

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RETIRED TRANSFORMATIVE PUBLIC  
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN OREGON

by

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APPROVAL

The abstract and dissertation of Aaron Downs for the Doctor of Education in Leadership were presented in November 2014, and accepted by the examining committee.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. The difficult, complex, and dynamic position of the superintendent is told through the untapped wealth of knowledge and experience from those who have served in the position for a minimum of ten years.

This research contributes to the limited body of research of superintendents and provides a contemporary analysis of the complexities of the position of the superintendent. Nine retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon participated in this research.

The study gained a deeper understanding of the recollections of the retired superintendents through in-depth interviews. Data was analyzed, interpreted, and coded using common themes.

The major findings in the study included: retired transformative superintendents were a lifelong and lead learner in their position as superintendent. A second finding in the study highlighted the key role of equity in the work of a superintendent. A third finding is centered on the need for the superintendent to be an innovator, problem solver, and informed opportunist. A fourth finding is the vital role of humor in the position of the superintendent. The fifth finding is each of the retired superintendents, if given the opportunity, would choose to become superintendents again.

Future superintendents can use this research to better understand the position of the superintendent and to study and learn “wisdom from their elders” in order to be a

successful superintendent. Superintendent preparation programs can also use this research in the designing and implementation of relevant curriculum in training the next generation of superintendents.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the lovely memory of my grandparents, Bud and Marcella Garland, and Buster and Gwen Downs.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“We teach who we are.” Parker Palmer

#### **Background of Study**

At the end of a school board meeting a school superintendent met with a soon to be graduating senior from the local high school who presented a year end update earlier in the evening to the board. The superintendent introduced himself to the student and engaged in a conversation and asked how the student experienced school the past many years in the district. The student enthusiastically responded with memories of administrators and teachers, who cared, inspired, motivated, supported, and challenged him throughout his schooling. The student naively asked the superintendent about what his job entailed and the superintendent quickly responded with “we hired all of those teachers and administrators who you mentioned.” The conversation then turned toward college and aspirations and the superintendent strongly encouraged the student to pursue a degree in education and to become a teacher similar to the ones that had inspired him.

The superintendent (who retired the next year) and student communicated throughout college and the student graduated with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in social studies teaching and a master’s degree in education. The student (who happens to be me) has spent the past 15 years as a teacher, assistant principal, and is currently a high school principal. I have since wondered about how my superintendent in high school experienced his position and what advice he would have for aspiring superintendents.

This leads me to the current study. This study documents the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon.

### **Statement of the Problem**

School superintendents hold a rewarding, personally and professionally challenging, stressful, complex, and influential position in our education system (Brinson, 1997; Callahan, 1966; Gober 2012; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Public school superintendents are being asked and held accountable to be the lead instructional leader of an educational system that needs to be stable, flexible, and evolving all at once (Antonucci, 2012).

The challenges and pressures of the position of the superintendency are found to be constant throughout history (Bau, 1982, Brinson, 1997, Daresh, 2002). Bau (1982) reported that the major sources of anxieties from a 1955 research study by Spalding showed that the public wanted to have a large say in the dealings of education, policy making, and the role of the superintendent. Bau's study reported that when asked about the changes in the role of the superintendent during the past decade, the Commissioner of Education Bell answered:

I think that the superintendent operates under more pressure than he or she use to. I think the superintendent fins more opposition and more roadblocks to action and it takes a lot more opposition and more roadblocks to action and it takes a lot more effort and energy to get changes in place . . . than it used to. Due process is there. And hearings. And rights to participate. And a big one—unionization in American education. The superintendency . . . is certainly a challenging situation. If problems are oppourtunities, the superintendent of today has a large number of oppourtunities. (p. 4)

Now, roughly 30 years later research reports similar findings with different challenges (Gober 2012). What do the people who have been in the position recently have to say about their experiences?

Nearly 50% of current school superintendents are not intending to be superintendents in 2015 (Kowalski et al., 2011). This statistic prompts a timely examination of the often-understudied position of the superintendent. The superintendency is recognized as a formidable undertaking that brings many intrinsic rewards (Antonucci, 2012).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. This is a very timely and significant study for emerging leaders in Oregon. The focus on the state of Oregon provides a rich opportunity for this study. Retired superintendents are a wealth of knowledge and a study of their experiences as well as the constraints from what they may share is needed. This will study provide future superintendents a framework of understanding the complexities of the position while being an equitable and transformative leader for our educational system.

Although many studies on school leadership and principals exist, research on the position of the superintendent remains limited. This study seeks to add to the corpus of knowledge of the lived experiences of retired superintendents. Lastly, this study provides a contemporary update to the previous studies on retired superintendents (Bau, 1982; Brinson, 1997; Wenzel, 1996).



### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its professional contribution to the superintendent position and to future superintendents. This study examines the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon and the results provide a framework of transformational, equitable, and socially just leadership of the position. Specifically, this study may add to the work the Oregon Leadership Network, a statewide educational leadership network, with equity at its core, is doing.

This study adds to a limited research base around the current and future public school superintendency and yields valuable information and insight into the profession.

Results of this study may be beneficial to colleges and university superintendent preparation program development and redesign. The study may also provide school districts a foundation for preparation, training, and recruiting of future leaders to be the superintendent.

### **Research Question**

This research seeks to contribute to the research on the position of the superintendent by drawing on individual accounts of their lived experiences (Antonucci, 2012; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). To this end, I, using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, asked one main research question: “What was the lived experience of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon?”

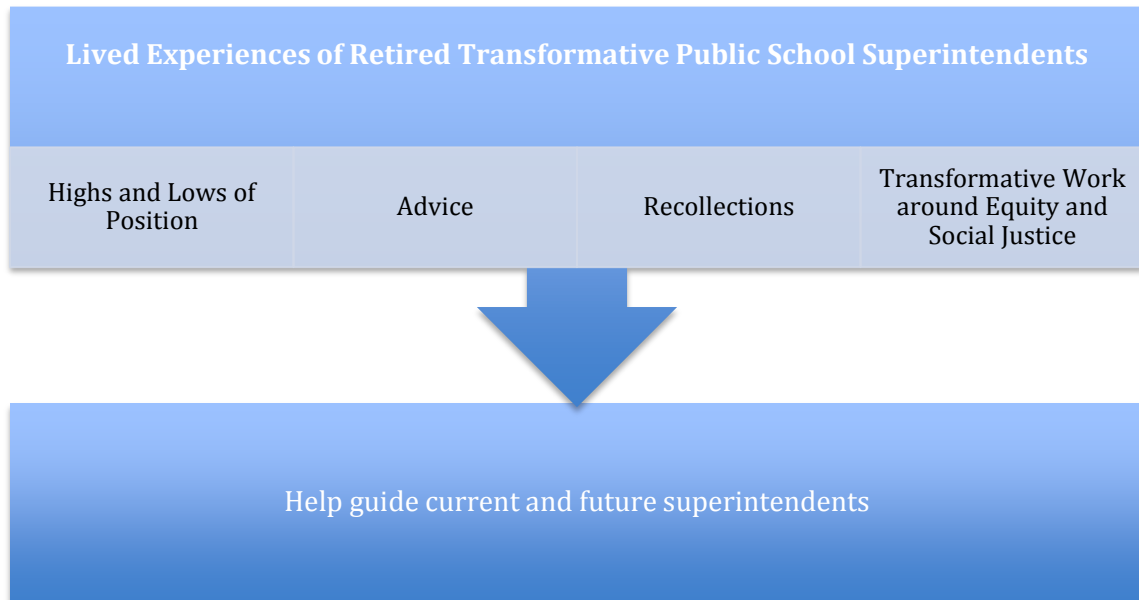
## Conceptual Framework

As current superintendents move on from their position, school districts must creatively replace them with the superintendent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Retired superintendents provide a clear lens into the position and prove vital in providing a smooth transition to future superintendents. A conceptual framework “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied-the key factors, constructs, or variables-and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 18).

At the top of my framework I have the lived experiences of the superintendents followed by their recollections, advice, highs and lows of the position, and their work around transformative leadership in equity and social justice.

I illustrate my conceptual framework in Figure 1 for my study. These are the main areas of study.

The “wisdom of the elders” is illustrated in the conceptual framework of this study. The recollections, advice, transformative work, and highs and lows of the complex position are passed on to help guide current and future superintendents. The largely untapped knowledge of the lived experiences of those who have been through it will lead the future of the position of the superintendent.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework of the lived experiences of transformative retired superintendents.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The wisdom of the elders is an accepted concept that has been used in previous retired superintendent studies (Bau 1982; Brinson 1997; Wenzel 1996). Retired superintendents are elder statesmen and they possess a wealth of unexamined experience (Bau, 1982). These superintendents have been through the battles and now are out and are able to recollect memories and stories of their time in the position.

Retired superintendents may also speak more freely than sitting superintendents for personal and political reasons. This qualitative study takes a phenomenological approach to examine how the world is experienced through the eyes of the retired superintendents. I constructed a theoretical framework using transformational leadership and perceptual theory as lenses into the position of the superintendent.

### **Limitations**

This research was confined to transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon. The sample of participants was drawn from Oregon and the results may not be generalizable to all. This qualitative study involves interviews that ask for telling of stories and recollection of experiences. These recollections may, or may not, be completely accurate. The data gathered are wholly dependent on the perceptions of the retired superintendents (Brinson, 1997).

I make an assumption that the retired superintendents answer in a truthful and forthright manner. Generalizing from the data collected in this study to other superintendents or other areas of the United States should be regarded with caution because of the reliance on self-reporting and the small sample size of the retired superintendents.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations utilized by me in this study were determined by a desire to better understand the lived experiences of retired public school superintendents in Oregon. In order to gain the perspectives of superintendents I only sought superintendents who held the position in public schools in Oregon. The use of public schools in this study did not allow me to gain the experiences of those individuals involved in private and charter schools located in the state.

A second delimitation used by me was the use of 10 years as a minimum of holding the position of superintendent. The use of the minimum of 10 years does not

allow for me to obtain the experiences of those who served one to nine years in the position.

A third delimitation used by me in this study was the superintendents used in the study were retired and did not allow me to obtain the experiences of those who left, were forced out or fired.

My desire as researcher is to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon and then share their stories with the public.

### **Assumptions**

This study included the following assumptions: (a) the retired superintendents respond to the interview questions honestly and accurately; (b) the data measures the recollections, knowledge, and perceptions of the superintendents; (c) the data collected gives an accurate representation of the lived experiences of the work of the retired superintendent. My personal belief is that retired superintendents gave an honest and clear recollection of their perceptions of their work as a superintendent.

### **Definition of Terms**

For clarity in this study, superintendent, contemporary superintendent, and transformational leadership are defined.

Wisdom of the Elders: The notion of gaining insight into the actual work of school superintendents through analyzing data gathered from retirees who have been in the position (Bau, 1982).

Superintendent: Administrators who provide district wide leadership and coordination to all schools and programs within the school district and implement and interact with the local school board or governing body (Daresh, 2002). They are not assistants or deputies.

Contemporary Superintendent: Administrators who are currently serving in the position as superintendent or aspiring to be a future superintendent.

Transformative Leadership: For the purpose of this study, transformational leadership can be seen when “leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of morality and motivation” (Burns, 1978, p. 4). Transformative leaders inspire others to work toward common and lasting goals.

### **Organization of the Study**

This research investigation is broken into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the problem, research question, conceptual framework, theoretical framework, limitations, delimitations, and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature, which includes a detailed look into previous retired superintendent studies, and current research on the position of the superintendent.

Chapter 3 defines the methodology of this research study. This chapter explains the selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter 4 present's the study's findings.

Chapter 5 gives a summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

### **Summary**

Nearly 50% of all current superintendents will not be superintendents in 2015 (Kowalski et al., 2011). Previous researchers call for further scholarly study on the lived experiences of retired superintendents (Bau 1982; Brinson 1997; Wenzel 1996). The present study seeks to understand the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. Nine superintendents participated in my research. The significance of the study is timely for emerging leaders in the state of Oregon as well as for college and university preparation programs.

The following chapter reviews the literature on previous studies of retired superintendents and examines current findings on the position of the superintendent.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

It is a multifarious undertaking to portray the superintendency. The evolving, complex, and dynamic position of the superintendency encourages continual study. This study focuses on the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. Retired superintendents are an underutilized wealth of knowledge and provide advice for the training and preparation of future superintendents. Brinson (1997) expressed “The wisdom of the elders in education is a viable, but largely untapped, resource from which much can be learned” (p. 125).

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section encompasses previous research on retired superintendents. The second section analyzes literature on the situated role and six conceptualizations of the position of the superintendent. The third section reviews the literature on contemporary superintendent preparation and longevity. The fourth section incorporates previous research on the framework of this qualitative study through the phenomenological lens of transformational leadership and perceptual theory.

#### **Retired Public School Superintendents**

Three previous studies are central to this section. In chronological order they are: “Recollections of Retired School Superintendents About Their Jobs” (Bau, 1982); “Retired Superintendents on Their Careers” (Wenzel, 1996); “The Impact of the Superintendency on the Spouses and Families of Retired Public School Superintendents”



(Brinson, 1997). These studies present findings of research on the public school superintendent. This study endeavors to add to the corpus of knowledge.

Bau's (1982) study examined the recollections retired school superintendents from Pennsylvania had about their jobs. Bau noted,

Few studies have attempted to describe the actual work of the school superintendent . . . No studies have been found which have used retired superintendents as subjects. Since the 'wisdom of the elders' concept has been accepted by most societies, insight into the actual work of school superintendents might be gained by analyzing data gathered from retirees. (p. 35)

Bau (1982) studied the recalling of past experiences of the superintendents in hopes to provide a more "meaningful understanding of what the work of a superintendent is like as well as recommendations for their younger colleagues" (p. 9).

The sample was of 18 retired male school superintendents in Pennsylvania who had served a minimum of 10 years in the work as superintendent. Each of these participants served as a superintendent of a school district, not of a county or state. Data collection was obtained through an in person interview consisting of 26 questions. The interviews lasted about an hour in length.

The questions were categorized by: a link to robustness, more meaningful understanding of what the work of a superintendent is like, and what future superintendents benefit from the "wisdom of the elders" (Bau, 1982, pp. 7, 8). The researcher enjoyed the interviews and tape-recorded them for an efficient and less distracting form of data collection.

Bau (1982) concluded:

School superintendents . . . were in agreement that improving instruction for students and building schools made them most proud, that they would become

superintendents again if they had to do it over, that they were under considerable pressure during their superintendencies, and that money was their biggest problem. (p. 119)

It is important to note that Bau (1982, p. 121) recommended future research from a population of superintendents outside the state of Pennsylvania.

The second study was guided by Wenzel (1996). The purpose of the study was to examine the recollections, retired school superintendents had concerning their careers.

This study was designed as a companion to previous studies and had advantages of reaching a larger pool of superintendents and more retirees were female. Wenzel created the list of retired public school superintendents living in Pennsylvania by working with the following organizations: Eastern Pennsylvania Association of Retired School Superintendents, Western Pennsylvania retired Chief Administrators, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Public School Employee's Retirement System, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of School Staffing and Technical Operations.

The 50 participants from Pennsylvania were all retired school superintendents with at least 10 years of service. Personal interviews were conducted with a schedule of 25 questions, many similar to previous studies.

Wenzel (1996) concluded:

It appears to be a love-hate relationship between school superintendents and their careers; that changes in society and in community concerns have increased the need for superintendents to be visionary leaders who are politically astute, flexible, and skillful at moving diverse groups to compromise and collaborate in order to advance educational goals; that women executives while contributing special skills will face special difficulties; and, that the career superintendency continues to gain importance as a major educational leadership position. (p. iv)

The third study reviewed was by Brinson (1997). The purpose of the study was to explore the impact the superintendency had on spouses and families by interviewing the spouses of retired public school superintendents from the state of Pennsylvania. Brinson collected data from 21 participants (17 female and 4 male) through a structured interview of 34 questions. The participants had further criteria to be included in the study. It included that the spouse and superintendent be currently married and the superintendent must have served as a public school superintendent in Pennsylvania for a minimum of 10 years.

The participants were selected through a list from Wenzel's (1996) study that was made available and used for this study. The recollections were analyzed using qualitative methods and the results were interpreted while no specific hypotheses were tested in this exploratory study. The interviews were recorded by extensive note taking.

Brinson (1997) concluded the study with three major findings. One finding notes the differences between a study utilizing superintendents and a study utilizing the spouses of superintendents. The second major finding of the study centered on the "role" of the spouse of a public school superintendent. The study supported the idea that "spouses of superintendents fashion a "role" based on the circumstances that present themselves" (p. 120). Spouses serve as ambassadors for the school district and superintendent and their support proves invaluable to the success of the superintendent. The third major finding highlights a contradiction. In spite of the negativity associated in the superintendency, they believed their spouses would choose to become a superintendent again and overwhelmingly supported those positive choices.

This finding suggests two things. Regardless of the difficulties inherent in the duties of the superintendency, it is viewed as a worthwhile undertaking. Regardless of the difficulties experienced by the spouses and families of the superintendent, they view their helpful and supportive roles as worthwhile. It seems to suggest the superintendency is a difficult journey for all involved, but a journey worth taking.

It is important to note that Brinson (1997) recommended that preparation programs for future school administrators take note of issues presented in this study. Brinson also contended that a series of case studies of superintendents and their families would prove useful to practitioners and aspiring administrators. Lastly, Brinson stated:

Current practitioners and those who aspire to be school administrators can only profit from studying the lives, careers, and reflections of those men and women who have preceded them and their spouses and families. Only by studying history can one attempt to chart the future. (p. 125)

Brinson's study serves as an inspiration to this current research study on the lived experiences of retired public school superintendents. Brinson also cautioned against the rosy recollections of the superintendents in previous studies. Brinson noted that superintendents may remember or recall events and work in rosy terms, in comparison to the spouse's recollection of the same event.

The findings of these three seminal studies are a foundation for this current study. These studies support a modern study of the recollections of retired superintendents. The next section of this chapter examines literature of the situated role of the superintendent and facets of the position of superintendent.

### **The Situated Role and Conceptualizations of the Superintendent Position**

In order to comprehend the lived experience and recollections of retired public school superintendents, it is critical to review literature relevant to the particulars of the position itself. This study analyzes the data using the widely accepted roles of the superintendent as teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator (Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2001). It also examines the role of the superintendent as an innovator (Gober, 2012). The evolution of the role of the superintendent has been carefully studied and researched (Bjork, Glass et al., 2005; Callahan, 1966; Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011; Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

The school superintendent position first appeared in the mid 1800s where individuals were selected to oversee the day-to-day schoolhouse operations (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). These individuals also worked on curriculum and assisted teachers. The original superintendents functioned with the board of education and acted more as a moral and ethical guide to the communities they served (Schiele, 2012). By 1900, most school districts had created this position, largely to meet a growing need for a key person to organize school curriculum, follow compulsory attendance laws, and answer increased demands for accountability (Kowalski, 2003).

School boards began to give more power to superintendents in part because many had become experts in pedagogy. As time went on, superintendents were also asked to communicate and interact with parents, community members, and the political arena (Byrd, 2001).

Callahan (1966) articulated four main role conceptualizations of the superintendent that are still seen as relevant today. The roles are teacher-scholar (1850 to early 1900s), manager (early 1900s to 1930), democratic leader (1930-mid 1950s), and applied social scientist (mid 1950s to mid 1970s; Callahan, 1966). Kowalski (2001) presented a fifth role as communicator (mid 1970s to present) and added to a list that reveals the intricate and complex nature of the position.

The superintendent as a teacher-scholar role consists of the primary focus of the position is to oversee the curriculum and supervise teachers (Kowalski, 2005a). The impact of the teacher-scholar role has been discussed for many years (Kowalski, 2005a). The superintendent as manager has been an important role in the history of the position. Effective superintendents are managers and ensure financial organization, facilities, and district operations are in order (Kowalski, 2005a). As Kowalski (2005a) noted, “The reality that the challenge facing today’s superintendent is not choosing between leadership and management; it is establishing equilibrium between these two essential roles” (p. 7).

The superintendent as democratic leader involves an understanding of the political nature of the work (Kowalski, 2005a). Democratic administration calls for a combination of politics and policy in a time of increasing public accountability (Kowalski, 2005a). The superintendent as an applied social scientist included a development of the social sciences in the 1940s and 1950s (Kowalski, 2005a). Superintendents were encouraged to use research and school administration studies incorporated the work as applied social scientists.

The superintendent as a communicator role garners importance as it relates to engaging others in school reform, vision, and school district news (Kowalski, 2005a). The skill of an effective superintendent as communicator involves a unique combination of successful practice and communication skills (Kowalski, 2005a). Since 1980, the information age has intensified the need for real time, accurate, and inclusive communication (Kowalski, 2005a).

In a 2012 study of superintendents, Gober noted a significant finding (and possible sixth role) in the emergence of the role of the superintendent as innovator. In fact, Gober recorded that the role of innovator will define the superintendency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Gober reported that superintendents must innovate otherwise they will become irrelevant.

Superintendents often assume two or more of these roles at any given time and the significance of each has fluctuated throughout history (Glass et al., 2000). In a key study of superintendents, Glass et al. (2000) identified roles of a change agent, maintainer of status quo, and instructional leader. According to Glass et al., the most consistent historical role of the superintendent is that of an instructional leader.

The contemporary or current and aspiring superintendents in this review is defined as a communicator has materialized as a result of America's transition from a manufacturing society to an information-based society (Kowalski, 2001). In part, due to the technology today, superintendents are expected to communicate with their school board more than their predecessors. Kowalski (2005b) described the communicator role as being shaped by the demand to restructure school cultures and the need to access and

use information in a timely manner. A majority of superintendents reported having engaged regularly in communication-intensive interactions with parents and citizens (Kowalski, 2005b).

The five roles of the superintendent remain relevant according to American Association of School Administrators (AASA) study (Kowalski et al., 2011) and they continue to provide a base for understanding the historical context of the superintendent (Kowalski, 2005a). This base provides a framework for understanding current literature of the role of the superintendent.

The synthesis of the literature of the role conceptualizations of the superintendent is important to this study because it situates the contemporary position and develops a richer understanding of their lived experience.

### **The Contemporary Superintendent**

In a continued effort to comprehend the lived experiences of retired public school superintendents it is imperative to study the literature on contemporary superintendents preparation, longevity, and evolution. According to a recent study of the evolution of superintendents Rueter (2009) discovered the areas of governance operation, communication and public relations, and student performance accountability have increased greatly due to the public expectations of the constituents. In the area of governance operation, the process of developing a clear vision was found to be even more important than the written mission statement that was created (Rueter, 2009).

Another major finding in Rueter's (2009) study was the increased role of the superintendent in curriculum development and instructional leadership of the school



district. The shift is due in part to the public accountability measures that are now easily accessible to all constituents, parents, students, community, staff, and school board members. One example of this accountability is seen through the changes in national movements, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The public has greater access than ever before to student achievement results. This access has in turn added to increased public scrutiny for superintendents (Daresh, 2002).

Peterson and Barnett (2005) studied how No Child Left Behind changed the role of the superintendent through the lens of accountability, parental choice, resource flexibility, and quality teachers. According to a 2006 AASA survey, superintendents listed No Child Left Behind legislation as the most antagonistic issue they face partly because many districts had to reallocate money and resources to comply with the mandates (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Superintendents also have expressed concern with the challenge to get all students to grade-level proficiency with the existing method of measuring achievement and almost 59% rated No Child Left Behind act as having a negative impact (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). These concerns are coupled with a limited understanding of how to address gaps and close the academic achievement gaps that are seen in their districts (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

The contemporary superintendent's understanding and knowledge of instructional practices and inner-workings of their outcomes are critical to effective communication around such federal education mandates as the No Child Left Behind Act (Rueter, 2009). The public awareness and transparency of information is critical for superintendents to be able to effectively and efficiently articulate and decipher the information. This

transference in responsibility of the superintendent is met with expectations that are unparalleled in the position (Rueter, 2009).

School reform and school improvement movements have often looked to the superintendent to be a significant mechanism for change in the public school system. The obligation for superintendents to be the lead learner in their organization is paired with the ever-growing expectation of having intimate knowledge of all aspects within the school district (Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

Historically, opposing viewpoints question whether superintendents can act as a curriculum and instructional leader while tethered with administrative duties. Studies provide evidence (Bredeson, 1996; Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Morgan & Peterson, 2002) that high performing districts have superintendents who possess instructional capabilities as well as collaboratively map out district goals with staff and community. Peterson and Barnett (2005) reviewed and synthesized these studies and provided a list of 15 similar findings of the superintendent as instructional leader.

The results of their list were:

- Collaboratively developing goals with administrators/board.
- Evaluating instructional effectiveness.
- Facilitating instruction through budget.
- Planning for instruction.
- Supervising instruction.
- Monitoring instructional programs.
- Developing principals as instructional leaders.
- Developing instructional policies.
- Reviewing research.
- Selecting personnel.
- Facilitating staff development.
- Communicating district expectations.

- Having a vision for instruction.
- Evaluating and monitoring.
- Involving the community in setting goals. (Peterson & Barnett, 2005, p. 117)

Peterson and Barnett described these findings as significant as they:

Emphasize the importance of an instructional vision, coordination, and socialization for the individuals and groups responsible for teaching and learning, the importance of maintaining a high level of visibility, clear communications, and monitoring and evaluating instructional and curricular program implementation. (p. 118)

These findings provided evidence divergent to the historical mindset that superintendents are too busy to focus on instruction and curriculum. The contemporary superintendent who does not have a central concentration on student academic success will not last long as a leader in today's schools (Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

The contemporary superintendent is called upon to be the instructional leader at a time of social change in America (Kowalski et al., 2011). In the 2010 decennial study of the American School Superintendent, the AASA surveyed current superintendents. In this prestigious and valued study they noted that school districts were becoming more diverse with a larger amount of students who were immigrants, living in poverty, and without both parents (Kowalski et al., 2011). As America becomes a more diverse nation so do the schools. This study also found that districts have more students from minority racial groups than employees from minority groups (Kowalski et al., 2011). The contemporary superintendent is called upon to meet the needs of their more diverse school districts (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005).

A 2003 study of 100 of the nation's largest urban school district's superintendents expressed falling short in regards to closing the opportunity gap and improving learning

for all students (Fuller et al., 2003). Fuller et al. (2003) stated, “We found that existing governance structures encourage acrimony and conflict among superintendents, the board, union officials, and central office staff. This environment sooner or later torpedoes the efforts of the leader” (p. 1).

Recommendations from Fuller et al.’s (2003) study centered on emboldening superintendents. Superintendents insisted on redefining school boards, total authority on human resources, and the ability to build a network of support (Fuller et al., 2003). This continued area of study remains essential in understanding the demands of the complexity of the contemporary superintendent. The changing demographics and an academic achievement gap on high stakes testing for historically marginalized student’s present new and varied challenges for superintendents. There is a call for the contemporary superintendent to be a leader for equity and social justice. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) explained that superintendents are applied social scientists and social activists who, in the lens of social justice, would “go beyond noting the difference and discrimination, and provide them with the skills to take action and to proactively implement social just policies and practices-to be leaders for social justice” (p. 198).

Another evolution in the role of the superintendent is the expectation that all students can and will graduate high school, college and career ready (Rueter, 2009).

Conley (2014) described college and career ready as

A high school diploma has been touted for decades as the goal all students should pursue, but evidence suggests that achieving the diploma may no longer be a sufficiently high expectation. The academic skill level many diploma recipients achieve may not be adequate to qualify them many of the careers and occupations emerging in the new economy. In fact, being able to get an entry-level job is not enough; having the skill level to star work today will likely not be enough to

retain a job for life, take advantage of new opportunities, or cope with changes in the economy. Success in the future will be much more a function not simply of what people have learned but of what they are capable of learning. School will truly need to be about enabling students to learn throughout their careers. Creating lifelong learners, a cliché that has been used often and carelessly by many, will become an increasingly critical and compelling goal of education. It's not at all clear what today's students will need to know throughout their lives, but it is likely that they will not be learning in school today much of what will be important to success over the course of their careers. (pp. 20-21)

Darling-Hammond (2010) explained the new mission of schools is, "to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented" (p. 2). The contemporary superintendent is called to be the confident and optimistic voice that students who graduate in the district will be college and career ready.

Conley (2014) suggested

Students who are ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate degree, a certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental course work. They can complete such entry-level, credit-bearing courses at a level that enables them to continue in the major or program of study they have chosen. (p. 51)

A high school diploma is no longer a high expectation for school districts (Rueter, 2009). Superintendents are addressing the rise in expectations for their students to succeed in high school and beyond. The changing economy has also created a new set of skills that our high school students need to leave with and the contemporary superintendent must be savvy to support and champion these skills. Conley (2014) explained that skills such as:

- Foundational academic knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge.
- Communication capabilities in reading and writing and, increasingly, speaking and listening.
- Technology proficiency.
- Problem-solving strategies.
- Flexibility, initiative, and adaptability. (p. 22)

Daresh (2002) noted a correlation between the school superintendency and a chief executive officer in the private sector. Managerial roles may be similar between a chief executive officer and a school superintendent, according to Daresh. Daresh suggested that the frustrations of the contemporary superintendent may lead to decreased interest among future leaders. According to Daresh, issues that may lead to decreased interest in future leaders seeking the superintendency include:

- Increased public pressure
- Limited contact with teachers
- Do little more than work with finance
- Spend an incredible amount of time on the job
- Must deal with teacher unions, collective bargaining, and potential labor actions.
- Lack tenure and job security
- Superintendents are politicians, not educators. (p. 69)

Daresh (2002) conversely stated that in spite of the negative perceptions of the job there are aspects of the job that are appealing. Daresh illuminated positive roles in the position as:

- Superintendents are well paid and enjoy good fringe benefits
- Superintendents can have an impact on the entire system
- Superintendents enjoy considerable community visibility and prestige
- Superintendents are rarely bored
- Superintendents are able to have continual long-term impact on the quality of student learning. (p. 70)

In summary, the intricate and dynamic role of the superintendent continues to evolve and the complexities, challenges, and joys of the position remain an intriguing study. Reviews of the literature around the situated and contemporary role of the superintendent support the views of Callahan (1966) and Kowalski (2005a) around the four conceptualizations of the position. The superintendent is still seen as teacher-scholar, business manager, statesman, applied social scientist, and as communicator (Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005a). Current practice and studies note an increase in the role of the superintendent as the lead instructional leader and an advocate for social justice for all students (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005; Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

The public accountability of the No Child Left Behind Act, high-stakes tests, graduation rate, and state and local challenges present unique opportunities for communication in the website, blog, twitter, and Facebook age (Gober, 2012). The effective contemporary superintendent is expected to clearly, and in real time, communicate all of the facets of the district, especially those relating to student achievement results. The next section reviews the literature on preparation of current and aspiring superintendents.

### **Superintendent Preparation**

According to the 2010 AASA decennial study of superintendents 50.7% responded that they intended to be superintendents in 2015 (Kowalski et al., 2011). This percentage is up from the 39% who visualized themselves retired in the next 5 years from the 2007 mid-decade AASA study (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). With this extremely large percentage of current superintendents who will not be in the superintendent position

in 2015, it seems to stress the importance of aspiring superintendent preparation and development. Studies and debates on preparation and licensing for superintendents are as unique and complex as the position itself (Kowalski et al., 2011). In 2010 nearly 79% of superintendents ranked their academic preparation as good or excellent and 81% of superintendents ranked the credibility of their former professors as good or excellent (Kowalski et al., 2011). Relevant reform literature is limited to support the AASA's findings on superintendent preparation (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Many national and local task forces in the last two decades have analyzed the relationship between leadership and university-based leadership programs (Bjork, Kowalski, & Young, 2005). The recommendations from these task forces were seminal as universities and school districts viewed the preparation and recruitment of the next generation of superintendents (Bjork, Kowalski, & Young, 2005). Five important recommendations surfaced from the reform reports:

- Strengthening field connections.
- Revising course content.
- Modifying instructional strategies.
- Providing work-embedded instruction.
- Recruiting student cohorts. (p. 50)

More than 600 colleges and universities offer programs for education administrators (Kowalski et al., 2011). Kowalski et al. (2011) summarized the literature review on academic preparation and noted:

A vast array of criticisms, including

- (a) Low academic admission and completion standards,
- (b) A general indifference toward instructional leadership,
- (c) A disjunction between theory and practice,
- (d) Inattention to practice-based research,



- (e) An inadequate knowledge base,
- (f) A proclivity to treat superintendent preparation as an extension of principal preparation,
- (g) Considering a doctorate in educational administration as the equivalent of superintendent preparation. (p. 8)

In spite of these findings, the number of institutions preparing superintendents continues to grow (Kowalski et al., 2011). Kowalski et al. (2011) argued that the growth of these programs is due to a lack of national curriculum. Without a national licensing criterion, programs will continue to create their own requirements (Kowalski et al., 2011).

