

Novice Superintendent Perceptions of Preparation Adequacy and Problems of Practice

George J. Petersen

California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo

Lance D. Fusarelli

North Carolina State University

Theodore J. Kowalski

University of Dayton

This article reports the results of a survey of novice superintendents in California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio. The research provides a profile of novice superintendents and their opinions regarding the adequacy of academic preparation and the problems they encountered after entering this challenging position. Findings indicate that the novices were typical demographically of all superintendents, and generally, they were satisfied with their academic preparation. However, they were highly focused on managerial problems, an outcome likely explained by nature of their employing districts. The typical novice was employed in a district that (a) was rural (b) enrolled less than 1,000 students, and (c) was below average in taxable wealth. Findings and conclusions provide insights for improving academic preparation and for considering changes to state policy that could affect qualifications for this challenging position.

Introduction

The preparation of superintendents is a critical component, an essential element, of systemic education reform, although as Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson, and Poster, 2002 observed, "the process is rife with difficulties," including synchronization of preparation and actual practice, the theory-practice disconnect, the need for life-long learning, and development of an adequate knowledge base (Cooper et al., 2002, p. 242).

The vast majority of research on the efficacy of administrator preparation programs focuses on principals. Most doctoral programs in educational administration serve as de facto preparation programs for superintendents, even though some contain little coursework specifically tailored for the position (Andrews & Grogan, 2002).

Recommendations to make administrative licensing voluntary across all states (Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003; Hess, 2003) and to

discontinue doctoral programs for practitioners (Levine, 2005) have received national media attention. As a result, some state policymakers are questioning the need to license school administrators. As an example, nine states no longer require a license; and among the remaining 41 states, 54% grant waivers or emergency licenses and 37% allow or sanction alternative routes to licensure (Feistritzer, 2003). Recognizing that efforts to deregulate practice in the superintendency are gaining momentum, Kowalski (2004) has recommended a concerted effort to improve the professional knowledge base on administrative practice. The core of these efforts is a research agenda intended to provide empirical evidence that will determine if assertions made by those seeking to deregulate school administration are accurate.

Arguably, studies of novice superintendents provide essential information that should enlighten efforts to reform preparation and to amend state licensing policy. Such research adds to a recent body of empirical work examining leadership preparation and effectiveness (e.g., Doolittle, Jacobson, LeTendre, & McCarthy, 2003; Orr, 2003). The study population of this investigation included novice public school superintendents employed at the beginning of the 2005-06 school year in four states: California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio. The overarching objectives were to (a) produce profiles of the novice superintendents, (b) produce profiles of the employing school districts, (c) identify the dispositions of novices toward their academic preparation, and (d) compare outcomes across the four states.

Theoretical Framework

The critical nature of the induction year in professional education has long

been recognized in relation to teaching. Studies of beginning teachers were prevalent throughout much of the last century (Armstrong, Henson, & Savage, 1994) and they were rather consistent in reporting that many beginning teachers entered practice filled with uncertainty, anxiety (e.g., Borko & Putnam, 1996), and feelings of isolation (e.g., Martin, 2004). Consequently, their performance was often affected negatively by their lingering doubts about their ability to meet professional expectations in general and employer expectations specifically (Grossman & Thompson, 2004). Teacher education faculty in many states deployed these findings in their lobbying efforts to secure policy and funding for induction year experiences for new teachers. Unfortunately, research on novice superintendents and efforts to inject empirical evidence into policy deliberations on superintendent licensing and induction has been far less common (Kowalski, 2004). In part, the dissimilar levels of interest between studying novice teachers and studying novice superintendents may be explained by demographic and professional group differences. Whereas, first-time teachers typically are quite young (e.g., 22 or 23 years old) and excepting student teaching, inexperienced, novice superintendents are older (typically in their early 50s) and almost always have considerable experience as both teachers and principals (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000). Because of these differences, many observers may conclude that the induction year challenges for teaching and for the superintendency are unrelated (Kowalski, 2006). However, anecdotal evidence (e.g., Cegralek, 2004; Yeoman, 1991), suggests that novice superintendents also experience uncertainty, anxiety, and feelings of isolation, largely because practice in the superintendency is substantially different from practice in the classroom and unlike

the administrative practice of principals (Glass et al., 2000).

