimination of some elements was considered by the superintendent and/or others responsible for implementation. In other cases, barriers had to be eliminated. These sixteen superintendents were reported to be at various stages in their reform efforts, and they remained optimistic about their expected results (*ibid.*).

In a study of big city school districts' improvement efforts, Hill, Wise and Shapiro (1989) selected six districts for investigation: Atlanta, Cincinnati, Miami,

Shirley M. Hord

Memphis, Pittsburgh and San Diego. A key finding was that 'No improvement effort can succeed without an active school superintendent . . .' (p. v). In explaining the contributions of these specific actors to the process of improvement, the researchers concluded that 'The school superintendent is usually the single most important actor in the improvement process, whether that person is the initial architect or an indispensable member of a coalition of improvement-oriented groups. No improvement effort that was studied caught fire without an active superintendent willing to interact with community forces to attack the school system's inertia' (p. 20). What did these six superintendents do?

First, they worked with their boards and the community to establish a public mandate of goals and priorities to guide the policies of the school system. The resulting goal statements were broad and general but meaningful guides for actions, providing agreement on direction and focus. Superintendents created these mandates in various ways, but they reflected 'public needs and aspirations' and granted greater authority than would normally be the case to the superintendent.

Second, these superintendents almost guaranteed results, but did not promise overly-ambitious short-term outcomes. Thus, they helped the community to understand that change and improvement would take a long time to achieve.

Third, the superintendents strove to assure that the improvement effort would be continuous and would not disappear if the current administrator moved or was replaced. By cultivating and nurturing younger administrators in the philosophy, processes and intermediate effects of the change efforts, its continuity might be assured.

Fourth, relating to the community at large, which is necessary for any district-wide improvement, means meeting the politics of race, income and ambition head-on. The superintendent's race was a factor to be reckoned with in these large, urban communities and these three black and three white superintendents did just that, in addition to addressing in a personalized way the needs of all children regardless of their race or family income.

Fifth, while the preceding four areas represent external issues, there was the internal dimension to be dealt with. Inside issues focussed on three strategic factors: information, principals and professional expectations. First, the information flow during change efforts was increased, and the media used to keep priorities and emergent needs up-front in the public mind. Second, a common means for managing change, identified by five of the executives, was to manage principals. They did so by reorganizing and eliminating organizational structures to make their relationships with principals readily accessible. 'Under new arrangements they (principals) reported to area superintendents . . . and through them to the superintendents . . . the line relationship between principal and superintendent re-emphasized the idea that the principal, responsible for the whole school, reports only to administrators with comparably broad concerns' (pp. 25-6).

To address the third issue, these superintendents spent major parts of their time in schools, treating teachers and administrators as professionals, yet leading them by articulating priorities and providing guidance and exemplary role models. Their symbolic actions — classroom visits, participation in principals' performance reviews or a school award ceremony — conveyed what was important. To make their expectations for quality performance absolutely clear, four of them paid unannounced visits to schools to deliver ultimatums for improvement if needed, and firing of principals as necessary. Principals were used as the

instruments for inducing and facilitating change, and were also the focus of change and improvement in the direction needed (*ibid.*).

Muller (1989) investigated the relationship of superintendent instructional leadership competencies and elementary principal effective instructional leadership behaviors to school effectiveness. He found that superintendent competence in the area of organizing for instruction was the best predictor of campus and district effectiveness. According to Muller eleven tasks are included in this area, namely:

- (i) The executive understands instructional design;
- (ii) The executive establishes priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives;
- (iii) The executive adopts instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum;
- (iv) The executive develops an instructional and resource management system that implements the district's instructional philosophy;
- (v) The executive develops goals and objectives that guide the district's instructional philosophy;
- (vi) The executive provides an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors the instructional program;
- (vii) The executive monitors student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program;
- (viii) The executive maintains a system for instructional change;
- (ix) The executive maintains a system of instructional improvement that seeks to upgrade the process of student learning;
- (x) The executive ensures that the district incorporates varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population;
- (xi) The executive stipulates that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groupings. (p. 127)

While this study does not suggest a causal relationship between superintendents' tasks and district effectiveness, it reports a significant correlation between these variables (*ibid.*).

From a descriptive study of forty-nine reputationally nominated superintendents, Buck (1989) identified seven most frequently described transformational leadership behaviors. The results are reflected in Buck's research-based behavioral definition of a transformational superintendent leader. According to Buck, such a leader uses leadership that goes beyond merely managing the system to helping the system achieve its next stage of evolution; sharing a vision that becomes the fused purpose of the organization; and communicating this vision, formally and informally in order to provide up-to-date information to different audiences regarding the status of the organization.

The leader accomplishes the district's mission based on the vision by initially conceptualizing a specific future; engaging in appropriate risks to bring about change; involving others in goal setting and decision making; empowering others; and communicating the vision to every level of the organization. The leader concerns herself/himself about the individual, is committed to quality development