

MENTORING THE FIRST-YEAR SUPERINTENDENT IN
TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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This study determined what mentoring experiences first-year superintendents have had and what they need from a mentoring relationship. Structured interviews and field notes were used in this qualitative study focused on Texas first-year superintendents' perceived needs from mentors.

Three patterns of mentoring relationships were found: 1) no mentor in the first year, 2) mentor-protégé relationship - those who developed mentoring relationships early in a career with a more senior person in the same school system, and 3) mentoring relationships of convenience - young relationships which developed outside the same system. Skills and knowledge areas novice superintendents identified as critical for mentor assistance were school finance, development of effective relationships with groups that have expectations of the superintendent while also improving student achievement, and working within the politics of the position.

Mentor characteristics novice superintendents considered necessary for a positive effect on job success include: trustworthiness, confidentiality, empathy, encouraging, active listening, and integrity. An attitude in which the mentor problem solved with the protégé, and did not give an immediate solution was displayed. Mentors actively and frequently initiated contact. Ideas were freely exchanged, giving the protégé undivided attention while not making the protégé feel inferior. The effects that previous mentoring experiences had on novice superintendents influenced whether they chose to mentor another person. Most reported seeking or engaged in a new mentoring relationship.

Differences in areas where help was needed among first-year superintendents associated with district size were reported. Assistance in finance was needed regardless of district size, gender, or ethnicity. Superintendents in small districts reported needing assistance in specific skill and knowledge areas. Those in larger districts reported mentor assistance in problem-solving processes to accomplish a task. Differences in needs of first-year superintendents based on gender or ethnicity were identified but generalizations could not be made due to small numbers. Recommendations for university administrative preparation programs and designing formal mentoring programs were made.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The young man knows the rule, but the old man knows the exceptions.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

The value of experience has been recognized as a source of learning throughout history. The master and expert have been revered as one to learn from and imitate. Mentoring, as a source of learning, uses the experiences of others to perpetuate the master's knowledge and skill. Historically, the word mentor is derived from Homer's epic *The Odyssey*. Mentor, a loyal friend, educated, nurtured, and guided Telemachus, Odysseus' son, while Odysseus went away to fight battles. Mentor provided Telemachus help and assistance in the absence of his father, but more importantly, taught Telemachus to think and act for himself (Kay, 1990). From that model mentoring is a relationship in which someone with more experience teaches someone else with less experience (Crow and Matthews, 1998, p. 2).

Mentoring, as a form of instruction, is as much about human relationships as it is about teaching skills or imparting knowledge. Leaders often have the ability to produce future leaders. Maxwell (1998) describes the "law of legacy," which states that a leader's lasting value is measured by the development of other leaders for succession and for the future growth and success of the organization. Tichy (1997) believes that the best leaders of outstanding organizations mentor others to lead. Max Dupree (1989), the successful

chief executive officer of Herman Miller, describes leadership as an art that is learned over time, not simply by reading books. He explained that leadership “is more tribal than scientific, more a weaving of relationships than an amassing of information, and in that sense is difficult to pin down in every detail” (p.3). If leadership is tribal in nature and dependent on relationships, then mentoring appears to be an aspect of organizational leadership. Experience and personal reflection play a part in the development of leadership skills. While the literature describes the importance of leaders serving as mentors to the inexperienced there is little known about mentoring for experienced leaders while serving in chief executive positions.

This study examined the mentoring needs of new superintendents. This chapter describes some of the challenges of filling leadership positions in education, specifically the superintendency, and the use of mentoring as a means of preparing the first time superintendent to fill those leadership positions. It provides an overview of a law passed by the Texas legislature requiring that first year superintendents in public schools participate in a mentoring program. This chapter also describes the need for research to discover the mentoring needs of the new superintendent and explains the research questions.

Many policy makers and reformers believe a different kind of school leader is needed for 21st century schools. Some suggest that mentoring is a way to prepare these new leaders. For example, a national panel of educational experts called for the “growing of our own leaders” (U. S. Department of Education, 1999, p.17). By “growing of our own leaders,” the panel meant that future superintendents would come from the ranks of

teachers, principals, and other educational staff. The panel addressed the critical element of reform to improve the quality of educational leadership for the 21st century. The participants on the panel advocated bringing a more practical and realistic orientation to preparation programs. They called for school districts to expand the pool of candidates for leadership positions by recognizing individuals with leadership potential and “giving them structured opportunities to demonstrate their skills and build their expertise” (p.17). The structured opportunities include mentoring and cohort programs that promote the development of leadership for the future.

Some formal mentoring programs exist in the field of education. Many local school districts have implemented formal mentoring programs for teachers, assistant principals, and principals. Some education forecasters think that more teachers will be retiring in the next five years than will be graduating. The use of mentoring is seen as a means to help retain teachers in the profession and assist in attrition (Glickman, 1985). Texley (1999) reports that, as her district in Anchor Bay, Michigan struggle to keep good teachers in science and math, the district administration has looked to mentoring to provide a much-needed support. Keeping good teachers in math and science has become increasingly difficult. She points to a projection by the National Science Teachers Association that 2.2 million teachers must be hired to keep up with retirements, increased student populations, and the enticement of higher entry-level salaries in other fields. Because of the need for math and science teachers is so great, at least one district has instituted mentoring as a way to retain good math and science teachers (Texley, 1999). In recognition of the promise mentoring holds as a vehicle for educational reform, more

than 30 states have mandated beginning teacher support as part of their teacher induction programs (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1988). State regulatory boards and agencies also have perceived mentoring to be important enough to institute requirements that ensure its continuance in practice in the public education system. In response, increasing numbers of school districts have arranged for experienced teachers to help their new colleagues persist and develop beyond their difficult and challenging first year (Portner, 1998).

Shortages of Educators

Teaching is not the only area in education that faces a nationwide shortage. Principals also will be in short supply. The Texas Education Agency has estimated that 75% of Texas' 6500 principals are older than 45 years of age and that 65% of all Texas principals are expected to retire in the next six years (Dejonge, 2000). In addition, in Texas, a large number of superintendents with a vast amount of knowledge are approaching retirement. While no projections have been published for superintendents, it could be inferred that a large percentage of Texas' superintendents also will be eligible for retirement in the next three to six years. Recent changes in the Texas teacher retirement formula have created an incentive for educators to retire. This action has the possibility of leaving a vacuum of professional role knowledge and skill on many levels in schools including the superintendent level. Increasing demands and complexities have heightened public awareness of a need for a different leadership style to address the changing nature of schools. A change in the public's desires and increased complexities of the job of superintendent has helped escalate the exit of experienced superintendents

into retirement. According to Johnson (1996), the school superintendent's job has become much tougher and increasingly more challenging in the past 20 years. She reports the superintendency now requires three dimensions of leadership: managerial, educational, and political.

An American Association of School Administrator's survey of the superintendency projects that; superintendent retirements will create about 1,000 openings nationwide each year for superintendents during the next decade (Natt, 2000). Natt (2000) cites the study as stating that 82 percent of the respondents were at retirement-eligible age. The responses of 1,719 superintendents across the United States from school districts of all sizes were analyzed. Eighty-eight percent of the superintendents polled believed that the shortage of applicants is a "serious crisis in American education" (Natt, paragraph 7). Over 90 percent of the polled superintendents were concerned about the effect a high turnover rate would have on keeping strong leaders in the superintendency. In another recent AASA study in which 2,262 were surveyed, Glass (2000) does not think findings support the idea that the superintendency is in a grave crisis but he believes that superintendents' plans for retirement may contribute to a considerable turnover in school leadership. Both studies indicate considerable turnover in the superintendency will be occurring in the next 5 – 10 years and new leaders will require sufficient professional preparation for the demands of the position.

To address the challenge of large numbers of new superintendents with little or no experience in the role superintendent, the 1999 Texas Legislature enacted a law

requiring that all new superintendents participate in a mentoring relationship. Beginning September 1, 2000, first time public school superintendents are required to adhere to Chapter 19 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 242.25 (See Appendix A) which states that specific guidelines must be followed if a school district has as its chief executive officer a first-time superintendent. The state guidelines require first-time superintendents (including the first-time in the state) must participate in a one-year mentorship to include at least 36 hours of professional development directly related to the state standards for a superintendent identified in Section 242.15 (See Appendix B) of the chapter. The law requires that the superintendent have contact with his or her mentor at least twelve times during the one-year mentorship. The new superintendent must complete the mentorship program for first-time superintendents within the first 18 months of employment in the superintendency in order to maintain the standard certificate. It is the responsibility of the novice superintendent to carry out the law. The Texas legislation appears to be the only state-required mentoring program for school superintendents in the United States.

Little is known about how superintendents are mentored. Studies of mentoring in the educational setting have centered on the student, the teacher or the principal in public education and the relationship between professor and student in higher education. Mentoring the superintendent is different from the more conventional or traditional model of a senior, experienced person taking a novice under his or her wing to teach and help within the same organization. In the traditional sense, mentoring allows for mediated career entry in which novices move gradually from simple to more demanding tasks, and

from modest to substantial responsibility, all under the supervision of acknowledged masters whose skill and longevity have earned them status with an occupation (Peper, 1994).

The required mentoring model for the public school superintendent in Texas differs from the traditional model, as an arms-length or distance mentoring relationship between a first-year superintendent and a seasoned superintendent from another school district is formed. Although the mentor superintendent is in a position to transmit knowledge and skills, provide some socialization to the greater institutional culture, and influence future career opportunities, the mentoring takes place from outside the organization of the local school district.

Mentoring, and on-the-job training enable individuals to adapt quickly to change and sustain the ongoing variety of competencies that are essential to survival (Cohen and Galbraith, 1995). One study suggests mentoring might be especially beneficial to first-time superintendents hired from outside the field of education (Mathews, 1999). A growing number of school districts are hiring nontraditional superintendents. School boards have purposely targeted these nontraditional sources for the superintendency because of their impatience with low student achievement and high educational costs (1999). On-the-job learning is necessary when new superintendents come from the military, business, public service such as city managers, and legal professions. Mathews (1999) reported that many nontraditional superintendents independently seek out mentors among fellow superintendents. The new superintendents find they benefit from other superintendents' advice in handling a variety of situations and basic day-to-day tasks, as

well as the idiosyncrasies of teacher-people skills. These mentors provided “crash courses” in “edu-speak” and “edu-accounting” and protocol for school boards (Mathews, p.28). However, there are few formal programs for the superintendent to enter into an apprenticeship, coaching, cohort, or mentoring relationship.

While there have been various levels of internships in education (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1993; Galbraith & Cohen, 1995; Mullen & Lick, (ed.) 1999), there are none reported other than the Texas law on the superintendent level. Much study and energy has been placed on the mentor relationship of teachers and principals in the field of education, on internships in higher education, and the entry-level position in business. There is considerable literature on the standards, skills, and knowledge that educational leaders must have to take schools into the next millennium (Hoyle et al., 1998). However, there is no specific information or study on the mentoring needs of the individuals who are entering the chief executive level, specifically the superintendent level in public education. The first-year superintendent is in need of assistance and guidance. Superintendent mentors can specifically address the areas of need in the mentoring relationship.

In describing the mentoring experience, Crow and Matthews (1998) use metaphor to describe a journey by the novice and the choice the individual has in finding one’s way either alone or with others. Mentoring, given just a few of the many definitions and descriptions that are being circulated in the education and business fields, is difficult to define precisely. It appears to be individualized by nature to the needs of the person being mentored and the circumstances of that individual (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Fraser,

1998; Milstein, 1993; Portner, 1998). School superintendents may need to define the mentoring relationship on their own terms and fit it to their own unique situation while also meeting the loosely coupled framework of mentoring, as it is known today.

A general tenet of adult education is that lifelong learning is essential, especially in a rapid changing culture (Beder, 1998; Brookfield, 1986; Galbraith and Zelenak, 1989, Schon, 1987). Professionals benefit from learning activities that enable them to assimilate new concepts and pragmatic information and help them apply such knowledge directly to the world of their empirical practice (Cohen, 1995). To prepare for the mentor role, one of the central actions of the mentor is to assess him or herself and realize that what he or she does considerably influences the learning of the one being mentored (Cohen, 1995). For the ‘seasoned’ superintendent mentor to be more effective in his or her assistance to the novice superintendent there must be a base of knowledge of the areas that appear to be most evident as a need to the novice.

The Texas Education Agency and the State Board of Education have not implemented a statewide mentoring program. However, the Texas Association of School Administrators has developed a mentoring program for first-time superintendents in Texas. *Learning for Leadership: A Mentoring Program for Texas Superintendents* is designed “as a tool for addressing the legislative mandate requiring a one-year mentorship for all first-time superintendent in Texas (19 TAC §242.25) (see Appendix A) and as a resource for superintendents serving as mentors in the program” (Monk, 2000, ix). Both the Texas Education Agency and the State Board of Education have approved the program.

The training for the mentor is not described in detail in the law. The criteria for mentors in the TASA mentor training program are: certification in Texas as a superintendent; recognized as exemplary by peers; five or more years of successful experience as a superintendent; willing to commit the time to be a mentor and complete six hours of mentor training; professional commitment to the Texas education system; and membership in TASA is preferred. This is currently the only formal training program for mentors and is in its inaugural year. Other professional organizations, regional service centers, or universities may deliver state approved mentor programs for superintendents.

The Texas superintendent mentoring program targets the qualities and standards in TAC §242.15 (See Appendix B). The expansive and detailed list in the statute is also used by the local board of trustees as a basis for developing the assessment of the superintendent. Each of the eight broad areas is further detailed in the statute. The specific areas include leadership in learner-centered values and ethics, setting leadership and district culture, human resources and management, creating policy and governance, communication and community relations, organizational leadership and management, curriculum planning and development, and instructional leadership and management.

Chapman (1997) reports in her study that most first-year superintendents in her study report that they wished their preparation had been stronger in financial issues, communication and interpersonal skills, political issues, personal stress, and crisis issues such as suicide of a student or teacher. Only financial or budgetary skills and communicating with the various groups of people involved in education are specifically

addressed in TAC §242.15. Mentors can be helpful in each of the above areas. Networking and socialization to the superintendency are not a formalized part of most preparation programs (Chapman, 1997). She also suggests that the first year of superintendency is consumed with management challenges and not the curriculum and instruction issues that can bring about positive change in student academic achievement.

Monk (2000) states that, “it is critically important for an individual in a stressful position such as the superintendency to have someone with whom he or she can discuss concerns and feelings about situations and individuals without fear that such conversations will be repeated” (p. 3). Monk also points out exchanging ideas, strategies, and coping mechanisms with a more experienced person in the same role can reduce the isolation of the chief executive position.

Texas Administrative Code §242.25 could have a secondary purpose in that it may bring about the improvement of the professional skills of the current “seasoned” and experienced superintendents if mentoring is a reciprocating relationship in which the mentor and the mentored both benefit and learn. The statute could have the dual effect of training new superintendents while improving the performance of more experienced superintendents and preserving the body of past knowledge and experiences. Mullen (1999, p. 13) uses the term “comentorship” to describe a framework in which mentoring activities provide powerful ways of furthering the reflection and development of mentors and mentees.

This study was designed to provide information on the mentoring experiences and needs of novice superintendents. This chapter reviewed existing mentoring literature for

definitions and for an understanding of the elements of a successful mentoring relationship, and then described the research.

Statement of the Problem

The research problem was to determine the mentoring needs of new superintendents in Texas. To address this problem, the superintendents' previous and current mentoring relationships were examined and skills and knowledge where novice superintendents need help were identified.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to determine how novice superintendents feel the mentor can be best utilized for both their professional and personal development to make them more effective in their school district. It determined what elements should be included in a formal superintendent-mentoring program.

Research Questions

The study was designed to address the following research questions:

- What skills, knowledge, and attitudes do novice superintendents identify as most critical for mentor assistance?
- What mentor characteristics does the mentored superintendent consider necessary to have a positive effect on his or her job success and career?
- What effects have previous mentoring experiences (if any) had on the novice superintendent?
- Are there differences among the needs of the first-year superintendent associated with the enrollment size of the school district?

- Are there differences in the needs of the first-year superintendents based on the ethnicity or gender of the mentored superintendent?

Definition of Terms

Mentor or Sponsor – A more experienced individual whose mastery is signified and generally acknowledged by skill and longevity in an occupation, and who gives assistance to a novice in the profession and prepares them for advancement (Clutterbuck, 1991). The word mentor has been characterized using such synonyms as sponsor, guide, counselor, coach, friend, parent, preceptor, and teacher (Cohen, 1995; Crow and Mathews, 1998; Zey, 1984). Vanzant (1980) describes a mentor as a person who acts as sponsor, advocate, guide – or who teaches, advises, trusts, critiques, and supports another to express, pursue, and finalize goals.

Mentee or Protégé or Apprentice – A novice who is assisted, guided, or given advice by a more experienced person of the same profession, a neophyte in a new role, job, or profession. Cohen (1995) uses the term mentee to designate the one being mentored. The term “protégé” comes from the French verb “protéger,” meaning to protect. A protégé is a person guided and helped, especially in the furtherance of a career by another more influential person (Auster, 1984). Farnham-Diggory (1994) defines the apprentice as one who gains in-depth knowledge of a role through membership and immersion in that culture. Monk (2000) uses the term “the mentored ...” with the blank being the job position such as teacher or superintendent.

Participant – An individual who is interviewed; a subject of inquiry; or an informant. Seidman (1998) defines the participant as a person who reconstructs their experiences

actively with another within the context of their life.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include:

1. In interview studies, it is often not possible to employ random sampling or even a stratified random sampling. The sample in this study was self-selected because participants were determined based on their willingness to be interviewed. This self-selection allows the possibility of other variables to affect the outcome. Therefore, there is no manipulation of independent variables and a lack of power to randomize. When assignment is not random, there is always a loophole for other variables to come through (Kerlinger, 1986).
2. The amount and depth of information participants are willing to share cannot be controlled and the participants may limit the information being asked of them (Seidman, 1998). The amounts of information about themselves as well as their ability to convey and communicate about their role and needs as a superintendent may be restrained. Participants may unconsciously omit information in the course of the interview.
3. This study uses an interview as the sole source of information and triangulation of data sources is unable to be achieved. Data triangulation as described by Denzin (1978) must occur between three different data sources, which can be compared so researchers can discover what concepts the data sources have in common. Only two data sources, the structured interviews and literature on the necessary skills, functions, role, and responsibilities of the superintendent, as well as characteristics of

- mentoring relationships are compared.
4. The lack of interviewing skills of the researcher can result in:
 - a. The danger of manipulating the respondent to respond to the interviewing guide in a preconceived manner and should be guarded against. To prevent this source of bias leading questions were avoided so as not to influence the direction of the response. Imposing one's own preconceived ideas could damage the validity of the study (Seidman, 1998).
 - b. Loss of data can occur if the protocol is not followed consistently with each participant to prevent unnecessary information and facilitate the uniform collection of data between participants. Data can also be lost or missed in the transcribing of taped interviews as well as in the analyzing of the interviews as the transcripts are marked, separated and grouped according to themes (Seidman, 1998).
 5. The range of variation in the participants is important. The small scale of this study may be cause for misrepresentation of the first-year superintendent's needs from a mentor and lead to an over generalization. Too few participants can lead to too little data to come to a valid inference or may lead one to conclude that the information gathered is idiosyncratic to the participants and irrelevant to the larger population of first-year superintendents (Seidman, 1998; Tagg, 1985).

All of these limitations create the risk of improper interpretation of data.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the knowledge base regarding development of the school

superintendent or chief executive and provides guidance to developers of mentor programs required by TAC § 242.25. This study is unique in that its goal is to gather data that will meet an immediate need while also impacting future mentoring programs. The information gathered is timely and relevant. The data can be used as a basis for a formal program through describing in narrative the first-year superintendent's perspective of a mentor as a new state law is being enacted. There is currently only one formal program in Texas in place for training mentors or mentoring the first-year superintendent that meets the requirement of the law. The program is in its first year and will require refinement to better effectively meet first-year superintendents' needs.

This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge about the use of mentoring in the field of education. While there is information on mentoring students in school, mentoring interns and students in higher education and with teachers and principals in public education, there is no information or research on mentoring at the superintendent level.

The Texas law is general and does not direct any specific source to provide the training. The Texas law requires the first-year superintendent to have a mentor and that the mentor be trained, but there are no formal mentoring training programs in place. There is no specific information on mentoring the chief executive officer of a school district. This calls into question how effective the law will be in achieving its goal of training and support for the new superintendent. Mentoring is an effective training technique and has shown its merit in the learning of one's profession. However, for the law to be effective, relevant and beneficial programs need to be in place both for the

mentor and the superintendent being mentored. An effective program based on real data from superintendents who have recently completed their first year in the position can help prevent ineffective programs where people waste or mark time and receive no benefit, and the experience is reduced to checking off a requirement. The experience of the mentoring relationship should result in meaningful and relevant learning.

This chapter described the need for research to discover the perceived needs of the novice superintendent in order to establish effective mentoring programs. It gave an overview of mentoring and its use in training the critical leadership position of the superintendent of schools. The chapter identified the need for strong school leaders to replace an aging leadership finishing up their careers. It outlined the directive as set forth by Texas legislators concerning the mentoring of first-year superintendents in public schools. This chapter also described the purpose of this study and the questions it will answer in order to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning mentoring the first-year superintendent.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The demands and expectations of superintendents are greater than ever for new superintendents entering the job. The superintendent has been described as “a practitioner of survival” (Chapman, 1997, iii). Paul Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, points out “schools have been described as the “world of permanent white water, where nothing remains tranquil for even a moment” (Patterson, 2000, v). Houston further emphasizes that “the skills required to navigate the rapids cannot be taught in a graduate course; they are learned amidst the changing currents and submerged hazards” (p. v). Thus Mackay’s (1988) appropriately titled book describes survival within the corporate world as a need to know how to *Swim With the Sharks*, as relevant and applicable to today’s superintendent of schools. Fritts (1998) suggests that managers who are survivors represent an excellent pool of potential mentors. Cohen and Galbraith (1995) believe that mentors offer valuable contributions to the personal, educational, and career development of the mentored as individual citizens, which promotes the collective enrichment of our culture. Mentoring may show promise in the successful growth and learning process of the school’s chief executive officer.

Mentoring is a social phenomenon that may happen naturally and voluntarily or through design as part of an organizational development program. Although there is no

common description of the mentoring process or the elements of a formal program, there is agreement that mentoring is an important element in the success or failure of a neophyte educator (Daresh & Playko, 1993; Brown et al., 1994; Luna, 1994; Thody & Crystal, 1994; Daresh, 1988; Mullen & Cox, 1997).

This chapter examines many of the definitions and descriptions of the mentoring relationship in literature as well as some of the educational programs that foster the mentoring relationship. It will examine what is known about traditional mentoring and emerging ideas about mentoring. This chapter will look at the role and responsibility of the Texas superintendent as it relates to statutory requirements for mentoring as well as the implications these requirements and additional demands have on the job of the superintendent. It will also look at the key role mentoring can have on one's first year as a superintendent of schools.

Traditional Mentoring

The concept of mentoring, whether in the field of education, business or industry, does not have a common definition, nor is there consensus of what mentoring should look like. Jacobi (1991, p.506) states, "although many researchers have attempted to provide concise definitions of mentoring or mentors, definitional diversity continues to characterize the limitations." This has not kept scholars from attributing their own meaning, trying to capture the elaborate latticework of social and psychological factors as well as the individualistic nature that makes up a mentoring relationship.

Merriam (1983, p. 169) points out that there is a difference among conceptual frameworks where "mentoring appears to mean one thing to developmental

psychologists, another thing to business people, and a third thing to those in academic settings.” It is seen by social scientists as a form of socialization. Mentoring has different degrees of concept definition to social scientists. Mentoring can be based either on the feelings, attitudes, and relationships of the individuals involved or on the organization and its functions and social makeup in parts or as a whole. Luna and Cullen (1995) believe that “most important, mentoring is a philosophy about people and how critical they are to an organization” (p. 73). Traditionally, in business, companies have viewed mentoring as a relatively low-cost way to develop flexible, adaptive networks of learners (Fritts, 1998). In business, mentoring is generally thought of as the preparation or “grooming” of employees within the organization by senior experienced personnel to be the future managers of that organization.

In the public education setting discussion of mentoring has focused on the development of both teachers and students. Mentoring has been described as “a comprehensive effort directed toward helping a protégé develop the attitudes and behaviors (skills) of self-reliance and accountability within a defined environment (Bey & Holmes, 1992, p. 53).

Educators commonly use the term, *mentoring*, but a precise definition of the word that could serve as a template to judge whether a person is doing mentoring or not, or is doing mentoring well or poorly, is difficult to ascertain (Peper, 1994). However, Merriam (1983) believes that the traditional meaning of mentoring that all groups can generally agree upon is that mentoring is the teaching of specialized knowledge and skills as well as intervention strategies in career development and learning from one or more

experience. In an attempt to establish a common definition of mentoring Thody and Crystal (1994) recommend adopting the British national principals' recommended definition of the mentor. The definition includes five functions of the mentor as catalyst, linkage, broker, problem solver, buddy, and a sixth catchall function called "other." Adoption of the definition implies a sort of orthodoxy in its national scope, and the definition provides a basis for evaluating the benefits to the individual being mentored (Peper, 1994). There is currently no nationally agreed upon definition and the functions of a mentor in the United States.

In higher education, literature shows that mentoring may enrich student personnel and development functions, improve the instructional process and student and faculty relations, and enhance professional faculty as well as student development (Cohen & Galbraith, 1995). They explain that the mentoring model of one-on-one interaction is an important approach to lifelong learning and a pragmatic method of helping diverse citizens to adapt to rapidly changing personal, social, and workplace situations. Sponsored mentoring programs are planned interventions that arrange the mentor-mentee match and focus the mutual commitment of the participants on creating relationships that are initiated to maximize the learning of the mentee. They hold that "mentoring is a deliberate effort to support traditional and nontraditional college students from different backgrounds in formal and informal settings" (p.5). Cohen and Galbraith further describe mentoring as a one-to-one interactive process of guided developmental learning based on the premise that the participants will have reasonably frequent contact and sufficient interactive time together. Mentors contribute their knowledge, proficiency, and

experience to assist the mentored that are working toward the achievement of their own objectives.

Mentoring perhaps interpreted in its simplest form is donating back into another life one's own experiences. Cohen and Galbraith (1995) believe that the importance of the relationship becomes stronger from the mentee's standpoint through the collaborative learning experience. Daresh and Playko (1994) believe one of the attributes of mentoring as being evidenced by a relationship that is both developmental and supportive in its nature. Luna (1994) similarly describes mentoring as a "functional" supportive relationship. A relationship in which both the mentor and the one mentored receives both professional and personal benefits.

Recently there has been a revival of interest in the use of mentoring as a mode of teaching and learning. There is no common definition among educators concerning the description or method of mentoring (Funk and Kochan). Mullen and Lick, (1999) point out that American culture values individual accomplishment over collaboration, and there appears to be little formal mentoring occurring on a large-scale basis. If mentoring plays a part in the life-long learning process (Mullen and Cox, 1997, xxi), what can we learn from these relationships that can help future mentoring experiences? Borrowing from Dewey (1934) to further define the meaning of mentoring one might view the mentoring relationship as the "activity setting" educators create as they shape experience while also establishing conditions to promote "experiences that lead to growth" (pp. 39, 40). Levinson (1977) believes one learns how to behave for later success through a mentor who assists through the transitions of a career.

Emerging Ideas of Mentoring

While traditional views of mentoring focus on the mentor guiding the novice within an organization by providing career development and support, emerging views have a much broader and far-reaching perspective of the act of mentoring. Maxwell (1996) believes that those closest to the leader determine his level of success or failure. Thus, when leaders provide mentoring for potential leaders, they insure their own as well as the organization's success. This suggests that mentoring is a reciprocal relationship in which both the mentor and the protégé reap some benefits of personal and/or professional growth. Osin and Lesgold (1996) suggest a form of collaborative learning for students, that is, much like mentoring. They identify this special form of learning as "cognitive apprenticeship" as described by (Collins, 1991). In this approach the collaborators consists of a successful practitioner of some expertise and the student. Lave and Wagner (1991) describe the student as a "legitimate peripheral participant." Learning takes place partly through the negotiation of meaning much like "straight collaboration, but the negotiation is primarily done by the practitioner since the terms being discussed are shared by a community of practice" (p. 625). The learner is in the role of protégé entering the community of practice or a profession.

Cognitive apprenticeship is a special form of collaborative learning in which the collaborators are successful practitioners of some expertise and the student is a novice in the field seeking greater or deeper involvement in that field. As described by Osin and Lesgold (1996) the cognitive apprenticeship has three primary features. First, the tasks to be completed are realistic, complex, and examples of valued performance in a particular

domain that is considered an essential area of knowledge or skill needed in carrying out the role or responsibility a job. The domain simulations are designed to make the task more realistic and less in strictly verbal exchanges or descriptions by the coach. Second, the coach and other parts of the performance environment provide a “scaffolding” to support the student. This enables students to complete valued and increasingly difficult objectives before they are fully competent to act independently. The other important component in cognitive apprenticeship is the concept of reflection. Reflection after and on the specific task provides opportunity for the student to identify the best solution and the components of cognitive processing. A drawback to the cognitive apprenticeships is the extreme cost of human expert time that each student requires. However, Olin and Lesgold recommend using technology to simulate important tasks to reduce that cost.

Kram (1985) has studied mentors in corporate circles. Her findings suggest that mentoring has two functions. The first is a career function, which focuses on learning the ropes of the profession and preparation for a career move. The second function is the psychosocial, which involves the development of the individual in his/her social environment. The career function brings about professional promotion and the psychosocial function affects the individual on a personal level, clarifying one’s role identity. It also acclimates the fledgling employee to the work environment. One-on-one mentoring programs have long been a part of management development in major corporations, but the emerging concept of the “learning organization” has sparked renewed interest in mentoring (Fritts, 1998, p. 3). In corporate management training some early formal mentoring programs were diversity driven to ease entry of women and

minorities into leadership roles. She describes other programs as being informal and intended to provide opportunities for young, high-potential managers, usually white males, to ride to success on the coat tails of senior managers.

Research in the private sector has shown that mentoring is a controversial topic in current management circles. Fritts (1998) believes that because managers are focused on survival, managers in downsized organizations are skeptical of the value of these programs. Managers have little time or energy to mentor an ambitious younger person who might take their job. Fritts (1998) argues that one reason there are different views on the value of mentoring is the lack of common definition of what comprises effective mentoring in times of organizational change.

Senge (1994), one of the creators of the concept of the learning organization, believes that since learning means expanding people's capacity to do new things, it happens best when they actually do real things. And although frustrating at times, the quality of learning by doing is far superior to classroom training in that people get the chance to see how their newly honed skills help them become more effective performers (Fritts, 1998). Fritts defines the learning organization as a company committed to the continual development of individuals and groups to meet changing business needs. The futuristic learning organization sees mentoring as a key human resource strategy. She further explains learning organizations use mentoring as a way to ensure that they have the leadership talent needed to move the company into the future.

Fritts (1998) argues that effective organizational change is not best achieved by trying to sweep away the past. It is better achieved through the purposeful

implementation of continual learning practices that integrate the best of the past with a challenging vision of the future. Experienced managers can act as key integrators in the learning process, and, in doing so, find new meaning in their work and share in the creation of communities of purpose. “People are united in pursuit of meaningful goals and the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning and not tied to old loyalties” (Fritts, 1998, p. xiii). She defines the new managerial mentor as one who uses personal knowledge and experience to grow and change and to help others do the same. These mentors “act as teachers and stewards, encouraging people to continually acquire the new skills they need to help their organizations thrive in a new era” (p. 183).

Fritts (1998) offers a new view of the mentor in the business organization. Instead of the traditional view of the mentor, she describes mentors as “learning leaders” replacing the view of mentors as senior managers who personally nurture favored “sons” and “daughters” (p. xiv). Learning leaders are managerial mentors who network across organizational boundaries to address the real-time learning needs of a particular business. She also asserts that managers who possess the skills to motivate, mentor, and engage in collaborative learning can serve as exemplary leaders of change. This is unlike traditional mentors. Managerial mentors serve as both teachers and learners in a relationship based on shared purpose, co-inquiry, respect, and trust.

Others reinforce this broader view of learning in the organization. Mullen (1999) urges support for comentoring dynamics among professionals to create an environment where individuals are empowered through interaction where they learn together for the purpose of personal and institutional change. Cohen and Galbraith (1995) believe that

mentoring provides an opportunity for managers to learn directly from the staff.

Bynum (1998) describes coaching and learning/working teams as two ways to improve quality, productivity, and employee satisfaction. The coaching steps used to teach people how to do their jobs are necessary for success. The steps should include explaining the purpose and importance of what one is trying to teach and the process to be used. The coach or mentor then shows the mentee how it is done, following up by observing the mentee practicing the process while providing immediate and specific feedback. If necessary the mentor will coach again while reinforcing the successes. In every step the coach is to express confidence in the mentee's ability to be successful. The last step includes both the mentee and coach agreeing on the necessary follow-up actions. Many natural or purposeful mentors probably unconsciously use these steps in the mentoring process. Effective leaders (mentors) will use these steps while also enhancing self-esteem, listening and responding with empathy, sharing thoughts, feelings and rationale, asking for help and encouraging involvement (Bynum, 1998).

Coaching is also used to describe mentoring. Peters and Austin (1985) believe that the art of coaching has five roles: educating, sponsoring, coaching, counseling, and confirming. Each role utilizes appropriate timing, a specific emphasis, desired results, and key skills necessary for coaching. The key coaching skills are the ability to listen, explain, encourage, provide clear specific feedback, and honesty. Peters and Austin (1985) state, "The best coaches set in motion a continuing learning process – one that helps people develop a tolerance for their own struggles and accelerates the unfolding of skills and contributions that would not have been possible without the 'magic' attention

of a dedicated coach.”

Mullen (1999) believes that to achieve the maximum benefit from the mentoring relationship there is a synergy between “co-mentors” that must begin with the belief that everyone involved will gain more insight. And that the excitement of that mutual learning and insight will create a momentum toward more and more insights, learning, and growth for both mentor and protégé. This type of relationship involves a trust between the mentor and the protégé. Covey (1989) describes the importance of synergy in a relationship where one opens up one’s mind and heart and expressions to new possibilities, new alternatives, and new options. He defines synergy as the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. It means that the relationship in which the parts have to each other is a part in and of itself (Covey, 1989, p. 263).

Mentoring and Mentoring Programs in Education

There are different mentoring programs for the many levels in an educational career as well as for entire schools. Mentoring programs are specifically designed for pre-service teachers, teachers, pre-service administrators, principals, and superintendents. There are mentoring programs to bring about school-wide improvement also.

Pre-service Teacher Mentoring

There are several pre-service teacher mentoring or coaching programs in place. These are commonly sponsored and run by colleges and universities across the nation. Sopko and Hilgemeier (Mullen & Lick, ed., 1999) found university professors reported evidence of positive changes in preservice teachers’ ability to make connections between theory and practice when they were prepared in the professional development schools.

The professional development setting provided student teachers close mentoring through observation, sharing, reflection and coaching from both experienced teachers and professors of the neophyte teacher.

Teacher Mentoring

Many local school districts have independently as well as in collaboration with universities established mentoring programs for the practicing first-year teacher. Fraser (1998) identified principles for effective teacher mentoring.

- A mentor must be responsive to individual learners, recognizing the learners as individuals with unique needs and interests.
- Flexibility is essential; mentoring work must be tailored to fit the needs and pace of the individual learner.
- Mentoring is grounded in sensitive, skilled observation.
- A close, honest relationship is the foundation of effective mentoring.

Lifelong learning is a goal of the mentoring relationship (p.102).

Pre-service Administrator Mentoring

Mentoring programs for pre-service administrators have also been developed. The Danforth Foundation of St. Louis, Missouri supported an experimental program to stimulate structured mentoring relationships between universities and school district administrators (Barnett, 1990). Danforth-sponsored administrator preparation programs see the practitioner with whom the intern serves and forms a close association as significant keys to productive learning experiences for the interns. When the Danforth-sponsored university preparation programs formed collaborative arrangements with local

school districts, both school administrators and college professors recognized the importance of mentoring relationships after a period of working together. The partners in Danforth programs believe that, if they can select a cadre of successful practitioners who willingly bond with, model for, and demonstrate to talented novices the best of administrative practice, the mentoring experience can have a remarkable likelihood of success (Milstein, 1993, 30-31). However, creating and implementing the conditions for an effective program is difficult. Milstein (1993) states that the selection, training, and evaluation of mentors are major challenges for these types of programs because of the limited time mentors have to devote to training and developing a relationship with the mentee.

Students in some administrator preparation programs experience some form of mentorship during their internships. Internships are characterized by the guided supervision of the novice by a person currently in an administrative position within the organization. The individual is shadowed in his or her job role by the novice or occasionally observes then consults with the novice who aspires to a similar position in the organization. The intern performs the tasks of the job under the supervision of the individual who is actually responsible for the job. Hills (1975) suggest that internships in administration should be taken more seriously now than in the past because internships are the only contexts in which an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and values can be influenced. He believes that the experience of an internship will make the difference between a moderately and outstandingly successful administrator and his/her performance. Hills also indicates that one critical component of the internship is if the

administrator with whom the intern served had formed a close association. Over twenty years later, “close association” is called a “mentoring relationship” (Bova & Phillips, 1984; Kram, 1985) and continues to be viewed as crucial in the preparation of school leaders (Barnett, 1990; Daresh, 1988). Administrator Mentoring

Crow and Matthews (1998) identified a difference between career development in corporate environments and professional development in education. The career functions in school leadership are different from those in other fields because there are fewer upper-level school administrator positions available for advancement. Consequently, the sponsoring of the mentored educational leader is a different mentoring activity. The professional development needs of principals are different from career development needs in business because of the dynamics and constant evolutionary nature of the principalship. The Crow and Matthews (1998) mentoring model for school administrators has three functions. The professional development function concentrates on the development of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values for dynamic school leadership. The career development function of mentoring is focused on career satisfaction, awareness, and advancement. The psychosocial development function promotes the personal and emotional well being, clarifies role expectations, and reduces organizational conflict.

Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1998) describe the ideal leadership preparation model as a combination of the best preparation practices, which involve development of a knowledge base through traditional instructional means and clinical or field-based experiences. They call for change in the administration preparation program based on the

recent Professional Studies Model (PSM) designed for full-time administrators and others who wish to pursue the doctorate. PSM centers on a cohort of students who are practicing or aspiring administrators selected by a committee consisting of both university faculty and practicing school administrators. Faculty and school administrators become teachers and mentors while the cohort group also contributes to each other's education through sharing experiences. The teaching centers on knowledge "domains" rather than traditional courses that follow no sequence. Students note the benefits of the program as - networking, strong bonds, and team learning. Mentors are used to administer a pre-assessment of each cohort member's skill level on each of the nine standards and then guide the student in preparing a portfolio that should include a curriculum map of the standard/skill areas and projects completed to demonstrate mastery of each standard. The mentor and the student keep a record of each successful step and work together to find alternative learning strategies to seek mastery of each standard/skill.

Another program described by Hoyle et al. (1998) is the Duquesne Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders (EDPEL) Model that centers on The Professional Standards for the Superintendency (American Association of School Administrators, 1993). This program also has cohort groups, which participate in activities such as professional problem-solving teams, study groups, continuous networking, and benchmarking and feedback on each participant's progress. Each cohort member selects a campus faculty advisor as well as a field mentor-practitioner and becomes part of a scholarly community of practitioners and university faculty. The Duquesne faculty has developed a practica checklist, which provides a framework for the

student and mentor to gauge the student's progress in demonstrating mastery of the identified skill indicators. The mentor and student periodically meet to confer regarding the student's progress. These meetings are a structured reflection time in which the student presents evidence in written or graphic form to the mentor of each skill indicator mastered. Once the mentor is convinced of the student's conceptual and practical mastery of a skill, the mentor initials the dates and area of completion.

School-wide Mentoring

Formal mentoring relationships have been implemented among entire schools. This type of mentoring has been termed as institutional mentoring (Brown et al., 1999). The *Texas Mentor School Network* for Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle and High School is an example. The *Texas Mentor School Network* goal is to identify schools that are committed to implementing research-based practices that improve student achievement and to sharing and modeling those practices on a statewide basis for other schools. After an orientation on how to introduce their school to others, the mentor schools host visits from other schools, and facilitate networking opportunities for campuses in their region and across the state. This program was established in 1991 and has 165-mentor early childhood, elementary, middle and high schools serving as mentor schools across the state.

This concept of sharing successful practices among schools appears to be the same concept behind the legislation requiring mentoring for the first-year superintendent. The desired outcome being one of application to the mentee's situation where through visits and conversations successful practices are shared. First-year superintendents learn

successful practices through the modeling and guidance of successful, experienced, and seasoned superintendents that will positively effect the management of school districts while meeting the goal of improved student achievement.

Superintendent Mentoring

There are a small number of formal cohort and formal mentoring programs for practicing administrators in the beginning stages of implementation. The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) began “Learning for Leadership: A Mentoring Program for Texas Superintendents” (Texas Association of School Administrators, 2000). The purpose of the TASA program is to address the legislative mandate requiring a one-year mentorship for all first-time superintendents in Texas (19 TAC §242.25) by providing structure and training for the mentor and mentored superintendents.

Glass (2000) is a proponent of state-funded yearlong superintendency internships for women administrators to give them a close view of the position. He found that one of the reasons there are fewer women in the superintendency is that they seem to have a less-developed mentoring system compared to men. This is important since mentors many times “act as go-betweens among superintendent candidates and school boards” (p.31). He believes that mentors provide in-district mobility opportunities for women aspiring to the superintendency. Glass emphasizes that the careful selection of mentors may be influential in attracting superintendent interns into the profession. Who the mentor is, as well as an internship, may attract excellent superintendent candidates to consider the position.

Describing the Mentor

Crow and Matthews (1998) define a mentor as

...not only a teacher or a coach who focus primarily on the task and results.

Mentors focus on individuals and their development. They act as confidants willing to play the part of an adversary if needed, to listen, and to question so protégés can broaden their own way. (p.3)

Fraser (1998) describes being a mentor as like having a garden. “Conditions must be right for learning and growth to occur” (p.4). She emphasizes the importance of the rapport between the mentor and protégé. The relationship will grow stronger if the partners feel a kinship, openness, and trust as they work toward a common goal. These feelings are necessary for a successful mentor experience.

In a study of first-year elementary principals and their mentors in New York City Public Schools, Grover (1994) reported that a majority of the 125 new elementary school principals stated that mentoring was a helpful experience. In that study of New York Public Schools’ informal mentoring program the mentees use the following characteristics to describe a helpful mentor: knowledge of the school system, experience as an administrator and superintendent, resourceful, accessible, and trustworthy.

One area that mentors agree is necessary is an orientation to the program and to the responsibilities and expectations of a mentor. Typically, mentors have not been receptive to formal training because of their already busy schedule. Also, most mentors believe they already have the needed training and experience in knowledge as well as coaching skills and clinical supervision.

Cohen (1995) describes the mentor model in his *Adult Mentoring Scale*. The purpose of the mentor model is to help mentors motivate mentees to take the necessary risks to make decisions without certainty of successful results and to overcome difficulties in their own journeys toward education. Cohen describes the mentor behavior demonstrating the following:

- The offering of personal thoughts and genuine feelings to emphasize value of learning from unsuccessful or difficult experiences such as trial and error and self-correction and not as growth limiting “failures.”
- Selection of related examples and experiences from their personal experiences to provide possible motivational value.
- Direct and realistic assessment of a positive belief in the mentees’ abilities to pursue goals.
- A confident view of the necessary and appropriate risk taking so as to develop personally, professionally, and educationally.
- The mentor uses statements that clearly encourage personal actions to attain stated objectives.

Benefits to the Mentor

The act of being a mentor has the potential to strengthen the leader in the role of mentor. Covey (1989) characterizes the interaction of two professionals in the same field with common goals as the habit of “sharpening the saw” (p.287). Crow and Matthews (1998) identify the mentor as the guide in the relationship, whose benefits are meaningful but many may only be implied benefits. They point out many of the benefits found in

recent literature. A personal and professional relationship such as mentoring and shared experiences lends itself or implies that both individuals, rather than just the mentored, may benefit from the relationship.

Mentors receive something in return for their mentoring. Milstein (1993) points to the University of Central Florida program where mentors reported that although there are no extrinsic rewards, there are significant intrinsic rewards. Those intrinsic rewards include:

- A chance to analyze and reflect on what they do so that they can explain it to their interns
- Having intelligent learners to help clarify school-based problems
- Being kept up-to-date about what is happening in educational administration
- Having opportunities to network with professionals from other schools
- Having a potential impact on the coming generation of educational leadership.

Daresh and Playko (1993) found that mentors gain a renewed enthusiasm for the profession. Mentors are able to avoid isolation, positively affect their own growth, and collaborate on improved leadership and innovation in their field. The collaboration allows for new insight. Many mentors learn computer and technical skills through their relationship with peers (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995). The collaboration and reflective discussions facilitate an expanded understanding of leadership.

Other benefits of mentoring to the mentor include the opportunity to evaluate critically one's own intuitive processes. The mentoring experience allows the mentor to articulate what one does, how one does it, and why. This process allows the mentor to

reflect on his/her own leadership processes and styles in a unique way (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995) while also facilitating reflective processes in the protégé.

The mentor can also gain satisfaction in playing the part of teacher again. Superintendents and principals have expressed frustration in being separated from the teaching process when they move into administration. The establishment of a mentoring relationship allows the mentor to regain the interaction and satisfaction of teaching (Daresh & Playko, 1993). Mentors can gain validation of their importance and the importance of their work. The endorsement of receiving recognition as a mentor can add meaning to one's work (Daresh & Playko, 1993).

Crow and Matthews (1998) found that after having worked with an intern, mentors in higher education requested another intern. Mentors have expressed enjoyment in the experience and miss it when it is absent in their work. Roche (1979) pointed out that the friendships that developed became valuable assets for principals in later years. Mentors can gain long-lasting and meaningful friendships that continue long after the formal mentoring process has ended. Daresh and Playko (1993) found that mentors expand their network for ideas and career opportunities either for promotion or new employment. The mentoring relationship allows for opportunities that may not have been previously present through the expansion of people networks and resources.

The Challenges of Mentoring

Mentoring may produce negative effects on either the mentor or protégé. The reality that mentoring involves a human relationship between two different individuals expands the possible decisions that can take place and the numerous outcomes of a shared

experience. Some mentors with selfish concerns or ulterior motives may want the prestige, honor, or status that may come from mentoring. They may have personal agendas and may not always have the best interests of others in mind (Muse, Wasden, & Thomas, 1988). For example, a person may take on the responsibility of being a mentor in order to have the protégé help in carrying out the mentor's personal agenda within the organization, which could have a negative effect on the organization.

Mentoring may restrict problem-solving and decision-making perspectives of the mentee. The mentor may be so committed to a particular style of leadership that other possible approaches are not ever considered (Crow & Matthews, 1998). The mentoring relationship may promote dependency in the mentee. Instead of developing an interdependent relationship, mentees may become so reliant on the mentor that common decisions cannot be made without some consultation with the mentor.

Another challenge is the limitations of the mentor, who may be an expert in one area and not very knowledgeable in another area of the field. The fact that one is in a mentoring relationship may support a polarized belief that mentors have either all the right answers or no answers. In reality, all mentors have strengths and weaknesses (Crow & Matthews, 1998).

Mentors can encourage cloning (Hay, 1995). Hart (1991, 1993), in a review on leader succession and socialization, believes that mentors can constrain innovation, and that using only established veterans as mentors nearly guarantees the reproduction of existing roles.

Benefits for the Mentee or Protégé

The benefits for the mentee appear obvious in that the primary focus of mentoring is to assist the novice. The mentee would appear to gain greater insight into him/herself, establish a basis for a network, and learn the ins and outs of the profession. Crow and Matthews (1998) found more subtle changes in thinking. New ideas for practice emerge as the mentee gains more and different experiences. Although the ideas are adapted from the ideas of others, Crow and Matthews found that the mentee became more creative. Torrance (1984) also found that people who had mentors were more creatively productive.

The mentored individual can gain protection from potentially damaging situations when the mentor runs interference, preventing potentially damaging situations that he or she may not be developmentally ready to tackle. Crow and Matthews (1998) believe that one of the key responsibilities of the mentor is to outline difficulties that the mentee may encounter in the profession. They hold that if the protégé becomes too visible too soon and makes mistakes, then future career opportunities could be limited. However, the mentor should not shelter the mentee so much that growth, development, and socialization are slowed or do not take place (Crow & Matthews). The mentor responsibility is a delicate balancing act and one that must be monitored regularly with assessing where the mentee is in professional development.

The mentee and his/her fate are also influenced by visibility with key personnel (Crow & Matthews, 1998). The mentor exposes and introduces the mentee to a variety of others in the profession increasing the mentees network of individuals. This process can

also influence future career opportunities. As acquaintances are made with other professionals the visibility opportunities increase.

Mentoring relationships can create more opportunities for the mentored individual. Crow and Matthews (1998) point out the increased opportunities for challenging and risk-taking opportunities, which also can positively affect confidence and competence. The mentor's support can be critical to both the mentee's success in meeting challenging situations and the mentee's willingness to take risks while problem solving. This is especially important for administrative interns and new principals for whom challenging opportunities may seem too threatening to venture upon on their own.

Just as the process promotes reflection for the mentor, it promotes reflection for the mentee. The relationship allows for reflection, which is believed to promote deep learning. Both the mentor and the mentee become more insightful about actions and decisions when they talk and discuss together about those actions and decisions. Kanter (1977) suggests that individuals gain "reflective power" from working and discussing with their mentors. Cohen (1995) believes that "the transactional process of learning" that mentoring provides in "the collaborative participation and mutual critical thinking and reflection about the process, value, and results of jointly derived learning goals established for the mentee" results in deeper understanding (p. 14).

In a study of the preparation factors common in outstanding community college presidents McFarlin and Ebbers (1997) used a peer rating scale to divide the 125 respondents into an outstanding/leading group and a normative group while using a questionnaire to determine respondents' characteristics with respect to nine preparation

factors. Two of the factors were participation as a protégé in a protégé/mentor relationship and involvement in a peer network. After analysis of the responses, their peers identified 17 of the 125 respondents as leading presidents. Peer networks and mentors as well as non-traditional paths to the college presidency were identified as factors in their preparation and leadership skills for the role as compared with the normative group.

Benefits To Others

Crow and Matthews (1998) suggest that people associated with the mentee outside the unique mentor-mentee relationship also benefit. The authors describe in metaphor the relationship of the mentor and mentee as a journey. They believe that these secondary or peripheral “passengers” on this journey include university faculty, district students, teachers, administrators, family, and friends also benefit from the relationship. Daresh and Playko (1993) note that leaders in school districts that have mentoring programs had the tendency to be more energized through the mentoring program.

This positively affects others the mentored individual comes in contact with. Administrators involved in mentoring programs in their district appear to have a cadre of more capable leaders. Daresh and Playko (1993) also point out that a community of learners becomes more apparent through a mentoring program and an attitude of lifelong learning is created among those who are involved in the mentoring program.

Another secondary beneficiary is school districts. They gain more prepared potential candidates for administrative positions. Nash and Treffinger (1993) believe that the visibility and exposure that mentees receive allows more individuals to emerge as

successful candidates for administrative positions. Additionally, Tallerico (2000) believes mentoring plays a part in successfully accessing the superintendency, especially from underrepresented groups such as women and minorities.

