

Preface

Extraordinary leaders are those who inspire people and make lasting contributions. In America, many of these leaders have been school superintendents, dedicated public servants charged to work with boards of education and communities to provide the best possible education for children and youth. School superintendents have always faced controversy because of the educational and political balance of the job, but in most communities the position of superintendent has been respected. The job, however, has changed. High-stakes testing has brought greater local, state, and national accountability to school districts in a time of greater social problems and inadequate resources to meet growing needs of a more diverse America. These complex factors have contributed to a gradual loss of faith in public schools and loss of respect for the position of superintendent. This loss of respect for the superintendency is reflected in increased micromanagement by boards of education and inadequate compensation. As a result, the number of superintendents leaving the profession is increasing, while the number of the best and brightest educators seeking to become superintendents is decreasing. Contributing to this growing problem is the quality of preparation and professional development programs for current and aspiring superintendents. Though national surveys of school superintendents report their overall satisfaction with their preparation, gaps remain in candidates' selection, academic preparation, internship experiences, and mentoring programs. Thus, issues of respect for the position and the need to create more relevant preparation and professional development programs led us, Corwin Press, and the University Council for Educational Administration's National Center for the Study of the Superintendency to produce this book.

The Superintendent as CEO: Standards-Based Performance is the first textbook to focus on research-based knowledge and skills needed by current and aspiring school district CEOs to become high performers and student advocates. In spite of the negative news about unethical actions by a small group of corporate CEOs, we believe that the overwhelming majority are ethical individuals who bring respect to the CEO label. America's superintendents should share the CEO label because they deserve our greatest respect for the jobs they do for their students and their communities. This respect will help attract high-quality candidates with a passion for education and a service vision to seek the position of education CEO. Surveys find that the superintendents in large, medium, and small school districts consider their jobs similar to those held by CEOs in the private sector. Both executive offices require many of the same management and executive skills to meet complex issues of budgets, personnel, information technologies, product accountability, and competition.

x • The Superintendent as CEO

Regardless of district size, there is little doubt that the old, less visible role of school superintendent has changed to that of highly visible chief executive. Superintendents are playing ever greater roles in shaping learning communities for all children and youth. We hope that this book will provide a bridge between the research on school management and leadership and successful practice for all education CEOs.

The complex role of education CEO demands energetic, visionary, and courageous individuals who can lead others to meet the growing demands for improved student achievement. They must develop plans for educating more, and more diverse, students, and they must struggle with teacher and principal shortages. In addition, they face extremist actions by special interest groups, inadequate school funding, deteriorating and crowded facilities, and excessive time demands.

This book is neither a comprehensive work on the history and role of the superintendency nor a checklist for accreditation or certification programs. We have attempted to produce a scholarly and, we hope, friendly research and field-based curriculum for professional development seminars and retreats and for superintendent preparation programs in higher education. Caught between the positivist approach to education, as reflected in high-stakes testing, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), curriculum standards, proficiencies, and competencies, and the less measurable, perhaps more spiritual, constructivist view, we have chosen to blend concerns of standards-based performance with constructivist reflections on multiple ways of knowing and acting in the complex role of the CEO superintendent and with ideals of spirituality and servant leadership to help prepare school district CEOs for the turbulent world of education.

WHY AASA STANDARDS RATHER THAN ISLLC?

The organization of this book is based on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993), with a chapter devoted to each of the eight standards and its indicators. We feel that the AASA standards have a stronger research base and a richer connection to the role of superintendent than the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 1996) standards for Chief State School Officers. Our opinion is in accordance with that of the National Policy Board Advisory Group advising the Education Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) responsible for preparing the 2002 *Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership* for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE): That group agreed that the ISLLC standards for system administrators were limited in their scope and their skill and knowledge base, even though numerous states require the ISLLC exam for licensure of superintendents. According to the Advisory Group, the ISLLC standards are inadequate for system administrators in several key areas, including school and district governance, policy development, political strategies, strategic visioning and long-range planning, school finance and financial management, district personnel processes and legalities, educational law, and school facilities. The Advisory Group argued that administration at the school level requires different skills than