In 2000, the National Center for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation was formed in an attempt to progress leadership in our schools (Bjork, Kowalski, & Young, 2005). The National Center for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation joined efforts to redesign universities preparation programs. They identified seven essential themes for redesign:

- The re-centering and re-culturing of the profession must be guided by concern for improving student learning.
- Universities and school districts must share responsibility for professional preparation.
- Leadership standards should be used to bring coherence to program content, measuring effectiveness and separating exceptional from weak programs.
- Research findings should inform efforts to redesign next-generation preparation strategies.
- Leadership standards also should be used to guide professional development activities directed toward building the capacity of veteran leaders to improve student learning.
- Pre-service and in-service leadership preparation should be viewed as parts of a cohesive system designed to improve student learning.
- Transforming professional preparation programs will require immediate and proactive engagement of both the academic and political communities. (p. 55)

University preparation programs also began to work with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education to accept the new *Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership*. These standards focused on what candidates were prepared to do versus how they were prepared (Bjork, Kowalski, & Young, 2005).

The preparation of the contemporary superintendent involves leadership programs to have training in closing the achievement gap, data analysis, social justice, financial, and political dealings (Peterson & Barnett, 2005). Bjork, Glass et al. (2005) have the belief that preparation programs need to be constructivist and move away from instructor focused teaching. Peterson and Barnett (2005) suggested case studies, seminars, and collaborative research as examples of student-centered approaches. The student-centered and constructivist approach will allow for working professionals to collaborate and plan on the stability of the present while planning for the unknowns of the future. Lastly, Peterson and Barnett argued for the assessment of superintendent candidates be connected with standards that provide evidence of learning and research. Many colleges and universities have aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium and/or the AASA standards (see Table 1). The context for the adopted standards of AASA and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium stems out of a desire to allow schools/districts/universities that “can mutually benefit from modifying conventional practices to increase the relevancy of leadership-preparation programs, accruing real dividends will depend on radically redefining the respective roles of institutional partners” (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005, pp. 98-99).

Table 1

*Superintendent-Preparation/Licensing Standards*

<p>AASA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard 1. Leadership and district culture</li> <li>Standard 2. Policy and governance</li> <li>Standard 3. Communications and community relations</li> <li>Standard 4. Organizational management</li> <li>Standard 5. Curriculum planning and development</li> <li>Standard 6. Instructional management</li> </ul>
<p>Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard 1: Setting a widely shared vision for learning. An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.</li> <li>Standard 2: Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.</li> <li>Standard 3: Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.</li> <li>Standard 4: Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</li> <li>Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</li> <li>Standard 6: Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts. An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (Bjork, Kowalski, &amp; Browne-Ferrigno, 2005, pp. 98-99)</li> </ul>

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) encouraged preparation programs to go beyond the standards and train superintendents to view the global picture and be social advocates for

all students. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) explained “university-based preparation programs for superintendents should train students more effectively in applied research methods, including data-based decision making, strategic planning and management, and evaluation techniques” (p. 202). They contend that the concept of superintendent as a social scientist is more important today and university preparation programs need to reflect this.

In a 2012 study on current superintendents and their preparation for the position, Gober noted a need for stronger preparation in the areas of continuous improvement, change process, school-board relations, finance, and a major overhaul of university courses (Gober, 2012). The superintendents desired courses to focus on instructional improvement, relevant, and applicable topics in a collaborative setting (Gober, 2012). The study also celebrated the need for preparation to include hands on learning and encouraged aspiring superintendents to work with current superintendents and work on real problems together in a mentoring fashion (Gober, 2012).

In light of the literature review, and evidence of the gaps in superintendent preparation programs, continued work is to be done in this area. Superintendent preparation programs are encouraged to adopt field-based work-embedded programs (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005).

One example of an innovative superintendent preparation program is seen through an intriguing study in Kentucky. In 2011, Northern Kentucky University invited current Kentucky superintendents to be a part of a unique doctoral cohort. Six superintendents accepted the invitation and formed a cohort, which had distinctly different attributes from

traditional teacher education preparation programs. The university and cohort believed that the use of technology as a means to share best practices was limited in education graduate programs (Floyd et al., 2013).

This cohort created a dissertation-capstone series of interactive videos designed to prepare new and current superintendents for Kentucky's superintendent effectiveness standards (Floyd et al., 2013). The six superintendents created a Leader-Scholar-Community virtual "living entity" which operates much like Wikipedia (Floyd et al., 2013). Superintendents were able to access resources, add, collaborate, network, contribute, share experiences, and meet training requirements for Kentucky's new superintendents (Floyd et al., 2013). The cohort also partnered with the Kentucky Association of School Administrators to help license emerging administrators in the state.

Kowalski et al. (2011) shared that in education, licensing policy has been determined politically rather than by professionals in education. This unique paradigm, in comparison to other professions, has impacted how university preparation programs operate.

Current efforts to eliminate licensing for superintendents have also surfaced typically in large and urban districts (Kowalski et al., 2011). Kowalski et al. (2011) referenced an earlier 2003 study where Feistritz reported that although 41 states still require preparation and licensing for superintendents, over half of them have waivers or emergency avenues to get a license. In 2006, only 39% of superintendents felt the state licensing process was effective or very effective (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

The most traditional path to the position remains to be teacher, building principal, and superintendent (Kowalski et al., 2011). Nearly two thirds began teaching in the secondary school level (Kowalski et al., 2011). The career path for superintendents is dependent on district size (Kowalski et al., 2011).

In summary, the superintendent preparation is increasingly more important as nearly half of all current superintendents do not envision themselves as superintendents in 2015 (Kowalski et al., 2011). This statistic upsurges the timeliness and relevance of further study in the specific area around superintendent preparation. The literature review around superintendent preparation remains multifarious with a through line on improving superintendent preparation programs through reform, mentorship, licensure requirements (or lack of), and innovative collaborations. The next section of the literature review surveys superintendent longevity.

### **Superintendent Longevity**

This section studies the literature on superintendent longevity and contributes to an understanding of the research in this area and its possible outcome of attracting and recruiting the contemporary superintendent to lead the schools of tomorrow. The contemporary superintendent position is often perceived as a position of change every two to three years (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). This is not backed by evidence as the median tenure for superintendents is near six years (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Research has dispelled the “revolving door” myth and the superintendent shortage issue (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Superintendents in small rural and large urban districts share the smallest tenure between one and three years (Bjork, Glass et al., 2005). Large

urban district superintendent turnover gains media exposure to help perpetuate the revolving door myth (Bjork, Glass et al., 2005).

Stability and effectiveness at the superintendent level has been recently examined through the lens of student achievement. Marzano and Waters (2006) noted a positive correlation between the length of superintendent service and student achievement. Positive outcomes appear as early as two years into a superintendent's tenure (Marzano & Waters, 2006). A healthy relationship with the school board, defining strong academic goals, and allowing building level autonomy, are all components of stability in the superintendent position (Marzano & Waters, 2006).

In a recent study of the impact of superintendent longevity Sybrant (2012) researched school districts with superintendents who had longer than average longevity. Sybrant studied superintendent longevity through a context of how programs, relationships, and culture support student achievement. While previous research showed a positive correlation between superintendent longevity and student achievement, Sybrant described why there was the correlation. This study produced four major findings relevant to this review:

Finding 1: Superintendent longevity supports and enhances student achievement by the superintendent's involvement in hiring and retention of good teachers in a consistent manner over many years.

Finding 2: Superintendent longevity supports and enhances student achievement by the superintendent supporting and providing consistent resources for professional development over many years.

Finding 3: Superintendent longevity supports and enhances student achievement by the superintendent removing obstacles so teachers can teach without distractions. This includes efforts to foster a supportive school board and supportive community and takes time to cultivate.

Finding 4: Local conditions influence the longevity of a superintendent through consistency and stability created by a supportive school board and supportive community that has been cultivated over many years. (pp. 231-243)

These findings are relevant to this study as they help describe another piece of the puzzle into an enhanced understanding of the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents.

In a related study around superintendent reform Murphy (2009) offered,

In order for a superintendent's reforms to have a chance to succeed, he or she must be in office for a reasonable period of time. It is not possible see the results of many reforms implemented during the average tenure of a superintendent. Much care should be taken when considering the termination of a superintendent's contract. Running a school district and developing policy is incredibly complex. Training for board members in all aspects of education, from legislation to budget to data-analysis to pedagogy to communication and team-building is crucial. Much of the work and the success of a superintendent hinges on his or her relationship and communication with the members of the board of education. Frequent changes in elected or appointed school board membership can be detrimental to maintaining a clear focus on the needs of students and staff, and may derail progress. (p. 163)

School districts and boards of education work together to provide clear focus and objectives to meet the needs of students and staff and consistent superintendent turnover may throw off any positive momentum (Murphy, 2009).

A review of literature on superintendent longevity articulates and enhances the complexity of the superintendent position and better situates us to understand the lived experiences of retired superintendents. This qualitative study is analyzed through the lens of phenomenology, transformational leadership theory, and perceptual theory.

### **Qualitative Study**

This study of the lived experience of retired transformative public school superintendents is a qualitative study as it is interested in uncovering and interpreting the



meanings of how superintendents describe and make sense of their worlds (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, this is a phenomenology study focused on the lived experiences of the retired superintendents. The design of the study is to describe the core of the experience of the life of a superintendent. This complex position is very well suited for a qualitative, phenomenological study.

This study is also situated through the lens of transformational leadership theory. Transformational leaders have inspired me, including superintendents, and this leadership framework serves as a cornerstone for this study. Transformational leadership theory has been studied and researched as it relates to school superintendents (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978; Gober, 2012; Kowalski, 2013).

The concept of transformational leadership, formally introduced by Burns (1978) in his seminal work entitled *Leadership*. Burns claimed that the “crisis of leadership today is the mediocrity or irresponsibility so many of the men and women in power . . . [who] know far too little about leadership” (p. 1). Burns described a distinction between “transactional” and “transformational” leadership. He described transactional leadership as leaders approaching followers wanting to exchange one thing for another, for instance jobs for votes (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership has a moral component to it and recognizes an existing need from a follower and creates mutually beneficial relationships.

The transforming leadership occurs “when one or more persons engage with each other in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978, p. 4). Burns (1978) added, “The result of

transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (p. 4). Gandhi, according to Burns, is an example of the quintessential leader who met people’s initial needs and remained committed to higher purposes and aspirations without seeking power. Transformational leadership theory has evolved, as it is being measured and conceptualized.

Bass and Riggio (2006) explained the transformational relationship is more complex than modest agreements and exchanges and articulate four main components of understanding transformation theory.

The four main components are:

1. Leadership is charismatic, and followers seek to identify with the leader and emulate him or her.
2. The leadership inspires followers with challenge and persuasion, providing both meaning and understanding.
3. The leadership is intellectually stimulating, expanding the followers’ use of their abilities.
4. The leadership is individually considerate, providing the follower with support, mentoring, and coaching. (p. 5)

Research on transformational leadership has grown because of instruments used to measure transformational leadership. The most popular instrument used is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and it is used in many research studies (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire contains standardized items and outcomes, including rating of the satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and follower’s effort as a result of a leader’s performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Education researchers have also provided their own working definitions of transformational leadership and its role for superintendents (Kowalski, 2013, Sagor & Rickey, 2012). The definition of transformational leadership, as articulated by Kowalski

(2013), is administrative behavior shaped by the belief that most employees are inclined to act as professionals and to help others. Through working together all will be elevated and will meet shared goals and ideals. There is a notion of empowering others to bring about significant change and in the school setting the motivation of all is essential. This is contrarian thinking to transactional leadership where the actions of the leader are developed from the belief that people are motivated from self-interests and therefore leaders use rewards and punishment to influence behavior (Kowalski, 2013).

Kowalski (2013) elucidated the need for the transformative, contemporary superintendent to lead the district where teachers, principals, students, and parents see school as a collaborative endeavor; they are more likely to enthusiastically take ownership and pride in their school communities. The actions of transformative leaders in schools can directly and indirectly influence teachers' job satisfaction and perception of their own professional duties and education in general (Kowalski, 2013). Leithwood (1994) described transformational leadership in schools as embracing the following elements:

- Building a shared vision of the school
  - Creating and aligning school and district goals
  - Creating an intellectually stimulating environment
  - Nurturing a positive, learning-oriented culture
  - Providing individual support and development opportunities
  - Modeling best practices and learning-oriented organizational values
  - Creating authentic organizational structures that support shared decision-making venues
  - Establishing and reifying high expectations for student and adult learning.
- (p. 518)

To build upon these elements, Gober (2012) insisted the role of the contemporary superintendent must possess the skills of transformational leadership in order to be

successful for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A key component for the success of the contemporary superintendent is to develop the skills to know and understand the diverse needs of their school communities (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). There has been a monumental shift in superintendent leadership from being a school manager to a transformational leader (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005) and an important component is the emergence of the moral purposes of education.

Sagor and Rickey (2012) explored transformational leadership through the lens of a visionary superintendent in Oregon and list three key leadership functions of a transformational educational leader:

1. The development and nurturing of a shared community vision
2. The development and nurturing of an “ethic of continuous improvement”
3. The development and nurturing of the organization’s commitment to productive and ethical human relations. (p. 14)

Sagor and Rickey discovered transformative educational leadership to be a relentless pursuit of excellence where people were put first and accountability created strong learning communities. Sagor and Rickey shared, “Rather than a system of rewards and sanctions based on test scores, we saw communities of educators pushing themselves to higher and higher levels of performance and, with it, increased student achievement” (p. 151). Lastly, Sagor and Rickey reported the following five sets of values for success as a transformative leader: Be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard, and be mission driven (p. 154).

This study is also positioned through the eyes and perceptions of the retired superintendents. In order to make sense of perceptions it is important to comprehend perceptual theory and tradition. Carolan’s (2008) study on perception described

perceptual theory as a theory that emphasizes the perceiving person and the life experiences of that person. Perceptual theory desires to understand behavior from the perspective of a person's own unique and personal experience (Carolan, 2008). Purkey and Schmidt (1987) outlined 14 assumptions of perceptual theory:

1. There may be a preexistent reality, but an individual can only know that part which comprises his or her perceptual world, the world of awareness.
2. Perceptions at any given moment exist at countless levels of awareness, from the vaguest to the sharpest.
3. Because people are limited in what they can perceive, they are highly selective in what they choose to perceive.
4. All experiences are phenomenal in character: The fact that two individuals share the same physical environment does not mean that they will have the same experiences.
5. What individuals choose to perceive is determined by past experiences as mediated by present purposes, perceptions, and expectations.
6. Individuals tend to perceive only that which is relevant to their purposes and make their choices accordingly.
7. Choices are determined by perceptions, not facts. How a person behaves is a function of his or her perceptual field at the moment of acting.
8. No perception can ever be fully shared or totally communicated because it is embedded in the life of the individual.
9. 'Phenomenal absolutism' means that people tend to assume that other observers perceive as they do. If others perceive differently, it is often thought to be because others are mistaken or because they lie.
10. The perceptual field, including the perceived self, is internally organized and personally meaningful. When this organization and meaning are threatened, emotional problems are likely to result.
11. Communication depends on the process of acquiring greater mutual understanding of one another's phenomenal fields.
12. People not only perceive the world of the present but they also reflect on past experiences and imagine future ones to guide their behavior.
13. Beliefs can and do create their own social reality. People respond with feelings not to "reality" but to their perceptions of reality.
14. Reality can exist for an individual only when he or she is conscious of it and has some relationship with it. (p. 30)

In this study knowledge of perceptual theory is beneficial to gaining insight into the world and experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents. Purkey

and Schmidt (1987) shared, "A person's behavior may make little sense when observed from the 'external' views of other people, but this same behavior makes great sense when understood from the vantage point of the 'internal' view of the experiencing person" (p. 30).

In summary, the literature and skills set of the transformative educational leader supports the 21<sup>st</sup> century superintendent who will be consistently called upon to meet the diverse needs of the district now, all while keeping a focus on the future.

### **Literature Review Summary**

The literature on retired school superintendents, situated role of superintendents, contemporary position of superintendents, and the qualitative research design through a phenomenological lens of transformational leadership theory and perceptual theory, provides a foundation for this study. The following chapter explains the methodology utilized for this research study. The primary purpose is to learn through the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents as they describe and make sense of their personal and professional experience of demands of the superintendency.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section explains the methodology approach and rationale for the study. The second section designates the population and the sampling methods employed in the study, including criteria. The third section discusses the design and development of the survey instrument. The last section explains the data collection tools, methods of data analysis, and the interview technique.

As previously noted, the primary focus of this study was to examine the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. The procedures used should provide a portrayal of how retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon perceived their work. By recalling the lived experiences of retired public school superintendents in Oregon, the superintendents can provide gripping evidence to how these school administrators dealt with the successes and challenges of the position. It is also hoped that a more eloquent understanding of what the work of a superintendent is like as well as recommendations of former superintendents for the next generation of superintendents will be acquired.

The present research will provide valuable information to future superintendents in Oregon and those who research them because it continues to fill a gap in the body of knowledge around the work of a superintendent. The design and methodology of the study followed a qualitative approach incorporating phenomenology, perceptual theory and transformative leadership lens.

### **Rationale for Qualitative Study**

Merriam (2009) described qualitative researchers as being “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). There is focus on meaning and understanding while the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The qualitative researcher tells an extremely descriptive story and words and pictures are used to describe what the researcher has learned (Merriam, 2009).

Specifically, phenomenology is used to describe the essence of an experience (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) explained that the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection. Marshall and Rossman (2011) enlightened readers that phenomenological approaches “explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience” (p. 19). Probing, follow up questions, and examples from my experiences provoked more detailed responses from the participants. I did this when appropriate to invite detailed stories and experiences of the retired superintendents. The lived experiences of the retired superintendents have an opportunity to guide future superintendents and add to a body of limited work around the wisdom of the retired superintendent.

### **The Population and the Sample**

The population for this study was retired transformative public school superintendents in the state of Oregon. The sample of participants was nine retired school superintendents. The purposive sampling of participants began with three retired superintendents with whom I have a professional relationship. Each of the three



superintendents recommended two others to give a total of nine for the study. Criteria, borrowed and adapted from previous retired superintendent studies (Bau 1982; Brinson, 1997; Wenzel, 1996) included: (a) the superintendent must have served at a public school in Oregon, (b) the superintendent must have been a transformational leader, and (c) the superintendent must have served in that capacity for a minimum of 10 years, though not all in the state of Oregon.

The participants were contacted via a phone conversation or electronic mail followed by electronic mail with detailed information. The participants were given a copy of the interview questions as well as two copies of the consent form (one for the study and one for their records).

### **Instrumentation**

I utilized in-depth interviews to explore more deeply the lived experiences of the retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. Building off previous retired superintendent studies, these questions have a combination of open-ended and demographic questions to give a richer description of the participant. The questions were crafted through collaboration with my chair, Dr. Brinson, peers, previous studies, and relevant literature. The result was an interview of 27 questions.

The interview questions are as follows. The questions are immediately followed by rationale for the construction of the question.

Interview Questions:

1. You were a school superintendent for how many years?
2. In what district (s) were you a school superintendent?
3. What was the name of the school district from which you retired?

4. After what year did you retire from the school superintendency?
5. Did you come from a family of educators? If you have children, are any of them involved in education?
6. What are your fondest recollections of your years as a superintendent?
7. Describe your career trajectory prior to you becoming a superintendent.
8. What factors originally influenced your choice to become a superintendent?
9. Did you feel well prepared when you became a superintendent, and if not, what might have helped?
10. What things did you do as superintendent that you were most proud of? Was there anything you were proudest of? Why?
11. What things were you least proud of? Was there anything you were least proud of?
12. The superintendency has been characterized as challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful. What would you add or change to that statement?
13. Describe experiences or stories in your position as superintendent where equity played an integral role?
14. The five main roles (as noted by Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011) of the position of the superintendent are teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. What role dominated your time as a superintendent and why?
15. Do you see yourself as an innovator? If so, how? If not, why not? Do you believe that is an important role for the superintendent position?
16. Describe experiences from your work as a superintendent that were transformational.
17. Under what circumstances were you able to completely relax and set aside the demands of the superintendency?
18. If you were hiring a superintendent today what are essential attributes you would look for? Are these attributes the same or different from those needed when you were a superintendent? What are your views on the non-traditional route to the superintendency?

19. Darling-Hammond (2010) explains the new mission of schools is, “to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented” (p. 2). Please comment on her quote.
20. Describe experiences from your work where you helped schools, students, principals, teachers, parents, and board members get on “winning streaks”- where two or more good things were happening and it propelled them toward success.
21. What role does humor play in the work of a superintendent?
22. What would your school board (s) say was your legacy and greatest challenges?
23. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon?
24. What advice would you give to future superintendents? And to their spouses and families?
25. Knowing what you know now, if you had to do it over, would you become a school superintendent?
26. One school leader in Oregon recently said a successful superintendent needs to commit to a rather simple set of values: Be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard, and be mission driven. Please respond to that statement.
27. You were a superintendent for a considerable amount of time during which you experienced many things, some of which we may not have discussed. Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **Explanation of Rationale Used**

The interview consists of 13 questions inspired by and identical to queries made by previous seminal retired superintendent studies by Brinson (1997) and Bau (1982). These questions are vital to a contemporary view of the lived experiences of retired superintendents. 13 questions are new and designed to allow for freedom of expression for a richer understanding of the lived experience of the retired superintendents.

Questions 1-5 address demographic information that is used to describe and situate the individual participants. The demographic information is helpful examining their lived experiences. The questions are designed to solicit short responses but may allow for a participant to share more information. Question 5 is identical to Brinson's (1997) study and is intriguing to know prior to exploring deeper questions.

Question 6 begins the profounder questions around the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents. Question 6 is from Bau's (1982) study on retired superintendents and used as an inviting start to the interview.

Questions 7-9 are used to frame the participant's pre-superintendency. Question 7 allows for responses to be compared between other participant's and current research around superintendent preparation. Question 8 is a re-write from Brinson's (1997) study and gives insight to the other questions in the interview. Question 9 is from Bau's (1982) study and frames future questions around future superintendent's practice.

Questions 10 and 11 are also from Bau's (1982) study and allow the participant to recollect what they are most and least proud of during their time as superintendent. Question 12 is from Brinson's (1997) study and is designed to dig at the position of the superintendency as a challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful endeavor.

Questions 13-16 are based on current research on the position of the superintendency. Question 13 allows for the participant to delve into their thinking about social justice and equity in relation to their time as a superintendent. This question is based on Fusarelli and Fusarelli's work (2005). Question 14 is crafted from the five main role concepts of Callahan (1966) and Kowalski et al. (2011). Responses vary from

participants and allow for an explanation of those roles. Question 15 is built from Gober's (2012) study of superintendents and allows the participants to self-reflect on their view of themselves as innovators. Question 16 is crafted from transformational leadership literature and is instrumental to the study of transformative retired public school superintendents and probes participants around their experiences from their work. It is open-ended to allow for a deep and rich exploration of transformational leadership.

Questions 18 was identical to Bau's (1982) study and get at a possible change in times for studying past, current, and future practice. Question 19 was a quote from Darling-Hammond (2010) around preparing students for the future and delves more into the innovator question.

Questions 20-22 were fashioned to engage in two areas of the position of the superintendent that have been limited in literature. Question 21 is built from conversations with current superintendents is intentionally open-ended to allow for exploration. Question 22 calls for an analysis of a school boards interpretation of the participant's legacy and challenges.

Question 23 is specific to Oregon, as the participant's intricate knowledge of the state will provide a rich comprehension of lived experience.

Questions 24, 25, and 27 are used from Brinson's (1997) study and allow each participant to give advice to future superintendents and for a concluding question to allow additional information to be shared.

Lastly, Question 26 is created from Sagor and Rickey's (2012) work of a transformational leader.

### **Data Collection and Interview Technique**

The participants were initially contacted by phone or electronic mail and a face-to-face interview was scheduled. The scheduled interviews were an hour and a half in length and were conducted at the participant's home or choice of location. Participants signed two copies of the consent to participate form, one for their records. To prepare for the interview, participants were also electronically mailed a copy of the interview questions.

I secured permission from nine retired superintendents to be audiotaped for the interview, assuring their identities would remain confidential. I recorded the data through a tape recorder and notes taken during the interview. Interviews started with me describing the study and sharing a brief personal educational background and inspiration for the study. Multiple points of clarification occurred during the interview. After each interview I thanked the superintendent, followed by an electronic thank you letter.

The in-depth interviews revealed the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon. I downloaded my digital recording of the interviews and sent them to an online transcription service called [www.rev.com](http://www.rev.com). Upon receipt of the transcribed interviews I reviewed them for accuracy.

### **Data Analysis**

After all of the interviews were conducted, they were coded to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The interview schedule in the study was “formulated to elicit memorable stories and anecdotes, and to probe for reflection and analysis upon recollected events and experiences” (Wenzel, 1996, p. 42). For the purpose of analysis,

classifications of responses were initially made across the questions. Common words, language, phrases, and experiences were categorized and coded. Themes from the data were also created. NVivo 10 was used to analyze my codes and themes. NVivo 10, a simple qualitative program is useful in helping to examine interviews, pictures, documents, surveys, and audio.

An analysis of the data included looking for commonalities and outliers and for common themes to emerge. I also had Dr. Brinson, my dissertation chair, looking over my shoulder to help point out themes, tendencies, and noticings. I also had a third party outside of the education field offer interpretation and perspective on my findings.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the methodology and research procedures used to examine the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon. Upon completion of data collection and analysis, the following chapters discuss results and findings. The results offer new insights into the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon.

CHAPTER IV  
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. A structured interview schedule, made up of 27 questions, was used in interviewing nine participants. Each interview was approximately 90 minutes in length and was conducted at the participant's home or location of their choosing. To protect the identity of the participants, each was assigned a single letter from A-I as an identifier.

Data from the interviews were collected and coded by themes. The analysis included relationships by the respondents' words and through researcher interpretation of the words' meaning. The complete interviews are recorded in Appendix A. Appendix A allows the reader to cross-reference the responses made to each question. The researcher's dissertation committee chair, an experienced investigator, checked on the themes of the responses.

Chapter 4 contains an introduction, the presentation and analysis of the participants' responses, and the researcher's conversation of the findings. After an initial discussion of the demographics and background of the participants (Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7) an analysis of the responses has been organized into 7 themes. The themes, and the questions they apply to, are shown in Table 2.



Table 2

*Themes*

Theme	Questions
Leadership	6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 26
Roles and Attributes of Superintendents	15, 16, 18, 20, and 21
Advice to Future Superintendents	19, 24, and 27
Fulfilling and Meaningful Work	12, 17, and 25
Equity	13
Legacy	22
Biggest Challenges facing Future Superintendents	23

### **Presentation and Analysis of the Participants' Responses**

#### **Demographics/Background**

The demographic and background data contain questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

These data are presented through means and varied responses of the participants.

Question 1 of the interview schedule was “You were a school superintendent for how many years?” The mean years of superintendency were 19.4, ranging from 10 to 32.

Question 2 of the interview schedule was “In what district (s) were you a school superintendent?” The mean number of districts was 2.3, ranging from 1 to 5. Question 4 of the interview schedule was “After what year did you retire from the school superintendency?” The mean number of the year of retirement for the participants was 2008, ranging from 1993 to 2014.

Question 5 of the interview schedule was “Did you come from a family of educators? If you have children, are any of them involved in education?” Similar to

previous superintendent studies (Bau 1982; Brinson 1997), the bulk of participants did not come from a family of educators. Seven participants did not come from a family of educators. Participant F's parents were in education as dad was an assistant superintendent and mom was a teacher. Participant H's parents were a teacher and dean.

Several participants had additional information in response to question 5.

Participant A mentioned that he wished he would have had a high school teacher sparked his interest in education. Participant B noted their brother was the first person to graduate from college. Participant C stated that his parents were farmers and had no real understanding of education. Participant D explained that teachers were held in high esteem and there was a real commitment to education in the household and that education was the only way to overcome discrimination seen during wartime. Participant E was the first of his family to graduate from college and came from a family of immigrants with strong values of hard work and commitment. Participant G was also the first of his family to go college.

The second part of interview question number 5 was "If you have children, are any of them involved in education?" Participants B, D, and G have children involved in education.

Question 7 of the interview schedule was "Describe your career trajectory prior to you becoming a superintendent." Participants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and I all began their careers as a teacher and had a traditional path to the superintendency. Participants A, B, C, E, and I were teachers, principals, and then superintendents. Participants D and G were Human Resource directors prior to their superintendency. Participant C noted his start

into administration as “I was starting out in counseling thinking maybe I want to be a counselor. So, I switched to administration, which is probably a good thing. Counseling would not have been probably my thing. I became a half time assistant principal and half time teacher.” Later that year the principal offered participant C the job of acting principal while he took a sabbatical. Participant E noted

I was teaching at ABC college at that time and had the highest ratings of the ABC educational administration staff. XYZ university then recruited me to go there as an administrator residence because they didn't have any practicing administrators to teach their practicing courses. I taught a full four-class schedule of graduate course for DEF for two years, get all my doctoral course work and that was two years and came back as superintendent. The board allowed me to do that. I went with the understanding that I could come back but there's no guarantee it would be as a superintendent. I was able to do that at 41, and I was a high school administrator as an assistant principal at 26. High school principal at 34 and superintendent at 41, was able to (at a relatively young age-wise) in a sense get breaks. If you could do reasonably well to begin with, you are considered to be better than the last guy. I've never had a year where I didn't teach. Never.

Participant G stated,

As soon as I got my superintendents credential, I applied for superintendency and I got it. It was a district and it had a lot of trouble, a world of trouble. They had fired the last five or six superintendents and all of my friends said not to apply for that. I was 28 years old at that time. I said if I fail, I'm just kind of write it down as nothing, but if I succeed, it's going to be different... We were doing some very exciting kinds of things and at that time, they were looking at converging county school offices and to enter education districts around the nation. We were the first to do countywide accounting. We had two rooms bigger than this full of computers. I mean they were huge things and the districts sent the stuff too. It's on rolls of tape and we have embedded over here and were one of the first in the nation to have county wide educational libraries... The United States Office of Education called and asked if I'd be interested in a job. They appointed an urban task force made up from people in the Office of Education. Somehow, I got appointed vice-chair of that. I was 33 or 34 at this time and it's remarkable the kind of experiences and that I was able to be a part of.

Interestingly, many participants became superintendents at a young age and fairly early in their careers.

## **Summary of the Background and Demographics**

The first five questions of the interview schedule consisted of demographic and background information. This information is a generalized picture of the participants and their varied experiences as a superintendent. On average, the participants were superintendents for nearly 19 years at two districts apiece. The average year they retired was 2008 and most did not come from a family of educators and did not have children involved in education. Most participants followed the traditional teacher, principal, and superintendent pathway and started at an early point in their educational careers.

## **Leadership**

The theme of leadership emerged because the participants gave the highest number of responses. The notion of leadership was prevalent throughout most of the interviews and this section synthesizes data from a number of questions. The data were gathered from questions 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 26. This theme is represented through this section with tables and representative responses from participants. This section is a summary of those responses.

Question 6 of the interview schedule is “What are your fondest recollections of your years as a superintendent?” Participant A stated, “To be able to be in a leadership role in that situation was just a glorious opportunity.” Participant B mentioned the pride in hiring and mentoring leaders for education. He said,

I think that’s just the ability to help people grow in their career and become successful. I presided over 60 graduation ceremonies and over 10,000 students and just to be part of that whole, to see the culmination of all the students, the K through 12 education. I was able to give each of my daughters their diploma.

Participant C cherished the relationships with adults and students in his leadership. He explained “People and the relationships and the connections you made that last long term. Those are probably the most significant things to me that I remember, having those relationships.” Participant E shared

I would say the thing that I could point to specifically because I look at leadership, prevalent, my rule of thumb of leadership is if you want to be a successful leader, it's paradoxical that you need to create the conditions for other people's success. It's not about you. It's about what you do to create the conditions for others. At the same time, it's absolutely about you because if you can't be the person you need to be later, you can't create the conditions for other people's success. Much with being a superintendent is working on those balances. If I was to point to things, I would say that successes that other people have been able to have that I have been able to work with kids, the parents, the other administrators, the teachers, that's where the joy is. It's what it's all about. You do it because of the people. You do it because you care about them in becoming what they're capable to do.

Participant G exclaimed that watching people grow and develop is exciting and hiring great people. Participant H fondly remembers his colleagues and relationships. He said,

I strongly believe in the strength of community and, as a superintendent, really emphasized that we are the communities of schools and that we really serve parents and communities. It's important that the relationship we have amongst ourselves and with our community be one that we place at a high priority, at a high premium.

Participant I shared the beginning of school was always a fond leadership memory for her. She shared personal stories to the whole staff and believed strongly in a powerful opening to the school year. She explained,

It was very positive. I had a lot of folks come up afterwards and talk about that every year. The opening of school became a big event. For whatever reason, I never intended it to be this way but my opening of school speeches, people would cry. I don't know why but I always had a story or two to share that I had saved from over the year and shared it next August in-service. People would...when the superintendent sends the back to school letter, they'd go, it's time to get my Kleenex.

Question 8 of the interview schedule was “What factors originally influenced your choice to become a superintendent?” (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Question 8*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Leadership role	A, B, C, E, H, I	6
Position regarded as fun	C, G	2
Working on doctorate	B, C, F, I	4

Participants had a variety of responses to this interview question. There was a desire to seek a continued leadership role in participants A, B, C, D, E, H, and I.

Participant B expressed,

I go back to what influenced me to become an administrator and I’ve always been called to leadership throughout when I was growing up, a student body class officer, in high school. When I was in college I was active in leadership roles in college, in my fraternity and in campus. I was called to being a leader and this sounds really arrogant but I got looking around when I started teaching and said, I can do it better than they can do it. I’ve got better ideas, I’m more energetic, and all of those things that a young 20 something thinks and so that propelled me.

Participants C and G viewed the superintendent position as fun. They both thought it would be a great deal of fun. Participant C was working with a central office team that had so much fun together that “We’d go out for lunch and come back just giggling, uncontrollable laughter. Just one of those kinds of teams you could get into that fun with.” Participant G watched board meetings with people and hiring staff and thought

“Hey, that looks fun to me.” He thought it looked like the superintendent position was where all the fun was.

Question 9 of the interview schedule was “Did you feel well prepared when you became superintendent, and if not, what might have helped?” (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Question 9*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Yes	C, G	2
No	A, B, E, H, I	5
Yes and No	D, F	2

Participants elaborated on their initial response to the interview question number 9. Participants C and G both said they felt prepared to become superintendent, but for different reasons. Participant G felt he was prepared because he was always a pretty good student and he had studied up on the superintendency. Participant C’s ego was strong enough to think he could do it. He said,

First of all, I felt I was ready. I really felt, I got a year left to go on my doctorate. I’ve had this experience as an assistant superintend. I was 41 years old. This is the right time. I felt prepared. I also had some ambition at that point about wanting to really be in that place. I can do this better or at least I thought I could.

Participants A, B, E, H, and I all said they were not prepared for the superintendency.

Participant I was not prepared for the school finance part of it. Participant A was naïve

about negotiations, the role of the superintendent, and the media. Participant B was not prepared for the complexity of the school board relationship. He mentioned,

I was not well prepared for a very key part of it and you cannot prepare anyone for one of the key roles and that's the relationship with your school board. That's an on the job training and I picked the brains of a lot of different superintendents. How do you work with your board, what do you do, and I tried to learn from colleagues, things that they found to be successful. You don't know how you're going to work with the board until you start working with the board. You've got five to seven personalities and they all came to their roles from certain positions. It's fortunate the board that hired me was a good board, was a stable board.

Participant H did not feel prepared even after spending 13 years as superintendent. He viewed the position as one of continuous growth and challenges. Participant E did not feel prepared but did feel confident.

Participants D and F responded with both a yes and no. Participant F did not feel overwhelmed, as he knew what the job was and knew what needed to be done. He did feel intimidated because of his age. He further explained, "It just felt awkward to me. I never had any pushback from anybody; I just felt a little intimidated organizing and supervising my elders. It felt strange." Participant D responded,

I don't think anything about the course work really prepared me, I think what prepared me was I was a leader all along. When I was a teacher we used to have these grade level teams and I would always be the one to facilitate it. When I was a first year teacher I applied for a grant to create integrated PE and I got it. I was always just kind of involved in leadership, I don't know exactly why because I was not a leader in high school particularly. I was a disengaged kid and I wasn't a kid who really who really liked high school and who did well in high school. I think that's partly what motivated me to go into education. I think I had a lot of leadership experience and I think the thing that influences me the most if you have to learn a lot from those around you.



Question 10 of the interview schedule was “What things did you do as superintendent that you were most proud of? Was there anything you were proudest of? Why?” (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Question 10*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Relationships/People	B, C, E, G, I	5
Student Achievement	A, D, F, G	4
Budget Management	B, I	2

Participants B, E, G, and I noted the depth and quality of the people and relationships they worked with.

Participant B is proud of

The people that I mentored and have grown and have become very successful superintendents. Well, one of the things that I’m very proud of and this is throughout my career is I knew the people. I knew their names and I actually knew a little something about them. To me it what was very important that if people know that I care enough about them to know their name that I can make mistakes and screw up and they’re going to forgive me. I can also be in a position where I can lead them. They’re going to follow more so when they know I care. They don’t care how much you know until you know much you care.

Participant E elaborated his answer to this question by stating,

One of the things I value is to believe that the people you surround yourself with are absolutely critical to your success and the success of what you’re trying to do. Right person, right role, right focus, right strategy, if you have any one of those four things out of alignment, you’re going to be less successful than you’re capable of being. Hiring the right person and then putting the right person in the

right role is key. My finance director should not be my human resources director. He would be bad at that.

Participant G described building relationships with people through education. He designed an early childhood education aimed at helping mothers and young kids. His education program was distributed throughout the United States and focused on giving parents skills to really make a “substantial difference” in their children. He noted,

That area (of early childhood education) became a notion of mine that if we were going to be successful in the school district it had to be because the people we had and the fact that these people were growing, they weren't being stagnant. There was a growth going on in those people.

Participant C explained the role of relationships in the context of longevity and in creating an enduring mission statement. He described it as,

I think longevity is a good thing. We created a mission statement that is so enduring. It's been our mission statement for 21 years now. There are times new board members will come on and kind of wanted to take another look at it. People kind of, in the community said, no. It touches the community so deeply. It is being able to just kind of stay with that and then build the culture around thinking about that. I enjoyed the idea of how do you build this culture of being in dialogue and thinking together, focusing on the mission, relationships in this organization. I look at that and I think that's really what I ended up feeling really proud about. The culture of the ABC district was a powerful, is a powerful culture around learning and relationships and strong value base.

Participants A, D, F, and G are very proud of raising student achievement and growth during their superintendency. Participant A was proud of elevating student achievement through placing an emphasis that it's “all about student learning” and the culture needs to shift from a management approach to an “how does this impact student achievement and learning?” Participant D was particularly proud of the creation of an academic and math academy designed to reach all students.

Participants B and I were very proud of the passing of bonds and the management of finances especially during difficult times.

Participant H was very proud of his focus on equity in his district.

Question 11 of the interview schedule was “What things were you least proud of? Was there anything you were least proud of?” (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Question 11*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Hiring/not firing people	A, B, C, D, E, G	6
Finances	A, B, I	3
Achievement gap	H	1

Interestingly, participants noted people as both a proud and least proud recollection of their time as superintendent. Participants A, B, C, D, E, and G specifically recall their least proud moments were with the hiring and not firing of people. Participant C was frustrated at times when he would really miss something in terms of reading a relationship incorrectly. Participant E recalled how he wished he would go back and handle a few teachers and administrators differently.

Participant B said,

Probably we hired two principals that my gut told me we shouldn't and we shouldn't have. One I removed after a year and half. One, he was a disaster and we run a collaborative process for hiring and I always like to, one of my mantras was the process will let the cream rise to the top. I trusted the process but my gut

told me don't, but I trusted my rational side, not my gut. Those were, when you make a big mistake like that you just and they were mistakes.

Participant D shared the same sentiments of wanting to let people go sooner and she explained,

There are some pretty poison people who can be holding up a whole lot of stress. It's a real balance between how long do you support them and how soon do you say it's just not going to work. In fact, it's people whose values are so different that to really try to shift them I could have gotten things done faster if I had moved a few people.

Participant C took pride in his hiring process so when he was wrong it really stuck with him. He said,

I just hated it when we made a bad hire. You go through this process and all these involved and you'd have this person and think, yeah. Then a month later you think, oh crap. What a mistake. There are others that I just hated it when we would go through the process and just make a mistake. You couldn't tell. You just didn't know. Or maybe getting it, seeing it, I don't know. For all the effort we did to try to make a good decision on hiring, we still made mistakes. And the people then had to put up with that, there are still people to this day who are probably still smarting for some of the hires we made. It leaves them scarred in some way to have, particularly around administrators, to have a bad experience with administration. You don't get over that easy. Not at an administrative level. You can take some really good people and they can become union activists as a results of it and it kind of turns them off. When you make a mistake, you're not proud of this. I screwed up. One of the lessons often times those things were a result of not listening to my own voice. Most people heard me talking about the tickbird. That idea that your own voice is telling you something, and to train your mind to listen to it and to be responsive to it.

Participants A, B, and I shared moments they were not proud of with financial decisions.

Participant I explained the extreme budget challenge of letting off effective teachers during budget cuts. Participants A and B lamented going out for bonds when (in hindsight) they should not have.

Participant H struggled with the achievement gap that still existed in his district when he left. He stated, “In spite of our efforts with equity and excellence and choice, we still didn’t make the significant dent in closing the achievement gap, not for want to trying or effort.”

Question 14 of the interview schedule was, “The five main roles (as noted by Callahan, 1966; Kowalski et al., 2011) of the position of the superintendent are teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. What role dominated your time as a superintendent and why?” (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Question 14*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Democratic Leader	A, B, D, F, H	5
Various	G, I	2
Communicator	C	1
Manager	E	1

Participants A, B, D, F, and H all responded with democratic leader but many elaborated further. Participant F rearranged his office to make it a more inviting and a democratic meeting space. Participant D encouraged democracy by inviting her leadership team to allow people (in a meeting) to talk 90% of the time and for her team to talk 10% (it was previously flipped). Participant H was a democratic leader who brought in well-respected instructional leaders. Participant A said,

I would say democratic leader because I was often criticized, and I think rightly so, of being a little slower than people would like in decision making. Part of democracy, I do believe, it's the best governance system but it is not the most efficient and it is not the most effective. In order to work, representative voices need to be able to speak, be heard, and influence. I think we tried hard to carry forward the best tenets of democracy in our decision-making. We didn't always do it right, we didn't always get everybody that needed to, but I tried to slow down most of the processes so that there could be enough time. I think I'd rather be criticized for going too slow and maybe getting the right decision than going as fast as a lot of people wanted and not getting the input that we give support.

Participant I commented that she spent a great deal of time in a counseling role and “nobody ever comes to see you when they're happy. They come to see you because they didn't get what they wanted from the teacher, the coach, the principal, and the board member.” Participant G did not think he fit nicely into any of those options but rather saw himself as an educator. His job was to educate everyone in the district. Participant C connected with being a strong communicator. He spoke about the importance of being careful about what you say because people will listen “in a way you don't expect.” He continued by saying, “You have to be careful about how you communicate. Watching what you say and then being more like a good questioner and a good listener. Tell me about this.” Participant E expressed the need to be a manager and in order to operate a complex system that is well managed.

Question 26 of the interview schedule was, “One school leader in Oregon recently said a successful superintendent needs to commit to a rather simple set of values: Be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard, and be mission driven. Please respond to that statement” (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Question 26*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Agree	A, F, I	3
Agree and add to statement	B, C, D, G, H	5

Participants A, C, F, and I all agreed with the statement. Participant F has the belief that it is a great set of values to live and work by. He does not think anything is missing. Participant I would want him on her team. Participant A could not improve on the list.

Participants B, C, D, G, and H all agreed with the statement but added to it. Participant H would go in reverse order with mission driven leading the way. He shared that we are accountable to the community and that educators work for their communities. Participant G would want a superintendent to have a good understanding of education and

Ought to hope to be one of best educators in the community. That doesn't mean that he necessarily has to be. There are maybe other people in the staff that are equally good but there ought to be a notion that I'm going to ride to that very upper tier of educators not only here, but also throughout the state. I think lots of superintendents become business managers and that's not what being a superintendent is about and it's not about scheduling bus routes.

Participant A added that a superintendent needs to be a people person and that it is the success of the people around you that is important. He stated, "It's all about making sure that the people you work with are successful because when they're successful, you're successful." Participant D added, "child centered" to the statement. Participant C

corrected the statement by saying that “being positive is an attitude, not a value” and that some people are programmed positive and others negative.

### **Summary of Leadership**

Seven questions of the interview schedule were used to communicate the role of leadership in the position of the superintendent. In summarizing this section, a glimpse into the complexity of the superintendent position can be attained.

The participants generally have a strong sense of studying leadership and many were drawn to the position at an early point in their educational career. The participants mostly followed the traditional route of teacher, principal, and superintendent pathway. Their recollections account for both positive and negative experiences around their time as superintendent. The participants generally saw themselves as democratic leaders who agree to a rather simple set of values. They view themselves as educators.

### **Roles and Attributes of Superintendents**

The next theme is the roles and attributes of superintendents. This section is comprised of questions 15, 16, 18, 20, and 21. This theme of data contains tables and representative responses from the participants. This section serves as a summary of those responses.

Question 15 of the interview schedule was, “Do you see yourself as an innovator? If so, how? If not, why not? Do you believe that is an important role for the superintendent position?” (see Table 9).



Table 9

*Question 15*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Yes	A, B, C, D, F, H, I	7
No, I would use another word	E, G	2

Participants A, B, C, D, F, H, and I all admitted to seeing themselves as innovators. Participants elaborated on their responses and it produced fascinating results. In general, most participants wanted to change the word or meaning of innovator and gave examples to follow.

Participant I used the term “instructional leader” and believed that “heart of innovation” is the ability to make interventions and changes to a system. Participant H said he was a “pragmatic innovator” and cited his work around equity as a lasting example of innovation in the district. He was innovative in his hiring practices as well. Participant F felt he was innovative with ideas like a 4-day school week and place-based learning. He shared that he had a sense of evaluating what the districts and community needed and doing something about it.

Participant A explained he was innovative by constantly learning about leadership and strategies to become better. This resulted in innovative examples of the proficiency movement and equity work. Participant B talked about his hiring practices as an innovative aspect of his leadership. He also re branded his district through an innovative

marketing campaign. Participant D considered herself an innovator around utilizing a budget and in the area of technology.

In one of the most interesting findings in the study, participant C explained he was an “informed opportunist” and a good “problem solver.” When unique situations would arise he would find unique solutions. He has the belief that, “If you are informed, and you are knowledgeable, take advantage of that.” He asked questions, which led to innovation such as unique, school designs and multidimensional libraries. He encouraged others to be innovators and invited them to say, “let’s play with this, let’s experiment with this.” He continued,

It created in a sense an invitation for them to be innovators. I think that maybe is more of an important role of the superintendent, that you invite others to be creative in their thinking. If you think you hold all the innovation in your office and in your person, you are limiting everybody else. Ask questions. Make it OK to explore.

Participant G described himself as a problem solver more than an innovator. He said, “We didn’t innovate for the sake of innovating, we solved problems.” Participant E did not agree with the term innovation because of negative connotations associated with it. Instead, he described himself as, “I’m very strategic. I’m very driven. I’m very focused.” He also noted,

When you say innovative, I wouldn’t choose that word just because there’s a certain amount of glamour associated with it. There are a lot of school board members over time who really would love to see those shiny objects around to show that they have made a difference. I’m really old school in terms of reading, writing, and math.

Question 16 of the interview schedule was, “Describe experiences from your work as a superintendent that were transformational.”

Participants A, G, and H all shared time spent at Harvard was transformational for them personally and their work as superintendent. It's fascinating to note the impact Harvard made on superintendents in Oregon and their connections with one another and their beliefs around transformational leadership. Participant A expressed the benefit of having top professors in the field of education lead the sessions and it helped him develop a new leadership lens. Harvard assisted participant G with helping to "see things differently" and creating a "professional growth plan" for all school district employees. He also shared a transformative notion he named "the people strategy" where building better schools starts with hiring the best people. He further explained the people strategy as,

If we wanted to have good schools, we were going to have to create a different kind of faculty and as we begin to create that different kind of faculty, the notion in my mind is really a people strategy but we're going to improve schools not through better buildings. Not through better books or better curriculum, we're going to improve these schools by getting better with people.

Participant G also recruited teachers from other districts and he believed his people strategy was transformational.

Participant A shared his transformational work as raising the rigor of the high school diploma. This involved the training and support of teachers, which allowed for a sustainable practice of increased rigor. Participant C admitted his ability and intentionality of creating an environment where people "talked and thought together" was transformational. He attempted to get people to think of leadership differently and to tip the traditional hierarchal view of leadership on its side. He explained it as,

Trying to get people to think differently about what is leadership, how do you engage in that and the whole idea that agreeing, discussing, engaging in dialogue,

and learning to think together and to try to hold the space in an organization for that.

Participant C had a transformational view of a leader and deeply believe the “group is the leader.”

Participant D described the creation of the academic academy as transformational because “It really made people see that kids can really learn if we have expectations for them.” Her work around equity was also transformational.

Participant E thought about transformational work through becoming a better version of you at every transition. He shared with beginning teachers, “If you’re not dramatically different as a teacher 5 years from now than you are today, something is wrong.”

Participant F’s transformational work was around changing the way “teachers work with each other.” Participant H put more “faith and trust” in principals to provide “instructional leadership” and this was transformational in his district. Participant I remembered the stories collected and published about kids and teachers.

Question 18 of the interview schedule was, “If you were hiring a superintendent today what are essential attributes you would look for? Are these attributes the same or different from those needed when you were a superintendent? What are your views on the non-traditional route to the superintendency?” (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Question 18*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Person of integrity	A, F	2
Effective communicator	F, H	2
Leader of community	C, E, G	3
Bright and intelligent	H, I	2
Instructional leader	D	1

Participants A and F stressed the need for superintendents to be people of high integrity and who lead with high moral character. Participant A explained that “extensive experience” is not on his list of attributes. Participant F agreed, “I’d say the first thing would be high integrity because people have to trust you. If you’re going to be a leader you have to have a high degree of trust.”

Participants F and H stressed the need for superintendents to be effective communicators. Communication skills are vital to the success of superintendents (according to participant F). Participant H shared that superintendents need to be courageous. Participants C, E, and G expressed the need for superintendents to be leaders in their community. Participant C desires a leader who “engages the whole community in leadership” while participant G wants a leader “who is deeply dedicated to the notion of schools and kids and community and the contribution that the school can make.”

Participants H and I want bright and intelligent leaders who know how to make hard decisions. Participant I said, “If you can’t make people laugh and trust you, then that’s about eye contact and meeting them where they are on an issue.” Participant D listed that a superintendent should be an instructional leader.

It is intriguing to note the attributes generally did not involve “experience” or budget and finance background. The notion of hiring a superintendent of integrity, who is a good thinker and learner, is extremely important.

In one of the most interesting findings in the study, participants A, C, F, and G responded to the interview question, “What are your views on the non-traditional route to the superintendency?” Participant A responded with, “I like it. I don’t especially like for example a lawyer who comes into the superintendency and I allowed to have it but no superintendent could ever become a lawyer without going through all sorts of things.” He sees an opportunity in larger districts for “new and divergent thought, different ideas, and for individuals to come in and work within a team setting and be able to be very effective.”

Participant C admitted he is not sold on the idea of a non-traditional route to the superintendency but he wants to “ask himself why.” He shared, “I think relationships are key.” He explained that the leader who need a deep “understanding of children” and has hesitancy with a leader who has not worked directly with children as an educator.

Participant F shared, “I think the epitome of the nontraditional route not working is when we bring people in from the private sector to run our HR departments. I hardly ever see that thing work. They just don’t get it.”

Participant G expressed, “I say those are tragic and I think the superintendency is an educator. It’s not a businessman. Educator in chief and not a businessman.”

Question 20 of the interview schedule was, “Describe experiences from your work where you helped schools, students, principals, teachers, parents, and board members get on ‘winning streaks’—where two or more good things were happening and it propelled them toward success.”

Participant A fondly remembered working with a businessman school board member who became superintendent of a school district. Participant B recalled working with a high school principal to help get him and school on a winning streak. The school and principal received recognition for the fine work and it propelled them to continued success. He also worked with a negative board member to gain her trust and help her see the positive. They are still in touch.

Participant C told a story as his response,

First guy comes along, he encounters a farmer out in his field. He says, I’m moving to this town down here. What are the people like down there? The farmer looks at him and says, what were they like where you came from? Oh, gossipy, mean spirited, you know, all these things. He said, I’m really sorry to tell you, that’s what you are going to find down here too. Turns on his way. Pretty soon a second guy comes along and sees the same farmer, greets him and says, I’m moving to this town down here. What are the people like down there? He said, what were they like where you came from? Oh, it was a great place, nice people, very good place to live, I loved it there. He said, I’m happy to tell you, you are going to find the same thing right down there.

Participant C enjoyed exploring the concept of winning streak through thinking of football and said, “Winning streaks are very interesting. One of the things I’ve always said is if the football team wins the first game of the year, we are set. It creates an attitude of winning.” He described the importance of winning streaks for students and adults,

including passing levies and bonds, ratings for the schools, and that it's a "good place" to have your kids in school.

Participant D also talked about building winning streaks with school boards and she described a community book event, which create a winning streak around literacy. Participant F recalled a student he took under his wing and helped get into college and he and his wife just attended the college graduation. He also shared a story about a district office employee who he assisted on a winning streak. Participant H remembered getting "little wins" with the superintendent staff and that led to bigger "wins." He was able to help schools get on winning streaks using little wins.

Question 21 of the interview schedule was, "What role does humor play in the work of the superintendent?" (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Question 21*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Important role	A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I	8

In one of the most interesting findings in the study, participants A, B, C, D, F, G, H, and I all responded that humor plays an important role in the position of the superintendent. Participant A said,

People who you lead expect it. I'm sure people don't want to follow pessimistic leaders. They want to follow people who see a positive light at the end of the tunnel but they're still realistic. Humor plays a great role and I believe in having people feel comfortable all around you.



Participant A warned that humor should be used “appropriately.” Participant B expressed the health in laughter and “you’ve got to be able to laugh at yourself.” He recalled fun contests, which reduced stress and provided humor throughout the district. He enjoyed having fun during his time as superintendent.

Participant C said humor is “essential” and finding the fun and humor in things allows for a fun environment. According to participant C, people don’t want to be around leaders who are serious all of the time. Participant D believed humor is important, but not at someone else’s expense. When done appropriately, she found it “terrific.” Participant F found humor to make his position fun and he said, “I can’t tell you how or why, but we made it fun.” Participant G described the importance of humor as a tension reliever for the position and felt “I never thought I had enough of it.” Participant H found it was important to not take himself too seriously and remembered embarrassing himself by singing a song to the staff. He found humor to be very important. Participant I recalled the importance of humor and the ability to not take herself too seriously. She remembered personal stories of laughter and humor at meetings.

### **Summary of Roles and Attributes of Superintendents**

The theme of roles and attributes of superintendents consisted of data from interview questions 15, 16, 18, 20, and 21. In general, participants provided responses, which provide a rich understanding of the superintendent position. Generally, participants see themselves as innovators but add their own definition to the word. Informed opportunist more accurately described many responses as well as being great problem solvers.

Participants also described many stories from their work as superintendent that were transformational. Interestingly, three participants all studied at Harvard during their time as superintendent and found that to be transformational to their work.

Participants discussed essential attributes necessary for a superintendent of today. The responses focused on bright people of character who could lead a community through effective communication.

The last two roles and attributes of superintendents provided some of the most interesting findings of the study. The concept of winning streaks (where two or more good things were happening and propelled people toward success) provided multiple personal stories and fond recollections about their time as superintendent. Participants remembered vivid details surrounding times when they helped people get on a winning streak.

Lastly, humor plays a very important role in the life of a superintendent. The participants adamantly believed that the role of humor helped them in their time. Appropriate humor and not taking oneself too seriously allowed for stronger relationships and provided a tension relief for a stressful position.

Overall, participants were clear and sure of their responses surrounding the theme of roles and attributes of the superintendent.

### **Advice to Future Superintendents**

The next theme from our participants was advice to future superintendents. The notion of wisdom of the elders exuded from the participants and they were willing, open,

and honest in sharing their advice to future superintendents. This section serves as a summary of their responses and the data collected from questions 19, 24, and 27.

Question 19 of the interview schedule was, “Darling-Hammond (2010) explains the new mission of schools is, ‘to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solutions for products that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented’ (p. 2). Please comment on her quote.” (see Table 12).

Table 10

*Question 19*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Agree with Statement	B, F, G, H	4
Disagree with Statement	A, C	2
Add or Change Statement	C, I	2

Participant B felt that this is not a new mission but rather “we are changing and progressing.” Education was always about preparing people to go into the workforce. He has the belief that we need to teach people how to think and problem solve. Participant C expressed that it is the wrong focus and lens on education. He has the belief that it too is not a new mission but instead nothing has changed for hundreds of years. He said, “What it misses for me is we are not teaching kids to be in jobs. We are teaching kids to live life. That is a different way of thinking. Maybe being a good thinker, having strong values, and being a good person.” He has the belief that educators need to focus on bringing up

great citizens. Participant G shared that they are “training the students to live in a world that has not yet been created. It is not the focus on jobs out of all the education. They focus on a broad range of skill that allows us to live well.”

Participant I changed the question to address too much attention is being given to collaboration and it is missing the power of the introvert. Participant A responded strongly to the statement and shared that Linda Darling-Hammond’s thinking “idealistically.” He went on to further say, “I think that is so typical of the expectations people have of public education. A really good basic education for many of our students is a very high calling from where we are right now.” Participant H agreed with the statement and added his own twist by saying, “I think what Linda is saying is don’t get so much caught up in what it is that we’re teaching as opposed to facilitating, helping motivate kids to do their own learning.” Participant F also agreed with the statement and believes that schools are doing a good job of addressing those items.

Question 24 of the interview schedule was “What advice would you give to future superintendents? And to their spouses and families?” Participants provided multiple responses to this question and were eager to provide guidance and share their learning from their life experiences. (see Table 13).

Table 13

*Question 24*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Connect with the Community	D, G, H	3
Be prepared for the position	A, B, E	3
Go in with “eyes wide open”	C, I	2
Value “team”	F	1

Participants D, G, and H all stressed the importance of making strong community connections. Participant G explained that it is the greatest job in the world and there is no job like it. He said, “It’s the community giving you an opportunity to influence the community in ways that hardly anybody has the chance to. Doctors don’t get that chance, lawyers don’t get that chance, and legislators don’t get that chance.” Participant H shared that you must be a “match” for a community and it must fit for both you and the community. He has the belief that you should not seek superintendency just because you desire to become a superintendent. He also shared the value of seeking colleagues and peers and advice for the position. He said, “The superintendent usually is the most visible public figure in the community. People are going to be interested in and looking to see what you do, one versus what you say and how you present yourself in the community.” Participant D shared that a community connection that provides the community with a plan that is “alive” is important.

Participants A, B, and E elucidated the necessity to be as prepared for the position as you can be. Their responses supported the need for future superintendents to do their homework prior to taking the position. Participant B said, “Well, be prepared. Be prepared for the unexpected because you’ve taken all the courses (school law, school finance, school budget). That prepares you for the stuff but it’s the unexpected that comes down the pike.” He also mentioned future superintendents need to have a thick skin due to public scrutiny. Participant B stated, “A spouse needs to have that thick skin and you have to insulate your kids a little bit. That’s just something you need to think about . . . You have to really think through what impact that will have on your family and your children.”

Participant A stated the positives associated with public education and the strides the nation has taken with preparing students for beyond school.

He stated,

It is an incredible way to make a difference in the community. It is something that if you give your life to, when you’re 80 in your rocker and you think back about how I have spent my life and how do I feel about it. There’s immense satisfaction. It is a really, really high reward position based on the morality of the work. I think public education is the greatest thing that has shaped our country to be what it is . . . I’m very positive and I would say it’s a tremendous time to get into the superintendency.

Participants C and I both brought up the impact of the position on families.

Participant I said that the superintendents and their families need to go into the position with their “eyes wide open” to the notion that the position is a 24 hours a day/7 days a week commitment. Participant C followed up by sharing that he did not know how much

he was gone until spouse said “I don’t think you have any idea how often you are gone.”

The notion of having eyes wide open will be important for future superintendents.

Participant F stressed the value of team. He learned that he could not do all things by himself and he needed to rely on his team and value them.

Question 27 of the interview schedule was, “You were superintendent for a considerable amount of time during which you experienced many things, some of which we may not have discussed. Is there anything else you would like to add?” (see Table 14)

Table 14

*Question 27*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Yes	A, C, D, F, H	5
No, we covered it	B, E, G, I	4

Participants A, C, D, F, and H all added various comments to this question.

Participant A focused on how thankful he was to have been in the superintendent position and added,

I think and I still feel this way. I still pinch myself to say how fortunate I was first of all to be in public education and secondly to be a superintendent. I would highly recommend it to those who have an interest especially in the ability to create a culture within an organization that really honors students and their future success and creating a wonderful place for people to work at whatever level they are because public education is such a positive thing.

He remembered when he was considering pursuing interests outside of public education and joining the business world. He decided to stay in education and,

What I came up with is if I left my job and went to that job, I would be helping wealthy people become wealthier. That wasn't what I wanted my life to stay on for. It had to be something of a higher value, a higher worth, an ability to contribute more. That was the last time I ever thought about leaving. It was about that time that I made the move from teacher to administrator.

Participant C emphasized the importance of listening to and learning your own leadership voice. He continued, "Listen carefully. And listen to how you are responding to it. That whole idea of listening, listen to what they say, and listen to what your reaction is and to what questions you have there. Anytime that's kind of there, hold your own council." Participant D stressed the importance of developing and listening to student voice. Participant F focused on the intricacy of working with school boards and shared a personal story. Lastly, Participant H shared the challenges between working with a large school district and a smaller one may be economies of scale. He explained that, "To be honest, in a much larger urban district you may be able to hide more easily. You can't in a small rural district."

### **Summary of Advice to Future Superintendents**

Three questions of the interview schedule comprise of responses surrounding advice to future superintendents. In summarizing this section, the position of the superintendent may be more clearly understood. The participants generally were very quick and detailed in providing specific advice to future superintendents.

The participants generally agreed that future superintendents would be entering into a position designed to help prepare students for beyond their school district.

The participants shared sentiments that future superintendents go into the position prepared and with eyes wide open. The participants encouraged collaboration with peers



and colleagues. The advice from this section was varied to fit personal experiences of the participants. Lastly, a strong connection with the community was strongly encouraged and supported. In general, the participants painted a positive picture of the superintendent position and were supportive to future superintendents.

### **Meaningful and Fulfilling Position**

Three questions of the interview schedule comprise of inquires surrounding the superintendent role as a meaningful and fulfilling position. The questions of the interview section were 12, 17, and 25. This section summarizes the participant's responses and data are presented through tables and responses.

Question 12 of the interview schedule was, "The superintendency has been characterized as challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful. What would you add or change to that statement?" (see Table 15).

Table 15

#### *Question 12*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Rewarding	A, D, F, H	4
Various	B, C, I	3
Not Lonely	E, G	2

Participants A, D, F, and H expressed they would add rewarding to the statement. In one of the most interesting findings in this study, participants discuss how the position

is a calling and very rewarding. Participant A has the belief that it is the most important job in any community and sees it as a calling. He eloquently explained,

The real goal in my mind is to enable children and young adults to be able to reach their potential and to put a great part of your vocational life into that kind of a goal is very reassuring. It's always worth the fight. It's worth the long hours. I think it's worth the public lack of privacy that you have, always 24/7. High risk but really high reward. I also don't think it's so much of a job as it's more, to me at least, more of a calling, and also more to me like missionary work. There's a great deal of good that is done by a really good superintendent in their small part of the world to make it a better place to live. I think you learn to love a little more and hate a little less.

Participant D described the position as "impactful" and that makes it so delightful.

Participant F explained as he went through his career the "sense of meaning and doing meaningful work" was incredibly rewarding. Participant H agreed that it is a very rewarding position and mentors youth still during his retirement.

Participant C succinctly said it's "fun" and a very "self-actualizing role."

Participant B shared the position is "exciting and exhilarating" and explained it has "the highest highs and lowest lows." Participant I laughed and said, "I don't know about delightful."

Participants E and G said the position is not lonely. Participant E explained, "I would never say lonely. I would not call it lonely. You have to maintain a professional distance but show people that you really care about them and have a kind of professional closeness." Participant G added, "It's not lonely. The fact is with a good superintendent involved, they never are lonely. You ought to be surrounding yourself with people and the issues in leadership as group-ish and not so much individual issues that you're leading."

Question 17 of the interview schedule was, “Under what circumstances were you able to completely relax and set aside the demands of the superintendency?” (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Question 17*

Responses	Participants	Totals
None, but I’ll explain	A, B, D, E, G, H	6
Activities	B, C, E, F, I	5

Participants A, B, D, E, G, and H expressed the position of the superintendent position is a 24 hours a day and 7 days a week commitment. Participant A shared personal stories of “being off balance on purpose” of work versus family life. He shared,

To me the superintendency became like a mistress, very seductive. You are put on a pedestal and you get lots of recognition and status.” Additionally he shared, “I’m still not sure I could achieve that balance, even knowing what I know and understanding that more work doesn’t necessarily mean better.

Participant B admitted, “you never stop thinking” about the position. Participant D enjoyed being out in the community five or six nights a week and viewed it as being important to the position. Participant E succinctly responded with, “Nope. That’s what I love about it.” Participant G expressed he never viewed the position as a burden and never “wanted to set it aside.” He said, “My heart and soul, my interest was here and it wasn’t a burden. It was never a burden. I enjoyed getting up every day and go hang out. I

loved the people who I was working with.” Participant H clearly stated, “it’s a 24 hour job and actually it’s interesting.”

Participants B, C, E, F, and I all shared different activities they participated in that they were able to relax. Participant B enjoyed skiing with his family. Participant E worked in his garden. Participant C liked to hike and concentrate on the next step and to be out of cell service. Participants F and I golfed. Lastly, participant I would go and sit in a kindergarten classroom and she said, “They would make me happy. It made my heart happy to see these little kids.”

Question 25 of the interview schedule was, “Knowing what you know now, if you had to do it over, would you become a school superintendent?” (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Question 25*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Yes	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I	9

In support of previous superintendent findings (Brinson, 1997), all participants would become a school superintendent again. Many participants added to their “yes” response. Participant G shared, “Oh my, if I had 10,000 lives in me, I’ll be a school superintendent in every one. I just loved it.” Participant A explained he would do it “in an instant, in a heartbeat” and wished he would have started earlier in his career. Participant B said he would do it again but do it differently and listen to people better. Participant C emphatically responded, “Absolutely. I loved my career. I loved it. I loved being an

educator.” Participant D shared the power of the impact on the community the position can have.

### **Summary of Meaningful and Fulfilling Position**

Three questions of the interview schedule crafted a series of inquiries surrounding the meaningful and fulfilling position of the superintendent. In one of the most interesting findings of the study, the participants generally found the position as meaningful and fulfilling. Many of the participants described the position as a “calling.” The participants generally described the position as “not lonely” and enjoyed a “professional closeness” with those they worked with.

In summarizing the section on meaningful and fulfilling position, participants described the superintendency as a very rewarding position. This study mirrored previous studies results (Brinson, 1997) where the participants would become a superintendent all over again if they had a choice. All of the participants responded that they would become a superintendent again.

### **Equity**

The theme of equity consists of question 13 of the interview schedule. This sections serves as a summary of those responses.

Question 13 of the interview schedule was, “Describe experiences or stories in your position as superintendent where equity played an integral role?”

Participants responded with personal stories of how equity played a role. In one of the more interesting findings from the data, the role of equity brought out emotional and deeply personal stories from their time as superintendent. Generally speaking, the

participants believe that equity played an integral role in their time as superintendent and many focused on the hiring of people of color to leadership roles.

Participant H was one of the participants who described the role of equity as “an integral role in almost all” of his experience as superintendent. He was using an equity lens on all his budget decisions and hired an employee who worked on “equity and community and her role was to make sure we focused on equity both from the community and the school standpoint, district standpoint.”

Many participants talked about hiring women, and men and women of color, as solid leadership moves with an equity lens. Participant I helped to build an English Language Learner program in her district. She believed strongly in hiring people of color to better represent her community. Participant D also has the belief that hiring people of color to leadership roles is an important equity move. Participant C described gender equity as “a balance of voices” and he was aware of made efforts to balance men and women in leadership roles in his districts. He expressed, “I think that (gender balance) is really important because each person, not only because of gender but because of historic background and raising and value structure, they bring something different.” Participant B also felt the need for a gender balance in leadership roles but he believes it is important to “recruit and hire” people of color in leadership positions. He noted difficulties with doing so due to a small number of applicants of color to leadership roles.

Participant G shared the discrepancy for girls and athletics when he first entered into the profession. He was a big advocate for hiring women in leadership roles in the districts he worked in. Participant E focused on economic equity. He was cognizant of

decisions he made that would “provide kids with an equal opportunity when so many other kids advantaged.” Participant A was very proud of the equity lens he used with economic decisions and made an effort to “hire people of color in all roles.”

### **Summary of Equity**

The participants in this study passionately described and provided personal stories of how equity played an integral role in their time as superintendent. In general, the participants stressed the importance to have an equity lens in all you do and that includes finances and hiring practices. The participants took pride in hiring people of color and women to leadership roles in their districts. In summary, their personal and emotional stories shared serve as an indication of the importance the role of equity played during the position. This was a very interesting finding throughout the study.

### **Legacy**

The next theme of legacy consists of question 22 of the interview schedule. This section serves as a summary of the responses.

Question 22 of the interview schedule was, “What would your school board (s) say was your legacy and greatest challenges?” (see Table 18).

Participants A, C, and G stated their hiring practices and the people they hired were what their school boards would say are their greatest legacies. Participant A stressed the value of the “principal” in a school district and helped to change cultures. Participant G believed in the notion of recruiting and retaining great people in the school district.

Participants C and I described the building of schools and facilities as part of their legacy.

Table 18

*Question 22*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Hired great people	A, C, G	3
Built schools and facilities	C, I	2
Equity	D, H	2
Integrity	F	1

Participants D and H stated that their focus on equity would be their legacy.

Participant H shared, “We spent a lot of time with the board in conversations in developing statements around what equity would look like and how we know if we saw it and those kind of things.” Participant F stated that his integrity was probably his greatest legacy. Lastly, participants B, C, and I shared their greatest challenges may be dealing with budget or financial crisis in their school districts.

### **Summary of Legacy**

Participants thoughtfully answered question 22 of the interview schedule and provided various responses. Participants focused on hiring practices, equity, and facilities as their legacies remembered by school boards. Three noted their greatest challenges were budget and financial crisis of their school districts. Generally, the participants were open and vulnerable to sharing what their past school boards would say to this question.



### **Biggest Challenges facing Future Superintendents**

The theme of biggest challenges facing future superintendents consists of question 23 in the interview schedule. This section serves as a summary of those responses.

Question 23 of the interview schedule was, “In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon?” (see Table 19).

Table 19

#### *Question 23*

Responses	Participants	Totals
Finances	A, B, E, F, G, H, I	7
Growing diversity and closing the achievement gap	D, H	2
Assessment	I	1
Values	C	1

Participants A, B, E, F, G, H, and I explained that finances and state funding would provide the biggest challenge for superintendents in Oregon. Participant A shared, “The State of Oregon lags the nation considerably in the amount of dollars per student at least by the time they get to us out in the schools.” Participant E expressed his simple formula for success as, “I want you give me the money I need, test my kids, and leave me alone.” Participant B stated, “I think when superintendents quit paying attention to finance is when they lose their job.” Participants A, G, and I describe a need for a great relationship with the State of Oregon Education team.

Participants D and H explained that the growing diversity and simultaneous closing of the achievement gap presents a big challenge to future superintendents in Oregon. Participant D shared, “It’s becoming more diverse and we need to really make all these kids feel safe and respected and for all the staff to believe they can meet high expectations and close the gap.” Participant H added, “I think growing diversity is going to be one of the challenges that includes ELL.”

Participant I explained that assessments pose as a large challenge for superintendents in Oregon. Participant C commented on the notion of future superintendents need to be well grounded in their values. He stated future superintendents in Oregon hopefully, “gone through some thinking about, what do I stand for? What are my rock values so that when I am faced with challenges, that I have something to firm to stand on? I am not waffling all over the place.”

### **Summary of Biggest Challenges facing Future Superintendents**

In summarizing this section, the participants admitted the biggest challenge facing future superintendents in Oregon is finances. This included working with state funding and developing strong relationships with the Oregon Department of Education. Participants noted the growing diversity in the state of Oregon combined with the closing the achievement gap as other challenges.

### **Researcher Discussion of the Findings**

This dissertation research study was intended to be a probing one with no theories to prove or disprove. This study was to provide a deeper glimpse into the complicated position of a public school superintendent. While research on school leadership and

principals grows, research on the position of the superintendent remains limited in scope. This study was designed to add to the corpus of knowledge of the lived experiences of retired superintendents. This timely study provides a contemporary update to the previous studies on retired superintendents (Bau, 1982; Brinson, 1997; Wenzel, 1996). Nearly 50% of current school superintendents are not planning on being superintendents in 2015 (Kowalski et al., 2011).

The wisdom of the elders notion was met with great openness and a genuine pride in sharing accounts of the retired superintendent's life work. Each retired superintendent I met was committed to passing on stories and experiences to better understand the complexities of their position. The honest, candid, and revealing responses were inspiring to me as a researcher and educator. I finished each interview leaving inspired, challenged, and encouraged for the future of education in Oregon.

These retired public school superintendents in Oregon, were passionate and thoughtful about their responses. Though they served in different school districts there was a tremendous amount of shared experiences told in different ways. The participants were not currently a public school superintendent. I am a current public high school principal in Oregon and many participants seemed to relate and appreciate my desire to learn from their lived experiences. An air of open and honest reflection appeared to exist throughout the interviews.

Each of the superintendents was extremely generous with their time and energy. The superintendents were gracious and quick to meet and articulated stories and experiences, which provide a deeper understanding of the complex position of the

superintendent. The superintendents also have a vested interest in the future of Oregon education and were genuinely connected with the state of Oregon.

The participants describe the position almost as a calling with all the long hours, difficult and stressful situations, public scrutiny, and complex problems. The high risk is met with high reward. Each retired superintendent shared the position was enormously rewarding and meaningful. As previously mentioned in the study, all of the participants responded they would become a superintendent again. This finding is significant in the study and provides a deeper understanding of the position. The participants described a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment from the position in spite of all the difficult and complex aspects to it, and they would choose to become a superintendent again in a heartbeat. This finding is similar to previous studies (Brinson, 1997). This is highlighted by participant G's response of, "Oh my, if I had 10,000 lives in me, I'll be a school superintendent in every one. I just loved it."

Lastly, in an interesting finding, seven participants noted that finances are one of the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon. The participants did not list being a manager or having budget/finance knowledge as an important attribute to becoming a superintendent.

The following are highlights from the data, as previously discussed earlier in chapter 4.

1. The mean number of years of superintendency was 19.4, ranging from 10 to 32.
2. The superintendents followed the traditional teacher to superintendent pathway.

3. The superintendents fondly remembered relationships and people from their position.
4. The superintendents were lifelong and lead learners in their district.
5. The superintendents would choose to become a superintendent again.
6. Equity played an important role in the leadership of the superintendent position, including hiring and budget practices.
7. The superintendents were problem solvers and informed opportunists.
8. The superintendents were transformational in their districts through changing of cultures, hiring practices, and equity work.
9. The superintendents loved helping people get on winning streaks.
10. Humor is important in the work of the superintendent.

This chapter included an introduction, the presentation and analysis of the participants' responses, and the researcher's conversation of the findings. The next chapter includes a summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### **Summary**

The drive of this study was to examine the lived experiences of retired transformative public school superintendents in Oregon. Research on the superintendency has been largely ignored and the need for a deeper understanding of the position is needed now more than ever. The decision to interview transformative retired public school superintendents came from a desire to get wisdom from the elders and from those who have lived to tell about the position.

Nine transformative retired public school superintendents were interviewed during the summer of 2014 using an interview schedule of 27 questions. Criteria for participation of the study included: (a) the superintendent must have served at a public school in Oregon, (b) the superintendent must have been a transformational leader, and (c) the superintendent must have served in that capacity for a minimum of 10 years, though not all in the state of Oregon.

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interviews were sent to the participants to confirm accuracy. After all of the interviews were completed, the data was coded and all participants were given a letter A through I to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Classifications of responses were initially made across the questions. Themes were built based on the responses of the participants with the help of NVivo, a software program used to analyze my codes and themes. The results

were then interpreted. The results offer a richer understanding of the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents.

### **Main Findings**

There are five major findings in the present study. The first finding centers on the role of being a lifelong and lead learner in their position of superintendent. The notion of leadership was prevalent throughout the interviews. The retired superintendents were students of leadership. The desire to be students of leadership was evident. They were lifelong and lead learners in their districts. They were educators at heart. It was important to read and stay informed, knowledgeable, and practical in their districts. There was great pride in mentoring and developing leadership around each of them. Participant G described the position of the superintendent as “educator in chief.” There was joy in recalling the number of people they worked with and helped to become leaders in their district and beyond. The superintendents extensively studied leadership and learned from books, conferences, colleagues, and the Harvard Executive Leadership program.

The second major finding in this study is built on the key role of equity in the work of a superintendent. The responses lead to a need for an increase around the study of equity in the position of the superintendent. Each participant eloquently shared stories of equity in their time as superintendent. Many of the responses involved discussion of their unique hiring practices as it pertained to equity. Participants were aware of gender balance and would attract, hire, and retain leaders of color in their school districts. Participant A stated, “I always felt that we were stronger as a diverse community, a diverse school district.” Equity involved listening to all voices in the district and included

being mindful of practices that encouraged dialogue and thinking. This finding supports the call for the contemporary superintendent to be a leader for equity and to meet the needs of their more diverse school districts (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). Equity also pertained to the allocation and reallocation of resources to effectively meet the needs of all students.

The third major finding is centered on the need for the superintendent to be an innovator. Gober (2012) noted the emergence of the role of the superintendent as innovator for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings in this study agree that innovation is important, but define it differently than previous studies. The participants described themselves as problem solvers and informed opportunists. They did not merely innovate to innovate, but rather were informed and knowledgeable. Through this knowledge they were able to problem solve and lead their districts forward. They asked questions and engaged the right people around them to be involved. People may claim innovation, but the participants clearly define it as problem solving with knowledge.

A fourth major finding is the vital role of humor in the position of the superintendent. The participants described the important role in humor and all agreed a great sense of humor was essential. The difficult, complex, and dynamic position of the superintendent can be stressful and appropriate humor is necessary. Humor, as described by the participants, allowed for stronger relationships, tension relief, and an ability to laugh and not be too serious.

A fifth major finding is in spite of all of the complexities, challenges, and increased public accountability of the position of the superintendent, all of the



participants would become superintendents again. This unanimous response mirrors and supports previous studies and their findings (Brinson, 1997).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are many recommendations for future research based on the results of the data. One recommendation is for a replication of this study in another state or with a certain type of participant. It would be interesting to compare rural versus urban settings or all female participants. This study's sample was limited to the state of Oregon and was small in size. A replication of this study in another region or a larger sample may be intriguing.

A future study on the concept of winning streaks would enhance the unique findings in this study. The participants were immediately engaged and detailed in response to the winning streak question of the interview schedule. The exploration of future studies on winning streaks may provide a better understanding of the rewarding and fulfilling nature of the position of the superintendent. It may be interesting to interview the people superintendents helped to get on the winning streak.

Another future area of study is around the non-traditional route to the superintendency. The participants desired to think more deeply about the non-traditional route to the superintendency and were intrigued by it. A future study on the successes and failures of the non-traditional superintendent could generate some interesting data.

Lastly, a future recommendation for study is the exploration of school board member experiences as it pertains to the position of the superintendent. Many participants brought up school board member stories and explain the relationship to be complex and

dynamic. It would be fascinating to compare what the school board members would say their superintendent's legacies were. Another intriguing area to study is the view of the school board member turned superintendent. Their journey and experience may provide a profounder understanding of both roles and the complexities of the relationship.

### **Implications of Findings for Theory and Practice**

This study was a probe into the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon. It lays a foundation for future research. Educational administrative programs should continue to address and actively pursue the central role of equity in the superintendent position. Preparation programs should take note of the findings and recommendations in the study to enhance the evolving and complex position of the superintendent. Future superintendents need to seek the wisdom of the elders and they will find the conversations to be meaningful, transforming, challenging, hopeful, and inspirational. Just as is the position of the superintendent.

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APPENDIX A  
PARTICIPANT A

## PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Interviews have been edited for clarity and confidentiality.

## Participant A

AD: You're a school superintendent for how many years and when and where, and where did you retire?

A: I was a school superintendent in ABC and then a school superintendent in XYZ for eight. I retired in July of 2011. This is my third year being retired.

AD: Did you come from a family of educators?

A: No. I wish I would have. I had a biology teacher at ABC school that absolutely loved his work.

I didn't have any ideas of jobs or anything. I thought, boy, that guy really enjoys it. I enjoy his class. The students do. I wonder if that's a possibility for me. The more I dug into it; I started using him as a mentor. That's how I got into education, is because of a good teacher.

AD: I just want you to start talking about your years as a superintendent. Can you start with just sharing a little bit of some of your fondest memories and recollections?

A: Yeah. I think when I was notified that I was selected for the superintendency in ABC; I was working for the XYZ School District at that time. The very fact that I was given the opportunity to be in the office of superintendency was one of the really shining moments. That's more of a personal thing than something that I could've been involved in doing that it was something being given to me.

Then when I was notified about the GHI School District superintendency that I had received it, I believe then and I believe now and maybe it's my own bias that GHI traditionally and for a long period of time, has been one of the stellar school districts in the state and I think even in the Pacific Northwest.

To be able to be in a leadership role in that situation was just a glorious opportunity and so I said to myself if they'll have me, I want this to be my last job and I'd love to retire in this organization. Luckily, that happened.



AD: Sure. That's neat. Can you describe your career trajectory prior to you becoming a superintendent?

A: I was a high school biology teacher.

It was very innovative. It was very beautiful. They had quite a staff they had selected.

For 14 years, I worked in the district as a teacher, a coach, and head of the counseling department.

Then from there, a position opened in the central office called assistant to the superintendent. It consisted of all the things that the superintendent didn't want to do and all of the things that he didn't have time to do. I really thought it gave me a great background on the ins and outs of that.

Then a position opened in the ABC School District and it was called Director of Secondary Education. The role of it was to be in charge of the district middle schools and the district high schools. I stayed there for nine years then went to XYZ as superintendent. I was there for nine, and then to GHI for eight so a total of 44 years in public education. I just think of how lucky and fortunate I was, really fortunate.

AD: When you took the job, did you feel prepared and as we sit into this first year superintendent?

A: No.

AD: No? Is there anything that would've helped you better or is it kind of one of those trials by fire?

A: Yeah. It was trial by fire. I think I was naïve about negotiations and how important they are in the role of the superintendency, the ability to work with the union and at the same time look out for the best aspects of the school district.

I think I was naïve about the media even though ABC was just a constant clash of different interest groups and media events. I also think that I didn't have as much experience in finance as I would've loved to.

Those were areas of learning on the job. They were very important areas. I certainly made my share of mistakes but in most cases I learned from the mistakes, owned up to them, and then could use that experience as I

encountered the same thing again, either in that district or when I went on to XYZ.

AD: When you look back on your years for the superintendency, what things do you think that you're most proud of?

A: In ABC, I think we really elevated student achievement. When I got there, it was a good running district with a good superintendent. I think things were moving along well but there wasn't an emphasis on student achievement.

For example, I looked at a number of the agendas that the board had in the past couple of years before I got there and there weren't any student achievement individual topics that the board was really discussing and heavily involved with these decision makers.

My view was that it's all about student learning that needs to be the number one goal and work that the board does. We as an administrative team worked really hard on changing the culture to more of an emphasis in that area and moving the board from more of a management approach to an approach that says as we make our decisions, how does it affect student achievement, how does it make it better, how can we move resources more in this area.

I felt especially good. It was slow work. I was there for nine years but it was consistent and gradual. We were able to hire really strong principals that were in their heart instructional leaders. I truly thought that the greatest legacy that I could leave was to have great principals in place.

I would say that helping a cultural change moving towards student achievement, student learning, and having a really strong leadership team in that district was what I felt ... I really want to say at the start I never felt as though it was me but it was working with a team with a common purpose. That was another part of the culture, team decision-making.

AD: We're talking about the proudest moments. Now let's flip it. Looking back, were there things that you were least proud of and why?

A: From about 2007 to 2011, my last years in the district, it was horrible cuts, in every kind of thing, teams, staff, professional development, building maintenance. ABC got hit harder than most districts in that regard. In fact I believe in my last year, we cut something like \$33 million. It was just a whole series of really difficult financial decisions.

I came in 2003 and we were tearing apart the things that we had been building up until that time. It was just hard to leave on a note of tearing it down instead of building them. I would say those would be two areas, difficult areas.

AD: I have a quote from a superintendent who characterized the job as challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful. What would you add, change, or take away?

A: In my heart, and I just went over that today with the new superintendents in the state, I believe that it's the most important job in any community. The real goal in my mind is to enable children and young adults to be able to reach their potential and to put a great part of your vocational life into that kind of a goal is very reassuring. It's always worth the fight. It's worth the long hours. I think it's worth the public lack of privacy that you have, always 24/7 being at the back and then called just like you experienced. High risk but really high reward.

I also don't think it's so much of a job as it's more, to me at least, more of a calling, and also more to me like missionary work. There's a great deal of good that is done by a really good superintendent in their small part of the world to make it a better place to live.

I think you learn how to love a little more and hate a little less. I think the very presence of the job makes you more and certainly a person that is always learning when you're on the roll. For example today I was mentioning to the new superintendents if they don't read they can't lead.

Lyndon Johnson's *The Passage of Power* is a great book about how to use power to get things done. For him, a very big issue was to be able to pass the Civil Rights legislation.

Then this one, *Unbroken*, about World War II story of a fighter pilot, a great distance runner and his resilience and ability to just persevere, because it's part of the superintendency.

This one, *The Age of the Unthinkable*, is the new way of problem solving, very different. It doesn't use the common traditional methods that we use now. It's really a different way of thinking.

Then this one, *Boys in the Boat*, is about the University of Washington and their crew team who won the 1936 Olympic Gold Medal and all of the teamwork, trials, and tribulations they went through.

What I found about the superintendency is I needed to continually learn so I had just a great thirst for anything about leadership and constantly felt as though I needed to learn more and more, refine my practice, and be a model for those that I was working with. That's good because it just means that you're continuing to grow as a human being. I think that's another strength of it.

A lot of people said to me golly long weeks, lots of public scrutiny, and why would you do a job like that. My understanding was they didn't know what the rewards were. They couldn't experience what the rewards were like. It was very hard to explain because usually when they talked about the superintendency, they were talking about the negative rather than, "We're so proud of you that you've decided to take on the challenge. Isn't that neat to be able to select leaders for a great organization? Don't you like the fact that you're able to testify to the legislature and they'll listen to you?"

AD: Can you describe experiences or stories from your time of superintendent where equity played an integral role?

A: I was always under the impression that we ought to fund schools within the district based on the need. In the ABC School District, we put together a funding model that took money away from the more affluent schools and gave it to the schools that were less affluent and actually needed more help. That was quite a battle for me because I had to work with my principals for them to agree not so much to be takers but to be givers.

A lot of faculties view the principal as successful or not based on what he or she can bring to them for resources from the central office. If you have a principal who is willing to work on a plan that equitably funds the district based on student needs, that's a pretty big switch. I felt extremely good about that.

The other thing we did that I think was a neat thing in ABC was ... The English language learner program was funded by the state. Each student gets an extra half, 95% of that was supposed to go to the schools and about 5% stays with the district. When I looked in our district and actually looked at the number of dollars that are going from the district office to direct instruction, I think it was somewhere in the 70s.

We put together a plan where we moved the money from the district into the schools. That meant jobs and a variety of other changes. We were trying to equalize the funding so that the schools could have what I think

they really deserve in terms of educational money for their students in need in that particular program.

A: It is amazing, isn't it? Lots and lots of efforts in that regard especially with administrators, so we try to start with the assistant principal as the starting role for getting more people of color involved. We had some success. It took a while but we had some success. We really tried to mentor those individuals and continued to move forward.

Then there's the other one about equity when it comes to, I think, age, equity in thought, and equity in terms of disabilities. My idea on that came from biology actually. That is if you look at an ecosystem, those that sustain themselves over time are made up of very diverse population. They don't have a model culture. It's like when you drive from here and go over to, say, ABC, you're going to go through onto XYZ and pass this huge area of burn. Those were all lodge pole pine trees only. One insect, the bark beetle infected them and sapped them of their strength so they became very dry. Lightning strike, they're all gone.

In a very diverse ecosystem, there'll be lots of different plants at different heights, can withstand a lot of pressures from the outside. I always felt that we were much stronger as a diverse community, a diverse school district than not.

Like I said, age, disability, certainly race, ethnicity, and thought were things that I tried to use as much as possible with our hiring teams when we had a new position and we could do that. The students were already there for us. We already had a tremendous diversity in the community and within the classrooms.

AD: Can you tell me a little more about equity of thought?

A: Equity of thought comes from sitting around a table like this in a leadership group when we started to make decisions about badges, curriculum, and things of that nature. I had what I called an administrative leadership group. That group was about 20 to 25 people from all different segments of the district. I tried to have them as much as possible make decisions with me on things that were really important for the district. A lot of it was about funding, funding decisions, and tremendous amount on that. Instruction, but not quite as much.

I felt that if I could have a lot of different ideas around the table, we would consider things that would come up that could be unsolved problems that

would go out there with the decision that we should have at least talked about at the table.

ABC was lucky because we were able to get really good people from other districts who had experience. There was an opportunity to be able to add strong people when openings came.

AD: In my studies here, I've come across some seminal works around the role of the superintendent. A very generic way to categorize some of the roles is instructional leader, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. Those are the five. They're generally accepted. You don't pigeonhole into just one. Out of many of those, would one of those dominate your time as a superintendent?

A: I would say democratic leader because I was often criticized and I think rightly so of being a little slower than people would like in decision making. Part of democracy, I do believe it's the best governance system but it is not the most efficient and it is not the most effective. In order to work, representative voices need to be able to speak, be heard, and influence.

I think we tried hard to carry forward the best tenets of democracy in our decision-making. We didn't always do it right, we didn't always get everybody that needed to, but I tried to slow down most of the processes so that there could be enough time. I think I'd rather be criticized for going too slow and maybe getting the right decision than going as fast as a lot of people wanted and not getting the input that we give support.

An example of that, years ago ... it's not so true anymore. There used to be an awful lot of talk about how the Japanese factories and corporations were so ultra successful and why the United States was not doing as well. The Japanese cars were an example of some of the quality issues.

One of the big factors was that in decision making, they spend a great deal of time on the front end, developing relationships, working on prototypes, trying to work the problems out, understanding long-term implications. They were very quick on implementation.

What was happening to us is we were very fast on the front end and then we had all of these implementation problems that should've been worked out before, people who didn't have a voice, things that were obvious flaws if there would just have been more time.

I tried to take that to heart in my decision making especially in a district that was so complex, so large, and so politically difficult. I just felt as though it was really important to go out with a decision that was as researched as we could, given the amount of time we had with these many voices to speak.

One of the things that we did is we had something called Friday at Four. Every Friday at 4:00 if I was in the district, the central office boardroom was opened up. It was for any staff member, not the community, but for any staff member of any type whether it is assistant superintendent or custodial assistant to come and speak on anything they wanted to. I would be there and so would be about five or six of the key leadership team.

We would just listen and we would answer. We would talk about issues that were important to them. That was another way of doing that democratic leadership of hearing the voices especially the people out in the field that usually didn't get the opportunity.

AD: Sure. That people responded really well to that.

A: They did. It was kind of a pain on Friday afternoon but on the other hand I think was a symbol of at least wanting to hear and valuing those opinions.

AD: During this time, do you see yourself as an innovator and if so, how? If not, why not? Then do you believe that it's an important role for a superintendent position?

A: We just did a thing here on what are the key characteristics of leadership based on a leader that you would follow. It was based on 20,000 people, four continents, and 10-year period of time.

The number one item that was mentioned, and it was 88% of the people that responded when asked what the three key characteristics are, was integrity. Number two at 71% was forward-looking which I think would be innovation, creativity, being prepared for the future.

I know that innovation for example is really important. I'm trying to think what other people would say if they would give me that tag. I would give it to myself that I'm not sure they would.

My way of being innovative was to be constantly learning, to constantly be learning about leadership and leadership techniques, finding ways of doing things that were different, different strategies affecting the strategic

plan, the mission, the vision, the values, to bring those forward in our funding efforts.

The idea was if we were talking about equity as being really important or if we were talking about instructional improvement, you ought to be able to look at our budget over a period of time and seeing money shifted from linear into these areas that we were talking about. I believe that we did that and we did that in ways that the district has not been able to do it before.

We were very prominent in the proficiency movement. I think that that was a real positive. We were really interested in K8 buildings. We did that. There are lots of efforts on schools of choice so that there are a large variety, not charters, but alternative schools in the district that we opened, and a reassignment of the overall leadership roles within the district.

We'd set up something that put our ... It'd be like an assistant superintendent. We would have quadrants. They would be like a superintendent for 12 schools. We had 50 somewhat schools. I had four of those people. They were in charge of those schools and I supervised them. They supervised the principals.

I personally found that to be a nice way to work with a larger more complex situation. We moved into a style of bargaining that was different than the district it had before. It was more of an interest-based type.

I would rate myself in that innovative category but again I'm only speaking for how I thought it might be.

AD: Can you look back and think of some stories or experiences from your work that was maybe transformational?

A: I can. In about the third year in the district, the district won a grant that allowed the leadership team to go to Harvard for three summers in a row. It was called the Harvard Executive Leadership Program. We were in Harvard. It was a combination of the school of law, the school of education, and the school of ... I'm missing what the third one was.

At any rate, we had some of the top minds in the world that were our professors for certain topics. There was one with a last name of Heifetz that wrote a book that I'd like to recommend you. It's called *Leadership on the Line*.

It's a fascinating view of leadership that I had not seen before. We had all of these top minds when we were together as a leadership group. We share



that with about, I think, five or six other districts in the state. Then we would meet as districts when we came back here and the professors would come and meet with us from Harvard as well on some kind of a regular basis.

I would say that that three summer experience as far as learning and I think trying really to reach my own personal level as a leader was probably the most transformational for me. It gave me new and different values. It gave me, I think, a different worldview of what public education to affect with in a country, in a city, in a school.

AD: Was that in all summer?

A: No. I wish it were. I think it was just one week per year but that was back at Harvard and then they would visit us.

AD: Under what circumstances were you able to completely relax and set aside the demands of the superintendency?

A: That's a good question and it's a really important question. I'm going to give you a roundabout answer on it. I think balance is important but for me, because as I told you earlier I saw and see the job as a mission and as a colleague, I was off balance on purpose. In other words, if I had an opportunity to do some important work in something that was really crucial for the district, I would rather personally do that than anything else.

There are some negatives about that. One was it caused me a divorce because I was more focused on my job than I was on my family. That was a big mistake. On the other hand being really honest with you, to me the superintendency became like a mistress, very seductive. You are put on a pedestal and you get lots of recognition and status. You make very good salary. You are asked to be on important committees. You get to travel the United States to conferences. You meet people like yourself, situations like this. I just found myself extremely devoted to it.

Now, one of the things that I tell the new people here is you've got to find balance. "I did that wrong. I'll admit it and I'll tell you what the downsides were because I really truly believe now that you are more effective balanced than you are unbalanced. That is much work and very little time for your own interest and your family."

I've met superintendents who can do that, who can very effective and still have a balanced life. In 18 years, I never learned how to do it. It was the

snagging thing of the job first and everything else second. Some of those “everything else” was more important at the time.

That’s why I think in this role with the new superintendents, I can talk to them about mistakes that I’ve made. I’m just thinking some of the things that early on I did in this superintendents’ institute that we have for new superintendents just to give them a leg up. We have different superintendents from all around the state, meet with them. We did five workshops a year.

I like to think that some of my earlier mistakes ... Right now, if I had to go back into superintendency, I’m still not sure I could achieve that balance, even knowing what I know and understanding that more work doesn’t necessarily mean better.

A: It’s a dilemma. I don’t know as a principal if you fight that balance thing but ...

AD: What are the key essential attributes of hiring a superintendent that you would look for, and then are those the same attributes or different from when you were first hiring?

A: I don’t think they’re different. I would put character on the top. I would follow it very very closely with beliefs and values. I would like diversity if I could get that in the hiring of a new group. I would absolutely require to the best of my knowledge to determine that integrity.

One of the things that you’re not seeing on the list is extensive experience. I’m not talking a great deal about absolute skills but I am talking about people who have the heart and the values for putting children first, being very centered, being a collection of diverse individuals, and having the character that I would think would serve the district of the staff, the students, and the community really well.

We had a very long hiring process for new people. I agonized over those decisions. My belief is the greatest legacy that I left and I should say we left because I never did any of the stuff by myself, that we left for ABC was an outstanding group of central office leaders and principals.

I have never ever run across given a little bit of time, I don’t mean just one year but say multiple years, a really great principal who was in charge of what I would call a bad school. The component to me of good schools starts with a really good principal and then give the person a little bit of time.

I don't think I've seen any really bad principals over time, in good schools either. I think the principal serve as key, absolute key. We put an awful lot of time into making those decisions.

AD: What are your views on the nontraditional role or route to the superintendency?

A: I like it. Again, it's diversity. I don't especially like for example a lawyer who comes into the superintendency and is allowed to have it but no superintendent could ever become a lawyer without going through all this ... I don't especially like generals. I'm talking big districts now, which come from the military and can go straight into the superintendency but no superintendency could ever be considered for their role.

We've got governors like Roy Romer who took over the LA school district years back but no superintendent ... I guess maybe they could be voted in but it would be pretty small, I think with no political experience to go from a superintendent to a governor. I don't like that lack of reciprocity but I do truly believe that there are opportunities for new and divergent thought, different ideas, and for individuals to come in and work within a team setting and be able to be very effective.

AD: Linda Darling-Hammond, I grabbed a quote from her book Flat World and Education. I want you to give your thought on the quote. She explains the new mission of schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented.

Can you give me your comment on that?

A: I think that is so typical of the expectations people have of public education. I'm not going to discount the statement but you know from your own school the number of migrant students that we receive, the number of children on free and reduced lunch, the lack of funding that we have, the restriction of union contracts, the English language learners, special education.

To talk that way is good from a university setting about what is believed should be, but when you're in the classrooms and you look around the classroom and it looks like the United Nations, you have children from families that can't provide for them a good basic education at times, is what reality is. A really good basic education for many of our students is a very high calling from where we are right now. It's some of the huge gaps that exist in certain student groups.

I like her thinking idealistically but realistically if you had a hundred principals in this room and she said that, I wonder how it would go.

AD: Think about experiences or stories from your work where you helped students, schools, principals, teachers, board members get on winning streaks where a couple of good things happened to them and then propelled them towards success. Can you think of?

A: Yeah, I remember in ABC we had a school board member who was negative and I was having some difficulty passing policies and funding changes and curricular changes with him. I decided that I needed to take him on as a project.

I made it a point to talk to him about the role of the superintendency and how difficult it was when I had a ... I called him an outlier school board member that seemed to be opposing more to be opposing that and to be noticed than to work with the team. In over about a three-year period and he was a businessperson in the community, he decided that he wanted to be a superintendent which was really neat.

He got a non-traditional role and he did end up as a superintendent of that very small school district in the State. I thought that that was a really interesting...

A: Transformations of having this negative situation turn more ... and of course in the process he changed and was a much better board member as he was studying for the superintendency.

A: It's nice for them to be in your own shoes because many of them are great at that. There are a number that just don't understand the total difference between your role as superintendent and their role as a board. They tend to be micromanagers and they don't see you really in the proper perspective of governance in the overall district. That creates problems overtime.

AD: What role does humor play in the work of a superintendent?

A: People who you lead expect it. I'm sure people don't want to follow pessimistic leaders. They want to follow people who see a positive light at the end of the tunnel but they're still realistic. Humor plays a great role I believe in having people feel comfortable all around you.

You're not always this solemn, stern, autocratic leader but you know the times when humor is good and when it isn't. You use it appropriately I think to gain followership that people like being around you. I know that there are a number of people that don't feel comfortable around authority

figures maybe from their experience with their father or their mother or their boss or whatever.

When you can lighten things up, I think it helps the mood. It makes you be more human. I do also know that people who aren't humorous they try to. It doesn't help and it's just best to say, "I wish I was. I depend on you guys to lighten things up a little bit."

AD: What would you say your school boards would say was your legacy?

A: I want to say and I hope I'm right that I worked as hard as I could each day that I was on the job and that I made decisions that were best for the overall district in an integrals way. When I came to ABC and also to XYZ, I said, "I'm not going to over promise you. I will tell you three things that I'll do and I promise you that I'll follow this everyday that I'm on the job."

"The number one is that I will be honest with you at all times. You can count on my honesty. I promise you that. The second thing is that I will work very, very hard at the job. The third promise I have for you is that I will make decisions that are best for the overall district."

I think in both districts, if you talk to the board members that I worked with, they might not be able to come up with those. If you said, "Here are three things that the superintendent felt he left as a legacy for the district's culture, would you be in agreement?" I think they would.

Speaking about legacies, I talked about the importance of the principal. Another one is the ability to change culture in a positive way. I really believe the last two districts that I was in; we did change the culture of the district in very positive ways especially around teaching and learning. Those would be a couple.

AD: In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges? What are the greatest challenges facing future Oregon superintendents?

A: The funding issue continues to be a problem. The State of Oregon, I know you've seen the statistics lags the nation considerably in the amount of dollars per student at least by the time they get to us out in the schools. I think facilities are huge issue in the State for our schools.

We're one of the few states in the Union that does not give money for facilities. We have to do bond measures. It's also incredible that the State doesn't see fit in the revenues that it brings in that it doesn't put aside money for facilities and I think that's going to be a bigger and ongoing problem.

The ABC's of the world are going to be real exceptions. Funding overall number one; facilities as a sub-part of that. I continue to think that the gap between the haves and the have-nots in our State really affects the academic success that children have. I know people say don't use poverty as an issue as to why students can't achieve.

You know, every time you look at the statistics and you look at the difference in the income levels, it's very, very difficult to find those exceptional schools that are high poverty and high achieving. I know they exist but they certainly aren't in the majority. I think the American culture where the middle class is getting squeezed out, there's more millionaires.

There are more people living in poverty. There's less in the middle. I think that will continue to affect student achievement. The only way I really know about it is to bring more funding in to help those that are struggling. That achievement gap is going to continue to be a really difficult, difficult thing.

Student achievement, facilities, funding. I wonder how effective going forward the relationship between unions and public education really makes sense. I really feel we're a profession. I don't know of any other profession that uses union tactics to control the condition of their workers.

It outmoded to me looking for maybe a different kind of governance. Now, COSA is sponsoring a program for teacher leaders. I think that might be able to help to create a different balance, a more professional balance. That brings me to my next issue.

I do not believe people in public education are paid fair and equitable wages. I believe that goes from the top to the bottom. People talk about superintendent salaries well.

If you took any CEO in the nation in any area, their income and their benefits would be so beyond that. Think of the average teacher coming out of college with a master's, what they're starting at, it's not fair. It's not equitable. To get the best and brightest I think for the future that needs to be something that changes as well. Those are a few ideas.

AD: What advice do you have for future superintendents and maybe their spouses and families as well?

A: Yeah. I'm going to just talk to you because I'm hoping that you will ascribe to it. It is an incredible way to make a difference in the community. It is something that if you give your life to when you're 80 in your rocker and you think back about how have I spent my life and how do I feel about it. There's immense satisfaction.

It is a really, really high reward position based on the morality of the work. I think public education is the greatest thing that has shaped our country to be what it is and you with all of the criticism. We're the only nation that I know that allows equal access for everyone.

Look what we're doing for the migrant students coming to our nation. What other nation would do that? You and I couldn't go to any other developed country in the world that I know of just have our kids be able to go to school. With all the criticism, I think public education has never done better than it's doing right now.

Our graduation rates are the highest. The AP tests are the highest. There's more kids going to college now I believe than there ever has been. In almost every measure, we're doing better than we have been but people don't recognize it. There is a wonderful, wonderful article that they had issues.

The AASA executive director did, on right now public education is at its highest pedestal ever if you look at the measures. It wasn't long ago that only 50% were graduating from high school. I like the young people that are coming out of schools. You work with them every day.

I'm very positive and I would say it's a tremendous time to get into the superintendency. I don't think there has ever been a better time.

AD: Knowing what you know now, you had to do it over, would you become a school superintendent?

A: In an instant, in a heartbeat. I would have done it earlier in my career than I did. Yeah. I definitely would have.

AD: All right. My last question is a successful leader in Oregon once said the superintendent needs to commit to a rather simple set of values. Be positive. Be curious. Be honest. Work hard and be mission-driven.

A: I don't think I could improve on that. Who said it? Do you know?

AD: You were a superintendent for a considerable amount of time during which you experienced many things. Some we've discussed. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

A: I think and I still feel this way. I still pinch myself to say how fortunate I was first of all to be in public education and secondly to be a superintendent. I would highly recommend it to those who have an interest especially in the ability to create a culture within an organization that really honors students and their future success and creating a wonderful

place for people to work at whatever level they are because public education is such a positive thing.

I can just speak for my experience, 44 years in the business. I had a chance to do some other things but to cite this day. I'll just end with one little story. I think it was around 1982. The State had a tough economic downturn. Mortgage rates on houses actually went up to 18% if you can imagine that.

That's how tough things were. I had a very good friend, a fraternity brother who was working for ABC firm. He was a stock broker. He said, "How much are you making a year?" He knew about the tough economic times and so forth.

I think I'm right. I think I was making 13,700 or so as a teacher. He said, "We've got people in our office that make more than that in a week. Why don't you come and take a look and consider coming in." He says, "I can give you a great recommendation. I know you're a hard worker." He said, "You'll do really well." I talked to my wife and I decided to go up to look.

There was an orientation process. At the end of the week, I needed to go to for more extensive training. At that point I need to leave my work in public education. I was really conflicted and I told my wife, "I know this is not what you want but I need to be by myself and think this through."

I took about a day away. What I came up with is if I left that, my job and went to that job, I would be helping wealthy people become wealthier. That wasn't what I wanted my life to stay on for. It had to be something of a higher value, a higher worth, an ability to contribute more.

That was the last time I ever thought about leaving. It was about the time that I made the move from teacher to administrator.



APPENDIX B  
PARTICIPANT B

## Participant B

AD: All right, so you were a school superintendent for how many years again?

B: 19 years.

AD: 19, and what districts were you superintendent?

B: 11 years in ABC school district and eight years in the X - YZ school district in Oregon.

AD: What was the name of the school district from which you retired?

B: X - YZ.

AD: Did you come from a family of educators?

B: My older brother was the first person to graduate from college so neither person, nobody in either side of the family had gone into education. My wife, we met after I'd started teaching, my wife's mother had been a teacher but we were not a family of teachers, of educators.

AD: Wow, if you have children do you already have them in education?

B: Our youngest daughter is a language arts social studies teacher.

AD: Just to get started here, what were some of your fondest recollections of you as a superintendent?

B: Let me think on that, you might want to shut that off for a second until I get it from recollection. Last night I was thinking about this and one of the things I was thinking about because I just read on LinkedIn that one of my former colleague is taking interim superintendency and I start thinking how many people did I hire, work with, mentor and become superintendents? I think that up to about 10 or 12 somewhere in that range I didn't actually do the counting but I started really when I was an assistant principal in ABC in junior high and I had a couple of people there, then I went to ... and I just started to count.

That's probably one of my fondest memories as I think about is those people that I was able to in some cases hire and mentor, some cases mentor that had gone on to really successful careers as superintendents. Right now, I'm on the Board and the superintendent there was my assistant superintendent in X - YZ and he's doing a great job. He said, "The reason I'm doing this is because of you," and so I had to get on the

board to help support him. I think that's just the ability to help people grow in their career and become successfully in their career is one.

Fond memories I think I counted it up once; I presided if you will over 60 graduate ceremonies and over 10,000 students and just to be part of that whole, to see the culmination of all the students, their K through 12 education. I was able to give each of my daughters their diploma. Excuse me, so.

B: Yeah, sorry about that.

AD: No, it's very powerful.

B: I didn't expect that but ...

AD: We'll take it for sure now.

B: Yeah, two from ABC high and one from X High and that probably was the most powerful.

AD: Okay, can you talk a little bit about your career trajectory priority becoming a superintendent?

B: Yeah, excuse me. No, I'll go through just I'll kind of split it up two ways, training and then actual job experience that works. BA in history, from Whitman College in ABC and then I started teaching and I was a competitive swimmer through college. Then they hired me because they needed a swim coach and so I taught social studies, coached swimming and then at a large high school in Northern XYZ and then I went back to the building where I had student taught five years previously, talk about a transition. I was junior high vice principal in ABC XYZ for three years.

I taught for five, assistant principal for three and then I became a middle school principal in Kennewick, XYZ for two years. My father in law passed away in January of our second year and we had our first child at the time. We said we need to get home to grandparents. I moved back, became a junior high principal in XYZ, XYZ. I am not very proud to say our school – it's not my school – our school was a national blue ribbon recognized school. I'll get to go back to XYZ D.C. with some other people and be a Whitehouse ceremony, which was pretty cool.

Then I went from there to four years as an assistant superintendent in XYZ and the ABC as a superintendent in 1989. I was just a little over 40 years old when I got my first superintendency.

When we went east of the mountains then I started working on my doctorate and superintendent credentials at XYZ State University. I finished my superintendent credentials at XYZ State University and then so I was finishing that, I started my doctorate.

Our oldest when I started that was 82; so our oldest was five. Anyway and we have just had our second child and so I finished that up and so that was my training. As a mentor of my you get your doctorate, that's like getting your union card to become a superintendent, so anyway.

B: Right.

AD: What factors originally influence you to become a superintendent?

B: Well, I go back to what influenced me to become an administrator and I've always been called to leadership throughout when I was growing up, a student body class officer, in high school. When I was in college I was active in leadership roles in college, in my fraternity and in campus. I was called to being a leader and this sounds really arrogant but I got looking around at my, when I started teaching, I can do this job and I can do it better than they can do it.

I've got better ideas, I'm more energetic all of those things that a young 20 something thinks and so that propelled me and as I got into, more and more into becoming a ... well, my goal was to be a high school principal. Then I realized high school principals is a tougher job so I kind have said ... and I got my first assistant principalship at a junior high. Like said, that's where I student taught and I really enjoyed. I kind of changed my trajectory in that regard but as I saw what was going on, I just said I can do this.

It sounds like there's a distinction that I make between a big ego and a strong ego. I didn't have a big ego I think I had a strong ego that compelled me to say, I can do this job, I can lead, I can help children learn and I can help teachers grow. It was just all of that kind of drew me that. It's controlling, I want to controlling and it was the power to be able to create the direction and the success for an entire district.

AD: That's great thank you very much. Thinking about when you first got your role, like you said you were around 40 or before 40, did you feel well prepared? When you became a superintendent and if not what might have helped or?

B: Nothing, I was not well prepared for a very key part of it and you cannot prepare anyone for one of the key roles and that's the relationships with your school board.

AD: Wow.

B: That's an o n the job training and I pick the brains of a lot of different superintendents. How do you work with you board, what do you do and I tried to learn from colleagues, things that they found to be successful? You don't know how you're going to work with the board until you start working with the board. You've got five to seven personalities and they all came to their roles from certain positions. It's fortunate the board that hired me was a good board, was a stable board.

That's very important, that board is really critical. From there, that part I was not real well prepared for. You try to figure it out but you don't really know. It's a real on the job training, things like teacher evaluation, and no problem. Principal evaluation because I had been an assistant too.

AD: Sure.

B: Negotiations had been at the table, I was not prepared. Preparing their budget, pretty prepared there, all the labor relations pieces, [inaudible 00:12:02], all of kind of the stuff I felt, I had a good enough background that I don't think there was much I really struggled with. Areas that really catch people though, special Ed. I needed to learn and grow in that area because I had been secondary all of my career, I needed to learn more about reading particularly level, the elementary curriculum and I had done that partly as an assistant sup.

It now became my fulltime. Hiring, I had been hiring as a principal in assistant sup so, but now I'm hiring. I'm more involved with hiring administrators. You have to look at it very differently; Trying to manage the operational side too because in ABC that was 2,500, 2,700 students so I had some administrative support at the district level but not a lot. Then I think media relations was another area that I needed to learn and grow. It may have come from, you make a few mistakes you learn a few mistakes and you move on.

I felt very prepared too for the people side of things. How to work with people, how to lead people, how to engage people. That I felt well prepared for. That's what you do when you're a leader.

- AD: Great thank you. Looking back and I know you had, say 19 years do you think back to back what were somewhat things that you are the most proud of and why?
- B: Well, I'll go back.
- AD: If you can remember a couple.
- B: The people that I mentored and grown that have become very successful superintendents.
- AD: What things did you do as a superintendent that you're most proud of?
- B: Well, one of the things that I'm very proud of and this is throughout my career is I knew the people. I knew their names and I actually knew a little something about them even in the X - YZ School District, I probably recognized and at least could identify the school or there. To me and what was very important to me is that if people know that I care enough about them to know their name that I can make mistakes and screw up and they're going to forgive me. I can also be in a position where I can lead them. They're going to follow more so when they know I care. What's the old saying?
- AD: You don't care how much you know until you know how much you care.
- B: That's exactly right and knowing people's name and knowing who they are shows you care. It's a simple thing and so that's one. I think showing up, we did something. We had a lot of ... we tried to, in X - YZ this is funny, we had what was college day, I said, let's just do this district-wide and we called it college day.
- We encouraged everybody, every teacher to wear their college colors no matter where they were which was classified staff and then we had a little contest too. The winners of the contest would get a day off and I'd take their job. Of course I wouldn't do a bus driver's job so I got the supervisors to do that.
- B: It was great and that was fun because it started a whole process about where we were, what we wanted kids to be thinking future. The ones who won involved their kids and so that was great. That's one. I think another thing that particular in ABC that I'm very proud of, we, when I got here there was a real undercurrent between the school district and the local process in the community. By the time I left the press was loving us. We passed two major bond issues, I built schools and passed bond issues and

built schools and all that stuff, that's the complex that every superintendent has.

The relationship that we established within the community and how people do the schools was a complete change and there was a lot of distrust and so we completely changed that. That was one that I think was extremely important. We had good relationships with the union. When I was in ABC I never saw the union staff rep. Never, we no grievances and we had a different style of bargaining. Our contract was a perpetual contract. We didn't have our end day. We met monthly, we had problems solved. We had some great ... I mean it was pretty phenomenal.

AD: That's unbelievable.

B: Yeah, and towns are a little different because you have a different group of people but I think that was pretty amazing that we had that. I can still remember we got people in the room when we said, okay so what are the issues we want to talk about? One woman who was a teacher at the time became a principal said; our senior staff is feeling just a little, something more is missing. We started talking. We ended up saying, okay what we ended up doing was the old as you gained tenure in the district, and you gained a day of personal leave.

Because, the older the more senior teachers have things like grandchildren, children get married, children graduate in college and all those things that they had a fuss about. We tried to work that out. We also found that generation didn't like to use their personal leaves. They just didn't feel it was right but they appreciated having the extra flexibility, so it was problem solving. Then I think the other thing that I'm most proud of in X-YZ is we really increased the rigor at the high school level and you will appreciate this.

I started looking around at our high schools because I kind of, the old senior year throw away really bugged me. I started looking around and I said so what are we doing for rigor? We had a few AP classes and I said so ... then I found out that we were calling them AP classes but the teachers had only gotten to weekend workshops. I said we got to do something about this.

We sat down and we developed what was called the honors diploma, our own honors diploma. We went to a five-point grade scale and we went to and to become a valedictorian you had to complete I think we called them the terminal courses. Whether they were AP, they were writing 121 to 122

colleges or then, one of the other things that kind of was my impetus was we put in place an IB program at X High, you know?

B: I'll tell you of that conversation in a second. We really did build a rigor and so you started to get people to get your honors diploma was basically the meeting all of the college entry requirements for the major university. Really, it was one of those that had just started [inaudible 00:20:58] and I can still remember the local paper here likes to ... it stole the virtues. They like first stole the virtues of ABC high school NEF being ...

B: Yes, so he comes into this, picked up my, either my last year or the next last year in the system. "What am I going to do? The paper keeps talking about it? Where will I go? What can we do?" I said, "Why don't we put an IB program in X High? Do you like paint?" He said, "Really?" I said yeah and that was the beginning of it.

B: IB programs at X High, X High has a really wonderful culture and that really helped shape, bring kind of a piece to it. When you have a district the old high school tends to suffer. The new high school got all the shiny [inaudible 00:22:08]. This was kind of helping after summing it up and now we can give a little to X High.

AD: That was great.

B: Raising the rigor I think was probably another one of those things that I look back at.

AD: Great, thank you. Looking back, what things were you least proud of and was there anything that you ... just kind of sticks out?

B: I'm least proud of. We run a couple of local auction levies here in X. We got our tails just ... we got our lunch handed to us and we did in the last when we run in '05 or '06, stupid and we should have never done it. The campaign we tried to run, just a poor campaign so that was something I'm very not proud of. When I was in ABC I got there in '89 and the board said, our schools really need a lot of work so go forth and get the community to support building new communities.

We put together a group and ABC is a town, we pass levies, the operating levy system that was much more engrained in supporting schools we run one every two years and we run it at the maximum we could. We are running close to 80% approval so a real strong support for public schools. Given that context, we run our first bond issue, 35% yes. It was the ugliest campaign and situation I've ever been involved with. There was, the high



school when it was built in the 70s had been built on a style growing and it had created so much controversy.

There was so much vitriol in our community over this. I couldn't believe it. I opened a can of worms I didn't know was there. I can still remember our oldest daughter picked up the phone one day at home and she heard what she shouldn't have heard thinking about her dad. I was a real naïve person and that's probably something I didn't ... wasn't well prepared for was to deal with that kind of hate and venom. We took the three tries but we finally passed upon the issue to get it started and every elementary there had been redone.

Since I left they've since built a new middle school and they're now in the process of redoing the high school. I started the process and so that's something I guess I'd be proud about.

- B: That was one, I mean those were just really, really ... that was a tough one. Probably there we hired two principals that my gut told me we shouldn't and we shouldn't have. One I removed after a year and a half. One, he was a disaster and we run a collaborative process for hiring and I always liked to, one of my mantras was the process will let the cream rise to the top. I trusted the process but my gut told me don't but I trusted my rational side, not my gut side.

Those were, when you make a big mistake like that you just and they were mistakes. Both of them were here in the band. One, and then there was a principal at ABC that was not a good match for the community it turned out. It was that. I would go back to some of the hiring mistakes that were made and I look back at that and anything else I'm not particularly proud of. I can still remember a battle with the eighth, the football coach at X High which is just hostile in the best sense of the word.

He wanted to put out a jumbo tron at the football field. It was \$50,000 that was all it was going to cost and he was going to get all these people to sponsor and I said, no we're not going to do it. As soon as we put that up ... and because we're getting ready to go on our football issue the community is going to see this and they say, you can put this big TV. For what, five, six nights a year? No, we're not and I had great respect for him.

I don't think it was a mistake but it was one of those really tough moments because I kind of knee jerked it a little bit. I was a kneejerk and I didn't and I came off poorly on that so. I think those were probably, just some of the things that kind of caught me.

- AD: In my superintendency research and studies and listing and a kind of great quote from a superintendent basically the superintendency was characterized as challenging, lonely difficult and delightful.
- B: Yeah.
- AD: What would you add or change to that statement?
- B: Not, a whole lot. I'm going to go back to that last statement. The last, there's another part that haunts me is how the board and I fell out of favor with each other. It was a bad relationship but there was one particular board member that drove me absolutely crazy, kind of towards the end of my tenure. There were a couple of them really and it just really bugged me that I wasn't able to maintain that strong professional working relationships with them. That one probably bugs me too. Okay, so ...
- AD: I appreciate that thank you.
- B: Yeah, no but the board, the relationship between the superintendent and school board is like a marriage. You got to think of it in that regard. You have a great relationship where you can have a divorce and it can be rocky at times. The problem is you don't always get who you're marrying because the community will.
- B: Yeah, that's for sure. I was just thinking about all that too. I also think about my former business manager I had in ABC. He was from the old school and he didn't like my school. When we retired, we went on the best terms anyway. That's okay, so I'll go back to the point ...
- AD: Just the quote back now that is characterized as challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful?
- B: I'd say exciting and exhilarating. You get some of the highest highs and the lowest lows. When we passed, I can still remember passing that first bond issue in ABC. We had to have a 60% yes so it was a pretty high bar and we passed. I just remember feeling so wonderful and I can remember passing my last bond issue in X and only Y ad a higher percentage. Because we were 59 point obviously 7 or 8 and Y was 59.8 or 9 or something like that.
- B: That acceleration of really putting something together and seeing it passing those bond issues that was an affirmation of some things we've

done. Acceleration is just being accelerated and it can be really emotional, so yeah.

AD: Can you describe any experiences or stories in your position as superintendent where equity played an integral role?

B: Yeah, easy one. This was in ABC. We had an elementary, one of our season elementary principals. He was a jokester and he was jovial and life was good. A good principal but life was good. Sometimes he was too good. He flapped a little at the mouth. Anyway, he had a kindergarten opening and went through interview process. One of the candidates had been a long time substitute in the district. You're talking a smaller district so it's pretty well known who is who. Latina didn't get the job.

Equity can be looked and a lot of different things.

B: We had a few there. One of the things that I was most proud of in both ABC and in X - YZ is I had a really good equity, or gender balance in terms of men and women. Trying to recruit and hire people of color into leadership positions is tough because it's the supply and I say that economically but the number of people of color who were aspiring into leadership is pretty small. We've seen the studies. Right now a number of people of color are wanting to become teachers.

The disparity between districts really of high populations of students of color and teachers of color and it's just pretty tough. That's right, itself the same thing is true and to leadership also, yeah.

AD: You've kind of hit on this but there is kind of these five main roles that I found that kind of talk about business and superintendency where you're a teachers scholar, a manager, a democratic leader, an applied social scientist and a communicator. Thinking about those roles, what would you say kind of was there one that for you dominated your time or kind of took most of your time? I guess that I kind have went back particularly the earlier notes but teacher scholar, manager, democratic leader, life social scientist and communicator?

B: Probably communicator is the most important because you're communicating with so many different audiences. In ABC, in communication you take many forms.

B: The difference in the role between the superintendency in ABC and the superintendency in X - YZ are because of the size of the district, I knew I had to help. I communicated with the school board but I was both in ABC

and Ben - YZ, they got a weekly update. So I send them an electronic weekly update. In X - YZ I would also send out weekly updates. I try to have it out every Friday afternoon to all staff. We do it electronically now. It's so much easier.

What was going on, things did impress me. Just trying to keep things, keep the lines of communication open. I said that because contesters, funny things. Just do this, people love that. Just to kind of keep things lively. In ABC I did it monthly and then we got with her pay check and because there are 250 employees from home but I always, if somebody child was getting married, somebody got their masters, always kind of little things about people.

Just try to keep people informed. Then go back to, I talked about college day contests. We kind of fledged out but if you had 100% of the staff participate they get a free breakfast. We'd come around breakfast and meet with, bring my really good nutritionist for this program in X - YZ. We cooked breakfast for all the teachers and classified staff. That was a lot of fun, so that's more communication and X - YZ because of the media presence we had to really step up our level of communication.

We hired a great person; he's still there but that media relationship was so important. It's a different kind of communication because it's mass communication. Not everybody read the local paper. Not everybody watches the news, not everybody listens to the same radio. You had to really work hard to get different streams of communication out and part of being a superintendent is that being an effective leader is showing up and be invisible.

To me that was part of the communication piece. I'd show up one high school, play or a high school concert. I tried, I was probably out three or four nights a week, just being out there and being visible because I believed I was the face of the district and I was communicating in other ways. It was being involved with a different communities or organizations. Making connections outside the school. There was just a lot of that going on. It was communicating with legislatures and just being that face and voice and person within the district.

I think communicating is the most important thing because it ultimately pays off when you run a bond issue or run a levy.

B: That's one. In ABC I probably did more managing. I did all the HR; I had an HR coordinator that did all the nitty-gritty but I did all the others, the rest of it, all the labor relations, all that. That was a difference. I had more

hands on with the operations side of things, the maintenance, the food service custodial; the transportation, those sides of the house then I did in ABC and in X just because I have other people running that. Operations, I had the fellow who is the ESP sup, he was my assistant sup for operations; one of the best. I didn't have to worry about it. I didn't have to worry about finances.

B: I will tell you that one of the hardest things I ever had to do and I'm not sure this fits in, I went through my first year as superintendent, we're building the budget, we get the budget built. Now this was 2000 going into 2001, I think September 2001. Okay, we adopt the budget and my deputy superintendent that was in charge of HR walks in and says, is there a problem? I said, okay. The business manager thought I put in my budget the steps for teachers and I thought he put it in. I said, okay how much?

About a million dollars, do we have it? I said okay, I think we have enough to cover it. We were growing and we didn't feel too bad. Then the business manager walks in and says, we've got a problem. I didn't account for, I double counted some revenue and I said okay, how much? About a million dollars. We started the school year \$2 million in the whole and the 9/11 happened and that was one of the hardest things to go through.

Because one thing I prided myself in is we had really good budgets in ABC and I was told we had really good budgets in X and we had to really work hard to make sure those budgets ...

AD: That was your first year?

B: That was my first budget, I think.

AD: That was your first budget.

B: That was tough because we had to go in and really clomp down and during all of that early part of the century. We had tough financial times. Anyway that took a lot of my time. Probably the management and then trying to make sure people still remained hopeful when times were dark. I mean that's part of communication. Whether people are going to have jobs. Firstly X was growing. I mean one of my colleagues would say, growth hides all kinds of sins.

B: What were the other areas?

AD: Just teacher scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist and communicator.

B: Well, and part of that, I think part of the communications of the applied social scientist piece because I think those go hand in hand but knowing who your people are, where they want to be, democratic leader. I really worked hard to bring people and involve people in many ways. We didn't have a curriculum leader when I was in ABC so we had what was called the curriculum leadership counsel and they were all leaders.

They were part time teachers, part time released for me at various levels doing various jobs. We had a, I really believed in the hiring process; it was very democratic so I drove some people crazy about that, that's what I believed.

B: Yeah, pieces of all of that. One I didn't have enough didn't focus on the of teacher scholar piece like you have to pick your battles.

B: I hired good people to do the teacher scholar piece.

AD: Do you see yourself as an innovator, if so how or not, why not? Do you believe that's even an important role for a superintendent?

B: Yeah, several things we did for innovation. How we hired, very different from what most people did, how we did collect the bargaining because we had collected bargaining after honor so people assume you're bargaining and I'm not sure that's always the case. I had good people in the curriculum instruction area and I turned them loose to make sure we were looking at best practices. Talk about how we hired, how we communicated I think was very important.

We went through our rebranding of the X - YZ schools after we got our tails kicked in the local option levy and I think that was what school districts need look at their brand. We hired an advertising company and we rebranded the school district and we got people kind of scoffed at it but right now in that rebranding process the regard for the district and the schools is still really high. Because, we don't call the X - YZ school district. This is subtle It's the X - YZ schools.

When you hear about a district you think about this amorphous façade. When you think about the schools you think about the individual schools. People love their local, all the research always says, when you look at the survey every year, we love my local schools. Everyone there is so good so it's that subtlety and then we also try to bring in the history by how we visually present the district and the logo of it. If you look at the logo it's got this little red schoolhouse. It's kind of a little retro; not our deco.

That was pretty innovative and I think that it helps set a tone. We're really focused on, and not every district does this. We're really focused on our purpose. We had and I can't remember what it was in ABC but we pawned it down to a five-word statement. If you ask anybody in X - YZ who has been in the district, they will tell you, what the district about? Educating all our citizens. Boom, that's it. Everybody knows that. They help, it a laser focus for people.

Yeah, I mean and in some different areas. Focusing on, putting in place the honors diploma, to raise the rigor. That was innovative. Nobody else was doing it, so really try to focus that senior, get that senior year focus going.

AD: Absolutely.

B: Those are things that people just aren't doing; requiring a job entry plan. People don't do that.

AD: Exactly.

B: I mean those are, when we were in ABC, no teacher was hired. When we were small enough part of the teaching, part of the hiring for teachers, we had to do a teaching demonstration. Nobody does that. I mean those were things that we thought were just really important.

AD: They are. I love that settled piece, I'm just thinking about that, X - YZ school district versus X - YZ School. You and I both know and you're exactly right, everyone loves their local schools, the other ones are okay.

Okay, so part of my work I'm looking at the word transformation on so and my next question is describe experiences or stories from your work that were transformational. I actually printed out, here's my definition transformation, not the way that we bring on or not.

It's based off of Burns' original work in 1978 where basically he said, transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with each other in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. The result of a transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and they convert leaders into moral agents.

I think you've hit on some of what you do, what you've done with that but ...

B: Well, I go back to comment one of our high school teachers who really raised the rigor in the honors diploma and made it, at the time we were dealing with the financial deficits and decline. We saw putting in place AP as a quick, easy - not so easy – quick, cost effective way to really increase the rigor. We did it, we set ... we took 20 each from each of the high schools and we sent them to San Diego for a week. They came back and I knew what would happen.

They came back and said that's the best teacher training I've ever had. Okay, who else wants to sign up? It was kind of one of those lead, follow or get the heck out of the way. So we kind of led and we got out of the way as we, then all of a sudden we went from one AP courses per high school. I don't know how they have ... it's really exploded but that's kind of a way when you talk about, I can still remember this high school social studies teacher who took ... he had been the weekend warrior. Now he took the full training.

He said, this is the best thing we've ever done because now a rising tide lifts all ships and so it gave everybody a way to use that training and apply it in all their courses. It really was one of those transformational things and it really raised the level.

AD: Great.

B: If you think about it at the time is you're trying just to solve a problem but it really did create a transformational piece to us.

AD: Great, thank you. Another side of superintendent studies it's been interesting to read some of the things that they talk about but under what circumstances were you able to completely relax and set aside the demands of the superintendency?

B: You never stop thinking. You never stop. At least for me it's kind of always there and so I can read your question a couple of ways. Could I ever get away from it? I mean I don't know if that's what you're asking?

AD: That's what I'm asking.

B: Okay, yeah I can remember and we were my second or third year in ABC and our youngest was about second grade and then our oldest was in middle school and was about fourth or fifth grade. I started looking around and said, I need to do something with my girls and so we decided that ... I decided we all needed to learn how to snow ski and my wife said, "That's your thing." We would commute from ABC to XYZ. It was like a two hours' trip.



I was a dad that drove and that was kind of my, that was one way I got away. I'm skiing with the girls and learning.

B: Yep, and so it was that. Fortunately being a superintendent, our kids were active so I could go. That's the other thing, I could show up to all their activities and people think, you're a great superintendent you're always visible at all our activities.

I didn't think a thing about it. That was, I was completely out of it. Some travel time, family time activity time. We tried to spend, we didn't try. Every summer we spent a week on coast and they would always accuse me of never leaving the office because they'd say, "Dad quit calling the office." That was before cell phones so I would find a phone booth. I didn't always leave it there. Then as we got cell phones and BlackBerries, it was harder and harder to leave.

Even though my wife and I went, started traveling and we could never leave it because you could always check emails, we're always there. It became harder and harder. I really only could get away from it when we did leave the country and completely get away where no one could get you.

B: Even golfing, I couldn't get away from it. Skiing on the mountain. That's even harder now skiing because you can still, people can still call you while you're skiing, so.

B: Travel, travel.

B: Down memory lane.

AD: Today, if you're hiring a superintendent what are just the must haves and essential attributes that you would look for and were those the same attributes or different from when you were superintendent?

B: I don't think so. There's the stuff we do in education and it's stuff you can all learn and this even goes back to my belief in hiring teachers and principals. You can learn how to do budgets. You can learn the intricacies of collective bargaining. You can learn policy. I mean that stuff you can learn. You can't learn passion and heart and caring for people. I go back to, we were hiring somebody for the ESP to do a job, grad job and I was on the panel.

People said, we need to hire this guy because he's got all these attributes. I said no, we need to hire this woman, a younger woman because she's got

the passion and she's got the vision. Guess what passion and vision are what you come from the heart. Now you got to have the head, you got to be smart about it but I still think that's the most important. It's passion, it's the ability to care for people, to demonstrate that care and it's the ability to communicate.

Those have to be there. You can learn all the other stuff and there's new stuff to learn. We never knew what a plc was back in 2000. We didn't know what an RTI is. You can learn all that stuff and you can figure it out but it's the ability to communicate and which means it's the ability to lead and lead change and half people follow you. All of those, there's no difference. I mean that goes back to it's been there for a long time. It's the ability to lead I guess and we cut it all down.

AD: Thank you. I have been reading Linda Darling-Hammond's work and she explain the mission of schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist. Creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified using technologies that have not been invented. What are your thoughts on her quote?

B: It hasn't changed that. I go back to 1980, when I started teaching ...

B: He had to order the dido fluid. He didn't know how much dido fluid he was going to use but everybody ordered their own dido fluid. Do you even know what a dido machine is?

AD: Yes.

B: I go back to, when I started teaching we used didos, we use mimeographs. I wonder if that's coming from that big anyway. We use 16-millimeter projectors. We didn't know what a VCR is, we didn't know what a disk is. What he's talking about is what we've always faced in a pure, basically in the industrial revolution. We are changing and progressing. We, now granted education was always about preparing people to go into the workforce. Some of those jobs were already there.

I go back to, as soon as we started getting into the space race, we didn't know where we were headed. We had to create jobs and create change and start educating people for jobs we thought we might need. As we started moving into a whole, our technological tech boom starting in the early 80s, it's that isn't anything, what she's saying isn't anything, it's just accelerated. I always believe and this is my personal belief, I always believe that we needed first, we didn't need to teach; we needed to teach stuff but we needed to teach people how to think.

We needed to teach people how to problem solve. There's a little quote that I had, when I was vice principal. My principal I always had a nice saying; "It's not what you knows, it's hows you knows it."

AD: I like that.

B: That was from 1975. I've been using that a long time but it's just, yeah we need to teach people information, we need to give people knowledge but we also need to teach them how to think, how to prepare, how to use what they have to move forward. That's what she's saying. I don't think that she's just saying it a different way in a different context but yeah, she's right. I don't think it's anything brand new.

B: Nothing brand new. I think it's always been there. She may be articulating it a little bit more precisely than maybe what was being said in the 70s and 80s and 90s but I think it's always been there. Bill Gates was saying it for a long time.

AD: Can you describe experiences or stories from your work where you helped schools, students, principals, teachers, parents, board members get on winning streaks where two or more good things are happening and kind of propel them towards success?

B: Winning streaks. I never thought of it that way so I have to kind of recalibrate that.

B: Okay, when I go back to this with Z, the whole how he was just couldn't believe that X High as good as it was, was not getting the recognition. We just started that whole process of looking at IB, putting the IB in and really raising that kind of the status of the school. My daughter graduated from X High so I always had a soft place in my heart for that school but just trying to bring that school along so that it had a much better self, kind of self-image, the self and I think that was one that really I can point to. We had a board member in ABC who was elected, a year or two after I was started.

She was in an abusive marriage and she kind of looked at the world from a pretty glass is empty point of view and she didn't trust me. I just worked with her and worked with her. I can remember, she got a divorce, since remarried in a much better relationship. We still exchange Christmas cards, 15 years later.

B: It seems small but it is, it worked with her to gain confidence. She went back and got her master's degree and we just helped her as a person She was the board chair, she had a winning streak...

B: Yeah, I can think of that board member. The business manager I hired in ABC had come out of private industry, didn't know anything about school finance, trained him, mentored him and he's still there doing the job, doing a good job. Yeah, that was a big win for him, winning streak and passing three bond issues in a row in ABC and then bond issues two in X by really substantial margins. Those are some things that I can think about. There's a principal, an elementary principal I can think of in X - YZ.

He wasn't really confident in many ways but was ... he had all the skills and tools. He was the vice principal and at that time people just got appointed. They didn't have to go through a process, which I changed.

B: Part of the interview process to be any administrator they had to spend some time with the superintendent and people told me, I just had the best time with this. People told me that was the worst part of the interview. I think I smiled after that. I had a reputation for asking off the law questions. Anyway so.

AD: Can you give me an example?

B: One of the principals we hired was a competitive swimmer and swam for the university of XYZ. Well, my background is considered swimming. She he walks in and he sits down and I say, "So how's Jones?" Which was his college coach. "How did you know?"

B: I wanted to catch him off guard and I always read the résumés. I wanted to find something that they wouldn't be prepared to talk about to see how they did it. I used to have fun with that.

B: The elementary principal I'm talking about we, were always kidding and he needed to wear his brown pants to the interview with the superintendent. We kept coaching him and he got over the hump and is going a great job as principal. I can just, he got over the hump as a vice principal then he got over, then he became a principal and he's doing a great job. To just look back and see that kind of success. I think of all the principals we hired when I, starting my last year I had already announced that I was retiring at the end of the year.

We went into the, I called it our advance; we never retreated, we always moved forward.

B: It kind of hooked but anyway. It kind of tried to represent a change of thinking. We had everybody read Jim Collins good to great and part of Jim Collin' work part of it he says, "You need to get the right people on the

right seat on the bus.” I think we had about 65 administrators. I asked people to stand up for them in a new position or have position exchange. All but I think three stood up.

AD: Oh my goodness.

B: We were getting the right people on the right seat on the bus. I think when you talk about a winning streak that was getting the right ... we had a really good guy. He had been promoted from a high school VP to being a planning principal in middle school. We got him to be a high school VP then and he was happy as he could be. I think about those and he thanks me to this day. Okay, I'll take that. Let me think of a couple of these things.

I mean those were the kind of things that one of the high school principals one of my first hires in ABC was to hire our high school principal thankfully. I hired a high school principal, I helped mentor him, he got his doctorate and went on to become a superintendent, came to Oregon and became a superintendent and the board went south on him. He was looking for a job. He became a high school principal. I was able to hire him twice. As a high school principal, again I believe is a very successful career.

A good personal friend, I hired her as a math teacher when I was a junior high principal in XYZ and she and her husband were looking to move. I made sure she got interviewed and she blew them away, she was a great math teacher.

B: Those are the kind of things and the people being able to live their dreams and become what they wanted to become and be successful. Those are the things that really are important to me, so yeah.

B: I keep going back to direct impact on students and it's a little harder in a larger district but in ABC, I know a lot of kids came. My office was at the high school and so it kept kids through all the time.

AD: What role does humor play if any in the work of a superintendent?

B: If you don't have humor and if you haven't, if you've forgotten how to laugh you've lost it. You've got to be able to laugh, you've got to be able to laugh at yourself and fortunately my wife keeps me balanced and yeah. Humor is very important and if you can't laugh and you can't have a good time and that's why we do ... on the Valentines I had a contest. It's kind

of dumb and what people wanted were chocolate dipped strawberries. The first 15 to answer the question correctly, so this all kind of fun.

You got to have fun and people will forget that unless you're pretty dull and it gets pretty tough and humor helps reduce your reduce your stress level and the stress level of everybody else. Yeah, you got to use it on yourself; you got to use it with others.

AD: What would your school board say was your legacy and maybe greatest challenges?

B: Well, the financial crisis of the early part of this century is the greatest challenges that we had to work through. We had to work with planning budgets. We had to deal with all the human fall out of that. We had to deal with the trying to maintain as quality an education program as we could with your resources. I think that they say that was the biggest challenge. That's one; second keeping up with growth making sure we had sufficient classrooms, buildings to deal with growth so we didn't have crowding.

Making sure we had sufficient personnel to deal with the growing population. We were building an elementary school a year. Part of the time we were growing about 500 kids a year. We grew, yeah. In my years we grew about 4,000 kids so pretty good.

AD: Growing an elementary school a year.

B: Yeah. Legacy, provided direction, provided the vision for the district, raising the rigor. Probably the other challenge I had was some school board members because you always have those. It was interesting. I'm on the school board and one of our other board members was on the board in YZ and he said, "We didn't realize you had it right. You have the direction, you have great spirits, you really turn things in the positive direction for the district. You raise the rigor. You brought and put in place systems that needed to be there."

Because, things just happened. Even as a larger district its bad, it just happens. We really put a system.

AD: What would you say like following up on the challenges piece, what are some of the biggest challenges for superintendents in Oregon now that you see?

B: I'm trying to figure out what in the heck is going on statewide. Where are we with common core, where are we with smarter balance? Where is all

the IB going to be? What's this P20. How are we going to make 11 through 14 relevant? All of those issues that I think people are focused, trying to focus on.

How are we going to really integrate preschool education in the case of the K12 system? How are we going to ensure the transitions are going to leave from preschool to kindergarten and from elementary to middle and middle to high and high to higher ed? How are we going to integrate all of those? That whole integration piece P20 is I think part of something we've got to pay attention to. You got to pay attention to where is common core? How will that direct the development curriculum and then assessment and where is this whole smarter balance thing taking us?

Then you've got to always pay attention to the basics. Where we would finance, what would be sufficient. I think when superintendents quit paying attention to finance is when they lose their job. That's the single biggest reason that a superintendent sees their job as finances. They'll pay attention to and I think this is a basic labor relations. How are you getting along with teachers? What's going on with your bargaining unit?

Where's ODE? What are all those issues that you got to pay attention to? Depending on the area and it hits your area the, the area district transfer I mean that's kind of an issue. I think, some of the things the state really has and this affects every superintendent where are we with educating our English language learners, where are we with ensuring that all special ed kids are properly ed cost effectively educated.

Then I think in those districts that that failing schools and they're all over the state in every district, how are you as a superintendent involving your board and your school in making sure those schools are no longer failing. That's going to become a theme that's come out of OEE. Then I think that superintendents just need to pay attention to who their school boards and where they're coming from and maintaining the current feeding of their boards is extremely important all the time.

You've got to pay attention to who, what the board believes how you're going to create more board members, how the board works together and how you continually communicate and interact with the board. You just don't do it at the board meeting. It's the whole behind the scenes and that current feeding is so critical.

B: I used to meet with my board chair and vice chair and another board member every week in X - YZ. The board chair and another in ABC, I

would meet with all five board members every week away from the board meeting. Preparing for what was coming, talking about issues.

- AD: If we step back for a second and say someone's aspiring to be a superintendent in Oregon, what's the biggest advice that you could give to a future superintendent? Maybe too if they're married, their spouse or a family?
- B: Well, be prepared. Be prepared for the unexpected because you can ... you've taken all the courses so you've taken school law, school finance ...
- B: School budgets, you've taken all this. That prepares you for the stuff but it's the unexpected that comes down the pike. It's the parent, it's the 30 year old who walks in and says this teacher molested me when I was on the fifth grade and I'm just remembering it now. What do you do? Be prepared for the public scrutiny. That's particularly true for the spouse and again that depends on the media and the community.

When you're the superintendent and you are visible. People know who you are. People know who your family is, just because particularly within the school community they will know with kids in the schools. Hence you got to be able to have a little bit of thick skin and your spouse needs to have a little bit of a thick skin to deal with when, gosh superintendents are never criticized. My wife taught in our district. It couldn't in XYZ which could here but she had a pretty thick skin when she'd hear people criticize me.

Yeah, a spouse needs to have that thick skin and you have to insulate your kids a little bit. That's something you just need to think about. I didn't think about that and it was always funny. My kids would say, "Dad, how much money do you make?" I said, "You don't need to know that." Finally it was in the paper and she looked at it. I mean it's kind of this dumb thing. In the scheme of thing you don't think this is a big thing but for them it was big. You have to really think through what impact that will have on your family and your children.

You've got to figure out how you're going to get away and take of yourself. You do need to take care of yourself and you need to take care of your family so you can ignore that. Because, you're going to spend a lot of time. People say, I worked 80 hours; I call it BS, you never worked 80 hours, you just think you work probably 60. 50 to 60, which is pretty typical for a high school principal too. You're going to work that much more as a superintendent. You're going to do a different kind of work as a superintendent.



The other thing I would say is makes sure you're ready for the challenge because it is a challenge. It's constant. I think it's fun. I thought it was fun. I had a great time. People say, "You think that work's fun?" Yeah, I did; I thought it was great fun.

AD: That was kind of my next question is knowing what you know now, would you do it all over again?

B: Oh yeah. I'd do it, I mean I'd do things differently but I'd do it again. I kind of was a denier I wanted to do this at first. When I started in the training working at my credential and my doctorate but I think I would have been a little bit more forthright saying, yeah I'm going for it personally to myself. I said, well I'm going to see if this is really what I want to do, kind of a thing I was kind of exploring. I think the other piece of advice I would give people is going in superintendency really focused on getting to know people, getting to know ... making sure, particularly with the school board.

Focusing on that whole people. It's not about the staff; it's about the people. We're a people and keep your focus on the people. That's all the people in your system and you just think about all the people whose life you touched from the kindergartener, through the senior in high school, to your teachers, to your classified staff. I guess it's, the other thing is I said this to the intern but, God gave us two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak.

That's right saying but the more you can listen and honor people, the more you will grow and be successful in your job.

B: I said this when I came into X - YZ, just because I say I heard you doesn't mean I agree and will go along with what you said. Sometimes when you listen to people and you say aha, doesn't mean that you're agreeing with them. I think that's everything. You just need to be clear about what, when you're talking with people what are your expectations? What are their expectations for you, for that conversation could be?

B: The last piece of advice is be very clear on what's important to you and what are those ethical standards to which you will always adhere. Cut through it all. You've got your value base and your ethical of what will carry you through.

AD: Great, so my last question for you, a school leader in Oregon recently said, to kind of sum it up what a successful superintendent looks like. Someone

who's positive, curious, honest hard worker and mission driven. Do you agree or disagree or have any thoughts to that statement?

B: I'd say that captures leadership. Say it one more time.

AD: Be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard and be mission driven?

B: Be a people person, right? I keep coming back to that and that's implicit in that but it's all about the people. It's all about making sure, it's all about making sure that the people you work with are successful because when they're successful, you're successful. If they're not successful ... it's not about you; it's about all of us.

B: Well, you coached basketball and I'll give you two analogies; number one your teams win when they're all working together and everybody. Everybody's lifting everybody up and when you're the coach and I've going to use this term loosely to control over the lock room, which means you have everybody with you, that means everybody is going to be successful.

AD: That's great. Well is there anything else you wanted to add or?

B: No, you really took me down memory lane.

APPENDIX C  
PARTICIPANT C

## PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Interviews have been edited for clarity and confidentiality.

## Participant C

AD: Thank you again for coming and meeting me. Let's just start with a few demographic questions. How many years were you Superintendent? What district you were Superintendent?

C: Had to make notes. Twenty-four years as a superintendent. Six years in XYZ School District. Eighteen years at ABC-D School District. I retired from ABC-D in 2011.

C: It goes by really fast.

AD: I know. Did you come from a family of educators?

C: No, not at all. No. My parents, mom through 7th grade, dad through 8th grade. Farmers. No real understanding of education. I don't know how I got here. Because of that. There's support, certainly.

C: We have 5 kids and none of them are involved in education.

AD: What did your parents think of your chosen field?

C: They supported just the fact, they were very proud that I got a Bachelor's Degree. I think they were happy I got a Master's Degree and I don't think they really even understand exactly what a Doctorate was. Other than they were both like, another degree, good for you. What they didn't under was really interesting, get a job and you stick with it.

I changed jobs. They would be like, why would you do that? Just didn't understand that element of career and progression. You become a teacher and just stay there and be a teacher, you know, for the rest of your life. That was a kind of an interesting; I don't think they just understood the career progression.

AD: What was some of your fondest recollections of your years as superintendent?

C: I actually made some notes about this. Just thinking about that, when you take away, what do you remember, is probably what is most significant to you. The kids and some of the funny things that happened and the experiences with kids. People and those relationships and the connections you made that last long term. Those are probably the most significant things to me that I remember, having those relationships.

Even though you may not necessarily have long-term contact with those folks, you start thinking about things and it's the people that pop back in your mind. It's not class or the teaching, what the lesson was. It's the people. That's really what I enjoyed the most. In the long run you set the job aside and it's really been a people job. That's where the fond memories come from.

I have other things I look at, particularly here in ABC-D. Pride is maybe a little different than fondness but pride is some of the things were done here. Again, people. It's fun to watch that to see that happening. Hiring kids that have graduated at the time. It's always more people things.

AD: What was your career trajectory prior to you becoming a superintendent?

C: Probably pretty typical. Teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. I never really taught a whole lot. I didn't teach very long. I started teaching in the middle of the school year. I graduated in the middle of the year and it happened so that there was this teacher that was leaving in the middle of the year. I got that job. Teaching her science in 9th grade, junior high. I taught that half a year and then I taught the next full year.

We were all kind of these; you know how you create these young friends about the same age. This math teacher, which I can't even remember his name right now, but he was the first one at doing really some computer programming. The old card programming, not language but key plants. We started playing around with this Flanders Interaction Analysis. It's where every 3 seconds you write down, your observer writes down what the teacher's doing by number.

He creates the curriculum cross. This math guy went over to the University and he programmed all this stuff. Create these big printouts. We got to be good friends. All talking about curriculum and teaching.

C: I was starting out in counseling thinking maybe I want to be a counselor. So, I switched to administration, which is probably a good thing. Counseling would not have been probably my thing. I became a half time

assistant principal and half time teaching. Having a full time, only teaching a year and a half. For that year I taught half and half. Actually had 8th grade science instead of 9th grade.

That spring he came in to my office there and said, you know I'm working on my doctorate. You know I have to take a sabbatical. So? He said, well, the University has agreed I can take a full time sabbatical if I take it all summer and 1st semester next year. We want you to be an acting principal, without an assistant principal. Just be acting principal full time.

C: And we'll pay you \$500 to do it. So I became acting principal. This is in 1971? 1971, 72 school year. I did this alone. Here's the math teacher, the computer. There was another woman who had been a math teacher a XYZ Junior High School and had gone to work for the government, the state government in computer programming.

I can do that stuff. We started putting this idea together to do computer scheduling. We had kids put all this together and then math teachers helped with the key punch cards. We get our first conflict matrix back. We had to go out in the hallway and spread it out. This computer paper printout took up the whole hallway!

C: Roll it on out there. We were doing computer programming for the first-

C: I've always been around technology.

C: Love the idea of what it can do. I'm 23, 24 and I'm assistant principal. I would never do that, you know.

AD: What factors influenced you to originally becoming a superintendent?

C: But on the other side of that coin there were some great experiences there. When I got there, there had been a bond passed to build a brand new high school. The middle school and high school combination. That was high school. I got in to that. That was my first experience at building and learning blue printing and all the whole process. It was a great experience in that regard. Moving in to it. Doing all the things it takes to that. There's another piece of an experience that you had later because this was not a good place to work.

He said you should apply. So, I applied and got the job. I spent a year as planning principal. I spent that in a district office. This is a district at the time of about 6,000, I think we were.

C: I really had the opportunity to be in a central office and gain that experience. Then, also new planning principal-ship and that was hiring. This was a high school of about 1,100 kids. It was a big job. For me, it was a big change but being in that office. I was in to high school, then for 3 years, he came out to me and walked around the building there and he said, you're bored, aren't you? I said, well, how are you going to tell your superintendent, yes, to an answer like that. Well, I'm ready to do something else. As we were growing, our school district was growing rapidly in the years that I was there from 1980 to 87. We grew from 6,000 to 10,000.

C: So, they created this new assistant superintendent job. It was a broad spectrum of job all the way from information technology to special education to personnel and all the other special programs. I was an overseer of all that. Administrators of those programs. All of those things came under my purview. It was a really broad piece. There was an assistant superintendent for secondary and for primary and one for curriculum. So there were 4 of us. We created this team. We had so much fun. We'd go out for lunch and come back just giggling, uncontrollable laughter. Just one of those kinds of teams you could get into that fun with.

During that time, because I had such a broad range of things, I learned a lot about budgeting, a lot about how to think about budget. I had this experience in the spring before I took the superintendent's position. Everybody had gone for some reason, I don't know if it was spring break or what it was. The woman who was the assistant director of budget, the director was gone too, superintendent was gone. Deputy superintendent was gone. Assistant superintendents were gone. I was the only one there. We dug into the budget and actually put the budget together.

I learned this huge amount of things about just having to make decisions about budget as well as being having several years of knowledge about all these other special programs. I decided I was going to start applying for superintendency. I was working on my doctorate. First of all, I've got to get a job in first year after applying. Secondly, you are applying in the wrong places. You need to be applying in the small school districts and then work your way up. I said, I like this job. I like this as a school district. I would rather stay here longer than go to really small school superintendency.

That's why I left. I didn't want to do that. He said you're not going to get that. I also applied for assistant superintendent position at Z, which was in Kansas. It was like a XYZ, growing leaps and bounds. I had this interview in XYZ and this interview in Z. Z called me and offered me the job at the

same time XYZ called me and offered me the job. XYZ is the district about the size of ABC was when I came here, a little bit, about 6,000 kids. And he said, I can't believe it. I just can't believe how, that should not happen. I said, well, I'm taking it. I don't know what the hell I'm doing but I'm taking it. So, off I went to be a superintendent.

AD: How far was XYZ from where you were?

C: We had a lot of ethnic diversity, which was really fun.

Same thing was true in XYZ, a lot of ethnic diversity. Conflict too. It was fun. The kids were fun. They were entertaining. It had a different kind of challenge. I really kind of miss that when I came to ABC, it was pretty white here. Not much of that sense of diverse behaviors and ideas and thinking and humor. It was different. I missed it for quite a while. I looked at moving to Oregon for a job.

C: She said, well, it closes tomorrow. You'd better send me something. So I faxed her a kind of interest letter in seeking. She said, well, send me the rest of your materials. So, I did. This was in 1993, spring of 93. There was this huge snow storm, like a foot and a half of snow. It was in February. I get this call to come down for an interview. I'm driving down and it's snowing like hell and I almost turned around and went back home. I thought that would be rude. So I get down there. Find the district office, the old building down there in the boardroom.

I told her the story of what happened. I said, I don't know much about you. I'm interested but I don't know that I do. I want to know more and I will find out more if you are interested in me. I will find out more and we'll see if we have a match. I don't know that I am interested in you. And they were kind of like, how could you not be interested in ABC.

I figured if I get passed that, if they want to talk to me after I said that. She called me back and said we want you to come back for another round of interviews. At that point I started making phone calls. I called tons of people. I just said, I had a series of questions I asked. Then I said, who else should I talk to? I must have talked to, I don't know, 50 plus people by the time I got down here. There were these group meetings that they had scheduled, meetings in the boardroom, the administrator's staff and teachers. The evening meeting with all the parent community and stuff, they were all my friends by then. I had talked to them all. I knew their names; they knew my name because I had been on the phone to them.



- C: My meeting was all my friends, my new friends.
- C: I had been prepped on a couple of things about there would be a minister there asking about birth control in the schools because that had been something happen in the school district. They talked about that. It was just fun.
- AD: Did you feel when you took the XYZ job, did you feel prepared?
- C: I actually did. My ego was strong enough to think, I can do this. Boy I tell you, I learned some lessons. Keep track of what did I become, superintendent. First of all, I felt I was ready. I really felt, I got a year to go on my doctorate. I've had this experience as assistant superintendent. I was 41 years old. This is the right time. I felt prepared.
- I also had some ambition at that point about wanting to really be in that place. Or that was part of my choice there. I can do this better or at least I thought I could. I want to do something. I want to have the career trajectory. At that time, I was thinking, large, larger and larger. I later changed my mind about that. But just seeing that this is something I can do and I'm good at. I felt I was good at it.
- AD: Can you tell me more about changing your trajectory or you're thought about the large one? The number?
- C: Yeah, it all comes back to the people. I interviewed for some really large school districts, came close, but the more I started looking at it and starting talking to other superintendents that were in some of those large districts, it made me realize they were pretty isolated from really getting to know people. It really made me think, particularly after getting here and just really being in the relationships that were here. This is a great place.
- I remember talking with Yvonne over at XYZ when she was there, she was just totally, she's a character but not really close to people, and she talked, I can't even get the whole administrative staff in room. I kept thinking, I wouldn't like that. I really said I think I like this size. It has a more personable nature to it and more fulfilling in terms of relationships. I just quit. I decided I'm going to spend my time here or I'm going to quit. Having involved myself in the network that prepares you to get those jobs, I'm just going to spend my time here working on what's important. That was a good choice. I'm glad I did that. The opportunities might have been there but-

- AD: When you look back on, like you said, you've been kind have been thinking about your years, are some things that you can point out that you're most proud of? Was there anything in particular that you were proud and stuff?
- C: A colleague of mine said to me the ABC-D and my work there, he said this is your opus. I said, you mean the penguin? He said no. This is your opus; this is your finest performance I guess, in a sense. I think he is right in a sense it's been 18 years. What I look at is that there is tremendous value and longevity. I know some districts like to rotate people around. I'm not particularly fond of that. I think longevity is a good thing. What I look at here what happened is that we were able; we did that whole world, future search process.
- That created a mission statement that is so enduring. It's been our mission statement for 21 years now. There are a couple of times new board members will come on and kind of wanted to take another look at it. People kind of, in the community said, no. It touches the community so deeply. It is being able to just kind of stay with that and then build the culture around thinking about that. That was what I enjoyed that idea of how do you build this culture of being in dialogue and thinking together, focusing on the mission, relationships in this organization. I look at that and I think that's really what I ended up feeling really proud about. The culture of the ABC-D District was a powerful, is a powerful culture around learning and relationships and strong value base.
- There were some big differences between us, how we approached that. There were clearly laid strong foundations for everything, a good strong academic school culture and one built on relationships. He just had a different approach to it. It wasn't something that I did alone but I think we coupled up really well on that. If you take his, he was here for 13 years or something like that and my 18 years, we've got 31 years. That's the career of most people.
- AD: Is there anything that you look back and you say you were least proud of or things that you weren't proud of?
- C: Yeah, it comes to people again. I just hated it when we made a bad hire. You go through this process and all these people involved and you'd have this person and think, yeah. Then a month later you think, oh, crap. There are others like that but I just hated it when we would go thought that process and just made a mistake. You couldn't tell. You just didn't know. Or maybe getting it, seeing it, I don't know. For all the effort we did to try to make a good decision on hiring, we still made.

And the people then had to put up with that, there is still people to this day who are probably still smarting for some of the things happened with Joyce. We can go around and name others that happened to. It leaves them scarred in some way to have, particularly around administrators, to have a bad experience with administration. You don't get over that easy. Not at an administrative level. You can take some really good people and they can become union activists as a result of it and it kind of turns them off. That's the thing I look to.

AD: Because you did pride yourself on your hiring philosophy?

C: Yeah, I did. When you make a mistake, I'm not proud of this. I screwed up. The other, I don't know least proud of, one of the lessons often times those things were a result of not listening to my own voice. The tickbird thing. Most people heard me talking about tickbird. That idea that your own voice is telling you something, and to train your mind to listen to it and to be responsive to it. When you think about when something happens, and you think back on it and you think, oh, the short version is my tickbirds were flying. Your voice was saying something, pay attention. Then you didn't do it. Damn. Those are the kinds of things that I think was just making a bad decision particularly around people.

C: It's such an interesting thing because it's not a magical thing. It's not; some people have this 6th sense. What your mind is doing is really collecting a lot of data. You are hearing things. You are seeing things. You are thinking about things. All this stuff is kind of coming at you and your brain is churning it around and it is telling you something. That's kind of what your tickbirds are doing. It's telling you something. Being intuitive is not magical; it is listening to your senses about that. So, we'd have this conversation periodically.

AD: The superintendency has been characterized as challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful. What would you add or change to that?

C: Not really much. It's fun. The thing I think for me is in terms of your, I always talk about this at any job, in the way you structure an organization, that people work best when they are self-actualizing. I think being in the superintendency is really self-actualizing role. It can be. I suppose you can get the wrong board or the wrong environment. The idea that you are able to take your ideas and move them forward, is self-actualizing, right? I think that is important when you are talking about what it is like to be principal or assistant principal or teacher. At the fundamental level, where the role meets the role of the kids is that ability for teachers to be creative and think about how they are teaching is instead of just following some

road map or some assessments and stuff. That is true throughout an organization. I think that has to start with the superintendency, that self-actualizing feeling.

AD: Great. Can you think of any stories or experiences from your superintendent position where equity played an integral role?

C: Yeah, actually, the one I wrote about, you could get into the whole racial thing. I had great experiences with in both XYZ and then ABC-D. The biggest argument I got into around an equity issue was in my doctoral program.

I always believed that the best way to get gender equity is you have a balance of the voices that there. It's not by trying to be something you are not. I always tried to look at in particularly in the leadership roles of having a good balance of gender. I think that is really important because each person, not only because of gender but also because of their historic background and raising and value structure, they bring something different.

I think there is a difference between in the gender that is important to have a good balance. You get a better decision when you think about, when you think together like that. That is the one I look at is the balance gender piece. You look at some school districts and it's all-them in administration. I don't think that is good. I think men behave better when there are some women around. Women behave probably better when there are some men around.

AD: Through my studies I found there are some seminal pieces of looking at what the definitions of the roles in the superintendent. When you look at those, is there a certain role that you feel like maybe dominated your time, and why?

C: That dominated my time. I'd probably look at this social aspect and the communication aspect of things. There are a couple of things you learn about communication when you are superintendent. First of all, be careful what you say because people listen to you in a way that you don't expect. Making a comment about, why don't we do this, is interpreted as, do this.

You have to be careful about how you communicate. Watching what you say and then being more like a good questioner and a good listener. Tell me about this. There's that social communication piece of that. Maybe it's political, I don't know. The ones that I wrote down that I think you spend an awful lot of time on is the political dynamic.

C: This is the nexus. The point of connection. You've got your board out here and your community. Then you've got your internal, administration and teachers. The superintendent sits in the middle of that. You are so many things in there and you have to be flexible in who you are and what you are so that in any given circumstance you might be the democratic leader, you might be the autocrat. Or you might be the ombudsmen, bringing warring parties together and being the peacekeeper. You might be the point of focus for both of them.

You kind of have to be aware of what the circumstances are because you have to be flexible in whatever that is going to be. You have to look at that and take your own counsel. A lot of the time, if you think about the role of the diplomat, people are looking to the superintendent to solve a dispute. It could be from a parent and a principal and a kid in a suspension or expulsion. It could be between a teacher and a principal. But looking for the superintendent to be a fair judge of the circumstance. I don't know if I necessarily saw that on there.

AD: No, that's all right. That's great.

C: That is often the role you are in of people look to that position to, and in some sense, adjudicate in a fair, kind of reasonable way. That is often the role you are playing. Unless it really matters what the decision is, it is more often better to find an agreed upon decision. One that both parties, you say, absolutely the right thing. We agree. It is a different role in that regard. You can sit there sometimes thinking, this is what I would like to say but you know that is not it. You get a telephone call from an angry parent. What do they want? First of all, they want you to listen to them. They don't want you to take the side of the other person, they want you to listen. Usually after you have listened, and you know this is a principal, you'd do the same thing. After you have listened for a while, one of two things, usually they calm down sometimes they escalate.

They work themselves in to frenzy. One of my favorite questions is after they have talked and talked and talked, what would you like me to do? What do you want me to do? Often the answer is, well, nothing, I just wanted to vent, OK? Thank you. Good-bye. Sometimes they will say they want this and that. Then they say, well, OK, can you appreciate the fact that I'm hearing just your side of the story here and I need to hear the other side of the story too? Yes, I can. Now you've put yourself in a place where, hey, I heard your story but you know, to be fair, I want to hear the rest of the story too, the other side of the story.

- C: By that time as long as you have listened to them, they see you as being a fair person. That is that politician, diplomat, judge, I don't know what you would call it. They are not really looking for you to be a scholar or a manager or democratic-
- C: It's a different thing. I actually, board I think looks at you for more for communication. IF there is any place that I get criticism from the boards is, you didn't tell us about this or you didn't tell us about that. As much as you pay attention to that and you still miss stuff. You learn that for them, that's an important piece.
- AD: Do you see yourself as innovator? If yes, how? If not, why not? Do you believe that's actually an important role for a superintendent?
- C: I had some fun thinking about that question too. You know there is an assumption in that kind of an idea that an innovators, centered on thinking about unique things to do. That's not me. But I am a good problem solver. So when unique circumstances arrive, I think I do find unique solutions. Example being one building. We turned that in to something beautiful that has been long term and enduring. I think that is the ideas that when, the term maybe you've heard me use that I wrote down here so I won't forget, the idea of being an informed opportunist.
- C: I do too. It tells a lot. It says, look, I'm knowledgeable about all that is going on here. I pay attention to things. I know that there is these questions or these issues and if I'm paying attention, an opportunity might very well knock at the door. If you are informed, and you are knowledgeable, take advantage of that. I don't know if that is an innovator or not. I think that is an informed opportunist. Part of that is I can think about, you look at two schools, those are very unique schools. They are unique, not because I knew the answer, but because I asked a question. The question I asked is, how are we going to build a multidimensional library? And everybody said, what the hell is a multidimensional library?
- I don't know but we are going to figure it out. I think if you look at it, it's a multidimensional library. Am I the innovator? No, not really. I just asked a question. Other people started thinking, what the hell is that; let's play with this, let's experiment with this. It created in a sense an invitation for them to be innovators. I think that's maybe is more of an important role of the superintendent, that you invite others to be creative in their thinking. If you think you have to hold all the innovation in your office and in your person, you are limiting everybody else. Many ways the role there is to invite. Ask questions. Make it OK to explore.

- AD: Kind of following up on that, you know part of my role is I'm looking at transformational leadership, and can you think of experiences from your work that were transformational?
- C: Transformational for me or for others?
- AD: So, Burns said in 1978 that, "transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with each other in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality." Then Burns said, this is where I was thinking of you, Burns said, "the result of the transforming leadership as a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leader, and may convert leaders into moral agents."
- C: I like that. Whether I would say I am that way or not, I think the environment that I try to create, the culture, going back to the whole idea of being students of leadership, learning what does it mean to be a leader. So many people still, you go down to little children, they still hold this hierarchical idea of leadership. They get it from being child in a parent relationship. Somebody at the top, somebody at the bottom. Trying to get people to think differently about what is leadership, how do you engage in that and the whole idea that agreeing, discussing, engaging in dialogue, learning to think together and to try to hold the space in an organization for that. That wasn't easy by the way.
- It's not easy. I remember the first time I brought that up was my first year. We were going to try dialogue. His great concern was that not all voices would get in there. I had to kind of agree I would watch and make sure that Tom got a chance to talk. But, it took a lot of effort. Kids slide back and forth. It's not an easy thing. The idea that you can sit around a table together and every voice in there counts. Assistant principals ICs always came.
- I think that is a missing piece is that they are all part of the leadership culture. It's the idea that you think together and out of that, who knows which idea becomes the you do. So who is the leader? Who is the leader? The group is the leader. As a superintendent, you have to hold the idea that somebody might actually have to make a decision sometime if the group can't kind of figure it out. You don't just always make the decision. You try to find something in the group that, yeah, this is where we are. Sometimes you don't even get to that point. People learn to think differently.

That I think is, being a transformational leader implies action on the part of somebody. To create this environment, if there is any way I can think about that, did I try to create this environment where people talked, thought together, think together? That is kind of a metaphysical side to things. It's being willing to let those voices come up and to hold the difference, held the space for differences. It is not an easy thing because somebody who wants something, expects you to make the decision that they want, they don't want to have a conversation about whether that is the right decision or not. They don't necessarily want to share that with others. There are some people who just can't ever get there.

This idea of sharing your thinking was just not some place he could go. Others wanted to share way too much. You get this balance, this place. For most people, I found them, who knows, the feedback I got they enjoyed that opportunity to have that dialogue and to have a voice and to be thinking and to be learners themselves without having this menu of lists of things to do. Not that you didn't need those on occasion.

For me, transformation is a movement of thinking. There is one idea of leadership is you move people. My idea is that you move thinking. When you move the thinking, action takes place a lot faster. If you just make people do something, move people, it's transitory. Whereas thinking is transformation, changing thinking. That was always the way I felt about it is the effort had to be in changing thinking. That only came through dialogue. Whether it worked or not, I have no idea.

AD: Is there a time where you were completely relaxed and set aside the demands of the superintendency?

C: Yeah, I wrote down here, hiking in the canyons of Utah. That, my experience of going down there was that after being down there for a week I realized, you know all I was thinking about was putting one foot in front of another so that I wouldn't fall off the ledge. It's so concentrating on that, literally, your mind was totally gone from anything to do with around work.

And there was no electronics in the canyon. No telephone. No Internet. No email. Nothing. So you are down there and you are totally away from all of that. The environment demanded your ultimate attention. It was that place that I could go hiking, generally to, but that really was the place. I loved going. We are going back there for 2 weeks this fall in fact.

C: Finding something that's demanding enough of your time that you don't have time to be daydreaming about work. Something could happen to you.



AD: If you were hiring today, what would you look for in a superintendent and do you think those are the same attributes or different from delegated when you were a superintendent?

C: I didn't write an answer to that question because I don't really think I knew the answer. There are so many different ways to be a superintendent. You look at that variety of the people that are out there from very finance oriented to very curriculum oriented to leadership oriented. Actually, this is my opinion; I don't think very many of superintendents are actually leadership oriented in terms of creating leadership learning. They tend to be either finance or curriculum.

If I were to look at, you know, my perspective, you want somebody that has knowledge in both curriculum and finance. That's important piece of that. In fact, most superintendents will fail because of finance more than anything else. I think you really want to look for people who understand and want to engage the whole community in leadership. I am not sure that is different. That would be just what I say is important.

AD: What are your thoughts on the non-traditional route to the superintendency?

C: Non-educational?

AD: Yes.

C: My gut reaction is that I'm not sold on that but I have to ask myself why. I think relationships are a key. A person if they have good relationships skills, that's a good thing. I also think that to, in the world of education, you have to understand kids. To understand kids you have to experience them. I think that for us to say, well, have a non-traditional leader that has not been in the world of children somewhere along the line, is a problem. I don't think it is necessarily a fatal problem, but for me to having taught middle school, age kids, and then knowing, OK, I know them. I taught high school. To have that sense of, these are children, they are not numbers. They are not adults. They are not done. They are growing.

To have that experience is I think critical. You can have that in a non-traditional route but I would certainly want to know that's very much a part of who that person is, have an understanding of children. Because ultimately, that is what we are all about. That's where we are. If they don't have that, I mean, adult relationships are very different. You can do all kinds of things with adult relationships and perform and that sort of thing. If you don't understand that relationship in terms of how their job is with

kids, there is a big gap there. I don't think it's an impossible thing to do but I really want to know those things.

AD: That's great. I included a quote from Linda Darling-Hammond. Did you get a chance to look at that?

C: Yeah, you got the dates wrong, though.

C: 1810. 1910. 1710. That's the same thing. It's the wrong focus. It's jobs, products, using technologies. That's the, really, I'm serious, several hundred years of this stuff, nothing has changed. There is not, this is not some new revelation here. What it misses for me is we are not teaching kids to be in jobs. We are teaching kids to live life. That is a different way of thinking. Maybe being a good thinker, having strong values being a good person. Being a good student is part of that. Being a good citizen, that's all part of that. To focus on jobs, that we don't know about, we have been doing that, that's literally in 1910, we are educating kids that did jobs that didn't exist.

In brand new technologies, fought wars, we did all this stuff. We did that in 1810. Education has always been doing that. Less so further back in time, certainly last couple or third years with all the industrial revolution and changes. We have been doing that. That's been part of it. But when you talk to parents, they want this too. You know, when you really talk to parents, what they are talking about is they want their kids to be good kids. They want to be proud of them as who they are. They want to know that they have a value base. We play an important role in that. To not make that central to what we do, where we are just focusing on jobs, products and technology-

C: We do those things sure. That is part of it. That is the venue. Really we are trying to help kids grow up to be good people.

AD: The next question is about experiences from your work, where you have helped students, board members, parents, principals, get on winning streak. A sports term, where 2 or more good things are happening and it kind of propelled them toward success.

C: That's a lot of perception, winning streak. It's the old story of two guys moving to another town. Have I told you this story?

C: First guy comes along, he encounters a farmer out in his field. He says, ahh, I'm moving to this town down here. What are the people like down there? The farmer looks at him and says, what were they like where you

came from? Oh, gossipy, mean spirited, you know, all these things. He said, I'm really sorry to tell you, that's what you are going to find down here too. Turns on his way. Pretty soon the second guy comes along and sees the same farmer, greets him and says, I'm moving to this town down here. What are the people like down there? He said, what were they like where you came from? Oh, it was a great place, nice people, very good place to live, I loved it there. He said, I'm happy to tell you, you are going to find the same thing right down there.

Perception, and you know, winning, is often a perception. I found that parents, if they like their teacher, and if their kids are having a nice experience in school with their teacher, the kid, the parents are going to like the school. They are going to see it as a winning school. They like to see good test scores, generally, for the school, big picture school. And they like to know their kids are doing OK. But they judge everything by that, getting a high test score. Parents don't generally judge that. That's not there, the whole idea of growing kids, be a good people. They are really more interested in that. Winning streaks are very interesting. One of the things I've always said is if the football team wins the first game of the year, we are set. It creates an attitude of winning.

It's not the winning itself, it's an attitude. We are having a good year. And if their kids come home happy after the first couple of days of school, that's winning. I'm not sure what exactly winning is; a lot of it is perception. Their kids are enjoying it. They are seeing trappings of success, which might be a very nice school building. Passing a bond. Passing a levy. Getting satisfactory or excellent on the state rating for the school. There are a lot of different things like that. When you move a whole community to your perception, this is a winning school district, everybody benefits. That is really more of the challenge, I think.

What creates that? Kind like all those bigger pieces. Once you have moved them there, they are pretty solid there. I think ABC-D, parent's community, sees this as a great school. In fact, people outside our school district see it that way. It's just very different. She said, why is that? So we had a long conversation about my ideas. There is this perception about this is a good place, this is a place I want my kids. That's the winning streak you want. It's that big one.

AD: What role does humor play in the work of superintendent?

C: It is essential. Not only to appreciate it but to be part of it. I remember that the first years when a certain colleague was still there, we'd have our Monday morning meetings. He would say, it sounds like all you guys do

in there is laugh. We were having fun. Getting humor out of things, and enjoying things, and seeing the humor in things is not just about creating something that's funny.

People could do some of the strangest and funniest things. You just have to find the humor in it, to be able to laugh at it. Humor is, and being able to laugh at yourself by the way, which is sometimes humiliating but you should be able to do that. Humor is such an important piece. If you can't laugh, and you see some people who are just kind of like, it's serious all the time. You are kind of like; I don't think I want to be around them.

AD: So what would you say your school boards would was your legacy and then also maybe greatest challenge?

C: I have no idea. One person said to me, on the board, he said, I think it was one of my ends of the year evaluations, or some other time. He looked at me, said, I have no idea how you can make any sense of 5 different opinions. What would the school board say? Well, each one would say something different. I think they are all shocked that I survived 18 years in the school boards. Different people coming along and that is a survival skill. Being able to really work through crisis, and there were crisis, there were some serious ones.

I think probably what they would look at and say the legacy; I would hope the legacy is 2 things. One is the culture of the school district and the quality of the physical environment that we are in. From the time I got here, our schools were pretty cheap and shabby schools. It's not that schools make the physical environment, it makes a high quality education, but it sure changes the attitude about learning. When you change the attitude about learning in a nice environment, it makes learning better and more fun. You look at our schools and our facilities; they are some of the finest in the nation.

C: They really are. And they continue to get awards. There is the human side of it and then there is the culture and physical side of it. But they all go together and that pride when you look, kids go to school and they like their schools. I think of ABC High School when we, it's not just that the buildings are nice but they a couple of other things. One, they help teach. Two, they honor the kids. One of the things we heard from when we were remodeling ABC High School, is when we did future search with students, there were about 100 kids there in Oregon from ABC High School. Great experience. Fun day. But we learned about things we hadn't thought about.

One of them was that the bathrooms. Kids talked about no respect. Why is there vandalism in the bathroom? Because there are no doors on the stalls. You don't respect us. You don't care about our privacy. So, we designed, probably not a good term for the time, bomb proof stalls that can't be torn out and vandalized and when there is vandalism in the bathroom, it's got to be taken care of within a day. You know what? We went from these beat up bathrooms to bathrooms that have been pretty well taken care of. There is an occasional thing here or there.

Pretty well taken care of because it said to kids, we respect you. We didn't say to them we respect you by building nice bathrooms. It's just the way the things are structured that we honor your place of learning. We care about your privacy. We care about your learning. We care about your involvement. The facilities say more than just we are nice. They say a lot more than that.

AD: What is the biggest challenge or challenges that are faced future superintendents in Oregon?

C: I don't think it is any different than it has always been. That is creating the human environment that really has this culture of caring and learning and thinking about high quality teaching and learning. Growing kids. I don't think that has changed. I don't think it has ever changed. Maybe the venue and the way the methodology has changed

I have read a lot of books and I've read a lot of things, but you know, the problem with all these books that we read is that they all kind of have their own here's the magic bullet. If you just take this and go do it, it will work. The issue there is that you have got to have your own ducks in a row in your own heart, in your own mind and your own values before anything is going to work.

Then you have to be flexible enough to use all of those things. You had better focus here first in getting your own good base values, and know what you want and what you believe and what you value. You don't have that, if you don't know that is, then you are all over the map. Oh, well, pick this one. We'll pick that one or this one. If there is anything I would say about the biggest challenge in future superintendent is, people who want to be superintendent hopefully they have gone through some thinking about, what do I really stand for. What are my bedrock values so that when I am faced with challenges, that I have something firm to stand on? I am not waffling all over the place. I don't know if that has changed ever. I would hope that there is more attention paid to that. Oftentimes boards are not looking for that.

- AD: Is there any big, any advice you would give to superintendents and families?
- C: I didn't realize this but when I was getting near retirement, that year. My wife had retired before. She kind of wanted me to retire. Something, some conversation came up about meetings and she said to me, I don't think you have any idea how often you are gone. I said I'm not gone that much. She said, you have no idea how often you are gone. It is easy to get in to that. For principals too.
- There is, you begin to live that life and you've got this meeting and you've got that. I'm just going to run over here for a little while. Go do this. You lose track of really how much time you put in to that. I don't know what advice is in there, except, and occasionally take an inventory. Put it in front of your face. And say, oh, I was gone 4 days this week and didn't even know it. Didn't even, you know. Because before you know it, your kids are going to be gown. You are going to miss some things.
- C: Take that time.
- C: She complains that I'm still gone. I'm over here in this office.
- AD: Looking back knowing everything you know now, would you go back and would you become a school superintendent?
- C: Absolutely. I loved my career. I loved it. I loved being an educator. Yeah. It was, I don't know how, why I got in to it exactly but it was kind of one of those decision points. You go back and experience it. I loved it. Mistakes and all. Bad experiences and all. It was a good choice for me.
- AD: A school superintendent actually said to be a successful superintendent you need to commit to a rather simple set of values. Be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard and be mission driven. Comments?
- C: Let's start with the first part of this, a set of values. I agree with. The ones you named there aren't necessarily values. Being positive is an attitude not a silly value. That's kind of, some of us are programmed positive, and some are programmed negative.
- C: You should have a positive outlook and hope for what the future brings. I already said this earlier about being grounded in what your values are because your values will be; you will be tested on things that are value laden. The distinguishing between a value and a belief, people can say their beliefs are their value. Not necessarily. Beliefs are more like an

opinion. Values are things like honesty, trustworthiness, integrity, and those kinds of things.

Knowing what they mean to you and being able to question yourself, am I being honest, is my integrity good here? Am I acting in a trustworthy manner? You can't say to somebody, trust me. That's shallow. What you can say is, I will behave in a trustworthy manner. Trusting me is up to you. That is what I would say about being grounded in values and be careful not to ground it in opinions and beliefs. Beliefs might lead you in curriculum and decisions but values will guide through crisis.

- AD: Can you tell me a little, just briefly, a little more of your hiring philosophy? When you would work with hiring administrators, hiring district office folks, and teachers?
- C: I'm trying to find those good people that have good hearts. I expected others to find knowledge about curriculum or their educational background and understandings. What I am looking for are people who could engage with me. Be that person who would be willing to think. You don't want people coming and saying, this is, I have the answer, and I am going to dispense it to you. But rather, to engage with you about the possibility. That engagement, I'm looking for that. Willingness to hear an alternative point of view. Because you know you are going to get an alternative point of view in your role.
- C: So, it's that looking at. Then one of the questions I love to ask is what do you think you qualify as a world citizen? Why are you a good citizen in this world? That evokes some really interesting answers. It is that looking for more than just the technical ability. Others can find that. There's personality, willingness to engage, ability to be open to alternative thinking. You know that. In the role you are in, there is no one answer. And people who think there is, are going to be sorely disappointed in this world. Or they are going to run in to a lot of conflict.
- AD: Sure. Was there anything that you would like to add?
- C: There was one piece and that is it's kind of a tickbird thing but it is listening to your own voice. If there is any piece of advice I would give to any administrator is pay attention to your own voice. I can give examples after example of somebody coming to me that I trusted and believed in and they have this strong opinion about something or make statements that get my energy going to do something about. I can't tell you how many times I've been burned by following up on that and finding out it is not true. Or

not exactly accurate. Or the person that supposedly said that, I didn't say that. Or that's not what I meant when I said that.

Even people you trust closely listen carefully to what they are saying and listen to how you are reacting to it. Listen carefully. And listen to how you are responding to it. That whole idea of listening, listen to what they say, listen to what your reaction is and to what questions you have there. Anytime that's kind of there, hold your own counsel. Hold your own counsel.



APPENDIX D  
PARTICIPANT D

## Participant D

AD: The first couple of questions are just some demographic kind of questions, can you just tell me a little bit about your life as a school superintendent where you were how many years where you retired from?

D: I was 10 years at ABC public schools and that is where I retired.

AD: Did you come from a family of educators?

D: No, but a real commitment to education in a way we really thought it as a great equalizer. So the way to wipe out prejudice really in ... my family is Jewish and my father was in the World War II he was the flying tigers so you he really feels like education was the only way to overcome the horrendous discrimination that he saw during the war, so teachers were held in the highest esteem. It was natural to want to be one I guess.

AD: Do you have any children or any of them involved in education?

D: Yes.

AD: What are some of your fondest recollections from your time as superintendent?

D: Well I would say the main thing it's just the difference we made for kids. I think just a few point I mean a few data points would be our response intervention program reduced... conservatively he said about 25% the amount of kids we were identifying for special Ed. Our work around increasing graduation in the last five years we increased at seven percent. Now ABC is still not where they need to be but we're definitely got the trajectory going in the right way and I would say in most data points we were able to do that. I also think just raising expectations for kids you can ... when I came into that community I felt very much like people were saying; with the kinds of kids we have they'll never go to college. I think what the kinds of kids we have met ...

Or they're just increasing numbers kids of poverty so there was the idea that if you're poor you're not smart. I think one of the best things was really showing them that ... we've been asking educators ... we've been asking students to change their schools and we need schools to change for our students so somehow we created the academy of arts and academic they started seeing kids flanking out not only being successful but ending up with the highest scores and reading language arts and science in the district. I think really shifting those attitudes was ... and I'd say

historically superintendents were not instructional leaders, they were great managers or bond passers or ... I would say I was really the first instructional superintendent. Just shifting the focus that's a huge shift to get people to move from ... it's about how much is in your ending fund balance as oppose to the difference you're making for kids.

AD: Can you describe a little bit of your current trajectory prior to becoming a superintendent?

D: Sure I started as a special Ed teacher in ABC so it was fun to go back as a superintendent, and then I thought you needed to teacher regular Ed to really understand special Ed. I went and taught regular Ed in I liked I really liked to be in schools where there's more poverty, need that's more that I'm drawn too kind of at risks kids. I ended my teaching career at a school which is probably about 90% free and reduced lunch, and I had a class 38 second graders, so that experience large class lots of needs too so that was a good experience for me. After I was a teacher in ABC I was ... an assistant personnel job opened I think that director ... I knew the director the HR really liked me I mean I think he thought I was effective of what I did he asked me to apply for that job. Just like my principal applied for the job the high school principal applied for the job and I got the job it was quite the shakeup I the school district.

I was like 28 young teacher and yeah I think this HR director had a problem that A there were no women in the district office and B he had a sort of break it up or shake it up. I was HR assistant and I also worked it was HR assistant it was half working on at risks kids, so I've been 40 years in education so this more we just this whole concept of at risk kids and how do we do special stuff for at risk kids was coming about. Now all of a sudden I'm kind of the HR director and two years at it was like young and I think I taught maybe 10 years totally between them. That was really interesting I mean it was ... it happened in May so I really wasn't the director for that long it was more the interesting things that I found about like, this was a good old boy network so.

This is the assistant superintendent of that school district so, I'm not saying the whole district was that way but I'm just saying it was, those were interesting times. I mean that was probably more extreme but ...

D: One colleague said it's not good to stay long in HR, because once you stay long in HR they don't see you as an instructional leader.

That was very cool was a very cool school the district the kind of district I like because I like blue color much more than white color, and some of

those blue color communities are very humble people just really good. Particularly ABC and XYZ is this way, and I would say is this way, people have a perception the college town is so much better school system. People in the other like ABC are just more humble workers and really great staff it was interesting, so then that superintendent retired and the new superintendent they brought in I just wasn't a match for him with him. I stayed for a year maybe two years with him and then I applied for the director of the administrative license program that he was involved and then I got that job. I did that for six years and the ABC superintendent seat opened and I thought that would be a pretty ... I thought you can only teach people to be superintendent so long you should be really do it.

D They almost didn't hire me and they almost didn't hire me because they saw me as visionary which I think is true, it was 2003 we were headed into the recession and they didn't there will be any money and they didn't think I could be happy when there was not any money. When they talked to me about that I said this nicely but I said you're wrong there is money and I'm going to show you where the money is. I mean the 250 kids dropping out of each high school I just equated that times six thousand how much money you would get, the kids who are choosing to do home schooling transfers out ABC has been huge. The amount of transfer so I really showed them that there was eight million dollars that I had to ... I mean it took a little like it would take them believing enough in me, so I could start something to bring that back. I told you people were pretty management oriented so manner the businessman the business director at that time was holding a huge ending fund balance.

Which was a big issue for me the first year because he felt brag to the business director about the big ending fund unit, of course that get back to our union and I was like how are we going to build trust if we ... I did that for 10 years I love that job things were starting to get repetitive. I'm not good when things get repetitive so there's going to be another bane I don't really want to lead another bane I dint think it was fair for the district if I didn't have the energy to lead a banes.

AD: Did you feel like you were prepared for your first superintendency?

D: Like through a course?

D: I don't think anything about the course work really prepared me, I think what prepared I think it probably happened to you too but I think I was a leader all along. Like when I was a teacher used to have these great level teams and I would always be the one to facilitate it and let it, when I was a first year teacher I applied for a grant to create integrated PE and got it. It

was always just kind of involved in leadership I don't know exactly why because I was not a leader in high school particularly. I was a disengaged kid I wasn't a kid who really liked high school who did well in high school, I think that's partly what motivated to go into education. Yeah I think I had a lot of leadership experience and I think the thing that influences me the most is you have to learn a lot around me, we get to know a lot about each other we travelled a lot. I think what really influenced me the most was getting to be under direct leadership team of the other superintendent.

Then I started getting to the point of feeling I can do this better I'd see how they were leading and say I think I could even be a stronger leader.

AD: What are you most proud of when you think back on your superintendency?

D: Well I think there is two things one is the creation of the academy math and academics not because of that particular but that really started showing people that once size that fit all the kids. That really it's really more about choices for students I mean you run a comprehensive high school, I think 90% of the kids can do well there but there's 10% it's just not the right structure and so we've got make better choices and having high expectations for kids. I think ... I don't know if you've read anything about any of this in the newspaper, but I'm really proud of this except I didn't do ... was my weakest leadership moment I mean it was really I if did it now I could do it without what happening. I really got into a really big thing around equity I brought forward ... did you read any of those articles I brought forward in equity plan that really caused a big promotion by the conservative community. We had a board meeting gathered about 400 people there and it was ... but anyways we really worked through it well and it's something that needed to happen for the kids there's no question about it.

In the end I started a ministerial group and I would say it people under that been really some of my closets colleagues, like people I really relied on and we had really intense honest conversations about ...

AD: Is there anything you can think of that you were at least proud of or is there something that stands out here?

D: I think there are some people I should have let go sooner that I did and think you probably see this too, there's some pretty poison people who can be holding up a whole lot of stress. It's a real balance between how long do you support them and how soon do you say it's just not going to work,

so I think you have to this isn't so much people like who needed improvement not like in classroom management. In fact it's people whose values are so different that to really try to shift them I could have gotten things done faster if I had moved a few people.

- AD: The superintendence has been characterized as challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful, challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful what would you add or change to that statement?
- D: Impactful I would put impactful just to me that's the only thing that makes it delightful, is that if you're impacting lives of the students so ...
- AD: I like that, can you expand on you had already talked about equity but for me this is obviously really important piece to my study, can you describe experiences or stories where equity played an integral role?
- D: One was just really creating equitable as a place where kids really felt safe and respect, and I think to the play that we did ... another really interesting learning around equity is in ... it was something I could apply recently to articulate for someone here.
- AD: I think that's a very powerful way to look at it as well, here's this principal is trying to doing something great but ... thank you we talked about this briefly the next question is about the roles of a superintendent. There's some similar works that basically break this position up into the teacher scholar which is what you talked about an instructional leader. A manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, same communicator is there one of those roles that dominated your time or that you chose to make?
- D: Well, I would say instructional leader I would also say democratic leader because this district was very top down.
- AD: Did you see yourself as an innovator during this time?
- D: Yeah, I think innovation was one I mean I think just knowing the whole idea about the eight billion dollars and creating the school, and it's not like I'm favored over specialty schools I need to show that if you stand by expectation and teaching in a way you can do it. I think we did a lot of work in all of these schools we're the first district in the state to have everyone doing computers.
- AD: Do you think that's an important role for superintendents?
- D: Yes, and to really support it and stuff.

- AD: Can you give any experiences or stories for your work that were transformational?
- D: Well I think the creation of the academy is transformational because it really made people see that kids can really learn if we have expectations for them, and we give a particular structure. I think the work around equity was transformational I think the work with the leadership team is transformational, I mean some of these people really shifted some we're able to shift but some really shifted.
- AD: Where there any circumstances were to completely relax and set aside the demands of the superintendence?
- D: Yeah I think there were a lot of times I mean I didn't ... I knew when I came in there that I was going to have ... there was a lot of changing that needed to happen. My idea was going to be everywhere in that community and I think I was successful with that, I mean I would typically go to three events every night I was out every night and I would go to six or seven events on the weekend I just ... I mean I went to all of this work stuff just because that's where the community was you know what I mean. Anytime kids are doing stuff to me it's really fun and relaxing I never ... and an opportunity to talk to families. That didn't seem ... I didn't get very stressed as superintendent I just ... I think one of the advantages of been with ... I was like the only woman with a bunch of men. I think they typically know how to compact analyze stuff a little but more than women do, so I just kind of took that skill to the extreme I was kind of like I'm going to make really good decisions. I'm going to use good process to make good decisions and I'm going to stay focused on that, I don't know I just seemed to get the best job. I don't feel like stressful.
- AD: Today you're hiring superintendent what would he attribute you look for and do you think those are the same needed that when you were superintendent?
- D: Yeah I mean I definitely would look for someone whose in instructional, I think really good people need a leader to be able to really make hard decisions but a sense of knowing that you need to make the kind of the decisions that are the right decisions. Really like hard decisions are the right decisions to make I think for someone who knows how to empower and grow the next level balance it absolutely critical. I think the only really way I was able to be in that community so much is because of the next layer down, I kind of like to say the next layer down. It's the same thing here I'm on three days a week that's only because of the ... how I

work with the leadership team, so I think that someone who has the ability to multiple themselves through other people.

- AD: Linda Darling-Hammond's quote is in 2010 but she explains the new mission in schools, as prepares you to work job that don't exist again create ideas, solutions for product and problems and have not been identified using technologies that have not been invented, any comments on her that quote?
- D: Yeah really about the lifelong learning and that's a skill, and I do think it takes a core basic skill I mean if you're going to be a lifelong learner you need to know how to read write and be know some stuff about mathematics. I really should assembled a platoon I think it really prevents a lot of kids from graduating now, many people use it but I think math is important and mathematical thinking is really important. I think it's more about statistics and communicative stuff and stuff like that, so it's really important not only to teach content but how content is applied and what are the skills that how do you teach students so they have the core basic skills and like so that they know how to continue to learn.
- D: You can see the social side how that so key and think the scientific process really and exploration I think so yeah.
- AD: Can you think of any story or experiences from your work where you help students, principals, parents, board member gets get on winning streaks here two or more good things are happening and kind of propel them towards success?
- D: Yeah I think I think that ... no I've always I've told this to people because it's sort of like ... I mean part of your job is to make your board feel successful and meaningful that they have real work. I know we say they're just policies so when we created a commitment around third grade reading in order to really galvanize the community around that, we created this thing called the gift of literacy and really what if was is that we ... so we work with like Rotary. There are about 10 private organizations Rotary we've brought in the libraries and the city and there were probably about 20 sponsors. We had about 1000 first graders so we got ... there would be a teacher team who would choose these 10 books, and then they would read them with the kids and then each kids got to choose a book that would become their own book. Then one day we took 1000 first graders up to our Community College and we had they'd come in three groups like 300, and when they got there, there would be a lot of staff just up the characters in this books. You can rent them it was great to see the



university students the college students to see what's going on, and then we had celebrities from all over.

Building, university presidents, athletes, football team, basketball team, mayors and there'll be a big assembly where everyone would get there book; there was this big unveiling of the book. Then we are ... well first there was training for everyone then they go to small groups and these people would read books. It just became a real buzz around literacy and the gift of literacy and that is community literacy is important, and we were all going to work towards that. It created great ... the board really ... I mean we did all the work. This was the boards' activity because the boards were the communities, so and I think once you start doing stuffs like that where everyone rolling up their sleeves because there's a lot of like get the books ready to hand out. It's not easy you're building relationship so then I think it really lead to passing our bond, because we were deep in the community working around doing good things for kids and people started seeing that we were going to makes this happen.

Now do I think that without strong instruction would have made any difference in achievement now, but it really made a difference in terms of the board feeling like things are happening in the community and something the community was buzzing about. I think actually there was one event before that and that was ... this is really big of a team because I want to do like we call it the ABC for the all the Ed models. I said to the team we just need to have a community event and they said oh yeah I know how that goes, two people show up and they're the same two complainers. I knew right then what I had to do to begin with to show I could produce a big event like this, so we used existing infrastructures we went to the city, we went to all the boards, went everywhere we would talk about this event.

Really what attracted people was one that clicker technology coming out so we let people know that we were going to electronically be able to tally their responses and tell them right away how the communities. I think half the people just wanted to see that but literally hundreds of people came to that meeting, and you could see this team.

AD: That's great. What role does humor play within the work of a superintendent?

D: I think it's important I mean of course I had to deal with that with this team too because, they humor at people's expense they were making fun of people they were saying racist stuff. I think humor is critically for

everybody it can't be at people's expense and you've seen it be at people's expense but if it's done appropriately it's terrific.

- AD: Looking back what would you ... school board do you think your school board or boards would say was your legacy and also maybe then greatest challenge.
- D: They would say probably my legacy was achievement, setting high expectations, making instruction the focus I think they would say equity. What was my biggest challenge? Well they would probably I think if you said what was a great challenge that I had it was the equity thing and we all had that it seemed like a really big challenge. I think they would say the leadership team I had I inherited because really honestly couldn't talk to anyone about that in the organization, so the board would be the people I ... the people, the thought leaders around helping me figure that out was the board. We were really involved in that, I had an awesome board I have five board members get this I had exactly the same board when I started when I ended the next step. One person left and the person who replaced and he was strong and the person replaced them was even stronger.
- D: When you have the board that chose you all along the way it's nice.
- AD: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon?
- D: Well I think obviously you're much more accountable for achievement then I would say that was true during my tenure too, but I don't think before that. I think you've probably read the article you're facing the level of poverty it just becoming extreme in our stay. It's becoming more diverse and that really making all these kids feels safe and respected and all the staff believes they can meet high expectations and closing the gap. Ultimately all this is irrelevant till we close that gap right.
- D: You know this much more just on closing the gap.
- AD: What advice would you give to future superintendents and maybe to possible spouses and families?
- D: I mean I think it's interesting I went to ABC's in 03 and people were really tired and I think people always appear tired, but you know maybe they have had to start doing their cuts. I literally was thinking of not doing like a strategic plan, which we call the ABC quality and model, which is the first meeting when they did.

- AD: Knowing everything you know now would you go back and do it again?
- D: Yeah.
- AD: Be a superintendent?
- D: Yeah best job I ever had really teaching more but and more important but you can really make a big impact on a community, group of children and there's ... I have a great story about the danger of a superintendents because I think this is important because you do have a lot of position power
- AD: There is a superintendent who said to be a successful superintendent commit to be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard and be mission driven. Anything you'd add or change ... sorry for the last one 26, be positive, be honest, work hard, and be mission driven.
- D: Be child centered, yeah I'll have to start there that would be the first one.
- AD: Is there something I have left out or is there something you would like to talk about that?
- D: I had a student advisory committee who advise me we had kids from every school who were part of the school board, they weren't voting but we definitely talk to them during school board meetings. I had to prop it a lot I had to say to the board chair do you want to ask the students how they feel about it. Then they would also be in my student advisory committee, which was really about 30 other kids, and it was very diverse, it's like I want to see faces that reflect kids I want to see kids who are successful kids who are struggling. Really important board issues we would take their group, and we would really talk with the kids and the boards always knew when they were discussing stuff what the kids opinions was. I mean first of all I think it's critical to know what kids think but I think even beyond that symbolically that you are really asking kids it makes a lot of difference to people.

APPENDIX E  
PARTICIPANT E

## Participant E

AD: If you wouldn't mind just starting with a little demographic questions, you were a school superintendent for how many years and what district and where did you retire?

E: 27 years

AD: Did you come from a family of educators?

E: No. Pretty much the first generation of my family that to have graduated from college. My dad, his parents came to United States as an immigrant and worked on the iron ore mines and starting all of his life. My father went into the armed forces and was for the first time realized that we could compete with the people he was there with in the air force and became an officer and got him thinking that he could compete with the people that were are college graduate at that point. He didn't graduate from college but an American dream college education really mattered.

There is school pulling you, hard work and commitment and loyalty, perseverance and all that came from a family those really strong values relative to work and commitment but not an educational background.

AD: Starting to think about your career as a superintendent, what are some of your fondest recollections?

E: I don't know that I have to give you specific recommendation or not a recommendation or reference but I can give you a perspective on it. You go to work every day doing something that you know matters. I've never looked at it like a job, as something that I haven't enjoyed doing or believed was meaningful. I think it's, for my personality, of my needs and my interests, it's the perfect job. Stresses you every single day and like I say, you don't need you're A-game every day but you better bring it over here because challenges are enormous and the rewards are enormous.

I would say the thing that I could point to specifically because I look at leadership, prevalent, my rule of thumb of leadership is if you want to be a successful leader, it's paradoxical that you need to create the conditions for other people's success. It's not about you. It's about what you do to create the conditions for others. At the same time, it's absolutely about you because if you can't be the person you need to be later, you can't create the conditions for other people's success. Much with being a superintendent is about working on those balances.

If I was to point to things, I would say that successes that other people have been able to have that I have been able to work with kids, the parents, the other administrators, the teachers, that's where the joy is.

E: It's what it's all about. You do it because of people. You do it because you care about them being in becoming what they're capable to do. I can give you all kinds of little examples, like that. We got all the examples fit in that framework.

AD: Can you describe your career trajectory prior to you becoming a superintendent?

E: Sure, I was, high school was all athletics for me, all in quarterback, point guard, short staff. When I went to college, I played baseball but, that I started out in pre-med, then I moved to business and then I ended, because of my dad, my dad are very, very successful in insurance agency and I almost run into the family business. I coached football, basketball, baseball, taught English, and became an English Department Chair, assistant principal and then high school principal at ABC High School '81, three or '84, '85.

Went to XYZ and became an administrator of the residents there. I was teaching at ABCD at that time and I have the highest ratings of the ABCD education administration staff. XYZ recruited me to go there as an administrator residence because they didn't have any practicing administrators to teach their practicing courses not their policy or that kind of courses. I taught a full four class of graduate courses for XYZ for two years, get all my doctoral course work and that was two years and came back as superintendent like as we go.

The board allowed me to do that. I went with the understanding that I could come back but there's no guarantee it would be a superintendent. The board fired their previous superintendent while I was at XYZ. They fire him so they just had him go on and leave. Then he left. I was able to do that at 41 which, in high school administrator as an assistant principal at 26. High school principal at 34 and superintendent at 41, was able to relatively, had a game age-wise in a sense and very reinforcement to get to breaks.

I was followed, people who worked very good. I've been really fortunate that way. If you could just do reasonably well to begin with, you are considered to be better than the last guy. I've taught extensively at XYZ for ABCD over time. I've never had a year where I didn't teach. Never.

E: As a high school principal, I taught classes to high school students. As a superintendent, I taught classes in the school district because that's where my heart is. I believe a superintendent needs to be a teacher. He needs to teach the board and you have to understand that there's a very important balance points there. You teach the board where to some extent they don't realize it because you need to empower the board. You need to make them look like they're in control or in charge when you want them to stay away from the things that they should stay away from.

At the same time, that you make sure that they look really good, really strong, there's an artistry to that, like blur the lines over what some superintendents do in terms of letting them be involved in having a real genuine voice offline but not necessarily online. That, you started to what has been their career path. I have had a very rich set of experiences in education and very grateful for that, grateful to have had the opportunities along the way. The longest gap for that I had when I thought I was ready and couldn't make the next jump was going from an assistant principal to a high school principal.

Because I was an assistant principal at 26 but I didn't get there super, or excuse me, high school principal, I was 34. I was not married, I was young, I was very active, we won football games, and I was an English Department Chair. I have those things but I still didn't look like what they were looking for at that time.

E: What I found I go up there at ABC job. I was really ready to throw everything at it that I could. We just happened to hit it at the right time where the national emphasis on the model schools and research and the Regan administration on schools of excellence that they tied into. We, I was in a position where what I was doing at ABC High School was a great fit for what was being looked at nationally. I was teaching at ABCD and that's how we were doing things. We were doing videotaped instructions and have the teacher share what other teachers about instruction.

I was doing retreat with kids and parents and staff members and been working on our school culture and trying to make sure we were focused on instruction allowing us to graft everything in the culture that takes away from that primary focus that we should have and surveying students on what they really believe about their education, what was taking them away from being successful. We had all of that staff going for us right at the time where they did those first schools of excellence thing where you have to make a major, major report, and of course our test score was good.

- E: Yeah. ABC High have decent test scores. I didn't go and make their test scores that much better. We certainly created better conditions for the success that we were going to have after that that you already have the test scores, you already have the parents involved in that and we really got parents involved in a positive way. We were selected as one of the top 70 schools in the nation. I was like just at the right place at the right time with the right stuff, just got lucky that all those thing did converge. That propelled the upward movement.
- AD: Was there any one factor when you were doing the XYZ work, any factor that influenced you to say, hey, I want to be a superintendent now?
- E: The factor that really influenced me at that particular time because I had been a high school principal. I left the high school principalship within two years at the XYZ as an assistant professor as a school administrator in residence. When I was able to come back after I did my course, I didn't finish the dissertation, just finished the course because I was teaching four classes.
- E: Worked at half time in ABC and doing course work. I was doing three different jobs but if you weren't writing your work, actually having to do much with supervising graduate students or anything like that, you didn't work with some advising, you could do it. You'll be able to teach four classes, four graduate classes and our college process have been pretty easy so you could work that and do your courses and all that kind of stuff.
- I needed to come back and have a job if I was going to come back to ABC and quite truthfully, I was all over. An administrator job opened, it was this sort of reach out. I hadn't even really thought about it. I thought I could do it but when we thought about it, our life, college teaching but it didn't have the challenge that I still need at that point of time. I needed to prove more to myself I could do the college teaching without having being stretched and I'm not saying I was good as I am now at that time but it wasn't difficult to be good as a college professor because most of them really hadn't, college hasn't caught up as what we know about teaching and learning.
- E: It is a different time and it was more old school that way and more lecture and less engaging along with the lecture. What all that resulted in is okay, superintendent is okay and I came back and they changed me from what I was doing in the district to the assistant superintendent. When they got rid of the superintendent, they also got rid of one of the directors.



E: Because the board was cleaning up and so they made me instead of a half-time person who was working with curriculum and instruction and teaching workshops in the district on essentially, it was called intermediation strategies and taking that thing in. A lot of my concentration, my close work is on neurophysiology and teaching and learning. Because I was a professor at XYZ, I got to concentrate on what I was really was interested in as well as take the other research courses all that kind of stuff that I was after.

AD: When you moved into that role, did you feel prepared?

E: Nope.

AD: What made you ultimately decide to be superintendent?

E: I mean not really. I felt confident but then that's different. I could say a whole lot of things to you and they would resonate with you as a high school principal and I was just sitting there in the garage just writing down a list of things. I would say, you probably deal with all these things. These perspectives wouldn't be foreign to you but the context is different. It's just, high school principalship is a great training ground. It really is in many, many ways in my opinion but it's different as a superintendent. There are things that, it's just, one example would be the people I really need to influence as a high school principal are right there with me. I've got access to them

E: Every day, every moment I've got access to them. As a superintendent, you've got to influence people but you don't have immediate access to them all the time.

E: You really have to develop, the people around you really know you when I teach classes, and I talk about it. There's these concentric circles. As a high school principal, the circles of the people you really need to impact are all pretty close to you. That's good and bad, but it's more good than bad because if you're going to make a difference for them that whole give to get sense, if you really give a great feel, you get a great deal back. I taught classes. I work with parents. I work with parents. I work with teachers, a lot of talks.

One of the things you can't do, you can't marginalize somebody with teaching classes right along with you. These kids are saying, yeah, that was a great class and you just came out of teaching them. You're part of the fabric of it and you can be part of the fabric of it because the fabric is right there. As a superintendent, your entire community with multiple

schools, the good thing about being a superintendent there at ABC or XYZ is there's a little difference between our two districts is that it's a small enough that you could really make connections and make a difference.

E: I have no idea how the large schools superintendent really survives. This is beyond understanding or some school districts where you're so small; you don't have expert staff around you. You have to be spending all of your time doing all the work that is so necessary to just keep the operations going that you don't have the time to pick your spot and make a difference in different domains that make a difference back. I started writing some of those things down and then I came to the realization that, yeah, they aren't that different than being a high school principal. It's just how you do it in a different context is different. I don't know if I'm answering your question.

AD: What were things that you were most proud of? You walk away and you go, I will, forever remember that at any moment or any things that you can think of that you are most proud of?

E: I think there are things that really matter to you and then there are things that would be considered big wins from an outsider's perspective. If we, we allow us had good conditions relatively speaking just like XYZ in good conditions were generally speaking but there are times where you've had to make things happen. One of the things that is so, so very important, I'll give two examples but you can going to have the perspective first, when I was speaking at a group of wannabe administrators, large group and I was doing a talk.

I said, if you really want to be successful, you learn, you have to learn how to practice the art of being mediocre. Like most of educational administrator, it's paradoxical in a sense that you got, because there are so many things that you have to do all the time. There are so many challenges, so much that your time is absolutely critical and how you spend your time. If something is really important, I got to spend more time on it. I can do some things really, really well but the important thing is knowing what those things are because you just got to be mediocre in other areas.

You don't have enough time to be knock it out of the park in every single domain that you work in. You got to learn how to be mediocre and just do enough to be getting by at an okay level because you can't give it the time, the energy and the focus. I can give you examples like what is pulled off, I have local auction renewal with 78% yields.

E: Yes, we have a great community but we just absolutely nailed that from you selecting the person. Who's going to be the point person on it as a parent to putting together the team, the working behind the scenes, to you coming up with the right marketing firm to do the research on your community to see what messages are there? There are stuff like that. Now, do I feel good about that? Yeah. Do I feel really good about what our teachers have accomplished, with our kid's test scores? Absolutely. Those kinds of things where you want to say okay, the big things, I feel better about hiring people and surrounding myself with the right people and helping them being successful than I feel about these passing of local auction renewal at 78%, yeah or something like that.

One of the things I value to believe is that the people you surround yourself with are absolutely critical to your success and the success of what you're trying to do. Right person, right role, right focus, right strategy, if you have any one of those four things out of alignment, you're going to be less successful than you're capable of being. Hiring the right person and then putting the right person in the right role. My finance director should not be my HR director. He would be bad at that. As finance director but he's the right person. Is she the right person? But the right person in the right role, that alignment is so important.

Then the right focus, what's your intentional focus? If you're focused on the right stuff or if it's the less important stuff, the more time you spend on what's less important and the more that's going to detract from you accomplishing what you need to and then finally the right strategy. You can be focused on the right thing and doing the wrong thing about it. I continue to work on those things and when I can take somebody like my finance director who came from being an accountant and was not, no administrative background at all but was a good finance person and teach him how to do those four things and become what he was capable of becoming.

To me, that's the emotional part. The part that I would really stress as what matters and as what made the biggest difference to me, I'm just giving you example.

E: The same is true with kids. I teach their class on the weekends to kids and parents and scholar's alliance. I've done it for 15 years. One Saturday a month we spend, I would spend three hours with sophomores and three hours with the juniors and their parents and there are about 90 kids in each of those sessions, it's about 180 people. Then we have college counselors who work with the kids in their senior years and just watching those kids

develop over that period of time does give me an opportunity to stay connected to them is what it's actually all about.

E: It is just watching those kids, watching a kid is like, who's got an 80 IQ with the merit scholars and still being able to feel good about that person being there and learning something from what we're doing is we're working with everything from down to marketing to gender roles and conflict. Every session we do, we still work with strategies and thinking skills and strategies but we vary the content each time in those sessions. You got great role models as parents. You got doctors and attorneys and real estate. Their parents are there with their child. They have to learn together.

The other thing that I didn't say about that comes back around is you've really had to be connected to your community to be as successful as a superintendent as you can be. I have taught those kind of classes from 15 years in the weekends, that's, in any given year, that's 200 plus parents that I'm working with about things that are helping their kid and helping them work with their kid intellectually, what's that worth.

E: I'm not only on the chamber of commerce board of directors and have been for 27 years but I teach their leadership and I teach their strategic planning. I do their strategic planning and I teach their leadership course, which I have about 30 members of the community and my leadership for two hours every time we meet. You start adding that up over 15, 20 years and how many people in this community I've worked with. It's not enough just to be there, you got to work with them. You got to make connections with them. You got to deliver something that matters to them.

E: It's priceless. I also teach parenting minds which is, this is obsessive but which I have developed a program based on what we did for scholar's alliance for high school kids to teach parents about how to work with their kids relative to thinking means and thinking, problem solving, alternative option thinking, working with emotional regulation, resilience, how to teach, how to deescalate a situation with your kid, that sort of thing. I got about 120 parents every time I do that.

E: That I work with that way too. Even though you're in a situation where you're in the center of the storm very often, you have avenues or you have positive real and meaningful connections with your community. That goes back to what I said before about a high school principal. High school principal can do that because they're all them with them. I've got to find the ways to make those connections on terms that matter to them. To me, I've had to also then have a stable positive relationship with someone who

also has that passion for education and work is powerful, this kind of thing because for a long time largely because she was, work a 100% and also as a chair of the English department, she is reading papers over the weekend and I'm gone doing this other stuff.

E: I'm teaching and you're gone and all of that. I don't, I'm not trying to suggest the way that I've done it is the way to do it but if you can't make those connections into that larger community so that they know you in a way other than you discord this up because that's one was when it's a lose-lose decision you're going to make like when we close schools because we knew that we wouldn't, we're going to be tight on classroom size but I knew I have enough teachers and I'm going to trade classroom and capability for having enough teachers because it's two million dollars a year for the cost for the whole maintenance.

Now, I got just murdered by some people around that issue but it really helps when you have some other connections in that larger community at the same time that you're making those kind of decisions and have to champion the decisions.

E: Now, I totally strayed away.

AD: No. This is great. Flipping it back on you, you're looking backward at things you were least proud of?

E: The times when you really miss something that you should have seen coming. I can think of it in personal terms, in terms of just relationship stuff but I can also think about it in terms of larger things that if you would have done something in a particular time like when we, I've negotiated every contract and then you probably develop a bit of a theme here. I really believe in being hands on. I want a, I think a lot of us superintendents do but there are many that don't. I don't want somebody coming in and negotiating the contracts.

I want to do it because I want them to have to deal with me. When we saw that the whole context for funding or ordering was going to flip from local control to state control and we went after being very, very assertive right away. We made cuts right away. We build a plan and we just stopped hiring people. Everybody at our district for the most part, the vast majority of them, we reworked ourselves ...

E: Because we just retool that we changed our high schools for teaching, teachers have been teaching five classes to six, roll over block schedule. We went to all that stuff before anybody else does.

- AD: Right, what you were talking before.
- E: That's an example where you got it and you saw ahead and you made that kind of move but the times when you don't see it coming and you wish you could have. I look back at that and we probably should have initiated, probably we tried to make a middle-level change we should have never have made. It costs us two years at the middle level because it cost you one year to do it and screw it up and then it took you a whole year to fix ...
- AD: I found a superintendent quoted, said, had this quote and said; superintendency is being characterized as challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful. What would you add or change to that statement?
- E: Let me take some of the words. I would never say lonely. I would not call it lonely. You have to maintain a professional distance so people know that you really care about them and have a kind of professional closeness. It's not lonely and I think that what the person is probably trying to get at is I don't consider that lonely because I feel like I've had that kind of camaraderie but you always have to be the boss and you never know when you have to discipline somebody who you really care about that makes them stay.
- I've fired people that I really wished they wouldn't have screwed up and I like them and I care about them but you got to own that personally. I would not say lonely. I'd say there's a tremendous amount of what I miss, what I really, really miss but now isn't so much, the strategic challenge that sits on because I love building things and seeing things took fruition but it's the connection with the people that I work really close with. I think that people that work together and that kind of domain, that service to others domain, that share that value, that caring and that belief in people, that is a very, very powerful, energizing bond, I believe but you still have to be the boss.
- They may have said so in times of paradox. You have to have that close connection at the same time you maintain a professional distance. I would, I have great respect for the people I work with but I do not have to dinner with them. In the work environment, I'm very close and very connected, very supportive but very driven. You have to find that balance, that works in your context and your district and that but I'd never say lonely.
- E: It's just like, I'd say, one of the things I tried to teach administrators when I'm working with beginning administrators, it's just, that thing having somebody to listen to. You have to listen for the truth that other person is sharing with you. There are multiple truths. You can hear them but most

people either affirm or disconfirm in default but you really have to understand that other person and listen to the truth that they're experiencing. They have to know it. They have to know you care about that truth that they're experiencing. There's that multiple dimension. There's, ours is a competing truth to any truth. The opposite of the profound truth is another profound truth.

E: You know, I was a high school principal; there are many ways to look at everything. It's not that I disagree with the guy.

E: For me, the value of it is in that working together in terms of a common purpose that matters. I'm having the ability to do something that really matters, that's huge for me.

AD: Can you share any stories from your time where equity played an integral role in your work?

E: Yeah, I think, I think in my experience, probably was impacted greatly by my first teaching job. Real racial dynamics were not very positive and we have a lot of poor white kids, black kids who are less economically advantaged and then a group of kids that were more middle to upper class Caucasian.

Finances are another equity issue. We're talking major money like big time major money but there's lot of other kids that are not in that strata at all. One of the things that's been really important I think is for us to look at what decisions we make that provide kids with an equal opportunity when so many other kids are advantaged.

Just like transportation, if we're doing something with transportation and we're expecting transportation to be provided by parents with something, just being sensitive to the notion that 80% of your parents can do that but maybe 15% can't.

AD: I found that there are, superintendents are categorized some pieces of their work into different roles and structural leader, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist and communicator. Basically, five different roles, I'll say them again, instructional leader, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist and communicator. If you had to pick one role, was there a role out of those five that may be dominated your time or is there something different that were missing?

E: I'll use my language in my perspective. If you're not well managed, people are not going to be anywhere as near as successful as they can be.

Fundamentally, bottom line, you need to be well managed. Your systems need to operate well. People need to be able to focus on their job. Half of the people in a school district are there to make sure the management or the district is well so that the people that you employ that teach and provide direct service instructionally and support wise to the kids are successful.

I'd say that a good portion of what you do have to be focused on management, effective management. It's really important didn't, the analogy that I would use is too many districts, too many cities don't pay enough attention to the processes that they use as they manage the district because we really need to make sure our capability managerially and process wise is always wrong. It's a plumber and the pipes and we're honestly the pipes. If your system, if the pipes are good, you could put whatever you need through it and what you're going to need to put through it's going to change and what your systems are going to need to be, have to be able to change.

You need to be in tune with the operational side every bit as much as the much more glamorous side which is the teaching and instruction, that piece that, as I always, when I talk to my staff, my role is to create the conditions for your success. My role is to be responsible and be the leader that really does care about the conditions that were going to help you be successful in what you do because I don't do the most important work of it, it takes place in the district. I don't. The people with the kids directly are doing the most important work in the district.

Therefore, the managerial operational is extremely important. I'd say that. I'd say instructional leader is really important because what are we here for? Teaching and learning is what we're here for. I believe you need to be a role model that way. I need you; I believe you need to teach. I believe that you need to really pay attention to it. What changes culture? What administrators pay attention to, measure and really care about matters in terms of cultural change. If you don't, if you're not there, if you're not present, one of the ways I look at what that administrator role is, what is your purpose?

What's your presence? What's your behavior? What's your practice and what partners are you working with to make sure that you're being the kind of superintendent you need to be? You all really figure out what your purpose really is. You're in charge of; you're in the most significant role in the district that does what matters. What are you going to focus on? If you don't manage the district well, that's going to detract from your



capability. If you are the instructional leader, you're not focused on what's the most important thing your district does.

Id' say those two are really important then I think there's a whole political domain sure is extremely important because the two gets what, where, when, why and how. You've got to be in that mixing with the city, with the business community, with the chamber of commerce, with the neighborhood associations. It's all that. To me, there's an operational role. There's curriculum and instruction. I'd say leadership and I'd say the operational, managerial then I would say curriculum and instruction but I'd say also you got to be the chief spokesman, the chief political mind in the district.

That is another whole thing and that's strategic change. I'd say that whole notion of, to some extent; you got to be able to see around corners. You really have to anticipate. I was the, my senior year in high school was voted the best athlete. I was nowhere as near the best athlete but I had some mobility athletically and I did have the ability to be at the right place at the right time. That matters a lot in high school because it isn't just pure athletic ability. I think a superintendent has to do that too. You got to get your district in the right place at the right time like when [inaudible 01:01:02] passed, we repositioned our district and we did it through three successive years and stages.

We started out with a plan and we were two to three years ahead of every district in the state. It matters. We didn't dropped, in fact, we improved the test scores because we come superior in the classroom, made sure that focus. We didn't lose that and we made the changes we needed to make in negotiations because we have to negotiate certain things with teachers because they were doing things before that we needed them to change in order there, a whole lot of process but you have to be able to foresee it, we were able to foresee that it was and passed because that initiative had been on the balance. There were to that.

They finally got it right. They had sold the notion that the school is not to be hurt. The state has five years to correct the problem and your taxes are going to go down. They sold that. People like us we go voted for even though we told them ...

E: ... rebuild it, because it's not going to work because you're going to lose control. I'm really glad I did because it was really hard for me to get my administrators to buy into the fact the world is going to change and that culture that we have with my administrators at that time because that's early on my superintendency was that you don't change to anticipate

something. You don't do that where it can totally happens because this has never passed but you could see it was going to pass. When we told people that we are, our strongest supporters, they like it and the business community liked it at that time because it took away the taxation burden that they were bearing.

I think that notion of planning strategically and mobilizing and positioning yourself an making the changes that you need to make internally to deliver where the ball is going to be not where it is right now is an important part of being a superintendent. I never worked in a stable environment. Think about that, because I got the superintendency, we didn't have any money. They fired the previous guy. We didn't have that, the tax base that we needed. We didn't have the schools that we needed because we're growing really rapidly at that time.

We have that environment, got that all fix past the tax base, build schools and took away our local control and made us state-funded]. We were previous about it. We got 13.7 percent of state money in the community. All of the sudden we're like over there. We have to build, find ways to deliver for our community what they expected without the money. I've just been on one of this context but that was good because you had to be adaptive. I never went through as a superintendent status quo.

You're constantly working and then reworking and then resituating yourself down to the point where we finally, after we spent that cash balance out of a long time. We just couldn't do it anymore, we have to close schools. That was my last way of making sure we have class sizes down that matter.

AD: Do you see yourself, through all of these, do you see yourself as an innovator and do you actually believe that that's an important role for a superintendent?

E: One of the things that you have to be really careful when you use the word like innovator, I don't know that I've used that word. I think I'm very strategic. I'm very driven. I'm very focused but you, in a large, complex, living system, which the school district is, the cost and effect are not closely related into time and space. Cause and effect in personal relationships are closely related to time and space but in a large system, the impact that you make over here somewhere in the system isn't felt the same way as in personal relationships over here.

The people who are over here have a hell of a lot to do with whatever happens. You just don't come in and innovate and change everything.

That happens, this is the long way of saying it that happens in incremental steps along the way so it doesn't look like, whiz, bang, all of the sudden, things are different. You have people who are very, very invested in what they do and want to do it their way. You have to, your innovations are not, and the profits are going to work. You build it and you build it and you build it and you build it.

The things that we have done that are innovative along curriculum and instruction and that thing are really built by degrees with multiple people working on it. When you say innovative, I wouldn't choose that word just because there's a certain amount of glamour associated with it that I think are, there are a lot of school board members over time who really would love to see those shiny objects around to show that they have made a difference and that thing. I'm really very much old school in terms of reading, writing, Math.

Yeah, there are a lot of interesting great things that we can do but if reading and writing and Math aren't addressed really well in your system, your kids are not going to be very successful. Certainly, technology is important. