The 9th Triennial Study of the Superintendency in New York State

snapshot IX

2015
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Abstract

Snapshot 2015 is the 9th iteration of the triennial study of the school superintendency in the State of New York, begun in 1991. There were 411 responses out of 686 members surveyed. This represents a response rate of 59.9%. The survey instrument contained 106 items ranging from superintendent demographics to issues such as contracts and retirements. Of particular note is the section on Leadership Teams, exploring the roles of Superintendents and Boards of Education.

Acknowledgments

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Principal Authors/Research Team

Snapshot Committee Co-Chairs and Principal Authors:

Edward M. Fale, Ph.D., Superintendent
Valley Stream 24 UFSD

Robert R. Ike, Ed. D., Superintendent
Palmyra-Macedon CSD

Editor/Author:
Marilyn C. Terranova, Ph.D., Superintendent
Retired

Principal Research Consultant:
Elaine Zseller, Ph.D., Program Supervisor
Nassau BOCES

Contributing Authors:

Gerald M. Cattaro, Ed.D.
*Fordham University*

David Glover, Ed.D.
*Salem CSD*

Martin Handler, Ed.D.
*Pine Plains CSD*

Phyllis Harrington, Ed.D.
*Oceanside UFSD*

Bill Heidenreich, Ed.D.
*Valley Stream Central High School District*

Maria Rice
*New Paltz CSD*

David O’Rourke, Ph.D.
*Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES*

Thomas Rogers, Ed.D.
*Syosset UFSD*
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History

What a difference an Internet makes. In 1991, the New York State Council of School Superintendents began an ambitious project - to survey (by paper) the superintendents of the state, and compile a “snapshot” of the state of the profession. The goal was two-fold, to enhance the nascent study of the superintendency as a profession, unique unto itself; and to compile information on common benefits and compensation packages, so superintendents could advocate for themselves in contract negotiations with their Boards of Education.

Fast forward some 25 years and the effort remains strong and healthy, even if the goals have shifted:

- The survey is now on-line, making data collection and analysis faster and simpler, but counterintuitively causing the response rate to drop significantly;
- We no longer bother collecting salary data since state law requires the Education Department to post all salaries above $85,000 on the Internet, and tax advocacy organizations like SeeThroughNY post individual and union contracts on their websites;
- The State has embarked on several generations of education reform efforts, leading the Snapshot to become an opportunity to ascertain superintendents’ appraisals of the State’s strategies;
- A body of academic literature grew up around the effective work of school boards, leading to an opportunity for superintendents to opine on how closely their own board’s work followed the practices deemed most effective.

Along the way, the profession of the superintendency has gone through several major demographic shifts. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Snapshot signaled a concern; a significant number of incumbent superintendents - over two-thirds - signaled their intent to retire in the next five years, implying that a generational shift in the profession was likely to take place.

The superintendency of the early 1990s was not diverse from a demographic point of view. In the first Snapshot, just 11% of superintendents were women, and very few were persons of color. Although it was clear that the school environment was slow to change in many ways, the lack of demographic change in the superintendency could as easily be ascribed to the success or longevity of incumbents reflective of a previous era as it could to prejudices against diversity in leadership. This generational turnover became an opportunity to test the relative strength of those two explanations.

In the course of subsequent Snapshot studies, a counterintuitive finding appeared. Instead of observing the significant drop in the average age that such a dramatic turnover
was expected to cause (as two-thirds of the population of superintendents changed from people of retirement age to those of mid-career age), the average age of superintendents nevertheless continued to rise.

In exploring this finding, our studies offered two explanations for this trend. First, all superintendents were taking their first superintendency later in life or even just at the very end of a career, suggesting that the superintendency had become a less attractive role to plan to hold for 20 or more years. Second, many more women were entering the profession; and women in particular were taking their first superintendency much later in life than men.

If this trend signaled a shift in attitudes towards women leaders, a parallel shift towards leaders of color has been much slower to take root. Even this most recent edition of the Snapshot finds no statistically significant increase in the number of leaders of color in New York state school districts. Despite two subsequent generational turnovers in the superintendency, this lends credibility to the explanation that this trend has less to do with the persistence of incumbents and instead, is a gatekeeping function in the preparation or hiring processes that preclude candidates of color in large numbers.

More recently, the superintendency has begun to shift again: the career differences between the starting ages of new superintendents and veterans has narrowed, as have the differences between men and women. Where the differences remain stark are the significantly higher proportion of unmarried/unpartnered women, and the higher proportion of men with school-aged children. Given the time and stress demands of the superintendency, much more work needs to be done to understand these differences and whether (or perhaps, how) traditional gender roles around family responsibility impact the pathway to the superintendency.

The answers are important – after a period of significant increase in gender diversity, the superintendency has leveled-off at about 30% women. If women (and persons of color) are to be represented in leadership in the same proportions as they are in society or in schools, the barriers must first be understood, if they are to be addressed. Moreover, superintendents are increasingly likely to be promoted from within which may have an impact.

Leaders Matter

Leaders matter. In fact, leaders matter a lot! A 2004 study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation found that school leadership is “second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning” and furthermore “the impact of leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of students are most acute” (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Given this dramatic impact on student achievement, it is essential to study the priorities and opinions of superintendents, the better to understand where they are leading, their views on the efficacy of state reform strategies, and what they see as distractions and impending challenges.

Unsurprisingly, over the past several years, superintendents report increasing proportions of their time spent on compliance with state mandates, particularly around elements of the state’s reform strategies. The State, it seems, has constrained leadership to be in the direction it has pre-selected as appropriate for all contexts. Despite this narrowing of flexibility, superintendents’ reported motivation to have greater influence on the lives of children, and high levels of stress, superintendents report high levels of job satisfaction. One could either conclude that superintendents find satisfaction in this direction, or they find satisfaction despite it.
At least part of that satisfaction must be attributable to the effectiveness of the School Boards superintendents work with and for. Some 90% of superintendents rated their Board of Education as “effective” or “highly effective.” By large margins, Boards focus on policy, work cooperatively among themselves and with the community, maintain confidentiality, and make decisions based on facts and data.

**Conclusion**

This *Snapshot* survey finds once again an impending generational turnover – with some 68% of veteran superintendents indicating an intention of retiring in the next five years. Who will be their successors? What will be their priorities? Will the profession become more diverse? The answers matter – superintendents in New York will lead the education of more than 2 million children for a future changing so fast it can only be imagined.
There were 411 responses to the 2015 *Snapshot* Survey out of all Council members surveyed; this represents a response rate of 59.9%. ¹

Leading a school district in New York State has never been easy; however, it’s a rewarding challenge that many fine leaders have chosen as their vocation. So why have public education leaders become even scarcer? The confluence of possibly the largest scale of educational reforms in our Country’s history, the public’s increased interest in the results of public education, and the political positions of multiple constituent groups make the need for superintendents with adaptive leadership skills that much more critical. “Stresses build up and produce a sense of urgency among certain groups within society . . . These are the times for leadership . . .” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 72). People who lead frequently bear scars from their efforts to bring about adaptive change (p. 235), changing attitudes, values, and behavior (Heifetz, 2002, p. 13). With regard to the role of the Superintendent in New York State’s public schools, respondents indicated that the top reasons they were hired was because the Board was looking for a leader with experience and/or a particular style or ability to be a change agent.

At a time when school districts were at the peak of implementing the New York State Board of Regents’ Reform Agenda, the economy was struggling, creating a perfect storm and tremendous need for the exceptional leadership of school superintendents. These chief officers are the primary advocates for the public school children of the State. In a national study conducted by *Education Week* in concert with Gallup (2013), more than half of the superintendents (58%) said that the Common Core State Standards “will improve the quality of education in their community.” In addition to being members of the New York State Council of School Superintendents (The Council) and advocating for children at the state level, advocacy for children at the national level also takes place with 65% of respondents indicating membership in the American Association of School Superintendents (AASA), the national association representing school superintendents. Sixty-three percent of districts encourage participation in AASA conferences by paying all expenses.

¹ There were 686 members surveyed, with useable responses for individual items which varied between 350 and 380; sixty surveys were submitted incomplete.

In response to the question “What is the public’s biggest misconception about superintendents?” …“That there’s a template, that school just ‘happens,’ and that the day is 9 to 5.” Carol Patton (2013)
Michael Osnato, founder of the search firm Leadership Advantage, noted, “The fiscal incentive to become a superintendent . . . is not what it was, so you have to want to take a chance on leadership to become a superintendent” (Oishi, 2012). Carol Patton (2013) in response to the question “What is the public’s biggest misconception about superintendents?” responded, “That there’s a template, that school just ‘happens,’ and that the day is 9 to 5.”