administration at the district level and consequently that the new NCATE standards should differentiate between school-level and district-level criteria (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2000). To enrich the standards in this book, however, we also selected important skills and dispositions for CEOs, including those regarding leadership and shaping of school climate at the campus level, from the ISLLC standards for Chief State School Officers and the 2002 National Council for the Accreditation of Colleges of Education (NCATE) standards. We emphasize that authentic and purposive leadership is a delicate blend of skills, proficiencies, rubrics, and accountability measures to create learning communities open to all and free from oppression and inequities. Success as a CEO is measured by high-performing staff and students who embrace integrity, equity, and caring for others. Individuals seeking power and control over others would not fit our concept of district CEO. In sum, the enhanced AASA standards found in Chapters 2 through 9 of this book describe the most important executive competencies, skills, craft knowledge, and values in the selection, preparation, and professional development of superintendent CEOs.

Chapter 1, “New Directions for CEO Superintendent Preparation,” provides historical context for the changing role of superintendents since the early 1980s and the landmark report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). We describe three waves of educational reform that include increasing accountability at state and national levels, addressing demographic trends of increasing cultural diversity and increasing numbers of low-income and special-needs students, meeting the educational and social needs of all children, and improving both the structure of school systems and the education-related professions. The remainder of the chapter focuses on reform efforts in the preparation of school leaders and the emergence of the AASA’s *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993). This contextual beginning sets the stage for the following nine chapters, which present the why, how, and what of preparing a new type of school superintendent who is the leader of learning and a respected CEO.

Chapter 2, “Organizational Culture,” begins with a case study about Amanda Cruz, superintendent of Carolynville, and her emergency meeting. The case study is written to challenge the reader to reflect about important links between a superintendent’s vision and the steps required to creating high performers through servant leadership, empowerment, and equity. The chapter suggests curriculum content about organization culture that encourages respect for diversity and celebrates school and community cultures. In addition, it offers new insights into the assessment of organizational climate and strategies needed to create a powerful shared vision and make the vision come true.

Chapter 3, “The Politics of School Governance,” invites the reader into a realistic and complex case study in board politics and the role of the superintendent in working toward successful solutions. The chapter addresses the most complex challenge facing CEOs superintendents today—building support with the school board and other political groups. Moreover, it takes the reader beyond the generalities normally found in education policy textbooks and stresses strategies for current and future CEOs to navigate the winding paths of school/community politics.

xii • The Superintendent as CEO

Chapter 4, “Communications and Community Relations,” begins with a detailed case study of a real-world communications dilemma. Will Superintendent Sue Smith communicate her new strategic plan to the board and community, and will a community attitude survey really make any difference? The reader is challenged to reflect on a wide variety of issues, comments, and policies in order to respond to specific questions from diverse constituents. Finally, suggestions are made to guide the CEO in communication processes that tell the school district story in compelling, persuasive, and empowering ways.

Chapter 5, “Management of the Organization, Operations, and Resources,” includes an overview of selected organizational theories that address the standards and best practices of organizational decision making and the utilization of scarce financial and human resources. The opening case study finds Steve Goodson in a weather-related dilemma. Does he cancel school or face hidden risks of flooding and bus problems? This is followed by an exploration of systems management strategies to assist a CEO in monitoring and adjusting the system when necessary. Researchers’ findings and practitioners’ insights are presented on managing, collecting, monitoring, and spending school funds and navigating the mysterious world of school finance. A second scenario at the end of the chapter serves as a class activity to find out if Superintendent Johnson used district money he did not have.

Chapter 6, “The Technical Core of Educational Administration: Curriculum Planning and Development,” takes the reader beyond typical curriculum textbooks. Since the advent of high-stakes testing, the narrow focus on “alignment” has created much discomfort for CEOs who believe that curriculum should be broader and fit the needs of children and youth in diverse classrooms. Conversely, policy makers—legislators, national and state departments of education, and professional administrator groups—have shifted their focus toward a curriculum centered on a “one best” model of proficiency and geared to quantitative measures of student performance on state and national exams. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has moved near the top of “one best” models to influence proficiency and uniformity of curriculum, especially for school districts accepting federal funding. The chapter presents a case study of a superintendent considering new options for providing instruction in math and science under conditions of a teacher shortage in those subjects. It provides directions on the selection and use of instructional technologies, including distance learning and other forms of online packaged learning systems, and explores their impact on student learning and their cost-effectiveness. The chapter closes with guidelines that will assist CEOs in creating curricular alignment and higher-performing, self-assured teachers and students.

Chapter 7, “Instructional Management,” begins with a case study that follows four superintendents through over 20 years of instructional leadership. The scenario includes the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) and the creation of an inclusive learning community for all staff and patrons. Next, we provide strategies to help develop, implement, and monitor data and change processes to improve student learning, adult development, and climates for learning. Other research and best practices about appropriate teaching methods for all learners are presented along with instructional strategies that include sensitivity to diverse cultures and learning

styles. Finally, we describe a practical student achievement monitoring and achievement reporting system.

Chapter 8, “Human Resources Management,” begins with CEO Ellen Cowell, a first-year superintendent, who decides to realign the district. She knows it will be sensitive, but for the good of all students she has to proceed. This change will mean reducing the teaching staff and moving some staff to new buildings. Before Ellen begins the realignment, she must conduct systematic personnel and program evaluations, including one on the legal ramifications of personnel changes. What must she know to succeed? This chapter addresses practical aspects of personnel law, benefit programs, and system and staff evaluation processes. In addition, it addresses new strategies to determine the sometimes nebulous effect of staff development on professional performance and organizational health. Valuable information, moreover, is presented on processes to implement creditable evaluations and audits regarding the effective use of available human resources.

Chapter 9, “Values and Ethics,” presents the latest information about helping CEOs “walk the talk” in ethical conduct. We assert that responsible leadership is guided by appropriate value systems, ethics, and moral leadership. The chapter begins with Dr. Ron Jones, superintendent, facing a troubling controversy over professional staff who shared information with students about birth control, Planned Parenthood, and abortion. What is the ethical thing for Ron to do regarding this difficult dilemma? The reader will gain valuable insights into ways of thinking about social justice, democracy, and religious, moral, and ethical practices established and practiced in schools. Increasing pressures to reform school districts and produce high-performing students have driven some superintendents and campus leaders to report misleading data. As a result, ethical and spiritual issues have moved to a higher priority in the preparation and professional development of CEO superintendents.

Chapter 10, “Leadership Performance Evaluation,” presents strategies and criteria to assess on-the-job superintendent performance. The chapter begins with a case study on Michael Sanders, a highly respected superintendent of Baton ISD, who has received glowing performance evaluations in his first 4 years but is one day caught by complete surprise when his school board informs him about misconduct by members of his staff. After the chapter’s presentation of several personnel evaluation models, including assessment centers, the reader will return to the case study and seek solutions to Sanders’s nightmare. Perhaps the new assessment model that we propose holds some answers to help CEOs and their boards avoid what happened to Michael Sanders.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We are enthusiastic about this book because of its depth and flexibility for the reader. Chapters 2 through 9 are designed around a tested CEO leadership domain that includes an intriguing scenario and a summary of the theory, research, and best-practice base for each domain. Thus, the suggestions for taking full advantage of the book are as follows:

xiv • The Superintendent as CEO

1. Read the preface again to gain a perspective of the 10 chapters.
2. After reading each chapter, take time to reflect on the case study/scenario and link the theory/practice content narrative to your real-world experiences. Then answer the questions at the end of the chapter.
3. Next, with your class, executive team, or in groups of five or six, select one or two of the chapters and conduct discussions or role-play the issues. Three or four of the chapters could be centerpieces for a 2-day retreat or weekend class. Role-playing assignments could be drawn from a cup or cap, and after a brief preparation time, participants can begin the fun of playing out the drama.
4. Each participant should keep a written record of each case as part of a class assignment or a portfolio for personal professional development.
5. To make a case study more relevant to a state or region, the instructor or inservice planner could insert actual local or state school data important to making decisions in the best interest of the district and for all students.
6. At the conclusion of the class or executive council sessions, each participant should review the skill areas for each chapter and assess his or her levels of competency. This could be a final class or workshop exercise.

We hope that the readers of this book will find its research and benchmarks helpful in creating scholarly and respected programs that select, prepare, and nurture a new generation of highly regarded education CEOs. With the AASA standards as the foundation and a compendium of successful practices for exemplary CEOs, we offer this book to help create schools for all of our children and youth.