Novice Superintendents

Knowledge of novice superintendents has been clouded by a proclivity to use the categories *first-year* superintendents and *first-time* superintendents interchangeably. The former classification includes all superintendents in their first year of employment in a given school district; this population includes superintendents with previous experience in the position. The latter population includes only individuals who have no experience in this specific position. The problem stemming from a failure to separate these populations is axiomatic. A relatively recent article, titled "Superintendent Rookies" (Lueker, 2002), for example, reported that approximately 20% of all the superintendents in 2001-02 were part of the population being studied (based on the article's title, one would infer that this was a population restricted to

novices). However, data reported a year earlier in the national study of superintendents sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and conducted by Glass et al. (2000) reported that the turnover rate for all superintendents in 2000 was about 20%. Since persons employed as a result of turnovers are both experienced and inexperienced superintendents, it is not plausible that 20% of all superintendents in a given year would be novices. Consequently, the failure to distinguish between first-year and novice¹ (in this study, defined as *first-time*) superintendents probably has contributed to erroneous conclusions about the induction year in this position.

Using data from the 2000 AASA study, Glass (2001) developed a limited profile of first-time superintendents and then compared the data to a profile for all superintendents in five areas as shown below²:

Criteria	First-Time Superintendents	All Superintendents
Female	24.3%	13.2%
Age	slightly over 50	slightly over 50
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	7.9%	5.1%
Marital status - not married	11.3%	7.5%
Less than 5 years of teaching experience	21.6%	37.7%

In their national study of superintendents, Glass, et al. (2000), reported that the percentage of all superintendents possessing a doctoral degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) had increased substantially between 1971 and 2000. In 1971, 29.2% of superintendents had earned doctorates and in 2000 that percentage increased to 45.3. In contrast, a related nationwide survey of superintendents co-sponsored by AASA found that nearly two-thirds (64%) of superintendents possessed a doctorate (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 1999). However, in the Glass, et al. study, the percentages of superintendents having a doctoral degree differed markedly based on school district size; as examples, 83% of superintendents in very large districts (i.e., those with over 25,000 pupils) had this degree compared to only 17% of superintendents in the smallest districts (i.e., those with fewer than 300 pupils). The same study reported that superintendent ratings of their professional preparation has remained consistently high between 1982 and 2000. In 1982, 74% of all superintendents nationally rated their preparation as excellent or good; in 1992 and again in 2000, that percentage remained the same.

Though many attempts have been made to capture the landscape of leadership preparation, analysis that places preparation in context and then seeks to analyze factors that support quality leadership preparation is essentially lacking (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). While a myriad of reform reports have addressed issues of administrator preparation and licensing (Björk, Kowalski, & Young, 2005; Young et. al., 2002), in most cases their recommendations for superintendents have

not been grounded in empirical evidence (Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005). Much of the limited research conducted on first-time superintendents has focused on demographic data and perceptions of working conditions (e.g., Beverage, 2003; Morris, 2004) and not on possible associations among preparation, licensing, and effective practice. Despite calls for reforming academic preparation (e.g., Björk, Kowalski, & Young, 2005; Murphy, 2001; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002) and despite the fact that considerable experimentation has occurred in recent decades (Jackson & Kelley, 2002), superintendent preparation still is not defined by a national curriculum, and programs among universities are becoming increasingly disparate (Kowalski, 2006).

In summary, the knowledge base on the effectiveness of superintendent preparation is limited, especially in relation to determining effects on practice. It is especially limited in terms of identifying relationships between preparation and problems of practice encountered by novice superintendents.

Methods

The population in this study was defined as superintendents in four states—California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio—employed in the position for the very first time at the beginning of the 2005-06 school year. Members were identified through records obtained from four state departments of education and the state superintendent associations. Data concerning the study population and the number and percentage of respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Total Number of Superintendents and Novices by State, Participation, and Gender

State	Total superintendents	Number of novices	Novices responding
California	986	88 (8.92%)	45 (51.14%)
Missouri	524	67 (12.79%)	41 (61.19%)
North Carolina	117	5 (4.27%)	5 (100%)
Ohio	613	40 (6.53%)	27 (67.50%)
Total	2,240	200 (8.93%)	118 (59.00%)

Each person in the study population was sent a packet of materials via surface mail in February, 2005; it included: (a) a cover letter explaining the nature of the study and inviting the recipient to participate, (b) a two-page survey (see Appendix A), and (c) an addressed return envelope. The survey was developed by the authors and content validity was addressed by having two former superintendents evaluate the clarity and purposes of the questions and statements. Statements in the survey pertaining to the adequacy of academic preparation were developed from five widely accepted role requirements for the superintendency: teacher-scholar, manager, statesman, applied social scientist, and communicator (Kowalski, 2005). Data were tabulated by research associates at the University of Dayton in April and May, 2005. Open-ended items were tabulated by assigning a numeric value to responses and then ranking the responses according to total points.

Because the defined study population consisted of novice superintendents in only four states, and because of the exploratory nature of this investigation, generalizations about novice superintendents in all states are limited. Moreover, the criteria for preparing and licensing superintendents in the four states involved in this study do not necessarily reflect preparation and licensing

requirements in other states. [See Appendix B for licensing standards in these states.]

Findings

This investigation uncovered some very interesting findings with regard to novice superintendents (who they are and where they worked). Two areas of particular importance were their perceptions regarding the adequacy and effects of their preparation and contemporary issues faced by district leaders. These findings are of value, given some recent rhetoric about the inadequacy of universities to adequately prepare educational leaders (Young, Petersen & Short, 2002). As the data reveals, these novices felt adequately prepared and were generally positive about their preparation programs, although in a few areas, such as school finance, school law, and school board relations, a few participants felt they could have been better prepared. Finally, in the areas of contemporary problems, novice superintendents articulated responses that parallel the frustrations and challenges of their more experienced peers.

Novice Profile

Across the four states, 8 out of 10 of the respondents in this study were males. Overall, the novice superintendents were mid- to late-career professionals; only 8.4% were below age 35. The modal age range of

the population was 46 to 55 accounting for 39% of the respondents.

Only one respondent (from Missouri) reported not having had teaching experience. This finding indicates that among the 20 novices who had not completed a required academic program for a superintendent's license (all from California and Missouri) all but one had been a teacher previously. Only 4.2% of the novice superintendents had less three or less years of teaching experience, whereas 45.7% had 12 or more years of teaching experience. The novice superintendents were even more experienced in administration. Again, only one (from Missouri) reported not having had any previous administrative experience; 6.8% had three years or less of administrative experience whereas 52% had 12 or more years. With respect to highest academic

degree, approximately 36% of the novices had an earned doctorate (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) and an additional 22% had a specialist degree (Ed.S.); all but 3 of those having an Ed.S. were from Missouri³.

Eighty-three percent of the respondents had completed an approved program of academic study leading to licensure as a superintendent. Results indicate that patterns for taking licensure programs varied across the four states. Ninety-seven percent of the Missouri novices who completed a licensure program did so at the same institution from which they received their highest academic degree. In North Carolina this figure was 80%, in Ohio it was 70%, and in California, it was only 42%. A summary of the profile is shown in Table 2.

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Table 2
Profile of the 118 Responders

Characteristic	Response	California	Missouri	North Carolina	Ohio	All
Teaching experience						
	0-3	3 (6.7%)	2 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (4.2%)
	4 to 7	9 (20%)	13 (31.7%)	1 (20.0%)	11 (40.7%)	34 (28.8%)
	8 to 11	8 (17.8%)	7 (17%)	1 (20.0%)	7 (25.9%)	23 (19.4%)
	12 >	25 (55.5%)	17 (41.4%)	3 (60.0%)	9 (33.3%)	54 (45.7%)
Administrative experience						
	0-3	1 (2.2%)	7 (17%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (6.8%)
	4 to 7	3 (6.7%)	10 (24.3%)	1 (20.0%)	9 (33.3%)	23 (19.5%)
	8 to 11	9 (20%)	10 (24.3%)	1 (20.0%)	4 (14.8%)	24 (20.3%)
	12 >	32 (71.1%)	12 (29.2%)	3 (60.0%)	14 (51.8%)	61 (52.0%)
Highest degree						
	Bachelor's	1 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (.84.0%)
	Master's	21 (46.7%)	9 (21.9%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (62.9%)	47 (40.0%)
	Specialist	0 (0.0%)	23 (56%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (11.1%)	26 (22.0%)
	Doctorate	23 (51.1%)	7 (17.0%)	5 (100%)	7 (25.9%)	42 (36.0%)
Age						
	<35	0 (0.0%)	8 (19.5%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (7.4%)	10 (8.4%)
	35 to 45	3 (6.7%)	15 (36.5%)	1 (20.0%)	7 (25.9%)	26 (22.0%)
	46 to 55	19 (42.2%)	11 (26.8%)	3 (60.0%)	13 (48.1%)	46 (39.0%)
	56 >	23 (51.1%)	5 (12.2%)	1 (20.0%)	5 (18.5%)	34 (29.0%)
Gender						
	Male	32 (74.46%)	30 (81.1%)	4 (80.0%)	23 (88.5%)	89 (80.2%)
	Female	11 (25.6%)	7 (18.9%)	1 (20.0%)	3 (11.5%)	22 (19.8%)
Superintendent preparation program						
	Completed	35 (77.8%)	31 (75.6%)	5 (100%)	27 (100%)	98 (83.1%)
	Not completed	10 (22.2%)	10 (24.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (16.9%)

Note: Not all respondents provided responses for all demographic questions.

Employer Profile

Nearly two-thirds of the novice superintendents (62%) were employed in districts serving rural areas; an additional 23% were employed in districts serving small towns or cities. The modal employing district (employing 46% of the novices) enrolled fewer than 1,000 students; another 13% were employed in districts that had between 1,000 and 1,499 pupils. By

comparison, only one-fourth of the novices (26%) were employed in districts enrolling 2,500 or more students. Two-thirds of the novices (67%) were employed in districts that had an assessed valuation per pupil that was below the state average.

One-third of the novices (33%) were employed in districts in which fewer than 25% of the school board members were college graduates. However, 25% were

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employed in districts in which 75% or more of the board members had a college degree. Half of the novices were employed in districts in which the average tenure of school board members was 4 to 6 years;

only 7% were employed in districts in which the average tenure exceeded 10 years. A summary of data for the employing school districts is provided in Table 3.

Table 3
Profile of Employing School Districts

Variable	Categories	Frequency
Geographic location		
	Rural	74 (63.8%)
	Small town or city	27 (23.3%)
	Larger city	7 (6.0%)
	Urban	8 (6.9%)
Enrollment		
	Less than 1,000	55 (47.4%)
	1,000 - 1,499	15 (12.9%)
	1,500 - 2,499	16 (13.8%)
	2,500 or more	30 (25.9%)
Taxable wealth ¹		
	Much lower than state average	40 (36.0%)
	Slightly lower than state average	39 (35.1%)
	Slightly higher than state average	22 (19.9%)
	Much higher than state average	10 (9.0%)
Percent of board members who are college graduates		
	Less than 25%	39 (33.9%)
	25-49%	30 (26.1%)
	50-74%	17 (14.8%)
	75% or more	29 (25.2%)
Average board member service (in years)		
	0-3	16 (13.8%)
	4-6	58 (50.0%)
	7-10	34 (29.3%)
	11 or more	8 (6.9%)

¹Based on district assessed valuation per pupil compared to state average assessed valuation per pupil.

Note: Not all 118 respondents provided answers for each of these demographic characteristics.

Opinions About Academic Preparation

Twenty of the 118 superintendents had not completed a licensure preparation program. Therefore, they did not provide opinions regarding the adequacy and effects of their preparation. Consequently, the number of responses for this section was 97. Using a Likert-type scale with four response choices (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree), the respondents were asked to identify their levels of agreement with 13 statements; 7 pertaining to the adequacy of their academic preparation, 4 pertaining to their former professors, and 2 pertaining to the general effects of their preparation. Overall, the opinions expressed were positive. The highest level of agreement was in the area of democratic leadership: 92% either strongly agreed or agreed that they were adequately prepared for this role. The next highest levels of agreement were for instructional leadership (85%) and

communication (81%). The lowest level of agreement was in the area of engaging in political activities (41%).

The respondents also were asked to express levels of agreement with statements about former professors and the overall effects of their preparation programs. Again, the outcomes were generally positive; agreement (i.e., combined agree and strongly agree responses) with the four statements about professors ranged from 70% to 88%. The highest level of agreement was for the statement pertaining to setting high standards for students (88%). Though 85% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their academic preparation for the superintendency had been intellectually stimulating, only 47% strongly agreed or agreed that the preparation program influenced their decision to become a superintendent. Responses for these items are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Opinions Regarding Effectiveness of Professional Preparation¹

<i>My academic studies prepared me to</i>	SD	D	A	SA
function as an instructional leader	4 (4.1%)	11 (11.3%)	57 (58.8%)	25 (25.8%)
manage the district's human and material resources	2 (2.1%)	19 (19.6%)	64 (66.0%)	12 (12.3%)
engage in democratic administration	0 (0.0%)	8 (8.2%)	58 (59.8%)	31 (32.0%)
conduct research related to solving district problems	1 (1.0%)	26 (26.8%)	49 (50.6%)	21 (21.6%)
communicate effectively in and outside the district	0 (0.0%)	19 (19.6%)	57 (58.8%)	21 (21.9%)
work effectively with school board members	10 (10.3%)	31 (32.0%)	46 (47.4%)	10 (10.3%)
engage in political activity	13 (13.4%)	44 (45.4%)	32 (33.0%)	8 (8.2%)
<i>Professors I encountered during my academic studies</i>				
understood the challenges of contemporary practice	7 (7.2%)	15 (15.5%)	55 (56.7%)	20 (20.6%)
effectively blended theory and practice	2 (2.1%)	21 (21.6%)	58 (60.0%)	16 (16.5%)
set high standards for students	1 (1.0%)	11 (11.3%)	70 (72.2%)	15 (15.5%)
integrated contemporary issues into course content	3 (3.1%)	9 (9.3%)	63 (65.0%)	22 (22.7%)
<i>My academic studies were</i>				
intellectually stimulating	0 (0.0%)	15 (15.5%)	61 (62.9%)	21 (21.6%)
influenced my decision to be a superintendent	7 (7.2%)	42 (43.3%)	33 (34.0%)	13 (13.4%)

¹The number of responses for these items was 97; 20 respondents had not completed a superintendent preparation programs and 1 other respondent did not provide answers for these items.

Legend: SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree

The respondents also were asked to identify the most and least beneficial aspects of their academic preparation for the superintendency. The three most beneficial were identified as (a) courses in the practical dimensions of school administration (e.g., management courses such as finance and law), (b) practice-based

experiences (e.g., clinical experiences, internships, and school board relations), and (c) the quality of instruction and relevancy of instruction (e.g., a professor's ability to teach and the infusion of contemporary problems into courses). The three least beneficial aspects were identified as (a) over-reliance on theory, (b) a lack of

professors with experience as superintendents, and (c) the lack of practical applications in school finance.

The respondents also were asked to identify the greatest omissions in their academic preparation. They identified the following topics: (a) school finance, (b) school law, (c) school board relations, (d) politics of education, and (e) collective bargaining. At first glance the responses pertaining to academic preparation may appear to be contradictory. As an example, school finance is identified as being among the most important aspects of preparation, the least important aspects of preparation, and one of the greatest omissions in preparation. This outcome may be explained by two conditions. First, the quality of instruction received by novices in this subject area varied considerably; that is, some had completed an effective course and others had not. Second, some novices may have viewed finance as a critically

important course but they were disappointed with the curriculum or quality of instruction they received.

Problems of Practice

Respondents were presented with 14 contemporary issues commonly cited as potential work-embedded problems in the literature (referred to as professional problems in this study). They were asked identify the degree to which each issue presented a problem. Response choices ranged from “not a problem” to “major problem.” Considerable variance was found among the 14 issues. The top three professional problems encountered by superintendents were: inadequate district finances; state accountability programs; and state pressure to implement change. Those that were deemed least problematic involved relationships with others: school board members, the community, teachers, and staff (see Table 5).

Table 5

Ranking of Professional Problems Encountered: Highest to Lowest

<i>Potential problem</i>	<i>Percent citing as moderate or major problem</i>
Inadequate district financed	81.2%
State accountability programs	70.1%
State pressure to implement change	59.0%
Poor school facilities	41.0%
Negative social conditions	31.7%
Lack of community support for school improvement initiatives	22.2%
School board member interference in administrative functions	22.2%
Community pressure to implement change	16.3%
Ineffective employees	16.3%
Relationships with school board members	8.6%
Relationships with teachers	6.9%
Relationships with the community	6.9%
Relationships with administrative staff	6.8%
Relationships with non-professional employees	5.1%

In the same fashion, the novice superintendents were asked about six issues commonly cited in the literature as personal but work-related problems (e.g., job-related stress). Though levels of severity varied, the issues were viewed as being less problematic than the professional problems.

The most frequently identified personal problems included: job-related stress; compensation; and negative effects on family/personal life. Outcomes for all personal problems related to practice are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Ranking of Personal Problems Encountered: Highest to Lowest

Issue	Percent citing as moderate or major problem
Job-related stress	34.2%
Level of compensation in relation to job requirements	29.0%
Negative effects on family/personal life	24.8%
Public and media scrutiny	17.1%
Career doubts	12.0%
Lack of job satisfaction	10.2%

Discussion

Intense and well publicized criticism has been focused on educational leadership preparation programs for the last few decades (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). Though rhetoric frequently outstrips reality, criticisms appear to be fueling a drift toward deregulating state requirements for serving in this position. Overall, 17% of the novices participating in this study had not completed a state-approved preparation program prior to entering the position. Moreover, 82 (41%) members of the defined study population elected not participate in this research for unknown reasons; undoubtedly, some of them also had not completed an approved preparation program. Having a relatively high percentage of practitioners who had not completed an approved program of study spawns consequential questions about the need for states to regulate practice in school administration.

As a group, the novice superintendents participating in this

investigation exhibited characteristics similar to those found in the demographic profile for all U.S. superintendents. This was true with respect to teaching experience, administrative experience, and age at which persons entered the superintendency (Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Likewise, the percentage of females among the respondents (19.8%) was nearly identical to the percentage of females in national superintendent population (21.7%) reported in the most recent national study (Glass & Franceschini, 2007, p. 17). However, the percentage of novices in this study possessing a doctorate (36%) was lower than the national percentage for all superintendent (50.7%) reported by Glass & Franceschini (p. 42). The lower percentage of novices with doctorates is likely to be due to two factors: some superintendents complete doctoral programs after entering the position (Kowalski, 2006) and a high proportion of the novices were employed in small school systems where

superintendents are less likely to have a doctorate (Glass et al., 2000).

Also noteworthy, nearly two-thirds of the novices in this study (66.3%) were employed in low-wealth districts where inadequate resources presented problems. Conversely, only 10 (8.5%) were employed in high-wealth districts—school systems that provide the most attractive employment conditions for superintendents (Kowalski, 2006). The prevalence of novices in below average wealth districts may appear to explain why adequate financial resources were cited as the most prevalent problem; however, this issue consistently has been found to be the leading problem identified by all superintendents (Glass & Fransceschini, 2007).

Findings regarding adequacy of preparation in politics and finance appear contradictory. Whereas 92% of the respondents agreed that they were adequately prepared for function as a democratic leader, only 59% agreed that they were prepared adequately to engage in political activities. Authors (e.g., Björk & Gurley, 2005; Callahan, 1966; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004) addressing democratic leadership commonly identify politics as a core function of this role. The findings here suggest that some novices distinguished between democratic leadership and politics, a proclivity not uncommon among school administrators. This is because some of the literature on school administration places a positive connotation on “democratic leadership” but negative connotation on “political activity” (Kowalski, 2006 Petersen & Short, 2001; 2002). In the case of school finance, respondents generally recognized that studying school finance was essential, but a notable number appeared to be negative about the quality of the courses they completed. Generally, discontent centered on two issues: the quality of instruction provided and curricular relevance. Those

commenting negatively about school finance tended to focus on the absence of practice-related experiences in the course(s), such as providing the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare a school district budget, dealing with investments, and managing school district debt.

Overall, results of this study provide several relevant findings that should be weighed when improving preparation and altering state licensing policy. Two out three novices in this study entered practice in districts where they were unlikely to have administrative support staff other than school principals. In fact, the vast majority of school systems in this country serve less than 2,000 students, and logically, normative standards for the position should be based on this fact. Yet, critics arguing for deregulation (e.g., Hess, 2003), tend to focus largely or entirely on large urban districts where superintendents typically have dozens of associates, assistants and directors. Allowing non-educators to be superintendents in districts where there are no curriculum and instruction specialists is arguably not in society’s best interest.

Additional research is needed to build a more adequate body of knowledge about novice superintendents. This expanded effort should include: (a) case studies of novice superintendents that could provide a greater understanding of the quantity and quality of professional studies related to the first year of practice; (b) more detailed analysis of trends for novice females in relation to all female superintendents; (c) replications of this study in other states; (d) outcome studies that examine the efficacy of academic preparation in relation to practice. Comparative studies of superintendent preparation programs in these states are also needed, largely because the curriculum for a superintendent’s license in these states is not highly prescriptive. Both the quantity of courses required, the nature of those

courses and the universities where the courses are being offered probably varies considerably among institutions.

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George J. Petersen is a Professor of Educational Leadership and the Co-Director of the UCSB/Cal Poly Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership. A former department chair, Associate Director of the University Council for Educational Administration and Director of Secondary Education, he has written and published books, articles, and book chapters examining the executive leadership of the superintendent. This work has primarily focused on superintendent beliefs, roles, and work in the area of instructional leadership, policy decision-making, and social influence in addition to the organizational mission and academic success of the district. His most recent book, *Effective Communication for School Administrators* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) was co-authored with T. J. Kowalski and L. D. Fusarelli.

Lance D. Fusarelli is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at North Carolina State University. He is the author or editor of seven books and more than 40 journal articles and book chapters. He co-authored *Better Policies, Better Schools: Theories and Applications* (Allyn & Bacon, 2004), *Effective Communication for School Administrators* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), and co-edited *The Politics of Leadership: Superintendents and School Boards in Changing Times* (Information Age Publishing, 2005). His research focuses on superintendents, No Child Left Behind, and the politics of education.

Theodore J. Kowalski is the Kuntz Family Chair in Educational Administration, an endowed professorship at the University of Dayton. A former superintendent and college of education dean, he is the editor of the *Journal of School Public Relations* and serves on the editorial boards of two other journals. He is the author or co-author and of over 150 professional publications including 31 books. His most recent books are *Effective Communication for School Administrators* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, co-authored with the co-authors of this article), *Public Relations in Schools* (4th ed., Merrill, Prentice Hall, 2008), *Case Studies on Educational Administration* (5th ed., Allyn and Bacon, 2008), and *Data-Driven Decisions and School Leadership* (Allyn and Bacon, 2008, co-authored with Thomas J. Lasley and James Mahoney).

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Appendix A

First-Year Superintendent Study Survey

Part A: Perceptions of Academic Preparation (Academic studies are defined here as graduate level courses and internships you were required to complete for a superintendent license, including prerequisite courses, such as those for a principal's license.)

1. I have completed a required program of study for obtaining a superintendent license.

Yes ____

No ____

(If yes, answer the remaining portions of Part A; if no, proceed to Part B.)

Write a letter after each statement indicating your response using the following response options: SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

2. My academic studies adequately prepared me to

- a. function as an instructional leader.
b. manage the district's human and material resources.
c. engage in democratic administration (shared authority, decision making).
d. conduct research related to solving district problems.
e. communicate effectively in and outside of the district.
f. work effectively with school board members.
g. engage in political activities.

3. Professors I encountered during my academic studies

- a. understood the challenges of contemporary practice.
b. effectively blended theory and practice.
c. set high standards for students.
d. integrated contemporary issues into course content.

4. My academic studies were

- a. intellectually stimulating.
b. influenced my decision to be a superintendent.

5. Identify the three most beneficial aspects of your academic studies (the most beneficial listed first).

- a.
b.
c.

6. Identify the three least beneficial aspects of your academic studies (the least beneficial listed first).

- a.
b.
c.

7. Identify any omissions (gaps) in your academic studies (the greatest omission listed first).

- a.
b.
c.

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Part B: Perceptions of Practice (*Practice* is defined here as all elements of your current position as you have experienced them during your first year as a superintendent. A *problem* is defined as a perceived difficulty regardless of its cause.)

Enter one of the following numbers after each statement indicating your response: **0** = Not a problem; **1** = A minor problem; **3** = A moderate problem; **4** = A major problem

7. To what extent is each of the following issues a problem for you professionally?
- a. Community pressure to implement change _____
 - b. State pressure to implement change _____
 - c. State accountability programs _____
 - d. Inadequate district finances _____
 - e. Relationships with administrative staff _____
 - f. Relationships with teachers _____
 - g. Relationships with non-professional employees _____
 - h. Relationships with the community _____
 - i. Relationships with school board members _____
 - j. Poor school facilities _____
 - k. Negative social conditions _____
(e.g., lack of parental support, crime, violence, poverty)
 - l. Lack of community support for school improvement initiatives _____
 - m. School board member interference in administrative functions _____
 - n. Ineffective employees _____
8. To what extent is each of the following issues a problem for you personally?
- a. Job-related stress _____
 - b. Negative effects on family/personal life _____
 - c. Lack of job satisfaction _____
 - d. Level of compensation in relation to job requirements _____
 - e. Public and media scrutiny _____
 - f. Career doubts (uncertainty about remaining a superintendent) _____

Part C: Personal Information (Place a check mark on the line preceding your selected response.)

9. Gender (optional) _____ female _____ male
10. How many years of teaching experience do you possess?
- _____ 0 to 3
 - _____ 4 to 7
 - _____ 8 to 11
 - _____ 12 or more
11. How many years of administrative experience (at any level) do you possess (exclusive of the current year)?
- _____ 0 to 3
 - _____ 4 to 7
 - _____ 8 to 11
 - _____ 12 or more
12. What is your **highest earned academic degree**?
- _____ Bachelor's

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- Master's
- Specialist
- Doctorate

13. What is your age? (optional)

- less than 35
- 35-45
- 46-55
- 56 or more

Part D: District Information (Place a check mark on the line preceding your selected response.)

14. Which of the following best describes the geographic location of your school district?

- Rural
- Small town or city
- Larger city or town
- Urban

15. What is the total enrollment in your school district?

- Less than 1,000
- 1,000 to 1,499
- 1,500 to 2,499
- 2,500 or more

16. How does the assessed valuation per pupil in your district compare to the state average assessed valuation per pupil?

- It is much lower than the average.
- It is slightly lower than the average.
- It is slightly higher than the average.
- It is much higher than the average.

17. Which of the following best describes the level of education of your school board members?

- Less than 25% are college graduates.
- 25-49% are college graduates.
- 50-74% are college graduates.
- 75% or more are college graduates.

18. What is the average length of time the current members have served on the school board?

- 0 to 3 years
- 4 to 6 years
- 7 to 10 years
- 11 or more years

Thank you for your assistance and participation. Please return your completed questionnaire and signed informed consent form in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

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Appendix B

State Licensing Requirements for the Superintendency in California, Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio⁴

State	Requirements
California	<p>California has a two-tier credential structure. A five-year preliminary credential is the first credential issued after an individual meets basic credential requirements. A clear credential is issued when all credential requirements have been completed. The Administrative Services Credential authorizes the holder to provide the following services in grades 12 and below, including preschool, and in classes organized primarily for adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Develop, coordinate, and assess instructional programs •Evaluate certificated and classified personnel •Provide students' discipline, including but not limited to suspension and expulsion •Provide certificated and classified employees discipline, including but not limited to suspension, dismissal, and reinstatement •Supervise certificated and classified personnel •<i>Manage school site, district, or county level fiscal services</i> •Recruit, employ, and assign certificated and classified personnel •Develop, coordinate, and supervise student support services, including but not limited to extracurricular activities, pupil personnel services, health services, library services, and technology support services <p><u>Requirements for the Preliminary Credential</u> Individuals must satisfy all the following requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possess one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A valid California teaching credential requiring a baccalaureate degree and a program of professional preparation, including student teaching • A valid California Designated Subjects Teaching Credential provided the applicant also possesses a baccalaureate degree • A valid California services credential in Pupil Personnel Services, Health Services, Library Media Teacher Services, or Clinical or Rehabilitative Services requiring a baccalaureate degree and a program of professional preparation, including field practice or the equivalent 2. Complete one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Commission-approved program of specialized and professional preparation in administrative services which results in the formal recommendation of the program sponsor • A one-year administrative services internship consisting of supervised in-service training taken through a California college or university with an approved internship program and obtain the recommendation of a California college or university with a Commission-approved program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Achieve a passing score of 173 on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA)

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	<p>examination administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS). Individuals who pass the SLLA may apply directly to the Commission for the credential. Please include an original score report showing passage of the examination.</p> <p>3. Satisfy the Basic Skills Requirement.</p> <p>4. Complete a minimum of three years of successful, full-time experience in public schools, nonpublic schools, or private schools of equivalent status (This experience may be teaching, pupil personnel work, librarianship, health services, or clinical or rehabilitative services. "Full-time service" means service for at least a minimum day for three-fourths of the total days in the school year. Substitute or part-time service does not apply.)</p> <p>5. Verify employment in an administrative position on form CL-777. (An individual who has completed requirements 1-4 above but does not have an offer of employment in an administrative position may apply for a Certificate of Eligibility, which verifies completion of all requirements for the preliminary credential and authorizes the holder to seek employment as an administrator.)</p>
<p align="center"><i>Missouri</i></p>	<p>1. A permanent or professional Missouri certificate of license to teach;</p> <p align="center">OR</p> <p>2. A baccalaureate degree from a state-approved teacher preparation program;</p> <p align="center">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recommendation from the designated certification official from a state-approved teacher preparation program which is included on the Application for Initial Missouri Teaching Certificate; and • Achieve a score equal to or greater than the Missouri qualifying score on the assessment designated by the State Board of Education (board) for initial certification; • A minimum of one (1) year's experience as a building- or district-level administrator at a public or accredited nonpublic school; • Successful completion of the district-level administrator's assessment designated by the board; • Completion of a course in Psychology and/or Education of the Exceptional Child; • Completion of an educational specialist or advanced degree program in educational leadership and recommendation from the designated official of a college/ university approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The approved graduate credit shall include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foundations of educational administration; 2. City school administration; 3. School supervision; 4. Curriculum construction; 5. Research and evaluation; 6. School finance; 7. School law; 8. School staff personnel administration;

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	<p>9. School/community relations; 10. School plant design and operation, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recommendation from the designated certification official from a state-approved educational specialist or advanced degree program for the preparation of superintendent; this must be part of the Application for Superintendent’s Certificate.
<i>North Carolina</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 1 year of experience (or the equivalent) as a principal; • Advanced graduate level (sixth-year certificate - an Ed. Specialist) degree in school administration; and • Meet the required score on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) administered by ETS <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university and five years leadership or managerial experience considered relevant by the employing local board of education.
<i>Ohio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three (3) years of successful experience in a position requiring a principal or administrative specialist license • Completion of an approved preparation program for superintendents <p>Ohio recently discontinued issuing emergency certificates and licenses for all administrative positions but the state now issues an Alternative Superintendent License. This license is issued for 2 years and can be renewed once. Eligibility is based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree from an accredited university • A position appropriate to the license and board resolution of appointment to position • A grade point average of at least 3.0 • Five (5) or more years of documented successful experience in teaching, administration, education, or management

¹ As used in this study, novice is defined as a person who is serving in the superintendency for the very first time.

² The title of the article in which this comparison appears refers to “first-year” superintendents; a personal conversation with the author, however, confirmed that the data actually pertain to “first-time” superintendents. Moreover, data for first-time superintendents were not extracted from the data for all superintendents; therefore, actual differences between the two groups may be more pronounced than reported.

³ Missouri is the only state in this study that required a minimum of an Educational Specialist Degree (Ed.S.) to obtain a superintendent’s license.

⁴ Information on the licensing requirements was obtained from each respective states’ Department of Education website.