When mentoring is a part of the administrative preparation programs, university faculty members receive the benefit of having a means to link theory with practice (Crow & Matthews, 1993). The associations in the internship experiences and course subject matter give opportunity for more frequent occurrences to link relevant experiences with practice and theory than when there is no internship experience.

Principals who are involved in collegial and reflective mentoring are more collaborative and interested in the improvement of teaching and learning (Crow & Matthews, 1998). Teachers and students also benefit because of the opportunity of working with more dynamic leaders who show interest in what they do.

Lastly, family and friends receive the benefit from proteges learning to balance multiple roles. The mentoring experience provides the protégé with a clearer perception of the roles he/she plays with school, family, and friends (Crow & Matthews, 1993).

Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities

The public school superintendent is a position with specific professional standards and functions. The superintendent must draw from several different sources for the skills, knowledge, roles, and responsibilities of the job. The standards and functions are diversified and numerous in literature, through professional organizations, and in state statutes. The Texas Education Code, the Commissioner's Rules, the Texas Administrative Code, the State Board of Education, standards adopted by professional

organizations such as the American and Texas Associations of School Administrators, and various other professional material and literature must be referred to by the superintendent. All set standards and list the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. (See Appendix B)

Superintendent and Texas Education Code

The Texas Education Code (TEC) §11.201 (Appendix B) outlines the duties of the superintendent and defines the superintendent as the educational leader and chief executive officer of the school district. Subparagraph (D) outlines the duties of the superintendent. An initial observation of the duties may seem clear and easily defined. However, the duties are much more encompassing and complicated in scope when the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent are closely studied. The broad descriptions in some of these duties include many specific tasks and evidence of their accomplishment must be looked for in many areas, programs, and documents.

The duties listed in the code include assuming administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the educational programs, services, and facilities of the district and for the annual performance appraisal of the district staff. In the area of personnel the superintendent is to assume the administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all personnel of the district as well as make recommendations regarding their selection or initiating the termination or suspension or nonrenewal of an employee's term contract. The superintendent also is charged with the organization of central administration.

The superintendent, acting as the administrative manager, is to manage the day-

to-day operations of the district. One is to prepare and submit to the board of trustees a proposed budget, prepare recommendations for policies to be adopted by the board while overseeing the implementation of adopted policies. In relation to those policies the superintendent is also responsible for the development or causing to be developed appropriate administrative regulations to implement policies established by the board of trustees. The superintendent duties include providing leadership for the attainment of student performance in the district based on the indicators adopted in the Texas Education Code and other indicators adopted by the State Board of Education and the local district's board of trustees. Specifically listed in the code is the general catchall duty that, "additional duties [or more specific direction] may be assigned by action of the local school board."

The Superintendent Appraisal and The Commissioner of Education Rules

The Texas Commissioner of Education in the Commissioner's Rules concerning educator appraisal Subchapter BB Administrator Appraisal §150.1021 (Appendix B) describes the evaluation and standards by which the Texas superintendent is to be measured. The performance domains and descriptors are outlined in topic areas and specified under each topic. The ten topic areas or indicators are: instructional management, school or organizational morale, school or organizational improvement, personnel management, management of administrative, fiscal, and facilities functions, student management, school and community relations, professional growth and development, academic excellence indicators and campus performance objectives as determined by state and local standards, and school board relations.

One of the primary differences between the duties described in the Texas Educational Code and the evaluation domains in the appraisal of the superintendents' performance outlined in the Commissioner's Rules is that the rules address the personal characteristics of the superintendent and his or her human relation skills. The relationships involve the quality of interaction with staff, students, board of trustees, and community. One's effectiveness in the roles and responsibilities of the superintendency is determined in the quality of these relationships as well as the accomplishment of specific measurable tasks such as those associated with fiscal management (budget) or student performance indicators (scores on state tests, attendance, or dropout rate). The skills involved in the development, maintenance, and measurement of quality human relationships is often difficult to measure, can be subjective, and are often more easily learned through experience than learned as an academic course.

The Superintendent and Professional Organization Standards

The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) has also published eight standards in the *Texas Professional Standards for the Superintendency* that was approved by the State Board of Educator Certification in September 1998. These state standards are related to the superintendent standards of the national organization, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), but are Texas specific. TASA has chosen to emphasize the standards as they are related to the concept of "learner-centered" priorities of the superintendent. Addressing the superintendent as the instructional leader precedes each of the specific standards. Following each general guiding sentence of a specific standard are indicators identifying and defining the standard. The acquisition of

knowledge and skills and the successful practice of the functions, role, and responsibilities of the superintendency suggest that there is more needed than just scholarly endeavor.

Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1998) additionally call for the demonstration of ethical and personal integrity while also modeling accepted moral and ethical standards in all interactions. They call for stronger preparation in the scholarship and practice of ethics as the first step to preparing future school leaders to make good ethical decisions based on intelligent thought and best moral judgment (p. 169). Hoyle et al. (1998) emphasizes Uchida, Cetron, and McKenzie's (1996) study in which a distinguished panel of 55 national leaders were asked to list the most important behaviors for America's children and youth. The highest-ranking behavior was "understanding and practicing honesty, integrity, and the golden rule." According to their report, "Treating others as we would like to be treated, personal and organizational integrity and basic honesty came up time after time, in every section of this study" (p.20). Hoyle et al., (1998) believes the charge is clear – model accepted moral and ethical behavior. Mentoring is one way of learning the standards and many functions of the superintendency.

Implications and Application to Superintendents

The information, knowledge, and skill required of a superintendent are vast and can seem overwhelming to the most experienced superintendent. The novice superintendent is expected to have the skills necessary to manage a school district and act as the instructional leader. The first-year superintendent with little or no experience can benefit from as many sources of assistance as possible. There are many sources, both

legislative and in professional literature, concerning the duties, roles, and responsibilities of the superintendent.

Given the magnitude of the job of superintendent there are reasons that superintendents are not successful in the position. Brubaker and Coble (1997) sought to identify and understand the causes for the high turnover rate for superintendents. They read over 150 journals of acting and aspiring superintendents who attended leadership seminars sponsored by the Center of Creative Leadership in North Carolina and also examined the research and literature on superintendent turnover. Brubaker and Coble (1997) identified six categories of why superintendents left their positions. They were: (1) strategic differences with management, (2) problems with interpersonal relationships, (3) difficulty in making strategic transitions such as dramatic changes in the board's membership, (4) difficulty in molding staff, (5) lack of follow-through, and (6) overdependence characterized by being paralyzed by the job and always testing the winds to see which direction to go. The guidance and wisdom of an experienced superintendent as mentor to the new superintendent could help the avoidance of these pitfalls.

A great deal of information is found in literature about mentoring and mentoring programs; however, the literature that is specific to mentoring the first-year superintendent of the public school is limited. The implication from existing literature is that mentoring can benefit the neophyte superintendent.

Understanding the nature of the first-year superintendent's experience as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of the job and unraveling the factors and areas of the job that a mentor can assist him or her in meeting those role expectations and responsibilities

is important to a successful mentoring relationship and program. The assumption can be made that mentoring can assist the first-year superintendent, but the literature is void of information of the specific professional areas that the first-year superintendent expresses as needing from a mentor. Mentors who have experienced the superintendency have something to offer the first-year superintendent. Clandinin (2000) points to Dewey's belief that examining experience is the key to education, and that experiences grow out of other experiences, where past experiences lead to further experiences. It is through the added assistance and sharing of relevant and pertinent information of the seasoned superintendent gained by experience to the academic training of universities that neophyte superintendents might have long, successful, and fulfilling careers.

Summary

This chapter described both traditional as well as emerging definitions of mentoring. It sought to illustrate the various uses of mentoring in educational programs for teachers, graduate students, aspiring mid-management school administrators, and entire schools. General mentor attributes, challenges, and benefits were explored. Benefits for the mentored person as well as those benefits for those people associated with the mentored person were described. This chapter also demonstrated the challenges of the new superintendent as he or she tries to successfully meet the different statutory requirements and role expectations of the superintendency, and the possible importance mentoring can contribute to that success.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceived needs of first-year superintendents from mentors. Although there are studies on mentoring the student, teacher, prospective administrator, and mid-management leader such as the principal, there appears to be no research on mentoring on the superintendent level. This qualitative study sought to identify those areas that first-year superintendents perceive as needing from a mentor as they seek to carry out a new role with new responsibilities by examining them through qualitative research features.

This chapter explains the qualitative methodology used to collect data. It will describe the process used to select the participants in the study, the data collection instruments, and methods of analyzing data.

Qualitative research is appropriate for exploration and insight (Billig, 2000, p.2). He further describes qualitative research “as almost always revolving around sitting down and talking to people, either one-on-one or in groups” (p.2). It “is best used when you want to identify the range of views on a subject, when you want to understand the human story that lies behind the opinions, or when you want to understand why” (Billig, p.2). Miles and Huberman (1994) identify features of qualitative research as follows:

1. Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a

- field” or life situation.
2. The researcher’s role is to gain a “holistic” overview of the context under study.
 3. The researcher also attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors “from the inside,” through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding, and of suspending or “bracketing” preconceptions about the topics under discussion.
 4. Reading through materials, the researcher may isolate certain themes and expressions that can be reviewed with informants.
 5. A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.
 6. Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, sub clustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyze, and bestow patterns upon them. (pp 6-7)

This research is exploratory and descriptive. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe and interpret present and past situations, conditions, events, and trends (Charles, 1988). This satisfies one’s need to know as well as providing a basis for speculating as to why things are the way they are. Charles (1988) defines descriptive research as describing situations and conditions of the present with the research questions giving form and direction to the research. He also states that hypothesis testing is seldom used although technically the research could test hypotheses.

This study was also exploratory, as the literature has not addressed mentoring for new chief executive officers. The first-year superintendent’s specific needs from a mentor were identified through structured interviews. Using the narrative of the participants who

had just completed their first year as a Texas superintendent the identified needs were described and categorized. This study provides the first-year superintendents' perspective on their own needs.

Kerlinger (1986) recommended three criteria of methodological soundness and substantive interest for smaller scale nonexperimental research. It must represent a unique, original, and interesting approach to an important sociological, psychological or educational problem, contribute significantly to scientific knowledge, and be considered nonexperimental. This study meets all three criteria.

The Study

This study used two principle sources of information. A comprehensive review of research and other literatures related to the superintendency and mentoring was one source of information. The other source of data was interviews of first-year Texas superintendents.

The method of inquiry was a structured interview of novice superintendents. The University of North Texas Office of Research Services Institutional Review Board approved the Human Subjects Application in order to conduct the interviews (See Appendix C). Participants read and completed a consent form prior to the interview (See Appendix D). Data was collected over a seven-month period of time. The Texas Association of School Administrators and the participants supplied district demographic information about student enrollment. A field notebook was maintained to record substantive ideas, impressions, and observations as well as taped interviews following a set protocol. Planning, implementation, and evaluation occurred throughout the study.

Field notes and informal self-evaluation were reviewed and evaluated after each interview to determine if the interview instrument was yielding the desired data. Additionally after each interview, the audiotape was reviewed for clarity and to ensure all answers from each participant were clear and answered fully. The taped interviews were transcribed soon after the interview. The scripted interview was then reviewed again and compared with the questions to ensure full understanding of the participant's answer. Interview questions did not have to be modified to elicit the data.

Analysis occurred continually. As each transcribed interview was completed it was reviewed and marked identifying subject area or theme and then added to the total excerpts related to that theme to be compared to other similar interview excerpts. The developed themes from the interviews were compared to the skills, functions, role, and responsibilities the literature outlined as important or mandatory for the superintendent position. This process continued until all the interviews were completed, analyzed, central themes identified, and comparisons were made to the literature. Comments, statements, and actions from the transcribed interviews and notations made in the field notebook were also grouped into the themes that surfaced as indicated by the mentored superintendent from the mentor as a need. The field notebook allowed for interviewer reflection of the interview process as well as nuances that were not recorded in the audiotape or written down during the interview.

Data was collected in interviews of Texas superintendents who have just completed their first year of the superintendency. The information required was primarily concerned with the first-year superintendent's contemporary experience and

how a mentor has helped or could ideally help in the first year of the superintendency. This information was gathered in one, approximately ninety-minute interview. The novice superintendents were asked to discuss what formal and informal mentoring they have experienced. Reflecting on their first year of the superintendency, participants identified the areas of the job they would have benefited most from a mentor and how that mentor might have assisted them in meeting the responsibilities and expectations of their role in the position of superintendent.

Standards of quality were used in conducting the interview. When dealing with consistency Guba's (1985) logic that considers whether the data that has been collected makes sense, not whether the results hold true in all settings was applied in this study. Questions of neutrality were dealt with as Patton (1990) suggests, "Qualitative objectivity has to do with the quality of the observations made" (p. 337). Collection of data over time, member checking, data collection from a variety of persons who have recently experienced the first-year as superintendent, comparisons to the skills, functions, and responsibilities of a superintendent found in professional literature and law, and field notes support the quality of the conducted interviews.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews

There are advantages and disadvantages to using interviewing as a research tool. The use of interviewing as a data gathering technique shows a way of life in a personal manner, which allows for thematic connections to be made between and among participants or subjects as they interact with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they work and live (Wolcott, 1988; Seidman, 1998;

Silverman, 1993). Seidman (1998) has defined interviewing as “empirical work that is emotionally and intellectually satisfying.” Observing a first-year superintendent, through the use of an in-depth interview, provides access to his or her behavior, puts the behavior into context, and provides access to understanding the first-year superintendent’s actions as it relates to a mentor.

Disadvantages of the interview include time and labor involved work such as transcribing tapes and analyzing written data (Seidman, 1998). There is also the possibility that participants may not provide a complete explanation or answer (Seidman, 1998). The problem of the adequate understanding of the linguistic forms of expression used by the interviewer and the participant may be present (Brenner, 1978). This could result in communication gaps or misinterpretations of language between the interviewer and the participant. The danger of improper and erroneous interpretation could result from the plausibility of many explanations of complex events or the acceptance of the first, most obvious interpretation could result in incorrect conclusions (Kerlinger, 1986).

Using correct interview procedures such as uniform questions in the same order for each participant while taping the interview can minimize some of the disadvantages that language and communication skills can present (Kerlinger, 1986; Seidman, 1998). Interview techniques, which make the participant comfortable, use of open-ended questions, and good listening techniques can result in participant’s candidly and openly answering questions (Seidman, 1998). Additional meetings and/or telephone calls provided clarification or additional information when needed.

One of the advantages to interviewing is that people will often grant a lengthy

face-to-face interview, although they may insist that they are too busy to fill out a questionnaire (Billig, 2000; Jaeger, 1988). Recounting narratives of experience has historically been the primary way that humans have made sense of their experiences. Interviews are capable of reconstructing and finding the compelling in the experiences of everyday life. The purpose of the interview is to understand an individual's experience and not to predict or control that experience (Seidman, 1998). It is through the understanding of the experience of the first-year superintendent as it relates to the mentoring needs that can lead to understanding and improving other first-year superintendents' experience in the job.

The interview explores complex issues in a subject area by examining the concrete experience of people in that area and the meaning their experience had for them. The advantage is that when in-depth interviews applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions is used, it can give enormous power to the stories of relatively few participants to assist in the general understanding of many (Seidman, 1998). One can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context.

Face-to-face interviewing allows for a better quality of information because the interviewer can detect and clarify any confusion that may exist on the part of the respondent (Billig, 2000). It also allows for better sample control because the researcher can be sure that only qualified participants are completing the questionnaire. The researcher also has control over the sample size, rather than waiting to find out how many questionnaires are returned, if the study is conducted using a self-administered mailed

questionnaire.

Finally, interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for the researcher to understand the meaning of that behavior (Seidman, 1998). A basic assumption of in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make out of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. The researcher can see how the participants' individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context, in which they work and live. Interviewing a first-year superintendent provides access to their experience and their behavior. Interviewing allows one to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding the participant's actions.

Interviewing

Interviewing is one of the most basic modes of inquiry, as recounting narratives of experience historically was the primary way that humans have made sense of their experience (Seidman, 1998). Interviewing collects information, gets the needed facts by question and close observation, and then arrives at a conclusion (MacHovec, 1989). The interview is a widely used method of creating field texts (Mishler, 1986). Wolcott (1988) defines an interview activity as "anything that the fieldworker does that intrudes upon the natural setting and is done with conscious intent of obtaining particular information directly from one's subjects" (p. 188).

There are two ways in which interview data can be collected (Silverman, 1993). The positivist model requires collection of data from a random sample of the participants and the administration of standardized questions with the use of multiple-choice answers

that can be readily tabulated. However, the standardized protocol prevents probing or searching for depth in an interesting or curious answer given by a participant that may give more meaning to the response. The nature of this study prevents the random sample required of the positivist model. The participants were self-selected. The sample was dependent on the willingness of members of the population of first-year superintendents to consent to an interview.

The second version of interview data is interactionism in which the data is based on authentic experiences. The questions are unstructured and open-ended to allow for probing or exploring of a response. A central concern in interactionism interviewing is seeing the world from the perspective of the participant. It is this method of interview methodology that this research was conducted.

Seidman (1998) believes that the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, test hypotheses, or “evaluate” as the term is normally used. The way to meaning is to be able to put behavior in context (Schultz, 1967). One must gain access to the person’s “subjective understanding,” that is, know what meaning he or she himself or herself made out of being the first-year superintendent to fully understand the first-year superintendent and his or her experiences and the possible areas of the job where a mentor was needed. Interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and provides a way for the researcher to understand the meaning of that behavior (Seidman, 1998). A basic assumption of in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their

experience affects the way they carry out that experience. Interviewing first year-superintendents provide access to their understanding of their behavior and allows one to put the behavior in context while also providing a point of reference for the mentor.

The literature suggests the use of from one to three interviews per participant. Seidman (1998) recommends three interviews, with the first interview gathering demographic information, the second gathering information on the present experience, and the third exploring what the experience means to the participant as they reflect on the experience. However, MacHovec (1989) believes an effective interview can gather the needed data and be completed in an hour or less if questions are well directed.

A modified in-depth interview approach (Seidman, 1998; Schumann & Dolbeare, 1982) using qualitative data collection and analysis was selected for this study. The modification in the interview process is that only one interview was conducted with a possible follow-up for clarification. The demographic information required of this study was minimal, and was gathered in a short period of time from public information, so a lengthy interview was not needed. Demographic information that was not available through public access was obtained prior to the interview via telephone or during the interviews. Demographic information such as school district size by student enrollment, and the first-year superintendent's gender and ethnicity was used to select representative superintendents.

Development of the Interview Questions

The professional standards of the superintendency as outlined by Texas statute and the Texas Association of School Administrators was used as sources to structure the

interview questions. An interview instrument based on the research questions, statutory requirements, and literature review was developed for this study (see Appendix E).

Broad, open-ended questions determined the areas a first-year superintendent identified as areas where a mentor can assist him or her in meeting the expectations, functions, role, and responsibilities of the job. The sources for the questions are Texas Professional Standards for the Superintendency (Texas Association of School Administrators, 1998), Texas Education Code Provisions §11.201 – Superintendent Duties, State Board of Education Rules Texas Administrative Code Title 19 Part 7 Chapter 242 Rule §242.15 Standards Required for the Superintendent Certificate, and Commissioner’s Rules Concerning Superintendent Appraisal §150.1021. These sources, which outline superintendent responsibilities, were also compared to the responses of interviewed first-year superintendents. Also used as a source for questions was Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders (Hoyle, et al., 1998). The instrument served as a guide during the interview process. However, there was some variation in interviews because there was an occasional need for follow-up questions to responses.

The interview instrument was submitted to an advisory panel (See Appendix F) to obtain face and content validity for a completed survey. The panel consisted of one university professor in the field of educational administration, three superintendents with over twenty years of experience, and one past superintendent who is currently a state educational service center director. One of the members served on the committee that assisted the Texas legislators in writing the law requiring the mentoring of first-year superintendents. The panel members were asked to assess the instrument for content

validity, question relevance, clarity, and appropriateness. Panel members were asked to complete an evaluation instrument, which allowed them to respond to the validity of each question on the interview form.

Population

Superintendents who had just completed their first year as superintendents were interviewed. Twenty participants were self-selected through their response to an introductory letter (See Appendix G) and a self-addressed postcard was sent to identify willingness to participate (See Appendix H). The post card included a questionnaire that asked the gender and ethnicity of the participant as well as the student enrollment (size) of the district. From those superintendents who were willing to participate, a group representing gender, ethnicity, and district size was selected. The selection was purposeful to get the maximum variation in range of people to be representative of the larger population (Tagg, 1985; Seidman, 1998). The participants in this study are purposely not identified to provide for the privacy of the participants and remain anonymous.

Twenty superintendents were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in person in most cases with four interviews conducted by telephone because of geographical distance and the inability to match schedules. Each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes in length. Analysis of the data continued between each interview, checking for answers that were repetitive and similar in content. The criteria of sufficiency and saturation were useful, when the interviewer recognized that nothing decidedly new was being learned it was time to end the interviews (Bertaux, 1981).

Table 1 shows demographic data for first-year superintendents in Texas in the 1999 – 2000 school year based on information provided by the Texas Association of School Administrators. In the 1999 – 2000 school year Texas Education Agency and Texas Association of School Administrators listed 77 first-time superintendents in the state. Fourteen or 18 percent were women, and 63 or 82 percent were men. Eighty-seven percent of the total population of first-year superintendents was white. There were nine Hispanics with only one Hispanic woman. First-year Hispanic superintendents made up twelve percent of the total first-year superintendent population. One African American male superintendent or one percent of the total first-year superintendent population was identified as being a first-year superintendent.

Superintendents in this study reflect this diversity. There were four women or 20 percent and 16 men or 80 percent in this study. Seventeen or 85 percent of the participants were white. There were two Hispanic men or ten percent in this study. There was one African American or five percent in this study. Hispanic women were not represented in this study.

Statewide there were sixty-seven superintendents or 87 percent in districts with fewer than 3,000 students and thirty-four or 44 percent were in districts with an enrollment of smaller than 500 students. This study had fifteen superintendents or 75 percent in districts with fewer than 3,000 students and seven superintendents or 35 percent of the sample in districts of less than 500 students. The sample of twenty first-year superintendents closely represented the state data in terms of school district size.

Table 1

Texas Superintendent Data 1999 – 2000

Size of District Student <u>Enrollment</u>	Total No. <u>Supts</u>	No. of First <u>Yr. Supts.</u>	Female 1 st Yr.				Male 1 st Yr.			
			<u>Supts.</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Hispani</u> <u>c</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Supts.</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Hispani</u> <u>c</u>	<u>Black</u>
0-499	345	34	6	6	0	0	28	27	1	0
500-999	211	15	3	3	0	0	12	12	0	0
1,000-1,599	121	6	1	0	1	0	5	5	0	0
1,600-2,999	132	12	3	3	0	0	9	7	2	0
3,000-4-999	84	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
5,000-9,999	68	4	0	0	0	0	4	3	1	1
10,000-24,999	47	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
25,000-49,999	25	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
≥ 50,000	9	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0
Total	1042	77	14	13	1	0	63	55	8	1

This data was based on Texas Association of School Administrators database during the 1999 – 2000 school year.

Collection of Data

The primary tool to gather information from first-year superintendents was a structured interview. Texas Association of School Administrators provided a list of superintendents who had just completed their first year in the superintendency. A letter of introduction (see Appendix G) explaining the study and its purpose was mailed to every first-year superintendent in Texas. Upon the receipt of the returned interest postcard (see Appendix H) enclosed in the introductory letter, willing participants were identified. The participants willing to be interviewed were then placed in categories based on student enrollment of the district. These student enrollment categories were further divided into ethnicity and gender of the first-year superintendent. A representative cross group of twenty superintendents was selected and contacted via telephone to verify initial data and

arrange for an interview.

The data was collected in personal face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews, which were taped and transcribed in written form after the interview. Four interviews were conducted by telephone because of geographical distance and the inability to match schedules. The interviews, approximately 90 minutes in length, followed the same structured protocol. The interview questions were developed from the review of the literature and Texas statutory requirements. A panel of experts who gave input into the clarity and validity of the questions and suggested questions reviewed the interview protocol, which would be relevant to this study. Field notes of the researcher's impressions, ideas, and observations were maintained in a notebook. The field notes were written immediately following an interview as a reflective exercise and to add meaning to each interview. Follow-up phone calls were conducted if, after reviewing the written transcripts, clarification or additional information was needed.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis was conducted through words as the main data source – words from structured interviews and words from field notes following each interview. These words were examined and processed into themes that were similar. Tables of selected data were organized, constructed, and analyzed. The analysis was conducted using categorical areas or themes that are associated with the roles and responsibilities of school superintendents and the expressed needs of first-year superintendents from their mentors. It is through interviews that thematic connections can be made (Seidman, 1998).

Audiotapes of the interview were transcribed into written form. The first step is

the analysis and reducing of the data must be done inductively rather than deductively (Seidman, 1998). The researcher cannot address the material with a set hypothesis to test or with a theory developed in another context to which he or she wishes to match the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The written transcript was read and then excerpts were coded by similar categories or themes. “Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56). The method used to analyze the data throughout the study was noting patterns and themes, counting, and compare-contrast. Miles and Huberman (1994) in their description of noting patterns and themes state that, “when you’re working with text, you often note recurring patterns, themes, or “gestalts,” which pull together many separate pieces of data. Something “jumps out” at you, suddenly makes sense” (p. 246). Field notes written immediately after each interview were also referred to for clarification and context.