During an era where the majority of superintendents reported that their district has curtailed spending in a way that has diminished capacity to help all students reach high standards (57.7%) and the influence of social media has allowed the spread of unsubstantiated rumors (61.1%), it is no wonder that a majority of superintendents reported being in a position that is more stressful than expected (64.7%). “To survive and succeed . . . superintendents necessarily rely upon a strong family support system” (Laffe, 2012). In addition, 96% of survey respondents indicated that they have very or somewhat collegial relationships with other superintendents in their respective regions. Collegiality and family support systems may very well have assisted our members through difficult and turbulent times.

*The Snapshot of the Superintendency: The 9th Triennial Study of the Superintendency in New York State* (*The Snapshot*) provides the membership of The Council with valuable demographic, gender/ethnic diversity, compensation, and retirement data; information on recruiting and developing courageous school leaders; and essential facts regarding leadership teams comprised of superintendents and their Boards of Education.

**Demographic Data**

**Age and Age of Entry to the Superintendency**

The ages of all respondents ranged from 35 - 73. The mean age of chief school officers was 53.5 years overall. Women were slightly older than men (55.5 vs. 52.7 years).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 / Average Age of Superintendents

The mean age of New York school superintendents has increased steadily since the first Snapshot survey in 1991 but began to decrease in 2012; 2015 data parallel the 2003 results. The mean age of women respondents (55.5 years) has remained flat whereas the age of men appears to be slightly younger (52.7 years). Careful examination of this trend should be considered in future studies.

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53.5

The mean age of chief school officers was 53.5 years old

59.9%

The 2015 Snapshot Survey had a response rate of 59.9%
The mean age of entry into the superintendency for all superintendents responding in 2015 was 45.2 years overall; 48.1 years for women and 44.1 years for men. In 2012, the age of entry was 48.1 years for women and 44.7 years for men. Men appear to enter the field three to four years younger than women, continuing a trend that has been apparent since first studying the concept in 1997. For superintendents that were in their first year in 2014-2015, the average age for the six females was 48.7; for the 24 males it was 45.3.

These data represent the overall average of the entire pool of respondents. The results become much starker when contrasting newer superintendents with their veteran counterparts (who began their first superintendency six or more years ago). One needs to consider that in 2003 and 2006 there were more superintendents in their 30s and early 40s.
In 2006, the mean starting age of a new superintendent was 48.6 as compared to a veteran superintendent, 42.8.

In 2009, the mean starting age of a new superintendent was 48.7 as compared to a veteran superintendent, 44.1.

In 2012, the mean starting age of a new superintendent was 47.8 as compared to a veteran superintendent of 43.9.

In 2015, the mean starting age for the pool of superintendents was 45.1; 46.6 for new superintendents, and 44.0 for veteran superintendents.

The age of an individual entering the superintendency has become younger. Of all superintendents who responded, 66.8% are now age 50 or higher, compared to 72.6% in 2012. This is a decrease of 17% in the last 3 years. National statistics indicated that 83.6% of superintendents are over age 46 (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young and Ellerson, 2010).

The number of superintendents in the 32-40 year age group has increased over past iterations; there are currently 14 who fall into this age category. The youngest superintendent responding to the 2015 survey was 35.

Of the 156 new superintendents, 12.8% intended to retire within the next five years as compared to 22.6% in 2012 and 33.7% in 2009. Of the 195 veteran respondents, 47.2% intend to retire within the same timeframe; this again is a decrease from the last two iterations of the Snapshot.

Just over one-tenth of new superintendents plan to retire within the next five years, as compared to one-third in 2009, and one-fifth in 2012. Slightly less than 50% of veteran superintendents plan to retire within the next five years. Over one-third of all superintendents plan to retire by 2018. It appears that newer superintendents will remain in the superintendency for longer than the traditional “capstone” years of the position (13% plan to retire within the next five years). New superintendents (80.5%), however, continue a trend of taking their first superintendency much later in their careers (between the ages of 41-58 years).

The next two tables illustrate age ranges of superintendents by region and district types, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages 35-40</th>
<th>North Country</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Central/ Southern Tier</th>
<th>Capital Region/ Mid-Hudson</th>
<th>Lower Hudson/ Metro/ Long Island</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 41-49</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
<td>35.30%</td>
<td>34.70%</td>
<td>31.70%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 50-58</td>
<td>46.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
<td>36.70%</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 59-67</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>26.70%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 68-76</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 / Age Ranges by Region
Community Service/Civic Engagement

“In 2010, 63 million Americans volunteered across the country, according to the federal Corporation for National and Community Service” (Kolker, p. 27). It is no surprise that superintendents not only volunteer their time, energy, and contribute through monetary donations, but that this commitment by educational leaders in communities provides a sense of belonging and engagement for the greater good. New to the Snapshot 2015 survey in the previous iteration (2012), 60% of respondents indicated they are an active member of a service or civic organization.

Educational Preparation

Superintendents were surveyed regarding their educational preparation for the superintendency. Women and men were similar in the type of administrative credential earned. Almost 95% of the women surveyed and 93% of men held a School District Administrator (SDA) credential. Only 5.5% of the women and 6.6% of the men held the newer School District Leader (SDL) credential that requires 175 hours of professional development every five years. Forty-three percent of those surveyed received a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS). Thirty-three percent of the respondents hold a Master’s Degree.

Nearly 36% of respondents reported having earned a J.D., Ph.D., or Ed.D. Similar to Snapshot VIII (32%), this represents a slight increase from the previous iteration of this study but is still below the 37.5% of respondents in 2006. Veteran superintendents are more likely to hold an Ed. D. rather than newer superintendents (41.5% vs 27.6%). However, those holding a Ph.D. are more closely matched by percentage: 8.2% for Veteran Superintendents and 7.1% for superintendents with less than five years of experience.

Length of Tenure in the Superintendency

In 2000, 2003, and 2006, some 60% of the respondents reported that they were in their first superintendency. Findings in 2009 and 2012 illustrated that 68% and 69% of respondents were in their first superintendency. In 2015, 69.5% of respondents were in their first superintendency. Not all of these superintendents can be considered inexperienced; some may remain in a single superintendency for an entire career. Only 30 respondents (8.5%) were in year one of their first superintendency, down from 15% in 2009 and 12% in 2012.

Superintendents had an average of 7.6 years of experience in 2015 compared to 7.3 years of experience in both 2009 and 2012 and down from 8.5 years of experience in 2006. In 2015 respondents held an average of 1.4 superintendencies, similar to 2012. Thus, the calculated approximation of average longevity per superintendent is 5.4 years in his/her current position. This is up from 4.9 in 2012 and comparable to 2006 (5.0) and 2003 (5.6). The data for New York Superintendents who responded to the 2015 survey do not support the findings of the Brookings Institution (2014) where it is suggested that “The typical superintendent has been in the job for three to four years” (p. 1); this study was reflective of longevity in Florida and North Carolina.
Interestingly, women constitute 28.5% of respondents while men constitute 71.5%. However, women have made gains in terms of years of experience in the superintendency. When compared to the superintendents with 11 or more years of service, this percentage has increased by 8% over Snapshot VIII (2012).

Nearly 32% of all participants indicated the possibility of retirement by 2018. The vast majority of participants (82.1%) indicated they were veteran superintendents. The remaining 17.9% are superintendents with less than five years of service.

**Career Path to the Superintendency**

Data in the current iteration of the *Snapshot IX* publication reflected the maintenance of the status quo in superintendent preparation for the position. When examining the career path taken by individuals who became superintendent, two main trends emerged. Similar to the trends in the *Snapshot VIII* (2012), individuals who move to a superintendent position tend to be Middle/High School principals (45.0%). The second favored path is one in which individuals gained District Office experience (35.3%) and then moved on to become a superintendent. Individuals moving from the elementary school to superintendent remained flat at 11.1%. Superintendents in New York are nearly four times more likely to enter the superintendency from a secondary school principalship (middle/high) than an elementary one.

*Snapshot VIII* recognized that the path to becoming a superintendent differed for men and women. According to previous data, women tended to move from a central office position while men tended to be in a secondary principalship before becoming superintendent. This trend continues with *Snapshot IX*, which found that 56.4% of women followed the central office track while men tended to follow the principal path (54.7%). These paths together constituted 80.3% of the individuals who became school superintendents.

Although the intent of the survey was to report on the administrative pathway to the superintendency, it is important to note that no statistical relationship exists within the variables; women are not necessarily more likely to become superintendents if they are currently in a central office position. Similarly, men are not more likely to become superintendents if they are middle/high school principals first. Table 6 denotes examples of pathways to the superintendency when analyzed through other factors.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Previous Central Office</th>
<th>Previous Middle/HS Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Suburban (56.6%)</td>
<td>Rural (58.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>1001-2000 (61.3%)</td>
<td>&lt;1000 (51.2%) 1001-2000 (53.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female (56.4%)</td>
<td>Male (54.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Lower Hudson/Metro Long Island (57.1%)</td>
<td>Central/Southern Tier (58.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 / Path to the Superintendency Factor Analysis – Highest Indicators (Most Similar and Similar Combined)

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2 Please note: each of these observations suggests potential trends; however, no statistically significant correlations exist in these examples.
The data from the current study also suggest that individuals wishing to become superintendents may need to leave their current district to do so. The majority of respondents (54.1%) indicated that they moved to a new school district for their first superintendent position. However, this is the lowest response received since this survey question was initially posed to participants in 2000.

A recent study conducted on school-based succession planning initiatives (Ryan, Wells and Dedrick, 2014) found that few succession models existed. Their research indicated that 80 percent of superintendents said there were no programs in their districts to identify individuals aspiring to the superintendency. Yet 39% of the New York State superintendents surveyed indicated that they held a leadership position in the district immediately prior to assuming their current superintendency and 6.3% indicated that they had worked in the district at an earlier time. Twenty-nine percent of all superintendents responded that they strongly agreed or agreed that their district had a succession plan in place, an increase from previous iterations. Thus, districts appeared to be more likely to hire internal candidates than at any time in the last 15 years.

Of superintendents with five years or less experience, 52.6% responded that they had either worked in the district immediately prior to their current position or had worked there at an earlier time in their career, a sharp increase from 2012 (42%) but a return to 2009 levels (51%). Among new superintendents, the previous position included moving from the district office to the superintendency (37.2%) or moving from a middle/high school principalship (43.6%).

Women tended to be promoted internally, by percentage, more than men. According to the most recent study, 41.5% of women and 38.7% men, respectively, were promoted internally. This is a very interesting change from the Snapshot VII (2009) and Snapshot VIII (2012), where men were more likely to be promoted from within than women. The majority of superintendents surveyed (56%) had never held a position in the district as compared to 2012 where 60.1% were hired from outside the district.

This is the third Snapshot publication where it’s been noted that 40% or more of the respondents had previous or immediate experience in the district where they became superintendents. The percentage for this publication (39.9%) also represented the largest promotion of internal candidates since the question was initially asked in 2000. Although internal candidates have increased, current data appears to support a school district trend whereby organizations search outside of their respective organizations for new leadership. The margin between this year’s study and Snapshot VIII (2012) was 5.5%; however, the gap appears to be shrinking when compared to previous Snapshot publications.

An influence to this trend appears to be the result of active recruitment by boards of education to promote internal candidates. When respondents were asked why they wished to enter the superintendency, approximately one-third of the “other” responses indicated that the participant was recruited by the current board either directly or through the outgoing superintendent.

41.5%

41.5% of women and 38.7% men, respectively, were promoted internally. This is a very interesting change from Snapshot VII (2009) and Snapshot VIII (2012).
Further investigation may be warranted to determine why the gap between internal promotion and hiring external candidates is shrinking. *Snapshot III* (1998) highlighted a need for more leaders in New York State and the need to support and promote individuals. Since then, multiple approaches have been employed (for example, succession planning) that may have contributed to the current trend.
Superintendent Diversity

Gender Diversity

There has been a narrowing of the superintendent gender gap since the first *Snapshot of the Superintendency* in 1991 to this most recent publication. In 1991, only 8% of the superintendents were women, as compared to today where there are 30%. Seventy-three percent of those women responding were in their first superintendency.

The number of female superintendents in New York State is consistent with other research conducted across the country in 2008 (AASA) and 2011 (Holland). There has been no progress in increasing the ranks of women in New York State's top district position since 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>11.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>12.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>18.40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>24.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
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</table>

Table 8 / Superintendent Gender

The issue of gender inequities in educational leadership cannot be ignored (Sanchez and Thornton, 2010). After all, women (76.1%) largely outnumber men as classroom teachers (National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2011). According to researchers, there are a number of complexities associated with the lack of increase in women in educational executive officer positions. Glass (2000) analyzed the data from AASA’s, *2000 Study of the American School Superintendency*, and suggested several reasons for why there are fewer female superintendents. According to Glass (2000) women enter education administration too late. Glass (2000) contends “women spend more years teaching in the classroom than men and often take several years out for child-rearing that by the time they reach the central office they really do not want a new career since retirement is only a few years away.” Stereotypical frames of effective leadership have worked against aspiring female leaders in public schools (Sanchez and Thornton, 2010); school boards may be reluctant to hire women superintendents (Glass, 2000); and there appears to be a great need for an equitable selection process for those seeking the superintendency (Brunner and Kim, 2010).

With the exception of the North Country, women tend to have proportional representation in regions of the State. There were zero women who responded to the survey as serving as a District Superintendent (BOCES) and one respondent who serves a large city; these data were therefore not included in the report. The
representation of women by region has shifted to a larger proportion in the Capital/Mid-Hudson Region from Western New York since 2012. Women are now more likely to work in suburban school districts as opposed to rural districts, which was the largest portion in previous years (Figure 3).

Approximately eighty-seven percent of the superintendents were married, identical to 2012. The number of single (never married, widowed, divorced or separated) female superintendents was higher than their male counterparts (19.2% to 7.9%). Almost 14 percent fewer women are married than men (77.7% vs. 91.4%). It appears that women superintendents are more likely to be divorced than male superintendents. There has been a slight increase in the number of women identifying as divorced/separated; there has also been a slight decrease in men identifying as divorced/separated since the Snapshot VIII (2012) study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small City</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 / Gender Differences by Type of District

Table 9 / Personal Differences between the Genders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average current age (years)</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age at first superintendency (years)</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # of years as superintendent</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>96.40%</td>
<td>98.10%</td>
<td>93.60%</td>
<td>96.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with doctorate</td>
<td>36.60%</td>
<td>33.50%</td>
<td>36.20%</td>
<td>34.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First superintendency</td>
<td>74.00%</td>
<td>64.50%</td>
<td>63.80%</td>
<td>67.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position in district immediately prior</td>
<td>38.20%</td>
<td>40.30%</td>
<td>41.50%</td>
<td>58.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2015, about 39.3% reported having school-aged children (slightly higher than in 2012), supporting a trend over the last three iterations that an increasing number of active superintendents have school-aged children. Of those with school-aged children, slightly less than half (46.4%) reported that their children attend the schools for which they are responsible as superintendent. Women continue to be much less likely to have school-aged children than men (15% vs. 50%).

The Snapshot VII survey introduced the status of “partnered.” This term was not meant to distinguish between same sex and different sex couples. Rather, it was intended to provide an option for people who are not single, but not married. Four respondents indicated this status.

More men began their first superintendency at a younger age than women, and this remains true for those in the 32-40 age group. A little over 5% of men fell into this age group while there was only one female in this group. Twenty percent of women were under age 50 while 38% of men were under 50. Almost 47% of women were in the 50-58 age group vs. 37% of men. As reported earlier, women tended to enter the superintendency at a later age. This is due to a number of factors despite the large number of female educators and the number of certified and qualified women aspiring to the superintendency (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011).

More work needs to be accomplished if substantial increases in equitable gender leadership are to occur in New York State. Snapshot IX will provide recommendations for further thought and study in Chapter 7.
Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Nationwide, there are more female superintendents today than there have been in the past decade. The largest increase has been white women in urban districts, which rose from 0% to 9% from 1999 to 2010. However, this increase was accompanied by a slight decrease in the percentage of Hispanic and black female superintendents (Pascopella, 2011).

While the percentage of women in the superintendency rose between 1991 and 2012 (remaining the same in 2015) there continues to be little increase in the racial or ethnic diversity of the superintendents in New York State. In the current survey, 95% of all respondents reported that they were white. African-Americans accounted for 2.0% of respondents (3.2% women vs. 1.2% men) and Hispanics accounted for 2.0% (3.2% women and 0.4% men). There was an increase from 0.4% of respondents (or one individual) in 2015. Based on the 2015 survey responses, there appears to be a slight change and greater ethnic diversity in the superintendency in New York State as compared to the previous iterations of the Snapshot.

Perspectives on Diversity

Responding to the question of whether gender, race and/or ethnicity had influenced career opportunities, approximately 34% of the respondents noted that this status had an influence, down from 68% in 2003, 47% in 2006 and 47.8% in 2012. Fifty-four percent responded that gender, race, and/or ethnicity had no influence on his/her career opportunities.

Detailed analysis of data by race/ethnicity remains challenging because of the very small number (17) of respondents reporting ethnicity other than white. Although records for The Council are maintained to represent 100% of the members, only about 50% of members actually reported their race/ethnicity to The Council. It appears there may be a discrepancy between the actual numbers of superintendents with a race/ethnicity other than white as compared to the actual numbers reported. As the superintendency continues to diversify and the population as a whole in New York becomes more diverse, it will be essential to continue with research that can develop meaningful insights from small populations of superintendents.
Recruiting & Sustaining Growth of School Leaders

The Snapshot iterations have consistently reported on the recruitment and professional development of school superintendents.

Recruitment of School Leaders

The pool of qualified candidates for the superintendency continues to be limited by a number of factors. This section examines the results of those factors and prospects for recruiting top leaders in public education.

The large numbers of retirements, increased expectations, and mounting political pressure continue to limit the talent pool for school superintendents (Kamler, 2009, p.115). In fact, these factors have impacted recruitment of educational leaders since Snapshot VIII (2012). The actions of our state government including the Governor, the legislature, and the Board of Regents have served to limit local control of the school districts and, therefore, the superintendent’s ability to meet expectations.

The percentage of superintendents expecting to retire in the next three years is 63%. This number has not increased since the last Snapshot (2012), 63% versus 62%, and may suggest that, although there may be barriers to individuals considering the superintendency, those same factors are not compelling superintendents to leave any earlier. Because of this continued turnover in leadership and the increasingly complex and demanding role of the superintendent, Snapshot IX attempted to determine what drives an individual to apply and seek the office of superintendent of schools. It also attempted to identify those factors that had superintendents hesitate before applying for their first superintendency.

Attractors and Barriers

Confidence and Motivation

The rank order of “confidence builders” leading to the decision to seek a superintendent’s position was similar to Snapshot VIII (2012). The percentages indicated the sum of the percents of respondents who ranked that response first or second. Thirty-one respondents suggested other factors that gave them the confidence to apply. Ten of these respondents indicated that they applied because of encouragement from the Board of Education.
Table 12 / Confidence Builders to Become a Superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentives</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Having a greater influence on the lives of children (45.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A desire to take on greater challenges (35.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A new set of experiences (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increased compensation (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prestige or increased status (3.1% - this represents one choice on the survey)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other (4.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s interesting to note that “having a greater influence on the lives of children” is ranked as the most important incentive for administrators to seek a superintendent’s position. Almost 81% of those women surveyed indicated this incentive as their #1 or #2 ranking in this category. The incentive most noted as the number one ranking since Snapshot V (2004) has been “a desire to take on greater challenges.” It should also be noted that the factor of increased compensation is fourth on the list, suggesting that professional satisfaction is quite a bit more important than any increase in salary and benefits.

The above findings may have significance for school boards searching to fill impending superintendent vacancies. The data indicated that while increased salaries may receive some attention from applicants, the strong personal motivations attracting new administrators to the superintendency included the potential to have a greater influence on children and to undertake greater challenges and responsibilities.

Barriers

While there are a number of factors encouraging administrators to apply for superintendent positions, there are also several issues that discourage such career moves. The leading factors that serve as barriers are much the same as three years ago. When the factors are ranked by summing the percent of respondents who chose that factor as first or second, the scope of the role (54%) was the leading cause of hesitancy. The loss of job security (49%) was second with having school aged children (23.6%) being the third most cited reason (Table 13). A little over 39% of women reported scope of the role as their number one factor for hesitating in applying for a superintendency. There were differences for two of the hesitancy factors between those with children and those without children (Table 14). Cost of living was ranked fifth by 31% of those without children and 52% by those with children.
Chapter 3  Recruiting & Sustaining Growth of School Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the role</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of job security</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age children</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 / Hesitancy Factor to Considering the Superintendency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rank #1 or #2 No Children</th>
<th>Rank #1 or #2 With Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the Role</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having School Age Children</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 / Having Children as Barrier to Considering the Superintendency

Residency

Current superintendents were surveyed regarding residency. Twenty-five percent of those responding were required by contract to live in the school district while 75 percent were not. This can be a contentious issue for school boards as they attempt to balance getting the most qualified superintendent with community pressure to have the superintendent as a taxpayer in the district. Ten percent of superintendents maintained a residence separate from their spouse and children for more than six months after accepting the superintendent position. Thirty-nine percent of the superintendents responded that they had school-age children. For about half of these superintendents, their children attended school in the district. The other half attended other public schools. The bottom line is that superintendents overwhelmingly enrolled their own children in public schools.

The Search Process

Invitations to Apply

According to the survey data, the most prevalent way superintendents became aware of and applied for their current position was via posted advertisements (33%). While these results generally mirrored those of 2012 there was one interesting change. The category “invitation from Board members” increased from 23% in Snapshot VIII (2012) to 29% in Snapshot IX (2015).
Internal Candidates

The increase in the percent of superintendents that applied because of a personal invitation from a board member seems to be reflected in the increase of internal candidates from 34% in Snapshot VIII to 38% in Snapshot IX. The percentage of those previously employed in the district at an earlier time in their career remained at 6%. This may be reflective of the limited pool of candidates and a greater willingness by the school board to look for an internal candidate.

Method of the Search

The search process used most by Boards of Education continued to be the District Superintendent of a BOCES (50%). In addition to having or having had a relationship with the District Superintendent, Boards are able to avoid costly consultants. Oftentimes, a District Superintendent can spend more time with the recruitment process than a consultant who will limit their involvement to the time specified in the contract.

The second most used method is having the Board do the search itself (24%). The third most used method is using a New York State consultant (15%). There are relatively few such entities doing that work currently as compared to the past, when many consultants were attached to university educational administration programs. National consultants were only used by 6% of the districts.

It seems that after searching for a superintendent, boards do not consider incentives to keep a good superintendent in their district. Only 29% of districts provided contractual incentives such as a longevity bonus or health insurance after retirement. However, when superintendents were asked about health insurance benefits after retirement, 80% indicated that they would have this benefit.

Accessing the Superintendency

Influence of Gender and Ethnicity on Career Opportunities

This survey illustrated that superintendents responded there were significant gains made in accessing the superintendency (94%). This was an increase of 3% since Snapshot VIII (2012). Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that women have made gains accessing the superintendency. Although the percentage of women in the superintendency in New York State has remained stable (30%) over the past few iterations of The Snapshot, there has been an increase in female superintendent appointments in various regions in the state. It is also believed by a large percentage of superintendents surveyed that race/ethnic minorities have also made gains (61%).

Pathway for Non-Educators

Policy-makers responding to the superintendent shortage over the past dozen years have considered providing avenues and certification pathways for non-educators to enter this executive position. Given their direct knowledge of the leadership, management and educational demands of the position, superintendents were asked whether they favor this approach. Seventy-one percent of the superintendents disagreed with creating alternative paths for non-educators to access the superintendency. Of this majority, 40% strongly disagreed with this proposal, up 5% from Snapshot VIII (2012). Only 16% of the superintendents surveyed believed non-educators should have access to the top educator’s position.
Time, Stress and Job Satisfaction

The pressures of the superintendents’ roles are well known. Previous snapshot surveys have predictably revealed the effects of these pressures on superintendents. Overall, 65% of respondents considered the job to be more stressful than expected. This is somewhat less than the 75% who saw it as more stressful than expected in 2012, but more than 56% in 2009.

The percentage of respondents who agreed they share with others why they find their job satisfying (83%) rose slightly from 2012 (81%). Some context for this information might be found in recent studies of job satisfaction. A study reported in the Wall Street Journal\(^3\) cited that fewer than half of U.S. workers were satisfied with their jobs. The study did not disaggregate different jobs. Within the education job sector, in a study reported by the Atlantic Monthly\(^4\), the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher revealed that only 39% of U.S. teachers described themselves as very satisfied with their jobs. Despite O’Connell’s (2000) finding that promising principals and central office administrators do not aspire to the superintendency due to the perception that the demands of the job will negatively impact on their family and personal lives, the AASA’s 2010 Decennial Study showed that “The level of job satisfaction expressed by superintendents remains high. A high percentage would again seek to occupy the same position if given the chance to re-live their careers” (Kowalski, 2010).

While the purpose of the Snapshot was not to study these different perspectives, there is an apparent disparity between what prospective superintendents believe their job satisfaction might be as a superintendent and what their satisfaction actually is once a superintendent begins in that role. Further, job satisfaction in the superintendency seems to compare favorably with other work roles overall in the U.S. and seems to exceed the satisfaction of some other roles within the education sector. It is recommended these issues be studied more fully in order to understand these trends.

Moreover, the fact that more than 63% of superintendents plan to retire after 2018 suggests that less superintendents are approaching the role as a capstone career experience in the last few years prior to retirement. Instead, more are entering the superintendency at a younger age. This would seem like a positive trend – in that perceptions of the role’s stresses may not be an insurmountable barrier to pathways to the superintendency.

It can be reasoned that pressures facing current superintendents such as the intensification of reform debates and their effects on local leadership, the Big Squeeze (Sipple, 2013) of reduced state aid, the tax levy cap, and unfunded mandates (external forces requiring internal or local compensation) have contributed to job stress facing our superintendents. In addition, social media could also be contributing to increased pressure and stress. Forty-eight percent of the respondents recognized social media as improving communication for a superintendent (an increase from prior years); it was also seen by 61% of respondents as allowing the rapid spread of unsubstantiated rumors.

The survey illustrated that, before a superintendent entered the superintendency, the sheer scope of the role and loss of job security were the most significant factors creating one’s hesitancy to enter into the role, especially for women.

\(^3\) (http://blogs.wsj.com/atwork/2014/06/18/u-s-workers-cant-get-no-job-satisfaction/)

\(^4\) (http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/teacher-job-satisfaction-hits-25-year-low/273383/)
Personal Time

Members were asked how they spent their leisure or personal time. The average of the responses to the survey indicated that superintendents spent about 44% of their personal time with their families. An American Association of School Administrators survey (AASA, 2008) found the second most important disincentive for considering the superintendency as a career was “family sacrifices” (Sutton et al., 2008). Snapshot IX found that spousal considerations ranked first or second for 35% of married superintendents as a factor that made them hesitant about becoming a superintendent. For 50% of superintendents, having school age children ranked first or second as a factor which influenced their hesitancy to become a superintendent.

Further, superintendents used about 15% of their time for recreation and wellness activities and 17% for community service/volunteering efforts or for travel. Finally, they used an average of 20% of their personal time for job related activities and professional growth.

Job Satisfaction

Sixty-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they “like the superintendency well enough to encourage a son or daughter showing the aptitude to pursue it.” This compares to 55% in 2012. Men and women responded similarly to this item (65.6% and 59.5% respectively). The percentage of respondents who agreed that they share with others why they find their job satisfying (83%) rose slightly from 2012 (81%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Finds job more stressful than expected</th>
<th>Would encourage son or daughter to be superintendent</th>
<th>Shares with others why job is satisfying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 / Indicators of Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction data tell a story suggesting that perceptions of the stresses and quality of life in the role of the superintendency may not line up with the actual experience of superintendents on the job. Although the stresses of the superintendency may be high and seem to exceed the initial expectations of many of those serving in the role, job satisfaction also seems high when compared with the average U.S. occupation or within other roles in the education sector. Family and personal concerns, in combination with decreased benefit packages and job security, rank among the “hesitancy to apply” factors.

With respect to job satisfaction, there is a high correlation between efficacy, skill and satisfaction in any role. The Council is committed to developing the skills of superintendents throughout New York State and has targeted professional development programs/opportunities for both new and veteran superintendents. In addition to the Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute, The Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc. (LEAF) offers several opportunities for professional growth and development.
Superintendents’ Learning Needs

*Public Education Matters* (NYS Council of School Superintendents, 2014) stated, “superintendents make an enduring life-long professional commitment to every child’s learning.” In much the same way, the commitment to their own life-long learning remains ever so important. This has never been truer than in recent years as the focus on public education and student achievement performance has been so prominent. The results of *Snapshot IX* (2015) indicated that 63% of the current superintendents intend to work beyond the year 2018. One can only imagine the challenges that lie ahead. This places a greater emphasis on the need to continually find appropriate ways to nourish the learning needs of these individuals.

When questioned about their level of preparation for the superintendent position, respondents felt most prepared in the area of Curriculum and Instruction with Business and Political Advocacy receiving the lowest ratings. Of significance is the perceived growth from preparation to current skill level in all five areas. As the charts below demonstrate, veteran superintendents reported the greatest increases in skill level. However, novices and veterans have reported gains in their skill level during their tenure as superintendents.

Sixty-seven percent of all respondents characterized their comfort level as very comfortable (skilled) or extremely comfortable (expert) as superintendents. This level of comfort is nuanced when broken down into specific skill areas, especially when comparing new (0-5 years) and veteran (6+ years) superintendents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/Finance</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Relations</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Advocacy</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 / Preparatory Skill Levels between New and Veteran Superintendents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Skill Level</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/Finance</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Relations</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Advocacy</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 / Current Skill Levels between New and Veteran Superintendents

Consistent with the last three iterations of the *Snapshot*, superintendents reported that of the five skill areas, Board Relations rated as their highest perceived skill level. This is true for both novice and veterans and is of statistical significance. However, there remains a need for continual learning and professional development in all of these primary areas as indicated by the self-assessment of current skill level.

Consistent with *Snapshot VIII* (2012), only 1% of respondents stated that higher education study was the form of professional growth that they used most often. Perhaps this is connected to the fact that only 18% of
Superintendents reported at least some tuition benefit as a contractual obligation. More concerning is the fact that there is a reported reduction from 2012 on the number of hours per month superintendents claim to spend on “informal professional development.” *Snapshot VIII* indicated that 49% spent ten or more hours per month on activities such as professional readings and collegial discussion; in 2015, that number decreased to 40%.

Only 11% of the respondents spent ten or more hours on conferences and workshops periodically at the local level. Fifty-nine percent spent nine or less hours on informal professional development and a vast majority (89%) spent nine or less hours per month attending conferences or workshops. The greatest barrier to professional development appeared to be the time spent out of the district as well as finding the work time or personal time to pursue learning needs. The distance required to attend professional development was ranked third in the list of impediments. This is an issue worth further exploration as it begs the question of how superintendents prioritize their own growth and development. Time seems to be the issue; lack of offerings, funds or support were ranked the lowest as barriers to professional development. The time to pursue professional development opportunities continues to be the greatest obstacle to superintendents’ learning. Finding ways to combat this perception or reality appears to be the greatest challenge and one that The Council can address.

Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that they used local professional development workshops while only 17% used state provided workshops. Thirty percent of superintendents indicated that they use the State and National Conferences for some form of professional development. It is hoped that this percentage will grow as LEAF continues to focus on superintendents’ learning needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit-bearing courses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State professional development workshops</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local professional development workshops</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and national conferences</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 / Preferred Form of Professional Development

Superintendents reported that they would find workshops on systemic change and improvement in school districts most valuable (43%). Similarly, 38% of respondents indicated that strategies for superintendent success and best practices would be most helpful to them. Consideration should be given to these topics when future conferences and workshops are being planned.

Overall, eighty-eight percent of superintendents reported that they felt a high degree of satisfaction with the current level of professional development being offered. It is possible that this continues to be connected to the high percentage (98%) of superintendents who have reported that they were able to identify someone who served as a mentor to them in their career as a superintendent. In addition, 96% of the Superintendents identified their relationships with colleagues as supportive and very collegial. This demonstrates the importance of finding one's “tribe” or as author and entrepreneur Seth Godin (2008) indicated, “a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader and connected to an idea. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate.” The Council can serve as a funnel for this level of collaboration and collegiality, especially considering that 99 percent of school districts pay for Council dues and its superintendents are active members.
Role of the Superintendent

Superintendents reported that 71% of the boards view the primary role of the superintendent to be day-to-day management and administration. This compares to 61% reported three years ago. The next highest reported primary role was curriculum.

Superintendents also reported that they split their time during the week performing multiple roles. Public relations and personnel issues took about one-third of the time of superintendents (Table 19). The time spent on teacher evaluation dropped by 5% from 2012. The top issues that required more time in 2011-2014 than in 2008-2011 were curriculum and data driven instruction (Table 20).
Superintendents were asked how their role as superintendent had changed over the last three years and what their two most important functions were for improving student achievement as open-ended questions. The data analysis of each of these open-ended responses was completed by two raters. For each question, analysts read the participants’ responses and then generated a key of codes that best reflected the content of the responses. Each response was read and assigned a category code. As new themes emerged, additional category codes were added or categories were modified. The coding was entered into a database.

Superintendents were asked, “How has your role as superintendent changed over the last three years?” Based on the coding, 30% of superintendents indicated that the most change in the role of the superintendent was with compliance issues such as the Regents Reform Agenda, Race to the Top (RTTT) federal funding grants, and the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). The next two changes were in community relations/public relations (17%) and political advocacy (10%). Other changes were in board development/finance (8%) and personnel/labor (7%).

When New York State superintendents were asked about the function of their role for improving student achievement, the five top categories (based on coding) of responses were professional development for staff (17%); supervision and evaluation (12%); providing data driven instruction (12%); setting a vision, goals, and educational plans (10%); and guiding curriculum and instruction (10%).
According to recent literature on the connection between school board governance and student achievement (Johnson, 2012), the key board governance principles associated with student achievement seemed to be:

- Creating a vision – students are capable of learning and teachers have the capacity to impact student learning;
- Using data – data is used to establish goals and accountability;
- Setting goals – reasonable goals (not strategies) for student achievement are established;
- Monitoring progress and taking corrective action – use of multiple sources of information: school visits, discussions with principals and teachers, data reports, conversations with parents and students;
- Creating awareness and urgency – the board actively advocates for change;
- Engaging the community – establish open dialogue;
- Connecting with district leadership – board members connect with central office administrators, principals, and teacher leaders;
- Creating climate – focus on the needs of people;
- Providing staff development – provide professional development focused on improving curriculum and instruction;
- Developing policy with a focus on student learning – link policy and reform to student achievement, curricular frameworks, and assessments;
- Demonstrating commitment – district resources support district goals and goals are supported for multiple years;
- Practicing unified governance – the board and superintendent have complimentary roles and work collaboratively;

**Board of Education Characteristics**

The percent of Board of Education members in New York State that have served four years or less has dropped from 22% to 18%. Thirty-eight percent served four to six years, 23% served seven to nine years, and 20% served ten or more years.

Typically, boards meet twice per month (67%) with meetings lasting three hours or less (86%), including the executive session. Twenty-three percent of boards have only the mandated audit committee. Other boards have four or more committees (47%).

Forty-five percent of the boards in New York State meet once per year with the superintendent for professional development opportunities. Twenty-one percent never meet for professional development and 27% meet twice per year. Seventy-one percent of the superintendents thought that legislation is needed to expand board member training to include topics other than finance. The most common suggestions (based on coding) were for training regarding the roles of board members and the superintendent (31%) and governance procedures (26%). Other topics included community relations/communication/relationships; academic reform; education law/NYSED regulations; ethics/confidentiality; and personnel/evaluation.

The four top reasons why the board hired the superintendent were reported to be experience in the same district (28%); experience in other districts (25%); personal leadership style (24%); and ability to lead change (16%). Fifty-seven percent of superintendents thought that the annual evaluation of their performance by the Board of Education improved their job performance. This compares to 53% in Snapshot VIII (2012).

Boards are considering ways to reduce expenditures. Seventy percent of boards are considering various forms of consolidation (Table 21). Functional consolidation is the most common form being considered. Fifty-eight percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “my district has curtailed spending in a way that has diminished our capacity to help all students reach high standards.”
Table 21 / Consolidation Consideration Associated with Effective Boards

**Effective Boards**

The comparison of ineffective boards to effective boards combines the numbers for somewhat ineffective with ineffective and highly effective with somewhat effective. Out of 370 superintendents who responded to this question, 90% rated their boards as highly effective or effective (Table 22). Thirty-one (9%) rated their boards as ineffective or highly ineffective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consolidation Consideration</th>
<th>Effective Boards</th>
<th>Ineffective Boards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional (e.g., AP, IB, courses, personnel)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic (e.g., athletics, extracurricular)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional (e.g., business office, transportation, internal)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical (e.g. merger, annexation, regional)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal building closure</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22 / Superintendents’ Evaluation of their Boards

When superintendents were asked about the adherence of their boards to the New York State School Boards Association Code of Conduct (2015), there were distinctive differences between effective and ineffective boards. Between the last iteration of the *Snapshot* (2012) and the current *Snapshot* (2015), ineffective boards still struggle with understanding that their primary function is to establish policy, keeping matters confidential, and basing decisions on the facts (Table 22). Since *Snapshot VIII* (2012), there have been some changes in following the Code of Conduct by ineffective boards. The criteria, “Board members base decisions upon available facts in each situation” went up by 6%. The criteria, “Board members keep matters confidential” went down by 5%. The criteria, “Board members welcome and encourage active involvement by stakeholders” has gone up by 17%. The criteria, “Board members uphold the majority decision” has gone down by 17%.
Table 23 / Boards and NYSSBA Code of Conduct

Boards rated as effective had different reasons for hiring the superintendent than boards rated as ineffective. Effective boards were more likely to base the decision to hire the superintendent on the superintendent being from within the district (29%). Ineffective boards were more interested in hiring a superintendent from outside of the district (36%) that would lead change (25%). Thirty-one percent of effective boards have a succession plan compared to 7% of ineffective boards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Boards</th>
<th>Ineffective Boards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience in the same district</td>
<td>Experience in another district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in another district</td>
<td>Ability to lead change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership style</td>
<td>Experience in the same district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to lead change</td>
<td>Leadership style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24 / Top Board Reasons for Hiring the Superintendent

Boards rated as effective viewed the primary role of the superintendent differently than boards rated as ineffective. Effective boards viewed the primary role of the superintendent as day-to-day management (73%) or curriculum and instruction (12%). Only 50% of ineffective boards saw the primary role of the superintendent as day-to-day management and did not see curriculum and instruction as a primary role of the superintendent. Seventy-seven percent of effective boards were focused on closing the achievement gap but only 32% of ineffective boards.

Thirty-three percent of superintendents who rated their board as effective thought that board meetings were taking more time this year than last year. However, 68% of superintendents who rated their boards as ineffective thought that board meetings were taking more time this year than last year.
Superintendents who rated their boards as effective were more satisfied with their job (85%) than superintendents who rated their boards as ineffective (64%). For superintendents who rated their boards as effective, 61% thought that an annual evaluation improves their performance. This compares to 18% for superintendents whose boards were rated ineffective.

There are operational differences between boards identified as effective by their superintendents and those identified as ineffective by their superintendents. For 53% of effective boards, the typical member serves less than seven years. For 89% of ineffective boards, the usual longevity of board members is less than seven years. Forty percent of the board meetings of effective boards were two hours or less but this dropped to 21% for ineffective boards. Ninety percent of the superintendents who rated their boards as effective thought that the board supported them more than 80% of the time, as compared to 61% who rated their boards as ineffective.

There are also operational similarities between boards identified as effective by their superintendents and those identified as ineffective. Sixty-seven percent of the effective boards and 64% of the ineffective boards met twice per month. Forty-six percent of all boards, whether effective or ineffective, have four or more committees. About a third of both effective and ineffective boards have two or more retreats. However, 19% of the effective boards do not meet for retreats at all as compared to 36% of ineffective boards.

Sixty-eight percent of superintendents with effective boards strongly agreed/agreed with the statement that legislation is needed to expand board members’ training. Eighty-six percent of superintendents with ineffective boards thought that this legislation is needed. The suggested topics were coded into categories. For superintendents with ineffective boards, 50% of the responses were related to board/superintendent roles. For superintendents with effective boards, this was 33% of the suggested responses. The second most suggested response was governance procedures (26% for effective boards and 33% for ineffective boards). The topics of academic reform; community relations/communication/relationships; and personnel/evaluation were only suggested by superintendents who identified their boards as effective. Education law/NYSED regulations and ethics/confidentiality were suggested by both groups of superintendents.

Community

Superintendents with effective boards viewed their communities differently than superintendents with ineffective boards. Ninety-four percent of effective boards were considered to reflect the feelings and attitudes of their community, but only 36% of ineffective boards reflected the same. For 95% of the superintendents who thought their boards were effective, they also thought that the community placed a high value on good public schools. Only 68% of the superintendents who thought their boards were ineffective, thought that their community placed a high value on good public schools. For boards rated as effective, 91% of the communities had been made aware of the Regents Reform Agenda by the superintendent and the board. For boards rated as ineffective, 72% of the communities had been made aware of the Regents Reform Agenda. For superintendents who rated the board as effective, 49% thought that the importance the community places on improving student achievement had remained the same. This was 61% if the board was rated as ineffective. If the board was considered effective, then 39% of the superintendents thought that the importance had increased.

Professional Development

Professional development is not only important for the Board of Education. Superintendents also need professional development. There was a relationship between superintendents identifying their boards as effective and their professional development. Ninety-one percent of superintendents with effective boards could identify a mentor. Seventy-eight percent of
superintendents with ineffective boards could identify a mentor. Seventy-three percent of superintendents with effective boards had very supportive, collegial relationships with colleagues (50% for superintendents with ineffective boards).

Eighty-seven percent of superintendents thought that their professional development was adequate or more than adequate. Seventy-five percent of superintendents spent four or more hours on informal professional development monthly. Forty-five percent of superintendents spent one to three hours per month on formal professional development with 18% spending less than an hour. Forty-seven percent of superintendents attended local professional development workshops for their formal professional development. An additional 47% attended state and/or national conferences or professional development workshops. Forty-three percent of superintendents would find professional development on systemic change and improvement in school districts valuable; 38% would find professional development on best practices and strategies for superintendent success valuable; and 17% would like professional development on critical issues affecting daily decisions.

Barriers to participation in professional development included time out of the district (65%), lack of good professional development offerings (27%); lack of time (22%); lack of funds (17%); lack of board support (18%); and distance required for participation (10%).
Superintendent contracts differ from other school personnel contracts in that they are directly negotiated with a local board of education. While many items of Education Law and job responsibilities are included in superintendent contracts, much of the contract details the compensation, benefits, evaluation procedures; leaves of absence (including sick, personal, and vacation leave); reimbursement of professional expenses; and professional development for superintendents. Contracts tend to differ because each is prepared individually between the district and the superintendent. The Council continues to provide support to superintendents with negotiation of contracts and providing a model contract for school board and superintendents to follow (The Council’s Model Contract, 2012).

A contract is a binding document, requiring both parties to understand and abide to the agreement. The United States Constitution considers the superintendent’s contract as property, affording the superintendent rights to the full compensation package. These rights are maintained in the event that a board of education wishes to end a contract prematurely. Since a superintendent’s contract is prepared individually between the district and the superintendent, all contracts may vary. When agreed upon mutually, the contract can also be used to successfully articulate the district goals for the board of education and superintendent as well as reminding each party of their own roles and responsibilities.

### Terms of Employment

In common, union free, central high school and central school districts, the initial term of an employment contract for a superintendent continues to range from three to five years. Contracts with three and five-year duration remain the most common. In all city school districts, other than Buffalo and Rochester, the board of education may, by resolution, set forth a term of employment not to exceed five years and then enter into a contractual agreement for the other terms and conditions of employment.

- **1/3**
  - Over one-third of all superintendents plan to retire by 2018.

- **3 & 5**
  - Contracts with three and five year duration remain the most common.

Benefits tend to vary by region, affecting compensation, leave, and termination clauses. Additionally, more senior superintendents appear to have better benefit packages than new superintendents. These may also be driven by regional differences often found in local teacher contracts that account for cost of living differences found throughout New York State.
Three and five year terms for a contract remain the most popular contract lengths for superintendents as indicated by 84% of respondents. The distribution of the contracts was nearly even with almost 42% of superintendents indicating that their contract was a three year term and almost 42% a five year term. This was similar to the previous study (2012) where approximately 83% of survey respondents indicated they have a three or five year contract.

A continuing trend in contract language included the clause that a superintendent may have early termination of his/her contract for “just cause.” Eighty percent of responding superintendents had this clause in their contract. This figure was similar to the past three Snapshot studies. This was an increase from 58.5% over 12 years ago.

Given the current rate of retirement for experienced superintendents, the question of providing an incentive to stay for a minimum number of years was included in this survey. In 2015, districts desiring stable leadership (29%) included some type of longevity incentive. Currently, 29% of survey respondents reported a combination of longevity bonus, health insurance post-employment, or a combination of both as incentive. This is over twice the amount reported in 2004 (13.3%) and represents a three percent increase from 2012 (26%).

**Just Cause**

80% of responding superintendents had this clause in their contract. This was an increase from 58.5% twelve years ago.
Benefits
Superintendent contracts often provide for some form of non-salary benefits such as vacation time, sick time, medical insurance, and life insurance. Superintendents’ benefits must be specifically enumerated as state law prevents superintendents from tying benefits to collectively bargained contracts in the district to avoid the potential of a conflict of interest. Professional reimbursements for expenses, such as transportation and conference attendance, are also usually clearly defined in superintendent contracts and have come under increased scrutiny by auditors in recent years.

Vacation and Other Leave
Sixty-two percent of superintendents received 21 or more days of vacation per year with another 33% percent allotted 16-20 days or more. Veterans are typically permitted to earn more vacation than newer superintendents. Considering the need for wellness and a healthy lifestyle, it is important to note that few superintendents’ report using all of their entitled vacation time. This is of significant consequence when 65% of all superintendents reported that they considered the job to be more stressful than expected.

Sick time and personal days are commonly included in superintendent contracts. Sixty-one percent of responding superintendents received at least 11-15 sick days, with almost 26% receiving 16-20 days (up 4% from Snapshot VIII). In addition, 51% reported the ability to accumulate over 200 days/year, followed by another 34% able to accumulate 151-200.

Personal day provisions remain consistent with Snapshot studies since 1991. Forty eight percent of contracts allow for three personal days per year while another 39% provide for four to six personal days per year.
Insurance

Health insurance remains the most common contractual benefit. Twelve percent of respondents reported that individual coverage is paid for entirely by the school district; this is down from 14% in our previous study. In total, 33% indicated that the district paid at least nine-tenths of the premium. This was a decrease of almost 30% from 2009. Overall, nearly three quarters of the superintendents are covered at the 80-100% levels.

Health benefits at retirement are now covered for 46% of superintendents and spouse; 21% at a partial rate for the superintendent and spouse, and 12% for the superintendent alone. Twenty percent currently do not have health insurance coverage in retirement. Approximately 12% of superintendents benefit from full individual health care premium coverage and 8% receive full coverage for family health premiums. Twenty five percent of individual and 23% of family dental insurance are fully paid by the district. A noticeable trend is that superintendents are contributing more to medical insurance premiums whether it is health or dental. Perhaps one of the major reasons why superintendents are contributing more to their medical insurances is its rising costs which has resulted in higher co-pays and superintendent premium contributions.

Similar decreases in life insurance policy are also found in this study. Approximately 43% of superintendents surveyed have a term life insurance policy and 14% have a whole life insurance policy, fully paid for by the district.

Other insurance or tax shelter benefits also appear in superintendent contracts. Common benefits included disability insurance (44%) and a district contributing to a tax-sheltered annuity on behalf of a superintendent (38%).

Support for Professional Development

On-going professional development remains a top priority for both superintendents and boards of education. Nearly all (99%) fully pay professional dues for The Council and a little less than two-thirds (65%) pay for AASA dues. In addition, 94% of superintendents have their attendance at The Council’s conferences fully reimbursed. This figure drops to 63% for AASA conferences. The number of changes that have occurred in education in recent years underscores the need for superintendents to participate in professional associations which are on the forefront of providing professional development to practitioners. Ninety-three percent reported that there is no incentive in their contract connected to meeting goals and/or objectives and 82% do not have tuition reimbursement for graduate study.

Reimbursement for Travel Expenses

Most school districts comprise multiple schools spread over the district. Accordingly, most districts offer some form of reimbursement for travel expenses. District cars have become less prevalent over the last decade (15%) while mileage (53%) and lump sum reimbursement (15%) have remained steady.
The Snapshot IX survey allowed for the projection of turn-over, regions most affected by retirement, public policy questions, and information regarding what superintendents plan to do once retired. The results of these responses were very important in terms of the need for replacements for those retiring superintendents. The retirement projections from earlier versions of the Snapshot proved to be accurate; high turn-over rates due to retirement occurred for a number of years.

Analysis

The number of respondents in Tier IV of the New York State Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) had jumped to a little over 74% in 2015 from 59% in 2012. A little over four percent of the respondents remained in Tier 1. About one-fourth of the superintendents (27.4%) were over 59 years-of-age. Out of the 79 respondents who were between 59 and 67 years of age, 38% are in Tier IV and 2.5% are in Tier VI. Three-quarters of all the superintendents responding were in Tier IV (74.6%). Respondents between the ages of 68 and 76 (15) were in Tier I through Tier IV with 60% in Tier I. Sixty-three percent of superintendents planned to work beyond 2018. In 2012, 60% planned to retire beyond 2016.

Turnover may be a greater problem downstate than upstate. In the Lower Hudson/Long Island region, 50.7% of the superintendents were over the age of 59. This compared to a low of 12% in the North Country region, 31.7% in the Capital/Mid-Hudson region, 18.1% in the Central/Southern Tier region, and 21.2% in the Western region. Two hundred sixty-two of the respondents were in Tier IV. More of the respondents in Tiers I, II, and III were in the Lower Hudson/ Metro Long Island Region.

Survey data indicated that age is a primary factor when considering retirement from the profession. Sixty-eight percent of all respondents ages 59 to 67 (79) plan to leave on or before 2018. Out of the 15 respondents over the age of 67, 11 plan to leave before 2019.

Although only 18% indicated that they received health insurance in their contract as an incentive to stay, 80% actually do have health insurance upon retirement. Out of the 69 respondents who said that they would not receive health insurance upon retirement, 19 of them are over 59 years of age and may have other health
insurance arrangements. Forty-six percent of those surveyed receive health insurance premiums for themselves and their spouse into retirement. For the hundred respondents between the ages of 41-49, 30% will not receive health insurance into retirement. This drops to about 12% for those between 50 and 67.

For respondents between the ages of 41 and 49, 44% of boards contribute to a tax sheltered annuity. This drops to 30% for those between the ages of 50 and 58 and rises to 47% for those between the ages of 59 and 67. For those between the ages of 68 and 76, 27% have this benefit.

## Conclusion

The survey data indicated a general lack of stability incentives for superintendents as evidenced by the lack of cash longevities and incentives for staying. Generally, it seemed that Boards are willing to accept their current superintendent’s retirement and seek new leadership. There is not sufficient evidence to suggest that this could be due to a desire to decrease salary/benefits for the executive position. However, Boards should examine their ability to attract new talent to their district and then make a decision as to whether they would be better served by retaining their present superintendent. Boards need to be mindful that decreasing salary and benefits too greatly maybe linked to fewer qualified applicants applying for vacancies.

### Post-Retirement Plans

Superintendents responded to questions requesting what plans one would have after retirement. In general, the respondents indicated that they wished to stay in education in some capacity when they retire. Only 5% stated that they will not do any paid work and another 18% wanted to pursue something other than education. Thirty-five percent were undecided.

These results were almost identical to those in *Snapshot VIII* (2012), including responses by men and women. The fact that there are significant numbers of individuals who plan to consider staying in education may indicate that a decision to retire is less about dissatisfaction with working as an educational leader and more about the immediate circumstances of their current position or current personal life.
Recommendations & Emerging Trends

The Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc. (LEAF, Inc.) serves as the professional development arm of The Council. LEAF, Inc. provides high-quality professional learning to support superintendent development (pre-service and in-service) and the development of school district leadership team members.

The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) serves as the state-wide voice of more than 700 boards of education. NYSSBA provides current information and advice on matters affecting school boards and cooperates with other educational and related organizations in promoting excellence in education, including leadership development to public school boards.

The recommendations, implications, and emerging trends resulting from *Snapshot IX* can inform these organizations in strengthening the development of future leaders.

**Recommendations**

- Continue to explore the aspirational level of women and why the number of women superintendents in New York State has remained at 30% over the past three iterations of the *Snapshot*.
  
  » Women continue to be underrepresented among the ranks of public school superintendents despite having similar incentives and disincentives as men when considering a career as superintendent. Women continue to outnumber men as educators and they comprise at least half of the students in educational leadership programs (Kelsey, et al., 2014, December).
  
  » *Snapshot VII* (2009) recommended that search consultants, BOCES superintendents, and School Boards make concerted efforts to broaden the candidate pool to include more women and minorities when recruiting for superintendents. Further, New York has experienced a large percentage of superintendent retirements in the last 10 years. Yet the number of women superintendents has remained stable at 30%.
  
  » The Council currently has a membership level for Assistant Superintendents. It is suggested that The Council reach out to this pool of aspiring superintendents, as well as those who take advantage of the Aspiring Superintendents Workshop hosted by The Council. Focus groups developed around a series of pertinent research questions would work well to give The Council and the Snapshot Committee insight into this critical issue.
Superintendents have identified the need for additional board training on the topics of governance, board role, and superintendent role.

» NYSED continually proposes interventions for districts that are performing far below similar districts; the proposed interventions seem to focus on removing teachers and administrators rather than on professional development for teachers, administrators, and school boards. Yet, both the 2012 survey of superintendents and the 2015 survey have identified professional development as a need for improving the effectiveness of boards. Research by other authors has also shown the connection between the governance decisions of school boards and student success.

» Effective boards, noted through the responses of the superintendent, viewed the primary role of the superintendent as day-to-day management (73%) or curriculum and instruction (12%). Board training should also include a heavier emphasis on curriculum and instruction, whether it be through NYSSBA trainings or superintendent-board retreats. If professional development is to be a major focus, it most certainly should be linked to students and their learning needs in the 21st century.

» Although Snapshot IX and Snapshot VIII illustrated the same number of ineffective boards (9%) there have been some changes in following the Code of Conduct by ineffective boards since 2012. The criteria of board members keeping matters confidential has decreased as has board members upholding the majority decisions. Training of Board members and superintendents focusing on conflict resolution skills may be warranted.

• Continue to investigate superintendent learning needs, specifically the factor of “time.”

» The greatest barrier to a superintendent’s professional development appears to be the time spent out of the district as well as finding the work time or personal time to pursue learning needs. How do superintendents prioritize their own growth and development? Although many superintendents attend The Leadership of Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc. (LEAF) series of professional offerings as well as other conferences and workshops sponsored by The Council, this issue is one in which the Snapshot Committee has grappled with over the past dozen years. Further efforts need to be made to personally assist superintendents in analyzing their learning needs. As a professional organization, professional development must be promoted in ways that make the most sense to each superintendent.

» Almost 80% of superintendents reported that they spent at least 20% or more of their personal time on recreation and wellness activities. Two hundred thirty-five superintendents received 21 or more vacation days per year. However, only 31 of these superintendents responded that they actually use all of the days they receive. Superintendents (63%) also responded that the position is more stressful than expected. If superintendents are going to remain healthy and manage the stress from their position, they will need to take more of their allotted vacation time.

Emerging Trends

• Snapshot IX (2015) illustrated that the pathway to the superintendency is through a district office position and/or a secondary principal position (HS/MS). Despite this finding, more superintendents are coming to their position without central office experience.

» This situation may account for the fact that only 6% of new superintendents come to their position with a “preparatory skill level” in business/finance and 11% in personnel. Once in the position, they report that their comfort level has risen to 13% in business/finance and 24% in personnel. With more intense regulatory requirements in both areas, more emphasis should be placed on these skills through university certification programs as well as new superintendent programs offered by The Council and others.
• The survey noted that there has been an increase in new superintendents. The number of superintendents in the 32-40 year age group has increased over past iterations. It appears that newer superintendents will remain in the superintendency for longer than the traditional “capstone” years of the position (13% plan to retire within the next five years).

• An increase in succession planning by boards of education and their superintendent was evident in Snapshot IX (2015). The concept of succession planning was first noted in Snapshot VII (2009). Of superintendents with five years or less experience, 52.6% responded that they had either worked in the district immediately prior to their current position or had worked there at an earlier time in their career. Women tended to be promoted internally, by percentage, more than men. Accordingly, 41.5% of women and 38.7% men, respectively, were promoted internally. This is a very interesting change from Snapshot VII (2009) and Snapshot VIII (2012), where men were more likely to be promoted from within than women. Further, effective boards were more likely to hire internal candidates than ineffective boards. This issue bears closer watch: are superintendents, in collaboration with their boards of education, creating succession plans or is this a way of hiring a superintendent at a lower salary with fewer perceived benefits?

• Snapshot IX (2015) illustrated the position of the superintendent as expanding so superintendents must spend more time on different tasks. Although a superintendent has always had to focus on board governance, personnel, curriculum, finance, advocacy, school community, etc., it appears that state and national agendas requiring accelerated public education changes are also requiring superintendents to take on a variety of new tasks with associated time factors. More than 10% of a superintendent’s time spent during an average week is devoted to public relations, personnel, board of education meetings, curriculum and instruction, and legal matters.

• An emerging trend seems to indicate that, although 65% of respondents consider the job to be more stressful than expected, there is an apparent disparity between what prospective superintendents believe their job satisfaction might be as a superintendent and what their satisfaction actually is once a superintendent begins in that role. Over 64% of respondents indicated they would encourage a son or daughter to pursue a superintendent and 83% shared their satisfaction as a superintendent with others. Further, job satisfaction in the superintendency seems to compare favorably with other work roles overall in the U.S. and seems to exceed the satisfaction of some other roles within the education sector.

• The Snapshot IX (2015) data clearly supported length of tenure as having a positive impact on student achievement and the organization as a whole. Yet, only 29% of survey respondents reported receiving a combination of longevity bonus, health insurance post-employment, or a combination of both when asked if he/she was provided an incentive to stay for a minimum number of years. Lack of benefits and/or less value attributed to them with no incentives to stay seems to be an increasing factor in contracts for superintendents. Boards of education need to remember that decreasing salary and benefits too greatly may be linked to fewer qualified applicants when conducting a search for their new chief executive officer.
Conclusion

In its preamble to The Council’s document *Public Education Matters! Leadership, Leverage, and Learning* (April 2014), a vision for reclaiming the promise of our public schools was established. Superintendents, as members of The Council’s Envisioning Committee stated:

*Every child in New York deserves the best public schools possible. Public education is the backbone, heart, wisdom and soul of a free and democratic society. It nurtures a hopeful future and infinite possibilities for all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, creed, gender, beliefs, personal orientations, economic situation or learning needs.*

*For centuries, public schools have prepared an educated citizenry. From the beginning, learning has been the backbone of our nation’s development. By Constitutional amendment, law, and judicial review we have made inclusive public education a pillar of our democracy. It has been the great informer, the great stimulator, and the great equalizer. Just as the Statue of Liberty exemplifies our mission to educate every child in our diverse state and nation, our comprehensive system of education for all students stands as an exemplar for the rest of the world.*

*As the international landscape changes rapidly and America strives to maintain its political and economic leadership, the need to strengthen and broaden the education of our students becomes more acute. Content knowledge is still necessary, but no longer sufficient. Success in today’s world requires students to be agile thinkers, astute problem finders and clever problem solvers; to develop curiosity, perseverance, tenacity, and imagination; and to work collaboratively, effectively, and respectfully with others.*

*Superintendents who have walked in the shoes of teachers, principals, and district leaders are the primary agents of this necessary change and the conduit between research and practice . . .*

*As public school superintendents, our children, our democracy, and our future are our mission – and our responsibility.*
References


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The New York State Council of School Superintendents (The Council) is a professional and advocacy organization with over a century of service to school superintendents, and recently assistant superintendents, in New York State. The Council provides its more than 800 members with numerous professional development opportunities, publications and personal services, while advocating for public education and the superintendency.

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