Transcripts were analyzed through organizing excerpts from the transcripts into common or reoccurring categories. Passages of interest and thematic subjects were marked in each transcript. Two copies of the transcripts were made. One of the transcripts was cut to form files of marked passages that are similar in nature and placed in categorized folders. The excerpts were coded to trace the interview origin from which the excerpt was taken. From the developed categories, connecting themes and patterns among the excerpts within those categories were looked for. The identification of a theme or pattern isolates, identifies, and tags information that may occur any number of times and consistently happens in a specific way (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This is what is

meant in qualitative research as “counting.” The files were read again and studied with comment being made on the excerpts from the interviews’ thematically organized data. Categories that surfaced were looked for and recorded in writing. The themes and categories were compared and contrasted among participants and the literature on the skills, roles, and responsibilities of the superintendent and mentoring. Miles and Huberman describe the process by stating, “we draw a contrast or make a comparison between two sets of things – persons, roles, activities, cases as a whole – that are known to differ in some other important respect” (p. 254).

Observations were recorded in writing. Gender, ethnicity, district size, type of mentoring relationship, and career paths were used as categories to compare and contrast with the surfaced perceived needs of superintendents to determine if these demographic groups or mentoring relationships have different themes or patterns. The areas of first-year superintendent perceived needs were identified as important components in a mentoring program to assist in the success of the mentoring relationship and in providing for the success of the first-year in the superintendency. Recommendations for further study were made based on the analyzed data.

Summary

This chapter explained the methodology of this study as being qualitative research. It discussed interview as a tool for collecting and using data, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. This chapter also described the study, the population and sample, the development of the interview instrument, and how the data will be collected and analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVE OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This study examined first-year superintendents' perceptions of their needs for mentoring. It sought to identify the first-year superintendent's expectations from the mentor and the relationship that develops as a mentor assists a new superintendent accomplish the responsibilities and job expectations associated with the position. This study explored what mentoring relationships novice superintendents developed without the state statutory requirement as well as examined the effect mentoring had on the mentored superintendent in his or her professional growth. It also explored what first-year superintendents who did not have a mentor would have desired from the mentor had one been available or present during the first year on the job.

This chapter presents the data gathered from interviews administered in person and on the telephone to each participant between March 23, 2001 and October 15, 2001. Data on demographic information such as ethnicity and gender, career paths, educational background, initial experiences as a first-year superintendent, and the perceived effectiveness of their formal education were presented by district size based on student enrollment. Three categories of relationships were identified. The first was those superintendents who did not have a mentor as a superintendent. The second mentoring relationship was those relationships that had been initiated early in the mentor and

protégé's career while in the same school system and the protégé was a subordinate. The last mentoring relationship identified was one that was relatively young, one to three years, and was developed when both the mentor and protégé were associated but not part of the same school system. Themes developed from these relationships. Specific questions on the participants' mentoring experiences led to themes that related to the type of mentor relationship the participant experienced.

When a checklist of superintendent skills, responsibilities, and roles was administered, the total sample was examined as well as the similarities and differences by gender, ethnicity, and district size. Closing questions in which participants share their advice to mentors, serving as mentors themselves, and their closing thoughts on mentoring were examined as a total sample. This was because there were not many differences between demographic data and type of mentoring relationship of the participants.

This chapter concludes with the research questions that guided this study. Summarized data was used to answer the research questions.

Demographics

Twenty superintendents who completed their first year as a superintendent in the state of Texas in the school year of 1999 – 2000 were interviewed using a set of twenty questions. The questions addressed specific demographic information about the participants, their districts, career paths, formal training, and their experience with a mentor during their first year of the superintendency. Those who did not have a mentor were asked what they would have wanted from a mentor.

The superintendents represented a wide range of school districts, including kindergarten through sixth grade school districts, kindergarten through eighth grade school districts, and pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school districts. The districts were representative of all geographic areas of Texas. Participants were selected to include men and women as well as African-American, Hispanic, and White participants. There were sixteen men (80 %) and four women (20%). The demographic data of this study is similar to the current American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Ten-Year Study (Glass, 2000) data. The male/female respondent ratio of the AASA Ten-Year Study of superintendents across the nation for first-year superintendents was 75.7 % male and 24.3 % female compared to the AASA national respondent percentages of 86.8 % male and 13.2 % female (Glass, 2000). This study's demographic data closely mirrors the AASA national study's demographics.

There were seventeen white participants (85%), two Hispanic participants (10%), and one African-American participant (5 %). This data is similar to the ethnic make-up of the first-year superintendent respondents of the AASA Ten-Year Study where the ethnicity was 92.1 % white, 3.3 % Hispanic, and 2.6 % African American. The superintendents from the largest school districts were both Hispanic males. The one African American male superintendent was also from a larger school district. The following chart represents the demographic information of the first-year superintendent participants by student enrollment of the school district, gender, and ethnicity. All of the women in this study were white.

Table 2: Student Enrollment, Gender, and Ethnicity of Participants

District Student Enrollment	Number in Group	Gender		Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic
< 500	7	4	3	7		
500-999	3	3		3		
1,000-2,999	5	4	1	5		
3,000-9,999	3	3		2	1	
>10,000	2	2				2
Totals	20	16	4	17	1	2

Career Paths

The career path of superintendents may include positions as teacher, assistant principal, principal, central office positions, and assistant superintendent. Some may have worked outside public education or in state agencies. The twenty superintendents had varied career paths. All had at least three years as a classroom teacher prior to entering administration. The average years of classroom experience was 15 years, with a range of 3 to 20.

Table 3 shows superintendent teaching experience by district size. The seven first-year superintendents in districts of less than 500 students had nine or more years as a teacher with five having more than 14 years experience as a classroom teacher. The majority of first-year superintendents in student enrollment categories greater than 500 students had ten or fewer years as a classroom teacher. Only 2 of the 5 superintendents in districts with enrollments of 1,000 to 2,999 had 16 or more years as a classroom teacher.

Four of the five superintendents in the large districts of over 3,000 students had 6 or fewer years as classroom teachers. The other superintendent in the two largest enrollment categories had ten years as a teacher. The superintendents of districts larger

than 10,000 students had 5 or fewer years experience in the classroom. All of the women superintendents had 14 years or more experience as a classroom teacher. Three of the four women had teaching experience that ranged from 18 to 20 years. Men had an average of 8 years in the classroom as teachers. There was a range of 3 – 16 years classroom experience for men.

Minority participants had less than six years experience as a classroom teacher with the average being five years. This is less than white participants who had an average of 11 years as classroom teachers.

Table 3: Classroom Teacher Experience of First Year Superintendents

District Size	<500	500-999	1,000-2,999	3,000-9,999	>10,000
3 years			1	1	
4 years					1
5 years			2		1
6 years		2		1	
7 years		1			
9 years	2				
10 years				1	
14 years	2				
15 years	1				
16 years			1		
18 years	1				
19 years	1				
20 years			1		

One of the more interesting career paths of this study was a superintendent who had been a teacher the year before being a superintendent after serving a short period as interim superintendent in the same district; however she had experience as a high school principal earlier in her career. She had also been out of public education as an educational consultant before entering public education again. Her career path included teacher,

assistant principal, principal, outside educational consultant, teacher/technology coordinator, interim superintendent then superintendent.

Eight superintendents (40 %) moved from a central office position such as assistant superintendent to the superintendency. One in the less than 500 student category, three in the 1,000 – 2,999 student enrollment category, three in the 3,000 – 9,999 student enrollment category and both participants in the greater than 10,000 student enrollment category. Table 4 shows the career paths of first-year superintendents by district size.

Table 4: Career Paths of First Year Superintendents:

T- Teacher **AP** – Assistant Principal **P** – Principal
C- Central Office or Assistant Superintendent
O- Other educational job such as Educational Service Center, Child Protective Services, Educational Consultant, or state school employee
B – Business or industry outside of educational employment
I- Intern Superintendent **S**- Superintendent

Career Paths	Student Enrollment in School District				
	<500	500-999	1,000-2,999	3,000-9,999	>50,000
T – P – S	3	1			
T – AP – P - S	1	2	1		
T – AP – P – I – S			1		
T – AP – P – C – S			1		
T – AP – P – C – I – S			1		
T – P – C – S				1	
T – C – S					2
T – AP – P – O – C – S				1	
T – P – B – C – S				1	
T – B – O – C – S			1		
T – O – C – S	1				
T – O – P - S	1				
T – AP – P – O – T – I - S	1				

When administrator experience was examined four superintendents (20 %) had no experience as a principal. They were in the following student enrollment categories: one in a district of less than 500 students, one in a district of 1,000 to 2,999 students, and both superintendents in districts larger than 10,000 students.

Fourteen (70 %) of the first-year superintendents have spent their entire careers in public education. Twelve (60 %) of the participants had a “traditional” path to the superintendency such as teacher-principal-superintendent or teacher-principal-central office position-superintendent. Eight (40 %) had a less traditional career path. Two participants did not have building level management or principal experience and six had breaks in public education service working in outside educational organizations or in business or industry unrelated to education.

All of the minority participants had entered the superintendency from a central office position. The African-American participant had a more traditional career path moving from teacher to assistant principal to principal to educational service center representative to central office as an assistant superintendent to superintendent. The Hispanic participants did not have building level administrative experience but entered the superintendency from the central office position of assistant superintendent.

Among the women superintendents, one had entered the superintendency from the principalship of an intermediate school, one from a central office position, and two from the interim superintendent position. One had been a high school principal just prior to being named interim and subsequently superintendent. The other woman participant was a teacher and technology coordinator before being named interim and then

superintendent. Only one woman's career path was a "traditional" teacher to assistant principal to high school principal to interim superintendent to superintendent pathway. Three of the women had worked in an educational organization other than public school. Only one woman did not have building level administrative experience. Most of the women's first superintendency was in districts of less than 500 students. Only one woman was a superintendent in a district of 1,000 to 2,999 students. She had a doctorate degree and had served as interim superintendent in the same district prior to being named superintendent.

Four of the superintendents had worked outside the public schools in a regional education service center, Child Protective Services, or in private educational consulting. Two superintendents worked in private business unrelated to education, one for 14 years and another for 18 years before reentering education. The two superintendents in the largest school districts came to Texas from superintendencies in other states. Both had over seven years as large district superintendents.

Nine of the ten participants in districts smaller than 1,000 came directly to the superintendency from the principalship, and one had come directly from the position of assistant superintendent. All of the participants in school districts with student enrollments greater than 1,000 came from either a central office position, serving as an assistant superintendent or from positions as interim superintendent or superintendent in another state. Three of the superintendents were interim superintendents in the same school district prior to being named superintendent. Table 5 represents the position that the first year Texas superintendent participant held prior to becoming superintendent by

student enrollment group.

Table 5: Positions Held Prior to Being Named Superintendent:

Students	<500	500-999	1,000-2,999	3,000-9,999	>10,000
Principal	5	3			
Asst. Superintendent	1		3	3	
Interim Superintendent in the same district	1		2		
Superintendent In another state					2

When inside versus outside hiring of the school districts was examined thirteen (65 %) superintendents were hired from outside the school district, and seven (35 %) were hired from within (Table 6). All of the superintendents in larger districts of over 3,000 students were hired from the outside. In districts of less than 3,000 students eight superintendents were hired from outside and seven promoted from within.

Eleven men and 55 % of all the participants were hired from outside the district. Five men or 25 % of the participants were hired from within the school district. When looking at gender, 69 % of the men were hired from outside the district and 31 % were hired from within. Fifty percent of women first-year superintendents were hired from outside the school district. The two women superintendents hired from within the school district had served brief periods as interim superintendents in the same district.

All minority participants were hired from outside the school district. In two of the large school districts with enrollments of over 50,000 students that hired minority first-year Texas superintendents, minorities made up the majority of the student populations.

Table 6: Insiders versus Outsiders:

Previous Employment	Student Enrollment				
	<500	500-999	1,000-2,999	3,000-9,999	>10,000
Hired from Outside					
Male	3	1	2	3	2
Female	2				
Hired from Within					
Male	1	2	2		
Female	1		1		

Educational Background

The superintendents had similar educational backgrounds (Table 7). All held a master’s degree, and all but one held the superintendent certificate. One superintendent (in the less than 500 students category) who had been promoted from interim superintendent was completing certification requirements. Three superintendents had earned their master’s degree from an out-of-state institution, and two of them also had earned a doctorate from an out-of-state institution. One superintendent had earned a bachelor’s degree from an out-of-state school. All first-year superintendents received the master’s degree from a public institution of higher education.

Women and minority group members as well as superintendents in districts greater than 1,000 students were most likely to have the doctorate. One woman in the 1,000 – 2,999 student enrollment group, one African-American male and two white males in the 3,000 – 9,999 student enrollment group, and both Hispanic males in the greater than 10,000 student enrollment group had doctorate degrees. All minority participants and all superintendents in districts larger than 3,000 students held a doctorate

degree. One woman had received the doctorate from a private university, and five men had received the doctorate from public universities. Additionally, two white males were working on their doctorate, one in the less than 500 students category and one in the 1,000 – 2,999 students category.

Table 7: Educational Degrees of First Year Texas Superintendents:

School District Enrollment	Number of Participants	Bachelor	Master's	Working Towards Doctorate	Doctorate
< 500 Students	7	7	7	1	
500 – 999 Students	3	3	3		
1,000 – 2,999 Students	5	5	5	1	1
3,000 – 9,999 Students	3	3	3		3
> 10,000 Students	2	2	2		2
Totals	20	20	20	2	6

Initial Experiences as a First-Year Superintendent

Participants were asked a question to focus them on the experiences they had as a first-year superintendent in Texas. They were asked to describe an experience that stands out in their minds as one in which they developed a deeper understanding of the superintendent's role in the school district, an 'Aha!' moment that they realized they were the superintendent.

The participants' responses, while varied in some aspects showed, some commonalities and three general themes developed. Some related a controversial issue, emergency situation, or comical experience that took place shortly after they began.

Others' experiences were subtler, such as the loneliness of the office with no set of directions or priorities not yet clear. Some confronted a special project that required quick research and "catching up" to meet the demands and make the necessary decisions. Only one participant could not recall any experiences that stood out in his mind in which he developed a deeper understanding of the superintendent's role in the school district. These responses show that 19 out of the 20 first-year superintendents felt unprepared for some aspect of their job.

A common area among all superintendents without respect to district size, gender, or ethnicity was school finance. Seven superintendents related situations that centered on developing and meeting a budget. One faced the challenges of suddenly having the district classified as a "Chapter 41 district." Texas school districts in this category are considered "wealthy" when the property value is over \$300,000 district property value per student. These districts must send any locally collected funds over the \$300,000 per student ceiling to the state agency to be distributed among less wealthy districts. This superintendent explained that this law affects few small school districts in the state and consequently, it was hard to find another superintendent to help her understand the challenges of administering the budget and explaining the situation to the board and community.

Four superintendents experienced the difficulty of trying to develop a budget and make budget-cutting decisions to balance the budget when a shortfall in revenues had occurred. Another described the emotional drain and difficulty in explaining a reduction in force to the board and staff. Neither he nor the board was aware of the severity of the

finances. He stated, “The inherited things are what kill you because you can’t be prepared for them. You don’t know about them until they crop up.” Three others expressed the difficulty in explaining to and getting their board of trustees to understand the problems in the budget.

Two superintendents related the more subtle but heavy feeling of realizing the responsibility of the entire community and school district through the proper development of the budget for the coming year. They described the experience as “frightening,” and realizing “the buck stops here,” or “I’m it.” One participant described a conflict over property values with the appraisal district and coming to the realization of the importance of the situation when he had to return to his office and individually sign every employee’s paycheck. There were nearly 200 paychecks to be signed. He realized the “awesomeness of the responsibility” as he signed each individual’s paycheck. It “hit” him that property values meant revenue, which meant salaries of people in the community. He felt strongly that he was an advocate not only for children but also for his community. This same participant also noted that through this experience he realized just how “political the position is,” referring to the experience of dealing with other government agencies.

Four superintendents described immediately having to handle different controversial situations, such as conflict on the board of trustees, continual negative press from the local printed media looking for scandals, and handling formal complaints that required investigation and reporting to the state agency. Each of these situations required quick study, organization of ideas, and problem solving in order to learn and carry out the

other responsibilities of running a school district as a new superintendent. Each of the superintendents reported that while concentrating on one main issue there were also the pressures of having to meet other needs that were unfamiliar to them within the school district. One participant described that on his first day of work there was a bomb threat in which he had to act. He stated, “You find out quickly who everyone comes to for the answers.”

Other first-year superintendents described more general and subtle experiences. One participant in a district of less than 500 students recalled that on the second day on the job after walking into his office he thought, “Where do we go from here?” He further stated, “There are no guidelines of what you do day-to-day as a superintendent.” Another participant in a district of between 1,000 to 2,999 students described the “butterflies” of the first board meeting and realizing, “there is no one else to take the heat.” One first-year superintendent in a district of less than 500 students described a similar feeling of, “I’m it. When I was a principal I could always tell people that I needed to ask the superintendent. Now I couldn’t pass the work on or know that someone would check me.” Another superintendent of a district of over 10,000 students simply stated the feeling as, “the reality of the superintendent experience.”

Two first-year superintendents in districts of 1,000 to 2,999 students recalled the constant work required in building and maintaining relationships and the political powers that seek to influence the decisions of the superintendent. One described being approached by an individual board member who expected the superintendent would immediately honor and work on the special request. The superintendent described the

feeling of not being prepared on how to respond to the individual board member, “one of her bosses.” Another superintendent in the same size school district described feeling the great responsibility of having to broker between the board of trustees, administration, and teachers in order for them to cooperate, understand each other, and develop common goals together. He stated, “Trying to speak and understand the same language is a challenge. Everyone is different. Sometimes we have some lively exchanges of ideas and discussions. You can’t educate children the same way you run a farm or business.”

Effectiveness of Formal Education

The interview included two questions addressing the effectiveness of formal education in preparing them for their role as superintendent. Participants were asked what specific area(s) in the scope of their job as superintendent they felt their formal professional training adequately prepared them for the superintendency. They were then asked to recall if there was any circumstance or incident during their first year as a superintendent where they felt unprepared by their professional or formal training.

Frequently when asked the first question, participants answered the second question immediately without being prompted. This was common when they did not have a positive experience in their formal education or if they felt that their formal education did not prepare them for the position of superintendent. Although there were some common areas among the total group, there also were differences among the participants by size of school district.

The one common theme that surfaced was that most of the superintendents felt unprepared for “the day-to-day” activities and responsibilities of the superintendency.

The constant input, questions, decisions, and problem solving that take place in a day with little time to study, think, or reflect on decisions was a challenge. The connection between theory and basic knowledge of the job and actual practice was not a part of the majority of the participants' formal education. Time management was another area in which all superintendents appeared to struggle when first in the position of superintendent. They expressed there wasn't enough time to get everything done they felt needed to be accomplished.

There were differences among superintendents of different size school districts.

Very Small - Districts with Less than 500 Students

The seven superintendents in this group had varied responses. Only one felt totally unprepared for the role of superintendent. Her immediate response, "I didn't feel prepared for anything." The majority of small district superintendents felt they had varying degrees of preparedness, but felt unprepared in other areas. For example, one felt that the formal training "...was limited. It gave me a good background, but it is not reality." Four of the participants noted that their formal education gave them a "good base" and "how to find information and resources." One participant stated, "I think we were well prepared for things that were procedural. The on-going things." The specific courses mentioned were instructional leadership, school law, the superintendency, communication or public relations, and courses that cover general procedures, or theory that give a background or base knowledge of an area of the job as most beneficial. Only one participant mentioned school finance as being helpful in his preparation, but he qualified the answer with "to a certain extent."

Five of the seven participants in this category considered finances as the area in which their formal training left them unprepared. All three women in this category identified finance as a weak area of their formal education. Some of the participants mentioned specific content, such as, “reading a Summary of Finances (from the state)” or “setting a tax rate” or “investing” or “building a budget.”

Other areas where this group of felt unprepared were facilities, curriculum, student projections, building projects, utilities, grants, employee health insurance, personnel issues and problems, and dealing and working with people. One participant stated that formal education did not prepare her for, “the day-to-day life as an administrator.” She believed, “the best thing to prepare for your day as an administrator is to show up.”

Intermediate - Districts with 500 to 2,999 Students

There were seven men and one woman in this group. The participants in this group attributed their formal education as raising their awareness level in specific areas of the role and responsibilities of the job of the superintendent. One superintendent said, “It gave me a good base.” They expressed that their formal education gave a base of knowledge to be used as a basis for decisions, as well as supplying sources to find information. They agreed that the background knowledge was a benefit, but they felt their formal education did not address the day-to-day experiences of the superintendent.

Superintendents in this group also felt that their formal training did not cover all aspects of the job as superintendent. One superintendent stated,

“I wouldn’t say my formal training adequately prepared me for all of it. It gives

you the ability to know where to go to get more information. The job of superintendent, the knowledge base needed is too vast for it to be covered in a semester-type course.”

Another said,

“ ‘Prepared’ is too strong a word. ‘The courses made me aware’ better describes the experience. The courses made me aware of finance, curriculum issues, dealing with personnel and interpersonal skills in dealing with people. They made me aware of school facilities and plant maintenance. But as far as preparation to do it – no.”

Another participant stated that he received instruction in,

“Discerning political issues, sacred cows. Being able to understand what battles are important to fight and what to leave alone.”

One participant recommended that institutions assign a practicing superintendent who is currently employed as a superintendent to teach classes. He justified this by relating what one of his professors, who was teaching a class said. The professor, who was also employed as a superintendent, said,

“I know you all are smart enough because you all have a masters. Let’s get down to what we’re really here for. And that’s to learn how to be a superintendent.”

The participant added, “He told us about stuff that happened in his life and everyday actual occurrences in his district. We would discuss with other administrators (classmates in the college class) and their experiences.”

Another superintendent thought,

“My mid-management training prepared me better for the job than did my higher education [superintendent certification courses]. Educational theory and philosophy broadened my understanding of actually applying the theory and educational research into practice. But actually dealing with the day-to-day operations, I didn’t feel prepared.”

Two other participants also identified the benefit of classroom discussions about experiences with other administrators and how it helped in understanding the job as superintendent. They said that it was an emotional support to know that others were experiencing similar feelings and challenges in their administrative jobs. One of the participants was prepared in a cohort group in which discussion with peers was a significant part of the formal training. She considered this a benefit.

Specific courses that the participants in intermediate size schools noted as helpful were leadership theory, developing leadership skills, ethics, personnel issues, curriculum development, and interpersonal skills in dealing with people.

The areas where this group of superintendents felt unprepared were finance, relationships, and the politics of the job. Six superintendents considered finances as the major area in which formal education did not reflect demands of the job. Members were specific in identifying areas in school finance. They identified managing formulas of the different state funds, transportation formulas, weighted average daily attendance formulas, Career and Technology funds and how to structure classes to maximize those funds, calculating revenue, tax rate computations, preparing a budget, and passing a bond. One participant stated that he wished that his professor in finance had taught him

how to get on the Texas Education Agency Internet site and use the template for figuring state revenue for the coming year and monitoring how closely the district was matching that projection throughout the year. One superintendent stated that finance, “is such a big area because you can impact so much but if you do not have your finances, revenues in order. [Or] If you get behind it will come back to haunt you.”

Relationships and the politics of the job were the other areas that this group identified as being inadequate in their education. One participants stated he wished he knew more about, “parents and politics; fairly dealing with parents,” while another stated, “understanding the community and the politics.” One superintendent stated a need for formal instruction in “being an astute politician” and “understanding the connections some people have.” Three of the participants specifically mentioned the formal and informal politics in an organization and community and not feeling prepared to deal with them. A fourth stated that his formal training had not prepared him for,

“Dealing with people – the formal and informal organization within and outside the school. Personal skills in dealing with people. Learning how to get people to do what you want them to do.”

One participant noted that formal training on board relationships was an area inadequately covered in his superintendency training. He stated that,

“many people are not aware when coming in [to the superintendent position] the impact of the first two to three months as far as keeping board members informed, sharing with them and listening to them and making them feel like they are involved with what’s going on in school.”

Large - Districts with 3,000 to More Than 50,000 Students

This group of five superintendents in the largest districts in this study consisted of three minority and two white participants. Leadership and courses related to leadership styles surfaced as a central theme. This is similar to the superintendents in the intermediate size districts. A participant in this group mentioned the benefit of being a part of a cohort group of administrators, as did a participant from the previous group. He stated, “The cohort group concept and dynamics helped me more than the formalized training.”

This group identified a need for courses that deal with relationships with the different groups of people the superintendent deals with in the role of the job. Two superintendents in this category received their education in out-of-state public universities. They also had previous superintendent experience. However, they also reflected on the benefits of those courses that center on relationships, organization, and leadership. One of the participants stated,

“The focus on parents and parental involvement. Establishing healthy relationships. [The] most [beneficial was] cultural anthropology, the nature of the organization and organizational culture. Courses that centered on inquiry and analysis.”

The areas of formal training that did not adequately prepare this group of superintendents were board relations, how to apply school law, relationships, evaluating the curriculum, construction, building projects, facilities, and land acquisition. One of the participants stated that his statistics courses were completely unrelated to the type of

statistics and the manner in which he could use them for helping the board and public understand important issues.

One participant stated, “I have three degrees now, and I don’t know if any of them helped me with the day-to-day things that you do as a superintendent.” Another participant stated, “A large percentage [formal training] was worthless in my opinion.” But this same participant also stated that the leadership courses and motivation theory courses were of benefit.

One superintendent stated his formal training did not prepare him for the “largeness” of the job as well as the many different relationships that must be developed with very different groups. Again, as with the previous category of superintendents of intermediate size districts, the politics of the job was an area of not being prepared. One participant stated he was not prepared for

“the reality of the superintendent experience... and the constant demand for immediate answers to a wide variety of questions from many different areas.”

Another superintendent stated being unprepared for the

“...politics. Dealing with several different governmental bodies. Working and relating with people and groups of people with different political stances. Selling people from a wide difference in a stance on ideas and programs and convincing them the change will help them.”

Summary

When the responses of the total group of participants are examined, a central theme that surfaced was the importance of courses that center on leadership. Members of

each group referred to formal training in leadership style, techniques, and theory as being beneficial. Other content areas found to be of value were human relationships (with parents, community, and employees), organizational culture, and motivation theory. All of these areas are connected with communication and the related skills. The content area of staff development was also stated as being a benefit of formal education.

The most frequently noted deficiency for first-year superintendents in small and intermediate sized districts was the area of finance. There was no difference between men and women superintendents, all believed more formal training in the area of school finance was needed. None of the superintendents in districts larger than 3,000 students mentioned school finance as a weak area of their formal education. All of the superintendents in this group had assistant superintendents of finance who were responsible for the budget demands of their districts.

The specific areas of school finance mentioned were tax rates, the process of setting a tax rate, reading and using the state's Summary of Finance (a state report of school district funding), preparing a budget, calculating revenues, passing a bond to fund construction, managing and maximizing the different state funds such as Career and Technology and Tier II funds. In the state of Texas each area of the school has a unique funding formula, which is affected by specific but different variables such as number of students, their attendance, and an assigned weight by program. Other areas associated with school finance and the management of the business office was grants, investments, health insurance, facility construction, and management of utilities.

Human relationships was an area where the first-year superintendents felt that

their formal training adequately prepared them, but it was also an area in which others noted as being one they were not adequately prepared in their formal training. The specific topics in human relationships pointed out in the interviews were board of trustees and parent relationships and the political maneuvering required between and with other governmental bodies. The politics of the position of the superintendent were noted by five of the participants (25 %) representing each of the district-size categories.

Areas mentioned by two participants in growing school districts were facilities, management of facilities and construction projects, and land acquisition. Other content areas that were specified by two participants, one in the smallest district size and the other in the largest, were curriculum and personnel issues.

It is implied that there was no course in their formal training that prepared them for the day-to-day responsibilities and demands of the superintendent. Six of the superintendents in this study specifically mentioned being unprepared for “the day-to-day” responsibilities, decisions, and experiences of the superintendency. This was true in participants from each size school district. The feeling was summarized well by using and combining the quotes of these two particular participants.

“I was not prepared for the reality of the superintendent experience. I had to draw upon my experience. There was a constant demand for immediate answers. The best thing to prepare you for your day as an administrator is to show up. You just don’t know what to expect.”

Mentoring Experiences

The remainder of the interview was specifically related to mentoring. Participants

were asked if they have or have ever had a mentor. Table 8 illustrates responses by district size and gender, as well as certain characteristics of the relationship. Ninety-five of the participants reported having had a mentor as superintendent or earlier in their careers. Seventeen or 85 percent had mentors while in their first year of the superintendency.

Table 8: Mentoring Experiences of Participants

Mentor Relationship		Student Enrollment					Totals
		< 500	500-999	1,000-2,999	3,000-9,999	>10,000	
One mentor	Male	2	2	3	3	1	11
	Female	2		1			3
More than one mentor	Male	1	1	1		1	4
	Female	0					0
No mentor	Male						
	Female	1					1
Other Differences							
Mentor was of the	Male			2			
Opposite sex	Female	2		1			

Nineteen of the participants had a mentor at some point in their administrative career. One of the participants had a formal mentor assigned by a professional organization, but the relationship was voluntary on the part of both the mentor superintendent and the mentored first-year superintendent. Most of the participants had only one mentor throughout their careers. Four men of the twenty participants had two mentors, and one had three.

Three women did not have mentors their first year in the superintendency, and one did not have a mentor either as a principal or a superintendent. Two women had mentors when they were assistant principals and principals but did not have one as superintendents. However, they both did state that they occasionally contacted and asked

advice of their mentors. All of the women, who had mentors, past or present, had male mentors. They also used a group of fellow superintendents as sounding boards on different issues.

All of the men had mentors as superintendents. All minority participants also had a mentor in their first year of the superintendency.

Patterns of Mentoring Relationships

Review of the data revealed three distinct patterns of mentoring relationships. There were superintendents who did not have mentors as superintendents. There were also relationships that developed while the participant worked as a subordinate or was a student of the mentor within the same school system in the past. The third type of mentoring was one that developed later and was one of convenience or association while the mentor and the mentored were in different school systems or organizations. One of the mentoring relationships in this group was a formal mentorship sponsored by a professional organization and volunteered for. The only common factor is that all the mentoring relationships were voluntary on the part of both the mentored and the mentor.

No current mentoring

These first-year superintendents did not have a mentor as a superintendent or a current mentor, or may or may not have had a mentor in the past. There were three women and no men in this group. Three of the four women in this study did not have a mentor as superintendent. All of the participants' school districts would be considered rural and somewhat isolated from cities of over 100,000. Two of the superintendents in this group were promoted from within the school district. The other had been hired as

superintendent from the principalship of a school in a neighboring intermediate size school district of 1,000 – 2,999 students. One female first-time superintendent in a district of less than 500 students had never had a mentor in her school administrative career. She had entered the superintendency as a principal in a neighboring school district of 1,000 to 2,999 students.

All felt they would have benefited from having a mentor during their first year as a superintendent. The two participants who had mentors as assistant principal or principal stated that they still occasionally contacted those mentors but relied more on a network of other superintendents in their education service center region. The participant who had never been mentored also stated that she used a network of area superintendents, professional meetings, the internet, and professional newsletters as well as contacting the regional educational service center and the state agency to assist her in the responsibilities as a superintendent.

When asked in what specific areas of the job of superintendent they would have wanted mentoring, these superintendents gave both content related responses and specific characteristics of a mentor. The following answers were recorded.

- “Finance and budget. Someone experienced in finance and the challenges of being a Chapter 41 (Property Value Rich) school district.”
- “Someone who could help in the management of all the tasks and state mandates. Someone who could remind me that some state report was due or this is the time of the year to be doing a particular task.”
- “This person [mentor] would definitely have to have experience and have

psychological experience to help with the motivation and encouragement. That person needs to be available and have an invested interest in my success and me. They would need a strong knowledge base and someone I could trust to lead me the right way without thinking I'm a pushover.”

Another participant noted that in the area of finance a mentor would have been helpful. A second area in which she noted was in relationships with her board and the community. However, she expanded this by stating; “I think a pitfall to lookout for is a new superintendent coming into a community from the outside.” She had been promoted to superintendent from within the district and lived in the district where she was employed.

When asked in what form or how they would have wanted help from a mentor, the unmentored group's responses showed a preference for active mentoring. Participants also preferred to be walked through a problem rather than being told an answer. They had clear ideas about the mentor and mentoring as shown in the following statements.

- “I would want the mentor accessible. I would be able to pick up the phone or e-mail at anytime. I don't like leaving the campus. Time is important to me. Maybe get together some. I want help but not by doing it for me. Walk me through the process. Problem solve with me.”
- “They'd take the initiative to contact me – show interest. They would ask me questions. Sometime I don't know the questions to ask. A reminder of what is coming up.”
- “I would want my mentor [to] tell me if I had done something correctly or

am I about to do this correctly or incorrectly. Someone objective and had a broader point of reference than you might even be able to get yourself.

Someone I can call and they would be available to answer my questions.”

Notably, the participant who had never had a mentor stated she thought she learned “more, or at least better, because I had to do it all myself.” When asked why she had not had a mentor at any time during her career, this superintendent indicated that she was independent, and “circumstances just didn’t allow for it.”

Two of the first-year superintendents (one in a district with less than 500 students and one in a district of 1,000 to 2,999 students) had mentors when they were middle management administrators. They both stated that the mentoring relationship occurred while they were assistant principals and principals in districts that had over 3,000 students. Rather than seeking a new mentor, they participated in networks of superintendents. Both of these administrators had served as interim superintendents in the same districts after the sudden exit the superintendent.

The two participants who had been mentored earlier in their careers were asked if they had continued their relationships with their mentors. Both stated that the relationship had continued with occasional e-mails, phone calls, and conversations at professional meetings. One participant described the frequency in which she had contact with her past mentor as “occasional.” Another stated that, when she talked with him, his main concern was “how was I dealing with the politics” of the office.

Another topic of conversation that the two participants had with their past mentors were dealing with people and relationships. One participant further described it as

“human dynamics.” They also discussed aspects of instructional leadership but most of the conversations were personal advice such as how to interview personnel and general interest in “how they were doing.” However, both indicated that their mentors were not asked for “much assistance,” and that the mentors did not refer them to other resources when they did ask for advice. One of these women did state that she received verbal encouragement, and she was confident that her past mentor was “always available.”

Each of the participants stated they would not have a defined number of mentor meeting times or a preference for a specific method of how they would have contact their mentor. Meetings with a mentor would be more occasional and on an as-needed basis. They would prefer to have the mentor accessible by phone or e-mail when the need arises. One participant stated that she would want her mentor available, “...when I pick up the phone its because I’ve hit a snag. I want to be able to call and have them help me.”

When asked if they wanted their mentor to encourage them they all indicated that they wanted verbal encouragement primarily. One participant used the word “compassionate” while another participant said it would be nice if someone just said, “Hang in there.” Each of the three participants who did not have a mentor as a superintendent indicated that, while the superintendency was a lonely job, superintendents in their networks made them “feel comfortable” and “able to ask questions.”

When asked if they served as mentors to others, the superintendent who had never had a mentor did not see herself as being a mentor to anyone in education. The two superintendents who had mentors earlier in their career stated that they were mentors to

other superintendents who were newer in the job or principals within their school district. One explained, “I have a little more experience but these people who are newer superintendents than I am and are in my [certification] classes feel more comfortable coming to me because they know I’ve recently been there.”

Those without mentors as superintendents had networks of other superintendents as a support system. Their networks consisted of superintendents who were geographically close and were often members of educational cooperatives for services such as special education. Despite the lack of mentoring, they had very clear ideas about the ideal relationship and how a mentor could help them.

Sponsor-Protégé Mentor Relationship

The second pattern of mentoring reflected the traditional relationship discussed by Kram (1985) and Cohen (1995). The sponsor-protégé mentor relationship is a long-term relationship, sometime beginning when the mentored person was a high school student working with a teacher or coach who moved into school administration. The mentor/sponsor helped the protégé move up the ranks, often taking him or her along as the mentor moved up the school administrative career path. The relationship continued until the mentor and protégé became colleagues and equals. Another characteristic of this group was all participants and their mentors were at some point in their careers connected by being a part of the same school district (organization).

This was the most common mentoring relationship for the group. There were thirteen first-year superintendents in this category. All three minority superintendents and one of the women experienced this type of mentoring relationship. Three of the

participants had been students of their mentors. These three mentors had been either a teacher or a coach of the participant early in their relationship. Ten of the participants in this category had worked for their mentors as teachers, coaches, principals, or in a central office position.

Although the majority of men in this category had male mentors, two were mentored by women. Both women had been the men's superintendents and immediate supervisor before the participants took their own superintendencies. The one woman participant in this category had a male mentor who had previously been her superintendent in another district. All three of the minority participants had men mentors. One minority participant had two mentors. It was not determined whether the minority first-year superintendents had minority mentors, although one minority participant reported having had a mentor of a different ethnicity.

When participants were asked to describe their mentors' characteristics, the responses were short, often only a short phrase or one word. Some of the responses revealed that the new superintendents had areas of personal concern or fear, such as the fear of looking foolish or unprepared for the position in the eyes of their mentor, or "dumb." These superintendents spoke to the importance of their mentor being "straightforward" and "offering constructive criticism." But, the mentor walked a fine line, and a helpful mentor "did not have an attitude of you should already know this." One participant described the constructive criticism of her mentor as "therapeutic." Yet another characteristic of a mentor was one who "gives emotional support."

Several participants in this group of superintendents with long-term mentoring

relationships described that their mentor was “honest” and stated that they “trusted” their mentor. One of the participants said that honesty was “first and foremost” in their relationship. Other participants used related characteristics such as “genuine” and “trustworthy.” One participant spoke of a “totally honest relationship” where there was “a confidence in saying things to each other.” This group of superintendents had high confidence in their mentors. Trust as well as confidentiality in conversations was important to participants. One participant whose relationship with his mentor began in high school when he was a student and his mentor was a coach, stated, “He loves me. He would have to love me to put up with all my crap.” This statement is related to another mentor characteristic often noted by this group - patience.

The characteristic of mentor patience was often mentioned. One superintendent stated that his mentor was “calm, relaxed, not a hothead.” Another used the descriptor “flexible”. Another superintendent stated that his mentor was “empathic and caring.” More than one participant used the qualities of “caring” and “calm” in describing the mentor. One superintendent described his mentor as “supportive,” while another said his mentor was “encouraging.”

Many in the sponsor-protégé relationship spoke of their mentor being a “good listener.” One said his mentor allowed him “to blow off steam.” Their mentors were willing to spend time, share, and give advice. One participant described his mentor as being, “very good at kind of walking you through an issue.” His mentor “saw challenges from multiple perspectives.” He further described his mentor’s problem-solving technique as, “You tell me your perspective. I’ll tell you mine. And let’s think of a third

together.” Another said,

“He is a great listener. He takes it in then gives feedback. He helps you work through problems and gets you to see what he sees and what you need to solve the problem.”

Participants described their long-term mentors as “sharp,” “informed,” and “knowledgeable.” They had an obvious admiration for their mentors’ experience and knowledge. One participant stated his mentor was “a good role model,” while others said their mentor “has integrity” or was a “quality person and superintendent.” One described his mentor as “charismatic.” Participants in this group of first-year superintendents said that their mentor “had good experiences he could relate” and “well learned from experience.” A participant stated his mentor showed “a real interest in me personally and professionally.”

This group emphasized strong leadership skills. One participant stated his mentor was “a relentless worker.” Another said his mentor was “visionary.” “Focused,” “well organized,” “efficient,” or “well-balanced” were other related characteristics noted by the different mentored superintendents.

This group also spoke of their mentors being “astute relationship builders” and “very involved with the community” and with “many outside organizations.” One said his mentor “bridges gaps in the community through communication.” Another noted his mentor as expressing herself well. And yet another participant described his mentor as “a strong leader willing to challenge traditional thinking, willing to step out front even if no one is behind him.” This same participant stated that his mentor was “focused” and yet

had “a great sense of humor.” He stated that his mentor did not forget to laugh and have a good time.

When asked if the relationship has continued since they moved into the superintendency, and if they still call upon their mentor, eleven stated that it did. All stated that the relationship has matured and become more personal. Some stated that the relationship had become very personal or developed into a “close friendship” as they had become peers professionally. One participant stated, “we talk about our kids and spouses.” The following are quotes in which the participants used to express how the relationship had changed. One participant said,

“It’s become very personal. We have a stronger personal relationship and have a bond that has a high confidence level. I know he doesn’t share what we talk about. I know I’m talking only to him.”

One superintendent described the relationship now as compared to earlier as “very trusting. The level of trust is very high where there is a high comfort level.” Another superintendent said,

“It [relationship] is now more personal. We [husband and wife] have become best friends with both him and his wife. We are now further apart by distance but we manage to see each other about once a month. We go to visit at each other’s homes.”

Another stated,

“I’ve got to know him better. We have become closer and better friends. We talk when we want to [with] each other not when I have a problem. I’ve ended up

being someone he can talk to about his job and role as a superintendent.”

Seven of the participants or 54 percent believe that the relationship is mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the participant. Also mentioned by participants was the expressed concern by mentors about the physical, emotional, and/or mental well-being of the superintendents being mentored. The presence of a personal relationship that had developed from an earlier professional relationship surfaced in each of the interviews. The mentored superintendents expressed how concerns of family were a part of the conversations and interactions with their mentors. In three of the cases, approximately twenty-three percent of the relationships, the relationship broadened to include interaction as couples with their spouses and spending leisure time with each other.

Three of the thirteen superintendents (23 %) stated that their relationship had remained professional and wouldn't describe it as moving to a personal level. One of the participants who believed that the relationship with the mentor had remained professional conceded that the amount of time spent with the mentor was less than when the participant was first working in the job of the superintendent. One superintendent stated that although he and his mentor have maintained a relationship, it has remained “mostly on a business level occasionally discussing issues such as passing a bond or personnel issues.” Another superintendent whose relationship had remained professional yet changed stated, “He treats me as a peer. Sometimes he calls me and ask for my input in some areas where he knows I may be more experienced.” The mentored superintendents noted their own increased confidence in their abilities and independence in the position to make informed decisions affected the amount of interaction with their mentors.

One participant described the change as “broadened into more a peer coaching relationship with each other. We’ve moved from a subordinate type of relationship to more of a peer relationship. We build on each other experiences as we share and both learn from them.” Another participant stated, “I’ve matured in assignments. We are more honest about our criticism of each other. He tells me how I should take care of myself.”

Each participant was asked how often they come in contact with their mentor and what was the primary means of contact as well the topics of interaction or for what reasons would they call on their mentor(s). The major means of interaction was telephone or e-mail (over 75 %) of those who maintained contact with their mentors. The frequency of contact with the mentor ranged from weekly to two or three times a year. Face-to-face visits ranged from once every two weeks to once or twice a month to once a year. The scope, magnitude, and complexity of the job as well as geographical distance were noted as contributing to limiting the frequency of contact with their mentors. The frequency of contact with mentors of superintendents in districts of greater than 3,000 students was less than in smaller school districts.

Three of the participants (one in a district of less than 500 students and both of the participants in districts of more than 10,000 students) specifically noted that their conversations were not something specific but how to do or work through a problem or accomplish a task. The two participants in districts greater than 10,000 students were less specific about an area of the responsibility or subject in the superintendency but stated they received help in “developing my leadership skills” and “getting things done in a big district.” One of these participants stated that his mentor helped him with “problem

clarification as well as identifying possible solutions and strategies for implementation.” All of the participants who had mentors responded in the affirmative when asked if they had been instructed on a process to get to an objective or complete a task.

Other topics of conversation included how to do the paperwork, the general business of the school district, or “evaluating the total school district.” Many of the conversations with mentors had to do with some aspect of school finance such as managing the budget. Most of these conversations occurred with superintendents in districts of less than 3,000 students. Personnel issues and dealing with people were mentioned by six (46 %) of the superintendents in this group. Four (31 %) participants stated that they talk to their mentor about board relationships or “how to handle board situations.”

When participants were asked if their mentors refer them to other resources when they talk about situations only one stated no. Four of the participants stated that referral to other resources were “not often.” Referrals to other resources was most often made to other professionals such as architects, lawyers, or another superintendent who the mentor may have known had a similar experience. One of the participants stated voluntarily that he “felt more comfortable with his mentor.” Two of the participants stated that their mentors referred them to training that the mentor felt would be beneficial to the mentored superintendent or to “programs for the school” that would improve student achievement. Most of the participants (46 % or 6 of the participants) could not readily recall if their mentor had referred them to other resources.

Each participant was asked if their mentor gave them support or encouragement

and if so, how did the mentor offer this support or motivation. Every participant who had a mentor stated that his or her encouragement was verbal affirmation and indicated that this was a major part of the mentoring relationship. Five of the six superintendents in school districts of more than 3,000 students all noted how their mentors “pushed” them or encouraged them to reach higher in their profession. The encouragement of hearing “hang in there” was often mentioned by the first-year superintendents as a message they needed and received from their mentors. One participant described his mentor as a “cheerleader” while another stated that his mentor “cheers him up when the chips are down. She is always positive and motivates me to keep it up.” Another participant stated his mentor told him to “not let it [the job] get you down. We’re all in it together and we’re all going to survive.”

Two superintendents stated that their mentor was “empathetic” while “acting as a sounding board.” Four of the superintendents noted that their mentors encouraged them because their mentors were “straightforward,” “always telling me the truth,” and “truthful.” Five of the superintendents expressed that their mentors encouraged them because the mentors were “available” or “takes time for me.” One participant stated his mentor “wants to meet with me and talk to me.” Mentors showed a noticeable interest in the participants.

Two of these superintendents (15 %) stated that their relationship with their mentor had not continued. The two white male participants “did not really have a lot of contact with their former mentors.” This was due to changes in jobs, geographic distance, and job demands.

Participants were asked at the conclusion of the interview how their mentor had helped them the most in carrying out their role and responsibilities as a superintendent. Certain themes were noted in the responses of this group of superintendents. One theme was the “support” and encouragement that their mentors gave them was most helpful in carrying out their role and responsibilities as a superintendent. In describing what helped them the most, the participants used words and phrases like “confirmation,” “support,” and “believing in me.” The mentors provided encouragement in letting the mentored superintendent know that they were not the only one that had to deal with the issues associated with the job. Another participant pointed to the encouragement of the mentor by stating he received the most help through his mentor’s “positive support, encouragement, and reinforcement.” This theme was especially evident in superintendents of school districts of less than 3,000 students. The superintendents of smaller districts were more likely to mention specific skills and problems related to performance than those superintendents in larger school districts of more than 3,000 students.

A second theme was relationships with various groups and their development. In the area of relationships one superintendent stated how his mentor had helped him most through his guidance in “how to develop appropriate relationships within the scope of this job.” He amplified this by further stating; “I think that is the most important role for a superintendent or any role in education [is] to have appropriate relationships.”

The third area of help indicated by superintendents of small or intermediate size school districts centered on the area of school finances. One participant explained how

helpful his mentor was in the planning and procedures in passing a bond. Another participant explained,

“I think without a doubt school finance has been one of the big areas in which I’ve received assistance because it was something I probably felt the least comfortable with going in [to the job]. I spent quite a bit of the time trying to get comfortable with that.”

Superintendents in larger school districts centered on leadership performance or process related areas but also desired support from their mentors. A participant noted that his mentor assisted him by her example of excellent leadership skills such as team building and being a visionary and strategically planning for the future.

As was also mentioned as a desirable characteristic by the superintendents who did not have mentors, this group stated that the greatest help was assistance by the mentor who gave clarity to the situation and confidence to the novice. One said that his mentor was “a good listener and very keen at isolating the real problem as opposed to missing the point.” The mentor gave clarity to a situation and gave the mentored superintendents perspective. One participant said, “When you’re in the situation sometimes it’s hard to see [the answer] but that someone from outside the organization can look in and give a broader point of reference.” Another participant stated that his mentor helped him by telling him to “take it one day at a time.” While another superintendent said that his mentor told him to “not make it harder than it is.”

The other associated themes that each mentored superintendent reported as the greatest help was that he or she had confidence in the mentor’s abilities and the

availability of the mentor in time of need. The confidence included knowing that the mentor was available, timely, and accurate in the needed assistance. One participant stated it this way, “When I hit a snag I want to be able to call and have him be able to help me.” Another participant described the most help was in “being able to give me the answers right when I needed them. He was able to give me immediate responses or immediate contacts. Timely accurate information...you need someone readily available within a short period of time.”

Superintendents in districts of more than 3,000 students reported that areas that their mentors helped the most were with encouragement and acting as a sounding board. They shared and discussed the experiences each had in the position. These superintendents were broader in their view of how their mentor had helped them. When describing their interaction with mentors they reported actively exchanging of ideas. Mentors assertively solicited ideas from the protégés. Conversations were not specific to a particular area such as finance or insurance, as with the superintendents in this group who were in smaller school districts. One participant said, “I think probably the most effective help has been the fact that he gave me somebody to bounce ideas off of and caused me to think sometimes in ways that I would not have thought otherwise.” These participants noted that their mentors were honest in their perspective of a situation and related their personal experiences with the mentored superintendent. One participant noted that his mentor was willing to share his knowledge. Another participant noted that he was helped not only by the honesty but the “risk-free environment” that was present in their relationship where “an honest exchange of thought” was available.

Superintendents of large school districts were more likely to mention exchanging ideas through dialogue with their mentors. They were less likely to share specific knowledge areas. The mentors of these superintendents were overt in encouraging the participants to grow on their own. One participant discussed how his mentor challenged him to think. He expressed this by saying,

“I think [he helped me] by forcing me to be reflective about the actions that I take and making sure that I question whether or not I can do them in a different and more effective way. At times I felt like saying, “Just tell me!” He said I was much too bright for that – “to think about it and come back with two or three options and then we’ll chat.” It’s almost like – “I’m not going to carry your load, you’re the one getting paid.”

This example demonstrates that his mentor purposely forced him to be more independent in his role as superintendent.

The superintendents of long-term mentoring relationships were generally very comfortable with their mentor. Participants in this category expressed high levels of trust in their mentors. Time and shared experiences of previously working together had developed a relationship in which both actively sought to continue it. Many of the relationships developed beyond the professional, and personal and family interests were exchanged. The mentors of this group pushed and encouraged their protégés to take on more responsibility and to seek professional improvement.

Mentor Relationships that Develop Through Convenience

The third type of relationship was labeled “mentoring relationships of

convenience” because they were relatively new relationships, did not develop over a long period of time, and they developed through business or professional association. The participants had never worked in the same organization as with the mentor-protégé relationship. They developed through volunteering in a formal mentoring program, having a helpful superintendent in a nearby school district, meeting a retired superintendent, a school business relationship, or colleagues met in a meeting. Mentors of the superintendents in this group had many of the same characteristics of mentors in the previous sponsor-protégé mentoring relationship.

There were four participants in this category. All were white men, two from very small school districts of less than 500 students, one from a school district of 500 to 999 students and one from a district of 1,000 to 2,999 students. Most had two or more individuals they considered mentors.

Their mentoring relationships were similar to the previous group but some differences existed. This group described their mentors as strong-willed individuals who are people they want to be like. Mentors were also described as caring and very patient. They stated that their mentors displayed a “willingness to do whatever it took as far as answering questions.” One participant said his mentor “didn’t make me feel like I should know the answers already. He doesn’t have an attitude that I should already know this.” Another superintendent described his mentor as experienced, global in his thinking, and having a long-range vision. This was like the mentor-protégé relationships. It was important to some of the superintendents in this group not to look “dumb.”

Mentors of the superintendents in this category were also described as involved in

the community and having “a lot of class.” Admiration of the mentor was evident in this group of superintendents. One participant described his mentor as “calm, keeping his wits in difficult situations.” This same participant stated that his mentor helps him work through the problem, “acting as a sounding board.”

The superintendents in this category described some characteristics of their mentors that were sometimes opposite in nature. Where some participants described their mentors as “aggressive,” “bold,” and “loud” others described their mentors as being “conservative,” “reserved,” and “soft-spoken.”

When this group of superintendents were asked if they had continued their relationship past the first year of the superintendency with their mentors all of them said yes. All stated that the relationships have progressed to a more personal level but one said, “it has changed but he doesn’t help me as much as other superintendents do now that he is retired.” One of the participants who affirmed that the relationship had become more personal stated that now their families met socially. One superintendent said that now that he had a year behind him in the superintendency,

“...he now calls on me. We also talk about our personal issues and more in-depth about subjects. He also tells me how I should take care of myself.”

Mentors in this group of superintendents were concerned with the personal well being of the mentored superintendent. The same was evident in the previous mentoring relationships. One participant said that his mentor is

“interested and knows the stress of the job. He understands and allows me to blow off steam. He encourages me to take care of myself, my health, my family, my

children. Take time for myself. Helps with problems.”

The frequency in which the participants in this category had contact with their mentors was about once a month face-to-face contact and “often” over the telephone or e-mail. This is less contact than the superintendents in the mentor-protégé category indicated they had with their mentors. One participant who stated that his contact with his mentor was “not much now” and that he had “built a relationship with four other superintendents in the area” near his school district. Their contact was limited due to geographical distance.

The topics of conversation covered a wide range of areas related to the superintendency but participants identified some areas more often. Topics of conversation were related to skill and knowledge areas as well as procedural in nature. The areas were personnel issues, relationships and dealing with people or the board of trustees, passing a bond, and budget or school finance. One of the participants noted that his mentor helped him in accomplishing tasks by telling him “how to go about doing something.” Their conversations were about school business and more procedural in nature.

One of the participants stated that he could tell his mentors of his “fears” and that his mentor gave him “helpful hints of how to stay out of trouble.” When asked if their mentor ever referred them to other resources they all stated that this did not happen “often” but was often limited to referring them to another superintendent who the mentor knew was experiencing a similar circumstance or a specific training that would provide help in doing the job.

All encouragement from mentors of this group of superintendents was also verbal, as with the superintendents in the mentor-protégé relationship. One participant stated that his mentor “encourages me with the truth.” Another superintendent described himself as sometime feeling as if “I’m in the well and can’t see out of it and he can help me. I trust him.” One stated that he was encouraged just because “he listens to me.” Another stated that he knows the level of trust is greater and he is encouraged because they “talk more about personal challenges.” It was apparent through the responses that trust was a part of the relationship as well as encouragement.

When the participants were asked at the conclusion of the interview how their mentor had helped them the most in carrying out their role and responsibilities as a superintendent, one participant in this group stated,

“The relationship is more important than the knowledge ...and the experience [was] more important in connection with the relationship. Knowing that they had dealt with those issues. [He would say] I’ve been there too and it’s tough right now but tomorrow the sun will still come up and you’ll still have your job.”

Another participant said, “He’s helped me the most by being a sounding board and giving me pointers and information on my board relations, employee relations and following up [on those relationships].” The mentors’ availability, being straightforward, putting things into perspective, and timeliness of their advice was important to the participants in this group. One participant stated that his mentor helped him look at situations realistically. Another participant expressed,

“...Probably the fact that they existed and they were there for support. [They]

gave me the confidence I needed to at least act like I know what I was doing. Also their advice was usually straight to the point. It was timely in that I didn't have to spend a long time looking for information in books. Then I would say that the encouragement that they gave to me. They are good listeners and are very keen on isolating the real problem as opposed to missing the point.”

Both groups who had mentors stressed the personal relationship and trusting their mentors. Participants in both of these groups identified their mentors being “sounding boards” for problems, projects, or ideas they had about their school districts. Mentors of both long-term and younger relationships expressed concern for the protégés to take care of themselves physically. Superintendents of the two groups identified their mentors as good listeners.

The major difference of the mentoring relationships of convenience was that the relationship had not developed to a personal level as with the mentor-protégé relationships. Although some of the relationships were developing into more personal interests the participants in this category did not report as close a personal relationship as the previous group. These relationships did not have a common history in which there were experiences in which both had shared in the same school.

Advice to Mentors

Participants were asked what advice they would give to someone who was going to be a mentor to a first-year superintendent. This provided information to determine if there was a similarity in the descriptions the participants' own mentor and the qualities participants desired in a mentor. The advice to mentors was varied but reflected the

qualities superintendents observed in their own mentors and the skill and knowledge areas in which they wanted assistance from a mentor. The recommendations and advice did not differ by type of mentoring relationship, gender, district size, or ethnicity. Three themes surfaced from the participants' responses. The participants described, 1) desirable personal characteristics of mentors and the relationship, 2) availability and approachability of mentors, and 3) two specifically discussed a need for mentor training programs. More face-to-face contact with the mentor early in the relationship was also a recommendation.

In describing the desirable personal characteristics of the mentor, the superintendents' advice also related to the development of the relationship. "Trust," "honesty," and knowing each other personally as well as professionally were pointed out as being important in the relationship. One participant said,

"Be very honest, have a relationship ...that goes beyond just the professional [level]. It has to go beyond the professional because many times, you're talking about focus, re-focusing, many times he'll use that technique to bring me back around as a reality check. Sometime this job gets to you. It's so overwhelming and so much to be done and you need someone to give you that reality check every now and then."

Another superintendent advised,

"Know your limitations. If someone is calling needing help don't play around with him or her. If you don't know something tell them. Be honest with your own limitations and be honest with that person."

Superintendents across enrollment group, gender, and ethnicity mentioned patience being an important quality of the mentor as well as the superintendent being mentored. One participant said a mentor should have

“patience [with the relationship]. Don’t try to accomplish it all on the first day.

Make a plan of what you want to accomplish and don’t try to do it all at one time because your team gets confused if you do that.”

Another said,

“The first thing is that you actually need to listen to the person you are mentoring. It’s not just information going from you to them. Helping to work through [issues]. Build [a relationship] off your concerns or needs. [The mentor] helps you work through it.”

The importance of “walking one through a problem” and “acting as a sounding board” while “listening” were other areas of advice. A participant said, “See the whole picture. Consider all the angles instead of just trying to solve the problem by looking at one part of it. Take every issue or concern serious. It may be silly but take it serious.”

Another superintendent advised,

“I would advise them to sit down with the person and work through some of the things together that they may be facing and actually show them how it’s done.

There’s no better way to do it than to sit down and talk about it. Also point out as many pitfalls as you are aware of and how you can end up in a bad situation. It never fails to amaze me at how many experienced people have been superintendents for many years end up in disasters and it’s either because they’re

not watching what their subordinates are doing close enough and the subordinates get them in trouble. Or they make a fatal mistake and don't recognize it because they're distracted or some other reason."

Encouragement and a mentor who actively pursued contact with the mentored superintendent were also advised that this group as a whole offered to prospective superintendent mentors. One superintendent advised,

"Be available. Be compassionate and verbally supportive. Not everyone is cut out to be mentor. I'd tell them to pick up the phone and call the person they were mentoring occasionally because that person is probably going to be so bogged down, their head spinning and going in so many different directions. Time is just so confined that sometimes you don't even have time to pick up the phone and ask the question, you just try to get through it."

Participants advised of the importance of developing a relationship through regular contact. The approachability of the mentor was important. Confidence and trust in a mentor must be established early in the relationship. One superintendent said,

"I would tell them to just to make sure you maintain contact with them, encourage them, be patient with them. Establish a relationship where they know that no question is too small to ask. Just let them know that no question is too simple, maintain an open line of communication where the person who is the first-year superintendent knows that they can call them without having the idea that it was a simple question. Broaden the person's vision. You are going to have to deal with things that are going to affect everyone. I would say being open and establishing a

relationship where they can ask anything at any time.”

Another stated,

“I would tell them to sit down and develop a relationship with the new superintendent where there is a comfort and really get to open up and share their insecurities or the areas that they feel inadequate in. Then bring them the support in those areas.”

One participant advised that the

“relationship needs to be first. Take some time, go spend some time with that person, take them to lunch. Get to know a little bit about them and their family. Get to know what makes them tick and what doesn’t make them tick. Because if you have that relationship and you build that trust then I think you have a lot better chance of being effective and helping.”

The second theme in which participants gave advice was associated with availability and the ability to communicate well to the person being mentored. The mentor must be have the time and be available to develop the relationship. One participant said it this way:

Return phone calls. Be available. Be some place where you can truly play that role. Provide feedback. Because you’ve had enough experience where you can provide feedback to what the individual is asking. To be in a situation where you are able to communicate well enough to get through to someone and try to find out exactly what’s going on and work with those situations. Be very patient and willing to listen.”

A superintendent of a very large school district advised,

“I think it’s important to maintain ongoing contact on the phone, e-mail, conferences. I think it’s also important to know that folks need to have someone just...to chat with and help you reflect. Not to solve your problems but certainly to listen.”

Another simply stated, “Listen. Active listening.” While one participant elaborated on listening by stating,

“You have to listen, don’t tell them what to do. You give them options because everyone has to do it their own way or it’s not real. People pick up quickly on things that are not real. I try to be very careful not to say, “Well, I would do this.” I want to know the options he’s thought of.”

Some of the advice that these superintendents would give prospective mentors was general in nature. One participant stated,

“People become very specialized. Your job is to manage this whole big pot and to make sure it meets the overall goals and your own personal vision plus what you feel the board of trustees and community want the district to go. That is the key. The other bit of advise is to make sure you’re in a place that matches your own value system, that you are in a school district and that you work for a board of trustees that matches some of those issues. You are going to be interviewed but you are also interviewing them. When you take your first job you want to feel comfortable, go home and be able to sleep at night.”

Another participant stated he would tell a prospective mentor to follow the example of

Abraham Lincoln. The participant related the following example of Lincoln.

“He wrote a lot of letters to people about things they were doing wrong and he always set them in his desk and pulled them out the next day before mailing them. Probably the best advice that I’ve tried to take myself is: Don’t ever do anything in haste because Lincoln rarely ever mailed those letters.”

The last theme in which this group reported as advice to mentors was related specifically to mentoring programs. Their advice included important components they felt should be a part of a mentoring program. One expressed that an effective mentoring program would identify the knowledge, skills, and experiences of both the mentor and the protégé. Another emphasized the importance of correctly matching mentor and protégé so as to have a “healthy” relationship. A superintendent said,

“I would think of all the areas that I’ve never thought about before, [the areas] that you encounter as a superintendent. As we talked earlier, there are so many areas that there is just no way the professional programs can train or take the time to prepare. Many times your experiences in prior jobs will not have been in that [particular] area. I think one of the things to do, as a mentor [is] for someone to do an assessment of what their experiences have been in. [Try to discover the areas of need or where there is no experience and help in those areas.] So I think you would want to assess what the mentee’s experience was before you begin mentoring and then you can more or less tailor it to what their needs are.”

Another superintendent talked of a professional mentoring program while giving advice to prospective mentors. He said,

“I’d say to find someone who you can have a healthy relationship with. If I were setting up a mentoring program I would match people up and bring them together for some social time, some kind of orientation where they can really get to know each other and start to develop that personal relationship. Find someone you can trust, that you can talk to and is knowledgeable that can be a resource for you and someone you can count on.”

Superintendents As Mentors

The mentored superintendents were asked if they had developed a similar type of relationship where they mentored with another person. The reasons the participants formed or did not form other mentoring relationships of their own were not examined. Each participant was asked if they serve as a mentor for other administrators, either formally or informally. If the participants had, they were asked to describe their role as mentor.

Only four (20 %) of the participants did not see themselves as mentors or say that they mentored another. One of them said he was not a mentor to anyone because of the small number of years as a superintendent, while another stated that he didn’t “see himself as a mentor.” This superintendent did not think he had the personal characteristics to be a mentor. One participant said, “Not as of yet. I don’t feel that as a superintendent I have enough experience to be able to be helpful to someone else. I would love to do it at some point in time.” Another said, “Now, no. Later, after probably one more year of this I might feel capable. I would love to.” All but one indicated that they would like to mentor someone.

There was no significant difference in type of mentoring relationship, gender, ethnicity, or district size in response to this question. Sixteen (80 %) of the participants were mentors to either principals in or outside their districts or to newer less experienced superintendents in neighboring school districts. Most share their experiences as principals with the principals they are mentoring. All of the superintendents except one had an obvious desire to be a mentor. A participant who was leaving his current school district for another superintendency noted that he was mentoring one of his principals who had been named as his successor. In explaining the situation he said,

“My high school principal is moving up into this job [superintendent]. He’s been over already about 27 times a day. I would rather him get into the job and then come to me with questions than me telling him how to do things. I was his superintendent. He was my principal. Now we are developing a new relationship. He is a peer now and when I talk to him it is as a peer not as a superintendent to principal. I’m very hesitant to just give him a list of things to do. The reason why this board voted to bring him in is they thought things would be handled as they have been handled the last couple of years. We’ve worked together. The transition will be very easy for the staff and kids. And programs we’ve started will continue and will be improved. But he has to make this job his own. I told him until he really gets into it and has the questions of what his needs are then we’ll start from there rather than me telling him.”

Another superintendent stated,

“...informally. I have a first-year superintendent in [a neighboring school district]

who calls me and asks, “What do you do in this kind of situation?” He thinks I am real experienced. He calls and asks questions and I just try to help him anyway I can. He’ll ask what do you do or what have I done here. And I’ll ask him what he has done. I get some ideas from him and he gets ideas from me. I think it’s a collegial thing between two people who talk to each other about situations that you can’t talk to anyone else about and they understand what you’re going through. Just sharing ideas and you can grow and develop new ideas and improve. I think it is a positive thing for both sides.”

The superintendents reported that they call those they mentor and encourage them with positive and affirming words. “I encourage him and reinforce that what he is doing is the right thing to do in regards to the law.” Another said he tries to be “straightforward and honest, showing that I care and am concerned.” One superintendent said,

“I think we all do [mentor] informally... I saw something that said the key to education is relationships, and the first step to relationships is recognition and you have to be able to recognize either where you’re going, where you’ve been or where you’d like to go before you can do anything else.”

Another stated that he saw himself as an informal mentor to many individuals who were trying to move into administration or into a superintendent position. A participant described his mentoring relationship with a person he had met in a college doctoral program and cohort group who had just started his first superintendency.

“He calls me fairly regularly. Most of the time he wants to know something based

on my experience. He knows I've been through it, that I've made decisions or done this or that. He wants to know what happens when you did this or what happens when you do that. I'll tell him and he will say, "Well, what do you think?" and I'll tell him. Sometimes I'm right and sometimes I'm wrong. He trusts me or he wouldn't call me. He believes that whatever I tell them is, at least from my perception, the best route to take."

A superintendent in a large school district felt the mentoring was now mutually beneficial to him and to his protégé. He stated,

"Yes, [the relationship is now] a co-mentorship. I think as a sounding board. Drawing upon one's experiences and expertise. She is a co-mentor and we worked together [in another district]. She's a superintendent in [out of state] now. We'll call each other and talk about board issues or other things and try to find people to find out how it worked best for them. It's more sharing of experiences that broadens one's reference base for information."

Another superintendent of a large school district stated,

"Informally yes. All kinds of folks in and out of the district. I have two or three people that call me from [out of state] once a month as they are going through whatever administrative role they happen to be in. I find it to be rewarding and I think we have an obligation to help others grow into the role."

Most superintendents sought to establish new mentoring relationships to help incoming administrators and enrich their own thinking. There was also an expressed desire to mentor from those participants who had yet developed a new mentoring

relationship. The superintendents displayed many of the characteristics they had observed and experienced in their previous mentoring relationship. They had definite ideas of what they should do in the relationship for it to be helpful to the protégé and put those into practice. They described acting as a sounding board to their protégé, sharing experiences, and working through problems. The superintendents said they called their protégés and met with them to check on their well-being and “how things were going.” They expressed an interest in their protégés.

Final Thoughts on Mentoring

The interview was concluded with an open-ended question in which the superintendent could express anything he or she wished concerning a mentor or the relationship that might not have been covered during the interview. The purpose of this question was to capture any further insight into the participants’ feelings about the mentoring they had experienced during the first year as a superintendent. There were a variety of opinions expressed to this question but two themes surfaced. There were a few participants who had nothing further to add. The following data was organized by content of thoughts by the superintendents. All of the concluding comments were more advice for mentors and the mentoring relationship or suggestions for a university-based or mentor-training program.

Mentors and the Mentoring Relationship

Participants in this group noted the importance of the mentor by saying, “A mentor can make the difference in a successful job.” Another participant phrased it in the following manner.

“ I want to re-emphasize that a mentor is only going to be as good as the effort they want to put into it. Yet, if they want to be a mentor just because it brings some prestige to them personally then that’s a wrong reason for wanting to do it because that’s not going to help the person they are going to mentor. There has to be a different kind of desire to be a mentor than just if they think it’s going to bring some kind of prestige or be on a list somewhere.”

Another participant emphasized the importance of the mentor not making the mentored person feel as though he or she were an imposition. One participant emphasized the importance of individuality of both the mentor and the mentored in a relationship. He stated that

“A person cannot be exactly who their mentor was. They have to be themselves and be genuine. Do the best that they can. They are not going to handle every situation the same way that their mentor has in that situation because what they have to remember is that mentor didn’t have all the right answers. They made mistakes too and that there will be times that you’ll do something because you feel that it’s the right thing to do and you better do it. You should do what you feel in your gut is the right thing to do but talk to your mentor about it first.”

Another stated,

“If you surround yourself with fine individuals who have more experience in areas than you do who can provide you with experience and as a sounding board. A circle of individuals you will always refer back to them to basically to keep you from making the same mistakes they might have made sometime and someone to

bounce things off of. I think that's vital to any position. What are all the possibilities?"

One participant spoke to the importance of having a relationship with others when in the position of superintendent. He said,

"I just think it's pretty vital to have someone. You need other people along the way. I don't think you can do it alone. Whether a person calls them a mentor or not I think everyone has one. You may just say my friend but that's what it really is, a mentor. You either call it that or you don't but everyone I think has one. You have to have it in this business."

One participant referred to a mentor being a type of "safety net" for the first time superintendent. He said,

"Everyone needs one. Everyone needs someone they can call. This job has a wide range of competencies that you have to display to handle without someone to lean back on. I don't care who you are, where you come from, what your training has been if you are a first time superintendent whether it be in Texas or wherever you have to have that person or people."

Another suggested,

"It's the relationship first. You have to mentor for the love of what you do [the superintendency]; for the love of education; and just wanting to have a relationship. I feel like I never wasted [his] time because we are able to talk about issues and I felt like we were sometimes helping each other."

A superintendent from a large school district related this example of the

mentor relationship.

“One is something I learned from a former board member and dear friend. She told me to answer three questions when you enter into a contractual relationship. It sounds relatively easy but it has a lot of meat to it. 1-What do you do? 2-What do I do? And 3-What do we do together? This was meant in the context of board and superintendent relationships but it applies to mentoring. I don’t think questions 1 and 2 are a problem. I know what I’m supposed to do and they know what they’re supposed to do in this push-pull, give and take relationship. The trouble comes when we try to figure out what it is that we do together. It’s when we do stuff together that gets a lot of us into trouble. It seems to me that a mentor ought to focus in on that working relationship between the superintendent and the board. If you don’t have that you’re not going to be able to do anything else. That to me is the very foundation of whatever else you’re going to do in the district. I think as long as a mentor can give you advise and provide support to make sure you keep these in mind about the relationship with the board.”

This same superintendent also related this story in his concluding comments.

“The other thing that has stayed with me is that after I left [former school district] my pride was hurt. I felt unappreciated. One day my mentor called and asked how I was doing. He told me after I left I need to learn to let go. You need to let go of the past and get on with the present. I didn’t realize I was holding on. He said let it go now. He was right and I did.”

This second example reinforces the idea and quality that most of the participants in this

study expressed. It was that their mentor was honest with them and there was a risk-free environment that allowed both to express themselves without negatively affecting the relationship.

University-based or Mentor Training Programs

Eight participants (40 %) made closing statements that related to training mentors of first-year superintendents. One mentored superintendent expressed,

“I think there is a definite need for a mentor program. We get teachers in the student teacher program 9 or 12 weeks [during student teaching] and when they get a job. We don’t do that in the superintendency. Even on the mid-management level we don’t. I think it is important. To have someone to go back to, a safety net. I think we should all have a class on the DEC [District Effectiveness and Compliance] Reference Guide [an overview]. It will make you a better principal and a better superintendent. You will know the expectations and the whole picture of schooling.”

The District Effectiveness and Compliance Reference Guide is a manual in which the Texas Education Agency monitors school districts as to the effectiveness of the various school programs and provides a thorough overview of all educational programs such as Dyslexia, English as a Second Language, or Special Education.

Participants stressed the importance of correctly matching the mentor and the mentored superintendent during closing comments. A woman superintendent who did not have a mentor said, “Personality has a strong role in pairing with a mentor. I don’t want to appear incapable. I don’t want to feel like a bother. It would be a very good feeling just

to know that there was one person [to call upon]. I would benefit from a formal program where I was assigned to a person.” Another superintendent said,

“I think mentoring is important. If there were one thing I would say as having gone through it and having an informal mentor that a formal mentor would be good. Someone who is closely matched, close in proximity, and matches the complexity that you face in your district and the experiences to what they have experienced in their tenure as a superintendent.”

Some superintendents gave warnings with their advice when asked whether they had anything else to add. One participant, referring to the relationship said,

“I would caution forcing or to push it because I don’t think you can make a person find a mentor. I feel that those two people have to have something ‘click’ but there has to be a relationship and trust there for it to work.”

Another said,

“I think the hardest thing to do is to match up people who are compatible because you can assign a mentor and that mentor may not be responsive enough or may not feel a strong enough responsibility. [The experience] may not be as helpful. To match up people so they would have a better chance to work together [is important]. [One should] find a pool of superintendents who have five or more years to go toward retirement that has really been successful to draw from that pool if it’s possible. I think eventually if they were paid for their services it would be good. I think mentoring is a great idea and everyone can use mentors especially when they are starting out. You need to have someone you can call

whose experience is valuable.”

A superintendent of a large school district stated the following about the importance of matching.

“I think matching them up in terms of common interests. As you know, we’re so diverse in terms of the interest that we have with regard to administration and so matching people up in terms of their prior experiences or interests. I know when I was doing the McKenzie Group stuff the folks from the urban districts tended to gravitate together because we could talk about common issues and folks from the suburban areas kind of bonded together and the rural folks as well. Then we’d all come together. This was formally and informally. One of things noticed was that we tended to gravitate towards those that could offer us something that we needed. People who were in similar situations and [could] more quickly get to the issues without much orientation.”

One superintendent who voluntarily participated in a formal mentoring program stated, “I’ve enjoyed the program [TASA First Time Superintendent Academy]. It’s been very helpful to me. I hope the program continues and expands and is successful. My relationship is growing with my assigned superintendent into the personal. As long as I am in this business I know I can count on him to help me no matter how many years down the road it is.”

Another stated how important cohort groups were in forming mentoring relationships. He expressed,

“I wish that schools [colleges] would involve practitioners in the process. I’ve had great instructors and researchers but the process needs to be changed at the

doctorate level. I don't know how you change that process. The cohort idea is good. The workload, distances, and responsibilities do not allow for much time. If you truly want to get ideas through and processes done you have to have time to just shut down and reflect and talk about things with people. We ought to plan it [talk, reflection] in our day.”

A participant concerned with time stated,

“One of the problems is time. Everyone is so busy including the mentor who is filling the role of superintendent. I try to create an atmosphere of ‘it doesn't matter what is going on, lets talk, lets meet or lets have lunch.’ Being in a hurry is not effective [for the problem or the relationship]. It might be a good idea to have mentors who are not in the superintendent role but recently out of it. You have to be able to trust the person. A network of people is very important. People who are current.”

Superintendent Skills Checklist

Near the end of each interview the participants were given a checklist (Appendix I) in which the interviewer read a list of superintendent skills, responsibilities, and roles. This allowed for verbal, visual, and tactile stimulation. The participants were asked to check the areas in which they felt they could have benefited from or would have wanted assistance from a more experienced mentor superintendent. The participants were also informed of the various sources for the list of areas prior to the list being read. The responses were examined by gender, district size, and ethnicity. Tables 9 - 10 indicate the ranked responses of first-year superintendent participants when administered the

checklist.

Table 9 shows ranked responses of all the participants. The areas in which the majority of participants indicated they could have benefited from or wanted assistance from a mentor were school finance, board relationships and development of that relationship, community relations, facility planning and capital projects, creating and managing a budget, managing a board meeting and preparing an agenda, and curriculum development and alignment. This confirms the information provided in the open-ended questions. The areas the fewest number of first-year superintendents could have benefited from or wanted assistance from a mentor were grants, athletics and extracurricular activities and vision articulation.

Table 9
Ranked Response to Checklist of Skills, Responsibilities, and Roles

<u>Skill</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
School Finance	19	95%
Board Relationship & Development	14	70%
Community Relations	13	65%
Facility Planning/Capital Projects	12	60%
Budget Creation/Management	11	55%
Board Meeting Management, Agenda, & Preps	11	55%
Curriculum Development & Alignment	11	55%
Employee Relations	9	45%
Team Building (Staff & Board)	9	45%
Transportation	9	45%
Investment of School Funds	8	40%
Employee Health Insurance	8	40%
Strategic & District Improvement Plans	8	40%
Food Services	8	40%
Fed. Programs & Management	6	30%
Communication Skills	6	30%
Maintenance & Custodial Service	6	30%
Calendar Creation & Process	6	30%
Insurance - General Risk Management	5	25%
Development of Policy	5	25%
Leadership Skills & Techniques	5	25%
Planning Functions	5	25%
Staff Development	5	25%
Grants	4	20%
Athletics & Extracurricular Activities	4	20%
Vision Articulation	3	15%
Total	20	100%

There were differences in the areas of need for mentor assistance by participants when size of the district is considered. There were seven first-year superintendents in school districts with fewer than 500 student enrollment, three in districts of 500 to 999 students, five in districts of 1,000 to 2,999, three in districts of 3,000 to 9,999 students, and two participants in districts with more than 10,000 students. Tables 10 - 14 show the ranked responses of participants to the areas of a superintendent's skill, knowledge, roles and responsibilities in which a mentor's assistance was most and least desired by district size.

There was no difference among the districts between first-year superintendents in the area of school finance. Every first-year superintendent in every size school district with the exception of one superintendent in a district of 3,000 to 9,999 students wanted or had assistance from a mentor in the area of school finance. The superintendent that was the exception had numerous years of experience in both private industry and as an assistant superintendent of business in another school district of similar size.

Two other areas in which first-year superintendents across all districts indicated that a mentor was used or would have been helpful is the development of board relationships and community relations. Almost all superintendents in districts larger than 1,000 students cited community relations as an area where assistance was needed. The first-year superintendents in districts of less than 500 students and in districts with a student enrollment of 500 to 999 students did not report the need of a mentor in the area of community relations. Less than 50 % of first-year superintendents in districts with student enrollment of less than 500 students and a third of the first-year superintendents in districts with a student enrollment of 500 to 999 students had a need for mentor assistance in the area of community relations.

Superintendents needed help with board relationships in school districts smaller than 3,000 students. Most first-year superintendents in the under 500 student enrollment (5 out of 7) and 500 to 999 students (2 out of 3) sought or received assistance from a mentor in team building with both the board of trustees and the staff. Only one first year superintendent in the 1,000 – 2,999 student enrollment category and one first-year superintendent in the 3,000 – 9,999 enrollment category indicated the need or using a

mentor for team building. No first-year superintendent in the largest student enrollment group (over 10,000) indicated a need to use a mentor in team building with the board or staff.

All three superintendents who needed a mentor in the area of vision articulation were in the smallest districts. Other areas where the majority of first-year superintendents in districts of less than 500 student enrollment differed in the need for or use of a mentor superintendent were facility planning and capital projects, board meeting planning, management and agenda development, team building on the board level and with staff, transportation, and food services. It should be noted that none of the first-year superintendents in this group had professional staff assistance in the central office. They had nonprofessional or clerical assistance numbering from one to three other individuals.

The two first-year Texas superintendents in the largest student enrollment group (greater than 10,000 students) needed a mentor assistance in communication skills, yet only three participants in the under 500 student category and one in the 500 to 999 students group considered communication skills as an area of need. The superintendents of the very large school districts also reported a need for or used a mentor for curriculum development and alignment.

There were areas of superintendent skill and knowledge in which few first-year superintendents in any size school district needed mentoring. These included athletics and extracurricular activities, writing and acquiring grants, and staff development.

Table 10: Most and Least Areas of Indicated Mentor Assistance in less than 500 students:

Areas Mentor Assistance Most Wanted Skill & Knowledge Area			Areas Mentor Assistance Least Needed Skill & Knowledge Area		
	n	%		n	%
School Finance	7	100%	Fed. Programs & Management	2	20%
Facility Planning/Capital Projects	6	86%	Leadership Skills & Technologies	2	29%
Transportation	6	86%	Athletics & Extracurricular Act.	2	29%
Board Relationship & Dvlpt.	5	71%	Calendar Creation & Process	2	29%
Board Mtng Mgt., Agenda, & Preps	5	71%	Insurance – General Risk Mgt.	1	14%
Team Building (Staff & Board)	5	71%	Curriculum Dvlpt. & Alignment	1	14%
Food Services	5	71%	Staff Development	1	14%

Table 11: Most and Least Areas of Indicated Mentor Assistance in 500-999 students:

Areas Mentor Assistance Most Wanted Skill & Knowledge Area			Areas Mentor Assistance Least Needed Skill & Knowledge Area		
	n	%		n	%
School Finance	3	100%	Investment of School Funds	0	0%
Board Mtng. Mgt., Agenda & Preps	3	100%	Grants	0	0%
Board Relationship & Dvlpt.	2	66%	Development of Policy	0	0%
Team Building (Staff & Board)	2	66%	Vision Articulation	0	0%
Curriculum Dvlpt. & Alignment	2	66%	Planning Functions	0	0%
			Strategic Dist. Improvement Plans	0	0%
			Transportation	0	0%
			Food Services	0	0%
			Maintenance & Custodial Svcs	0	0%

Table 12: Most and Least Areas of Indicated Mentor Assistance in 1,000-2,999 students

Areas Mentor Assistance Most Wanted			Areas Mentor Assistance Least Needed		
Skill & Knowledge Area	n	%	Skill & Knowledge Area	n	%
School Finance	5	100%	Grants	0	0%
Community Relations	4	80%	Insurance – General Risk Mgt.	0	0%
Curriculum Dvlpt. & Alignment	4	80%	Development of Policy	0	0%
Budget Creation/Management	3	60%	Vision Articulation	0	0%
Board Relationship & Dvlpt.	3	60%	Leadership Skills & Technologies	0	0%

Table 13: Most and Least Areas of Indicated Mentor Assistance in 3,000-9,999 students

Areas Mentor Assistance Most Wanted			Areas Mentor Assistance Least Needed		
Skill & Knowledge Area	n	%	Skill & Knowledge Area	n	%
Board Relationship & Dvlpt.	3	100%	Federal Programs & Management	0	0%
Community Relations	3	100%	Vision Articulation	0	0%
School Finance	2	67%			
Budget Creation/Management	2	67%			
Employee Health Insurance	2	67%			
Insurance – General Risk Mgt.	2	67%			
Facility Planning/Capital Projects	2	67%			
Board Mtng Mgmt., Agenda & Preps	2	67%			
Employee Relations	2	67%			
Planning Functions	2	67%			
Strategic & Dist. Improvement Plans	2	67%			
Curriculum Dvlpt. & Alignment	2	67%			
Calendar Creation & Process	2	67%			

Table 14: Most and Least Areas of Indicated Mentor Assistance in more than 10,000 students
 Areas Mentor Assistance Most Wanted Areas Mentor Assistance Least Needed
 Skill & Knowledge Area Skill & Knowledge Area

	n	%		n	%
School Finance	2	100%	Grants	0	0%
Community Relations	2	100%	Employee Health Insurance	0	0%
Communication Skills	2	100%	Board Mtng. Mgmt., Agenda & Preps	0	0%
Curriculum Dvlpt. & Alignment	2	100%	Team Building (Staff & Board)	0	0%
			Vision Articulation	0	0%
			Planning Functions	0	0%
			Athletics & Extracurricular Act.	0	0%
			Transportation	0	0%
			Food Services	0	0%
			Maintenance & Custodial Svcs.	0	0%

There were differences between women and men first-year superintendents, but there were few women in this study, and differences should not be generalized for women. The majority of the sixteen men participants desired or received mentor assistance in school finance, developing board relationships, community relations, curriculum development and alignment, the creation and management of a budget, and board meeting management such as setting an agenda and preparing for a meeting. The areas in which the men were least likely to need mentor assistance was maintenance and custodial services, leadership skills and techniques, planning functions, athletics and extracurricular activities, grants, and vision articulation.

Three of the four women participants desired or received mentor assistance in school finance, facility planning and capital projects, investment of school funds, transportation, and grants. Women did not report a need for mentor assistance in the areas

of curriculum development and alignment, employee relations, insurance and general risk management, development of policy, and staff development.

Finance was an area where both men and women needed and used mentor assistance. The greatest difference between men and women was in the areas of curriculum development and alignment and employee relations. Most men would have liked to have a mentor assist them in these areas, but not one-woman participant received or desired assistance in them.

There were a small number of minorities, and generalization is not appropriate. The three ethnic groups represented by participants were white, Hispanic, and African American. There were seventeen whites, two Hispanics, and one African American. When comparing responses to the checklist by ethnicity, few differences were found. Areas in which a majority of first-year superintendents showed no difference in regards to ethnicity of the participant were school finance, the creation and management of a budget, facility planning and capital projects, development of board relationships, and community relations. All indicated the need for a mentor in the above areas.

Minority superintendents did not have or desire the assistance of a mentor in the areas of grants, team building for the staff and board of trustees, vision articulation, athletics and extracurricular activities, transportation, food services, and maintenance and custodial services. There was little desire for assistance in these areas by white participants with the exception of team building for the staff and the board of trustees and transportation in which nine of the seventeen white participants (53 %) reported a need for or using a mentor in these areas.

Research Questions

The data collected in interviews of twenty first-year Texas superintendents were summarized to address the research questions in this study.

1. What skills and knowledge do novice superintendents identify as most critical for mentor assistance?

The skills and knowledge that novice superintendents identify most as being critical for mentor assistance can be divided into two themes. One theme centers on the superintendent as the chief financial officer of the school district. The second centers on the many relationships the superintendent must develop and maintain with different groups of people.

In the area of content skills and knowledge most (95 %) superintendents needed mentor assistance with school finance. Another critical skill area in which a majority of novice superintendents need guidance from a mentor is the development and maintenance of board relationships as well as establishing and maintaining community relationships. Other knowledge areas include facility planning and capital projects, creating and managing a budget, the preparation for and management of board meetings, and curriculum development and alignment.

2. What mentor characteristics does the mentored superintendent consider necessary to have a positive effect on his or her job success and career?

The characteristics of mentors cluster around the two categories of personal characteristics and professional skill. When asked to identify characteristics of a mentor, personal characteristics were always mentioned before a professional skill. Professional

skills were related to past experiences encountered and the processes required to solve a problem.

The most frequently stated personal mentor characteristics identified is ability to establish trust and honesty. Mentored superintendents trust their mentors to maintain confidentiality and tell them the truth. They trust their mentors to be genuine and to offer constructive criticism while also demonstrating care. This is done without the novice feeling inadequate, “dumb,” or “as if they should already know” how to do a particular task.

An attitude identified as most critical for mentor assistance is one of helpfulness in which the mentor assists the novice by problem solving with the novice, working through a problem so that the process is understood as well as the solution to a given situation. During this exchange of ideas and problem solving it is important to the mentored superintendent not feel as though he or she is “dumb” or should already know the answer. Experience of the mentor superintendent is important as well as the ability to communicate that experience.

Another important mentor characteristic is one of caring for the novice. This is demonstrated by making time for him or her without the impression that the contact appears an imposition or interruption. The mentor must display an attitude of trust and confidentiality in which a free exchange of thoughts and ideas are shared without fear of belittlement, embarrassment, or damages to the relationship. There is an overt willingness by the mentor to cultivate and maintain the relationship with the growth and best interest of the novice in mind.

Mentors are also empathetic as well as supportive. Support is verbal in nature and gives the mentored superintendent a feeling that they are not alone in the challenges that face superintendents. They listen closely as though there is nothing else on their mind or occupying their time. Mentors are “sounding boards.” They conversely can relate well their many experiences, knowledge, and perspectives to those they are mentoring in a meaningful way. They teach process while also helping the mentored superintendent see multiple perspectives to a specific problem and keeping the entire picture in mind.

Mentors encourage through listening, verbally affirming those they mentor, and showing interest in both personal and professional growth. They motivate by “cheering on” the individual when they may be frustrated, confused, or discouraged. Mentors also let the protégé know that the position of superintendent is not one of aloneness but that others have traveled the same path. Encouragement comes from “confirming,” “supporting,” and “believing in” the mentored superintendent’s capabilities to meet the demands of the position.

3. What effects have previous mentoring experiences (if any) had on the novice superintendent?

The positive effect of the mentoring relationship tends to encourage the mentored to be a mentor, to seek and develop a relationship in which he or she can be of assistance to someone else in the profession. There is a realization, first by the mentor and later by the one being mentored, that the relationship is mutually beneficial. The exchange of experiences and ideas can develop into improvement and growth for both individuals.

Novice superintendents recognize that good mentors are individuals who possess

a desire to help others starting out in a new position in which they had experience and knowledge. The recognition and importance of the experiences the mentor had in his or her career was reported by many of the participants. When participants discussed new mentoring relationships they had started with other individuals most had relationships with principals. Many of the superintendents had not established a mentoring relationship with a newer superintendent. Most of the participants were only in their second year as a superintendent and did not feel they were “in the position long enough” but thought “maybe a little later.” Only two of the novice superintendents and the two superintendents who had experience in another state had developed a mentoring relationship to help a less experienced superintendent.

The relationship is collegial in which only another superintendent can understand the thoughts and feelings of any given situation. The relationship is formed when there is a “fit” between the individuals. Participants recognized the importance of matching the mentor and new superintendent so that they are compatible and complement each other.

4. Are there differences among the needs of the first year superintendent associated with the enrollment size of the school district?

There are differences in the needs of first-year superintendents associated with the enrollment size of school districts. The needs of first-year superintendents of small school districts of less than 1,000 students differ from those of larger school districts.

Superintendents of small school districts felt more assistance was needed in specific skills and knowledge areas than superintendents of larger school districts.

Superintendents of small school districts were most likely to report that require mentor

assistance in the planning and preparation of board meetings, team building, and auxiliary services such as transportation and food services. They report the areas of least need for assistance to be risk management, curriculum development and alignment, and staff development.

Superintendents of districts of over 1,000 students needed less assistance in specific knowledge areas. They are more interested in processes that make school districts successful. They were more assertive in exchanging ideas with their mentors and placed value in that part of the relationship. Superintendents in these school districts indicate they desire mentoring in the areas of community relations and curriculum development and alignment more often than their fellow superintendents in smaller districts. Mentors of superintendents in large school districts of over 3,000 students were more assertive in “pushing” their protégés to seek the greater responsibility of larger school districts and were more aware of the political aspect of the superintendency. As noted by participants, mentors were involved in or aware of the relationship with community. Assistance from a mentor in the development of the relationship between the board and the superintendent was an important need for superintendents in districts of 1,000 to 9,999 but not for superintendents in very large school districts of over 10,000 students. The areas in which superintendents in larger school districts desired the least mentor assistance were vision articulation, development of policy, auxiliary services such as transportation, food services, and maintenance and custodial services, and grants.

5. Are there differences in the needs of the first year superintendents based on the ethnicity or gender of the mentored superintendent?

The data does not allow for generalization because of the small number of minority and women participants. There did not appear to be a significant difference between white and minority first-year superintendents tendency to have a mentor. Eighty-five percent of the white participants had mentors, and 100 percent of the minority participants had mentors. There are some differences between the needs of first-year superintendents based on ethnicity but the small number of minorities precludes generalization by ethnicity. Minority participants had less than six years experience as a classroom teacher with the average being five years. This is less than white participants who had an average of 11 years as classroom teachers.

Men and women also reported different needs from a mentor. Women were less likely to have a mentor than men in the superintendency in this study. When they did have a mentor it was a man. A higher percentage of men than women felt they needed assistance from a mentor in curriculum development and alignment. Where a majority of women superintendents wanted mentor assistance in the area of grants, men did not need help in this area. A majority of men would like mentor's help in employee relations but no women superintendents indicated this as an area for mentoring assistance.

While the career path of women generally is not the same as for men, the climb up the career ladder to the superintendency takes women a longer period. All of the women superintendents had 14 or more years experience as a classroom teacher. Three of the four women had 18 to 20 years teaching experience. Men had an average of 8 years in the classroom as teachers.

Summary

This chapter presented data collected from the interviews of twenty superintendents who served their first superintendency in Texas during the 1999 – 2000 school year about their perceived needs from a mentor. Responses to the interview were recorded, analyzed, and discussed in descriptive terms using tables, figures, and words. Qualitative results were reported from the interview questions and themes that arose from the first-year superintendent responses were grouped and discussed using selected quotes from the participants. The research questions were addressed using collected data.

Chapter V will summarize this study and the findings, in relation to the research questions, presented for the purpose of this study. Analysis and conclusions of this study as well as recommendations and implications for further study will be also discussed.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This chapter summarizes the study and findings and describes conclusions from drawn from interviews of 20 first-year Texas superintendents. It offers recommendations for university-based superintendent training, formal mentoring programs, and implications for further study.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the mentoring experiences of first-year superintendents and what they wanted from the mentoring experience. This study was also designed to gain insight into the professional needs of novice superintendents that could be used in a mentoring program. The study identified elements of a public school superintendent-mentoring program or university-based superintendent training that first-year superintendents considered necessary to meet their needs as superintendents. The information will help in the design of programs to prepare superintendents to serve as mentors and in the development of planned, formal superintendent mentor relationships. This study also adds to the growing body of literature on mentoring and the superintendency.

The research design was guided by a comprehensive review of research and other literature related to the skills, knowledge, roles, and responsibilities of the public school

superintendent and mentoring. In-depth structured interviews of a representative group of first-year superintendents in Texas provided the data. Twenty superintendents who had recently completed their first year in the superintendency were interviewed in person and by telephone when distance and schedules prohibited face-to-face interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis and review.

The purposeful sample of superintendents represented a wide range of school districts in structure, size, and geographic location. The willing participants were also selected to be representative of the total population of first-year Texas superintendents in the 1999 – 2000 school year by gender and ethnicity.

The interview instrument consisted of twenty questions. It was examined by a panel of experts for content validity, clarity, question relevance, and appropriateness. The interview protocol gathered demographic information, as well as information on the career paths, formal educational background, and feelings about how their formal education prepared them for the job of superintendent. Open-ended questions gathered information, descriptions, and impressions of the first-year superintendents' mentoring experiences. During the interview the participants were also given a list of superintendent skills, knowledge, roles, and responsibilities. The participants reported specific knowledge and skill areas where they would have wanted or had used a mentor's assistance. The interview concluded with participants sharing their advice to mentors. They were asked if they serve as mentors in new relationships, and if so, to describe to whom and how. Finally, the superintendents were asked if they had any closing remarks or comments they wanted to add on the subject of mentoring a superintendent.

Data from the transcribed interviews were analyzed by looking for patterns and themes that developed, such as career paths, type of mentoring relationship, and the demographic information of district size, gender, and ethnicity. Selected responses were hand tabbed or grouped by theme or related characteristics for further analysis. The patterns and related themes from the superintendents' responses were organized to compare and contrast needs among the groups of superintendents. Differences and similarities in the areas of need from a mentor were recorded in words and tables by the type of mentoring relationship the participants had developed, career paths, district size, gender, and ethnicity. Areas of need and mentor characteristics reported by first-year superintendents were identified as components to be incorporated in a mentoring program and to assist in a meaningful mentoring relationship.

Review of the data revealed three distinct patterns of mentoring relationships. The first category was superintendents who had not had mentors as first-year superintendents. In the second mentoring relationship category, the relationship had developed early, while the participant worked as a subordinate or was a student of the mentor within the same school system. The third type of mentoring relationship, developed later and was one of convenience or association while the mentor and the mentored were in different school systems or organizations. The third type of mentoring relationship had developed shortly before or at the beginning of the participant's first superintendency.

Research Questions

The five research questions addressed in this study provided a framework of analysis and discussion of the findings. Following the research questions is a summary of

the findings.

- What skills, knowledge, and attitudes do novice superintendents identify as most critical for mentor assistance?

Skills and knowledge in school finance and related content areas such as creating and managing a budget, facility planning, and capital projects were areas that novice superintendents identified as most critical for mentoring assistance. Another critical area was the development and management of relationships with many interest groups, primarily with the school board and community. Assistance in understanding and how to work within the politics of the superintendent position was important while also positively effecting student achievement and managing the district were critical skills to the first-year superintendent.

- What mentor characteristics does the mentored superintendent consider necessary to have a positive effect on his or her job success and career?

A mentor characteristic that novice superintendents reported as critical was one in which the mentor problem solved or exchanged ideas ‘with’ the novice, not just giving an immediate answer or solution. The mentor had the ability to communicate and relate well experience, skills, and knowledge that were helpful and meaningful to the first-year superintendent. The mentor gave assistance by displaying an attitude that the novice superintendent was the mentor’s priority, giving undivided attention, and without the first-year superintendent made to feel inferior or as though he or she should already know the answer.

Other mentor characteristics reported as critical were confidentiality and

trustworthiness. First-time superintendents also identified empathy and support as having a positive effect on their mentoring success. Mentors also were described as a “sounding board.” Positive support was reported as being demonstrated by the mentor through listening, verbal encouragement, and being available to the novice. Mentors actively sought contact with and communicated often with the first-year superintendent.

- What effects have previous mentoring experiences (if any) had on the novice superintendent?

The previous mentoring experiences of the participants in this study had a positive effect on whether they chose to establish a mentor relationship with other individuals entering administration. Most participants indicated they wanted to be mentors, and many had voluntarily chosen to seek out and establish mentoring relationships with either a subordinate within their own districts or administrators in nearby districts. Participants recognized the importance of a good “fit” or “match” in where the relationship was an active exchange of experiences and ideas in which both benefited and were provided growth.

- Are there differences among the needs of the first-year superintendent associated with the student enrollment size of the school district?

The first-year superintendents of small school districts required more mentor assistance in the planning and preparations of board meetings, team building with boards and staff, and the auxiliary services such as transportation and food services. They indicated less need for assistance in maintaining relationships with community, risk management, curriculum development and alignment, or staff development.

First-year superintendents in districts larger than 1,000 students needed more mentor assistance in understanding the processes of making a school district successful and less in specific content areas. They were concerned more about the politics of the position, working with the different interest groups that seek to influence the superintendent, while also trying to bring about school improvement. First-year superintendents of large school districts reported needing the least assistance from a mentor in policy development, grants, and auxiliary services such transportation, food services, and maintenance and custodial services.

- Are there differences in the needs of first-year superintendents based on gender or ethnicity of the mentored superintendent?

The small number of women in this study does not allow for generalizations. Because most of the women were concentrated in small, rural, and isolated school districts, and the majority did not have mentors as superintendents. Their needs differences could be explained by these factors rather than gender. In comparison of what men and women wanted the area that differed the most was in wanting mentor assistance with employee relations. Women did not indicate a need in this area where a majority of men indicated the need for mentor assistance.

There did not appear to be a significant difference between needs expressed by white and minority first-year superintendents. This also may be due to the small number of minorities. Although there were differences among areas of need, the small number of minorities does not allow for generalization. Differences can be attributed to other factors such as the location of the minorities in large school districts, two in districts of over

50,000 students. Also, although two were first-year Texas superintendents, they had previous superintendent experience in other states.

Analysis and Conclusions

The data collected in this study added to the body of literature and research about both the school superintendent and mentoring. The findings also reinforce those from other research on the school superintendent and mentoring.

Most of the participants in this study felt that their professional programs gave them “a good base” for the job of superintendent but did not prepare them for the day-to-day operation of the position. Very few of the participants were negative about their professional preparation. This supports Glass’ (2000) findings in which 64 % of first-year superintendents felt their graduate programs were either fair or good.

Finance was the area in which most first-year superintendents reported a need for mentoring assistance. In Glass’ (2000) study of first-time superintendents, financial issues also were identified as an area of greatest concern and “the most difficult problem for their boards to successfully manage” (pp 29 – 30). Glass’ AASA study also showed that inadequate financing was a factor that inhibited the superintendent’s effectiveness. The type of instruction given at the university level can explain this. Formal instruction in finance as with other subjects taught at the university level is general and applies across many situations. It is in the application of content taught in finance that was found lacking in the university formal training experience.

Women in this study were less likely to have a mentor in the superintendency. Wheatley (1981) also found that although most all experienced teachers and

administrators have some professional network, women may not have access to as extensive a network of influential individuals as white males do. Glass (2000) reported that women seem to have a less-developed mentoring system when compared to men.

The women in this study who had mentors earlier in their career or as a superintendent had male mentors. This suggests support of Bell and Chase's 1996 studies that found that women who were supported by men of status in the profession during the development of their careers allowed them "to be integrated into the power structure and support networks of the occupation" (p. 129). Women in this study also took longer to reach the superintendency. Glass (2000) found that most men start the process of moving through the ranks to the superintendency earlier in their career than do women. The average time in the classroom for women superintendents in this study was 18 years, while the men had an average of 8 years as a teacher before moving into administration. Another related finding was that women had a more varied career path to the superintendency than men. This suggests that women's needs may be different than men.

The majority of the superintendents in this study had developed a mentor-protégé relationship that formed early in their careers when they were in the same organization. They attributed their move into the superintendency to their mentor "pushing" them and encouraging them to move up to higher positions. Tallerico (2000) found in her study that mentors had a positive effect in attaining the superintendent position. Daresh and Playko (1993) also found that career opportunities for promotion and new employment expanded through mentoring.

In this study, critical factors identified in the mentor relationships of participants,

was trust and honesty. Frazer (1998) identified this as “the foundation of effective mentoring” (p.102). Many of the participants described their mentors as someone they admired or wanted to be like. Mentors were described as having “integrity,” being “genuine,” and “honest.” Cohen (1995) described effective mentor behavior as being the offering of personal thoughts and genuine feelings to emphasize the value of learning. Participants in this study recognized and reported the moral traits of honesty and integrity in describing their mentors. Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1998) called for this type of ethical and personal behavior to be modeled in superintendents. Another mentor characteristic that the majority of first-year superintendents considered as important was the ability to listen well. Bryce and Griffin (2000) noted that a characteristic of a good mentor was use of effective listening skills. Monk (2000) points out that a mentor’s integrity, empathy, listening skills, and communication skills were critical to the success of the process. All participants identified one or more of these characteristics in describing their mentors.

Though the school superintendency may be commonly thought of as a position where the individual is in a high position and has a great deal of knowledge and experience in education, many superintendents’ needs from the mentor relationship appear to be the same as those of the students or teachers aspiring to be administrators. The needs from the relation remain the same for the individuals in the position. Mentor encouragement as well as critical feedback and shared problem solving were identified as an important part of the relationships described by the first-year superintendents in this study. Bynum (1998) also found the importance of the mentor’s reinforcing successes

and expressing confidence in the mentee's ability as an important part of mentoring.

Johnson (1996) reported that the superintendency now requires three dimensions of leadership: managerial, educational, and political. The first-year superintendents in this study confirmed this in their recommendations and expressions of need for mentor assistance in the skills and knowledge of all three of these leadership areas.

Participants in this study recognized and reported the importance of matching the mentor and the protégé in a mentoring program. Several studies have shown that matching personal traits such as age, gender, ethnicity, interests, and class background as well as professional traits are important factors in the establishment of effective mentoring relationships (Janus, 1996; Monk, 2000; Sweeney, 1994).

The researcher found that mentoring, even at the chief executive officer or superintendent level, has positive effects on success in the position. Individuals thought to be at the apex of their chosen careers still need assistance and help professionally and emotionally to increase their chances of success. The support, empathy, collaborative problem solving, and reflection provided by a mentoring relationship can make the transition into the superintendency smoother.

Recommendations and Implications

Findings in this study point to recommendations for current superintendent training programs and formal mentoring programs. The mentoring experiences of twenty first-year superintendents in Texas in a time in which mentoring was not a requirement by state law was looked at in this study. Needs are unique to every individual. A larger study of first-year superintendent needs, whether quantitative or qualitative, is necessary

to gain better understanding and produce generalizations about the needs of historically under represented groups such as women or minorities.

University-based Superintendent Training

The participants in this study reported areas in their formal training that could have better prepared them for the superintendency. Finance was the first and major concern of the first-year superintendents in this study. Superintendents also recommend a more realistic presentation of the knowledge and skills needed for the job. For example, one of the participants suggested that training programs develop realistic activities such as using the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website financial section's school funding templates and a sample school district's data to determine a district's state revenue. This would help an individual get 'a feel' as well as completing an actual task of a school superintendent. This exercise would allow the novice to discover all the sources of data required to calculate the 'earned' state funds and compare to TEA Summary of Finance document located on the website as to what the district is getting paid. This comparison would allow the novice to understand the critical issues in managing revenue, budgeting, as well as determining overpayment or underpayment from the state and the ramifications to a district's financial wellness. This is a critical task for the superintendent to understand and be able to do, especially superintendents of districts smaller than 1,000 students. Clerks or bookkeepers rather than professional staff in the business office frequently support smaller districts.

The use of examples and real experiences in the application of theory is important to understanding. Experience gives the 'textbook' processes and theories meaning.

Experiences provide for discussion. First-year superintendents expressed a need for bridging the gap between theory and practice. The use of a practicing superintendent as an instructor for some of the content areas could help in combining experience, actual situations, and theory. Practicing superintendents could also help novices in navigating the political side of the superintendency. They could assist in explaining the practical skills used in the development of relationships with the many different groups and bringing together of these groups to positively effect student achievement and meet district goals.

Superintendents in this study who had participated in university-based cohort programs felt the cohort was a benefit to their administrative education. Cohort programs allow for the discussion and sharing of experiences between practicing administrators and professors. These discussions facilitate understanding, relating the formal instruction of critical content and knowledge necessary for the superintendency to the day-to-day experiences of the practicing administrator. Cohort programs also assist in expanding networks that are critical for support and landing that first job as superintendent.

Participants in this study indicated a need for understanding the day-to-day responsibilities, jobs, and situations that a superintendent encounters in a day. University-based superintendent training programs would assist the aspiring superintendent for a smoother transition from principal or central office level job to superintendent by providing a more realistic internship. The internship should include extended time with the superintendent in which the intern actually ‘shadows’ the superintendent. Often internships are filled with special projects that the superintendent or someone in central

office does not want to do. Time should be set aside during the internship in which meaningful critiques and reflections takes place between the intern and the superintendent on the varied jobs and tasks that come through a superintendent's office in a day.

University-based programs are doing a good job in leadership courses based on the participants' responses to their formal education. University-based programs should continue to take the initiative in leadership skills instruction, motivational and leadership theory and introducing students to current books on leadership. Participants in this study reported the validity and benefit of these courses in providing a good basis for leading their districts and the position of superintendent. They also noted the benefit of reading assignments that were current and relevant to leadership skills and leading a school district.

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs must pay careful attention in matching mentors and novices. The matching of school district demographics, personal and professional attitudes, class, gender, ethnicity, knowledge, experience, and expertise should be looked at closely in determining compatibility as well as complimenting both individuals. Surveys, questionnaires, and other instruments to determine both the mentor and the protégé's personal and professional characteristics should be developed and used. This will create a healthy climate and give the best opportunity for a successful relationship to develop and grow. A goal should be that both individuals benefit from the relationship professionally.

Based on review of the literature, it is recommended that the American

Association of School Administrators collaborate with other professional educational organizations, universities, and practicing public school administrators to establish a common definition of mentor to a superintendent and the functions of the mentor as well as the critical components of an effective mentoring program for the position of superintendent of schools. Also, based on this study and review of the literature, it is recommended that paid internships for promising school leaders and aspiring superintendents be created to better facilitate the transition from mid-management administrator to superintendent. The majority of school districts in Texas are smaller than 3,000 students with most superintendents coming straight from building level administration to the superintendency.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings in this study show that further research in mentoring relationships is needed, specifically at the superintendent level. The Texas law requiring first-time superintendent mentoring has been in affect for just over one year and the relationships that have developed from these formal mentoring experiences provide fertile ground for both qualitative and quantitative research. This study has led to recommendations for more research in both mentoring and the superintendency. The following recommendations are made for further research.

1. Additional studies to determine if a formal mentoring program is necessary for First-time superintendents who have an established long-term informal relationship with a mentor who is already serving as a superintendent as described in the mentor-protégé relationship in this study.

2. Additional, more defined studies are needed to determine if differences exist in the mentoring needs of women superintendents and minority superintendents as compared to men and white superintendents.
3. Long-term research is needed to determine if there are distinguishable positive professional effects on the first-time superintendent from the presence or absence of the mentoring relationship. The careers of successful superintendents should be studied to determine if a mentoring relationship was a factor in that success.
4. Additional studies with larger populations identifying the characteristics of the mentoring relationships at the level of superintendents and chief executive officers to develop and improve mentoring programs for this level of an organization.
5. Studies exploring alternatives to mentoring which developed in the absence of a mentor such as networking are needed to determine if networking meets the same needs as a mentoring relationship in the superintendency.
6. Studies identifying the impact of the relationship on the mentor are needed to determine specific professional and personal benefits.

This chapter summarized the study and its findings. It addressed research questions using collected data. It made conclusions using data and existing literature and research on the school superintendent and mentoring. This chapter offered recommendations and implications for current university-based superintendent training and mentoring programs. Recommendations for further research were also made.

APPENDIX A
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FIRST-TIME SUPERINTENDENT IN TEXAS

Texas Administrative Code

Title 19 Education

Part 7 State Board of Education

Chapter 242 Superintendent Certificate

Rule Section 242.25 Requirement for the First-Time Superintendent in Texas

- (a) First-time superintendents (including the first time in the state) shall participate in a one-year mentorship, which should include at least 36 clock hours of professional development directly related to the standards identified in Section 242.15 of this title (relating to Standards Required for the Superintendent Certificate).
- (b) During the one-year mentorship, the superintendent should have contact with his or her mentor at least once a month. The mentorship program must be completed within the first 18 months of employment in the superintendency in order to maintain the standard certificate.
- (c) Experienced superintendents willing to serve as mentors must participate in training for this role.

Source Note: The provisions of this Section 242.25 adopted to be effective March 14, 1999, 24 Texas Reg 1617; amended to be effective September 2, 1999, 24 Tex Reg 6751.

APPENDIX B
TEXAS SUPERINTENDENT STANDARDS

Texas Professional Standards for the Superintendency

(Texas Association of School Administrators, 1998)

Each statement starts with, "Promotes the success of all students by...."

1. Acting with integrity, fairness, & in an ethical manner
2. Shapes district culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, & stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
3. Implements a staff evaluation & development system to improve the performance of all staff members, selects appropriate models for supervision and staff development, & applies the legal requirements for personnel management.
4. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, & cultural context & by working with the board of trustees to define mutual expectations, policies, and standards.
5. Collaborating with families & community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, & mobilizing community resources.
6. Leadership and management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, & effective learning environment
7. Facilitating the design & implementation of curricula & strategic plans that enhance teaching & learning; alignment of curriculum, resources, & assessment; and the use of various forms of assessment to measure student performance
8. Advocating, nurturing, & sustaining a district culture & instructional program conducive to student learning & staff professional growth

Texas Education Code Provisions

- §11.201** Superintendents. The duties of the superintendent include:
- § 11.201(a) Act as the educational leader & the chief executive officer
- § 11.201(c)(1) Assume administrative responsibility & leadership for the planning, operation, supervision, and evaluation of education programs, services, & facilities of the district and for the annual performance appraisal of the district staff
- § 11.201(c)(1) Assume administrative responsibility & leadership for the planning, operation, supervision, and evaluation of education programs, services, & facilities of the district and for the annual performance appraisal of the district staff
- § 11.201(c)(2) Assume administrative authority & responsibility for the assignment & evaluation of all personnel of the district other than the supt.
- § 11.201(c)(3) Making recommendations regarding the selection of personnel of the district other than the supt.
- § 11.201(c)(4) Initiating the termination or suspension of an employee or the nonrenewal of an employee's term contract
- § 11.201(c)(5) Managing the day-to-day operations of the district as its administrative manager.
- §11.201(c)(6) Preparing & submitting to the board a proposed budget as provided by §44.002**
- §11.201(c)(7) Preparing recommendations for policies to be adopted by the board of trustees & overseeing the implementation of adopted policies**
- §11.201(c)(8) Developing or causing to be developed appropriate administrative regulations to implement policies established by the board of trustees
- §11.201(c)(9) Providing leadership for the attainment of student performance in the district based on the indicators adopted under §39.051 and other indicators adopted by the State Board of Education or the district's board of education
- §11.201(c)(10) Organizing the district's central administration
- §11.201(c)(11) Performing any other duties assigned by action of the board of trustees

State Board of Education Rules Texas Administrative Code Title 19 Part 7 Chapter 242 Rule §242.15 Standards Required for the Superintendent Certificate

- (a) The knowledge and skills identified in this section must be used by the Board as the basis for developing the assessment required to obtain the superintendent certificate
- (b) Acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- (c) Shapes district culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- (d) Implements a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members, selects appropriate models for supervision and staff development, and applies the legal requirements for personnel management.
- (e) Understands, responds to, and influences the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context and works with the board to define mutual expectations, policies, & standards
- (f) Collaborates with families and community members, responds to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizes community resources.
- (g) Provides leadership and management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- (h) Facilitates the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning; alignment of curriculum, curriculum resources and assessment; and the use of various forms of assessment to measure student performance.
- (i) Advocates, nurtures, and sustains a district culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

*Each of the above domains has four to ten specific tasks that will demonstrate that the superintendent has the knowledge, skill, and understanding of the domain.

Commissioner's Rules Concerning Superintendent Appraisal §150.1021

- (a) The domains & descriptors used to evaluate each administrator may include the following.
- (1) Instructional management. Promotes improvement of instruction.
 - (2) School or organization morale. Fosters a positive school morale through activities such as: assessing and planning improvement of the school district or community environment; reinforcing excellence; promoting a positive, caring climate of learning; and using effective communication skills
 - (3) School or organization improvement. Promoting efforts to improve the district by activities such as: collaborating in the development and articulation of a common vision; encouraging appropriate risk taking; and ensuring continuous renewal of curriculum, policies, and methods.
 - (4) Personnel management. Delegating appropriately; recognizing exemplary performance; encouraging personal and professional growth; securing the necessary personnel; complying with personnel policy and rules; & evaluating job performance.
 - (5) Management of administrative, fiscal, and facilities functions. Obtains broad based input for fiscal & financial analysis; compiling reasonable budgets and cost estimates; ensuring facilities are maintained and upgraded; & managing a broad range of school operations
 - (6) Student Management. Promotes positive student conduct; ensuring policies & rules are in place & observed uniformly & developed collaboratively
 - (7) School and community relations. Promotes positive & collaborative educational efforts
 - (8) Professional growth and development.
 - (9) Academic Excellence indicators and campus and district performance objectives.
 - (10) School board relations. Supports and promotes a positive working relationship.
- (c) A student performance domain shall be included in the appraisal of principals and superintendents as follows
- (2) The superintendent promotes improvements of the performance of students in the district through activities such as comparing district disaggregated student performance results to state accountability standards and to prior year performance

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY *of*
NORTH TEXAS

Office of Research Services

May 29, 2000

Rock E. McNulty
1004 Hyde Park Blvd.
Cleburne, TX 76031-5423

RE: Human Subjects Application No. 00-121

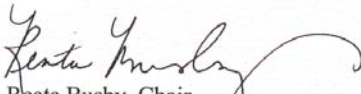
Dear Mr. McNulty,

Your proposal titled "Mentoring the First Year Superintendent of Public Schools," has been approved by the Institutional Review Board and is exempt from further review under 45 CFR 46.101.

The UNT IRB must review any modification you make in the approved project. **Federal policy 21 CFR 56.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only.**

Please contact me if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,


Reata Busby, Chair
Institutional Review Board

RB:sb

APPENDIX D
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Participant's Name _____ Date _____

Title of Study: Mentoring the First year Superintendent of Public Schools

Principal Investigator: Rock McNulty

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks, and discomforts of the study. It also describes the alternative treatments that are available for you and your right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important for you to understand that no guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of the study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND HOW LONG IT WILL LAST:

The purpose of this study is to determine the areas of professional knowledge, skills, roles and responsibilities that a first year superintendent perceives he or she needs from a mentor as determined through a 90 minute interview reflecting on the completion of the first year of the superintendency. The possibility of a short follow-up telephone call or personal interview exists if clarification is needed after reviewing the transcripts of the interview. The entire study will last approximately six months but you as a participant will not be involved for more than the 90-minute interview and possible clarification follow-up.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY INCLUDING THE PROCEDURES TO BE USED:

You will be asked questions following a set protocol concerning your first year of public school superintendency to determine how you feel you could benefit from a mentor to better accomplish the roles and responsibilities of superintendent. This interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will be taped. The audiotapes will be transcribed into a written format. Your interview will be coded to protect your identity. A copy will be made of the transcription. This copy will be marked up to identify broad themes or areas and placed in with other interviewed first year superintendents. Connections and observations will be made from the thematic categories as well as analyzing demographic information to better understand the needs of first year superintendents and how they feel they can benefit from the mentoring relationship. The transcripts will be analyzed individually and as an entire participant group to try to identify areas that the mentoring process mandated by state statute can be both affective and relevant to first year superintendents.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES THAT MAY RESULT IN DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE:

You may feel uncomfortable speaking while recording the interview. This is for accuracy and will be heard by the transcriber and myself only. You may also be concerned with being identified. Your anonymity will be strictly protected and there will be no reference made to you by name in the study. Also identifying information will be closely screened to prevent your identification. Your time is precious and every effort will be made to collect all the information and data in one interview.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURES THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FORESEEABLE RISKS:

There are no foreseeable psychological or physical risks associated with this study.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECTS AND OTHERS:

This study will add to the research in the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent with emphasis on the experiences of the first year superintendents and how mentoring will assist in that development. It will assist in the development of mentor programs that are relevant and effective in the professional development of superintendents of public schools.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH RECORDS:

The tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. No one will review or have access to the tapes or transcripts. Each of the transcripts and tapes will be coded with no identifying names attached to them. The master identification list will be maintained in a separate secure location. The tapes will be destroyed upon completion of this study and you will have the option of having the tape returned to you. In the written analysis and conclusions no demographic or other identifying information will be used to trace the identity of the participants.

I have read this consent form and agree to be a part of this study.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Purpose: The questions I will be asking you concern your perceptions about the first year of your superintendency and the areas in which a mentor could have or has assisted you in completing the role, responsibilities, and expectations of your job as superintendent. For the purpose of this interview a mentor is defined as a more experienced public school administrator. The term mentoring is more than calling another superintendent to ask a question. The term mentoring is a relationship in which a more experienced person who provides their experience, advice, resources, and/or information to help you solve the challenges and problems you face in role as a superintendent. A mentor may offer encouragement, act as a sounding board, and offer constructive criticism in your professional and personal growth. This exploratory study is:

1. To determine what a novice superintendent needs in a mentoring experience as it pertains to the role, responsibilities, and expectations of a Texas superintendent of a public school district.
2. To determine if there are common areas of need or themes that novice superintendents think they could benefit from in a mentoring relationship and could be implemented or included in an effective and meaningful mentoring program.
3. To determine the mentoring experience of the first year superintendent in the absence of a formal program.
4. To determine a baseline of common areas from which mentors of first year superintendents can begin to develop a relationship with the novice through the mentoring experience.
5. To determine what previous mentoring experiences a first year superintendent has had and a general description of that relationship.

Confidentiality Statement: The information will be used as the basis of a research report. Your name or school district will not be used in the report. Non-identifying pseudonyms will be used in the place your name if specific examples are used in the report. No identifying information will be used. All of your answers will be kept confidential.

Research Consent Form: Prior to the interview commencing you will be given and explained a research consent form. Please read it carefully and sign the form if you agree to continue with this interview and research study.

Questions:

Demographic Information and Icebreaker

1. Years as Administrator:
2. Education Level: Bachelors Specialist Masters Doctorate
3. Source of Administrator Certification or where did you get your highest degree?
4. Were you hired from within or outside the school district?
5. What was your last position prior to becoming a first time superintendent?

Focus Questions

6. Can you think of any circumstance or incident that sticks out in your mind during the first year as a superintendent where you felt unprepared by your professional or formal training?
 - a. Can you describe it for me?
 - b. How did you seek the information, advice, or help in dealing with this issue?
 - c. Is there any other time or area as it relates to your superintendency that you felt unprepared by your professional training to undertake?
7. Which of those experiences stand out in your mind as developing a deeper understanding of the superintendent's role in the school district?
8. What specific areas do you feel your formal professional training adequately prepared you for?
9. Do you have or have you had a mentor? **If the answer is no go to question 14.**
 - a. Describe the person. What characteristics did this person have?
 - b. How did the relationship develop?
 - c. Has the relationship lasted? Describe the relationship today?
10. How often do you meet or speak to your mentor? What are the occasions for interacting?
11. Does your mentor help you in your role of superintendent?

12. What specific areas did your mentor help you in your role of superintendent?
13. In describing your relationship with your mentor, how do they support or help you in your role as superintendent? Do they: 1) Refer you to other resources?; 2) Describe how to do something or how to do a process to get something accomplished?; 3) Offer emotional and psychological support or encouragement?
14. **(If no mentor)** Do you think that you would have benefited from a mentor in carrying out the responsibilities of superintendent in your first year?
 - a. In what way do you think you would have benefited?
15. What specific areas would have liked to be helped in carrying out your responsibilities as a superintendent?
16. Let's review the areas you told me. How would your mentor have helped you? What would you have wanted them to do to assist you?
17. Please look at this list of superintendent skills, responsibilities, and roles. Tell me which areas do you think you could have had help or would have wanted assistance from a more experience mentor superintendent.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School Finance <input type="checkbox"/> Budget creating and process <input type="checkbox"/> Calendar process <input type="checkbox"/> Employee Health Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance in general <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Building, Facilities Planning and Capital Projects (Bonds, Time Warrants) <input type="checkbox"/> Investment of School Funds <input type="checkbox"/> Board of Trustees Relationship and relationship development <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills and methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics, extracurricular activities and UIL management <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Programs and management of those programs <input type="checkbox"/> Grants <input type="checkbox"/> Community Relations <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum and development <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic or District Improvement plans <input type="checkbox"/> Food Services <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance and Custodial Services <input type="checkbox"/> School Board Meetings – procedures and management
--	--

- Development of Policy and its implementation
- Employee relations and policy development

18. Let's review the list and tell me how your mentor helped you or how you would have liked him or her to help you in carrying out your role and responsibilities as superintendent.
19. Did your mentor give you verbal or written encouragement (motivation) in some way?
 - a. How?
 - b. If no mentor, describe how you would have wanted them to give you encouragement?
20. What kind of advice would you expect to get from a mentor?
21. Do you serve as a mentor for other administrators?
 - a. If yes, how would you describe your role as mentor in this similar relationship.
22. Is there anything you would like to say concerning a mentor and your relationship with that person?

APPENDIX F

PANEL (OF EXPERTS) MEMBERS FOR VALIDATION
OF INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Panel Members for Validation of Instrument

Dr. Tom Norris
Executive Director
Educational Service Center, Region XII
P.O. Box 23409
Waco, Texas 76702-3409

Dr. Elaine Wilmore
Associate Professor & Director of Educational
Leadership
College of Education
University of Texas at Arlington
P.O. Box 19227
Arlington, Texas 76019-0227

Mr. Douglas K. Lane
Superintendent, Mildred ISD
5475 S. Hwy. 287
Mildred, Texas 75110-9328

Mr. Kenneth Bateman
Superintendent, Meridian ISD
Rt. 1, Box 102
Meridian, Texas 76665

Dr. John D. Horn
Superintendent, Mesquite ISD
405 East Davis
Mesquite, Texas 75149-4701

Panel Members Qualifications:

Three of the panel members are currently superintendents of 1A, 2A, and 5A school districts. Two are in rural school districts and one in a metropolitan area. Each of these three superintendents has at least 30 years experience in education and over 10 years experience in the superintendency. One of the superintendents chaired the Texas State Board of Education committee that was mandated by the Texas legislature to develop Texas Administrative Code Title 19 §242.25 Standards Required for the Superintendent Certification. This law required that beginning September 1, 2000 first time superintendents must have a mentor the first year in the superintendency. Another of the superintendents was on the regional educational service center committee who sponsored training and assistance for superintendents who were in their first three years of the superintendency.

One of the panel members is a past superintendent with over 25 years in education and 10 years experience as a superintendent in a fast growing 5A metropolitan school district. He is currently an executive director of a state regional educational service center and has contact with 78 public school superintendents and 3 charter school leaders in his region.

One of the panel members is an associate college professor who directs the Educational Leadership Institute at a state university. This institute is a part of the Education College and is an alternative “fast track” mid-management certification program, which includes on the job training and mentoring of the prospective building level school administrator. This panel member has over 20 years experience in education with administration experience being primarily either an assistant principal or principal.

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND PARTICIPANT INTEREST SURVEY

Sample Letter of Introduction and Interest Survey

Date

Rock E. McNulty
1004 Hyde Park Blvd.
Cleburne, Texas 76031

Dear

I am a fellow superintendent in Kopperl I.S.D. and a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of North Texas in Denton. I am working on my dissertation about mentoring needs of first year superintendents. To collect the data I will interview superintendents who have completed their first year as superintendent of schools. I have completed my second year as superintendent and the lessons and experiences of my first year are still keenly imprinted on my mind. My research is designed to determine what first year superintendents need from mentors.

As you may already know, September 1, 2000 the legislative law that requires that all first year superintendents have a mentor will go into effect. Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 242.25 also requires for the experienced superintendents who serve as mentors to be trained for the role. You have just completed the first year of your superintendency and as you reflect on that year the areas you could have used a mentor and how you might have utilized that source are fresh on your mind. That information could prove invaluable to the development of a practical and relevant mentoring program. It is my hope that the information you can provide can be used to shape the mentor programs that will be developed in the near future. Every first year superintendent will receive this letter but not every first year superintendent may be able to or want to participate. Nor will every first year superintendent be chosen for the study.

Participants will be asked to participate in one 90-minute interview, which will be taped and transcribed. These scripts will be analyzed to find common themes, which may help in future training programs to make the first year of the superintendency more effective. A survey may be used to gather more information. Please complete the enclosed post card and place in the mail if you would be interested in participating in this study. From this initial information a representative group of superintendents will be chosen to gather information about your first year as a superintendent and how a mentor could have been effectively used to help you meet your role and responsibilities.

The information you supply will be used as the basis of a research study and report. All of your answers on the enclosed post card will be kept confidential; no person or school district will be identified in any manner. If you choose to participate in this research study and are chosen to be one of the participants in the interview you will be given an additional protection of participant rights form. You may choose to withdraw at any time in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

I would like to offer my thanks up front for sharing an already busy and filled calendar. I know just how demanding your job is and how precious your time. I hope you choose to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Rock E. McNulty

APPENDIX H
RETURN INTEREST POSTCARD

Postcard Example

Name: _____

District: _____

_____ Yes, I am interested and willing to participate in this study.

_____ No, I am not interested in participating in this study.

If yes, please provide the following contact information.

Contact information:

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Gender: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Student Enrollment: _____

APPENDIX I

CHECKLIST OF SUPERINTENDENT SKILL, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Please look at the following list of superintendent skills, responsibilities, and roles. Tell me which area do you think you could have had help or would have wanted assistance from a more experienced mentor superintendent.

- School Finance**
 - Summary of Finance and other state financial documents
 - Tax Rate Calculation
 - Enrollment or Student Projections
- Budget Creating, Development Process**
- Investment of School Funds**
- Federal Programs and Management of those Programs**
- Grants**
- Employee Health Insurance**
- Insurance in General (Risk Management)**
- Building, Facilities Planning and Capital Projects (Bonds, Time Warrants)**
- Board of Trustees Relationship and Relationship Development**
- School Board Meetings – Procedures and Management**
- Development of Policy and its Implementation**
- Employee Relations and Related Policy Development**
- Team Building**
- Vision Articulation**
- Leadership Skills and Techniques**
- Community Relations**
- Planning Functions**
- Communication Skills and Methods**
- Strategic or District Improvement Planning**
- Athletics, Extracurricular Activities and UIL Management**
- Curriculum Development, Alignment, and Implementation**
- Staff Development**
- Transportation**
- Food Services**
- Maintenance and Custodial Services**
- Calendar Creation and Process**

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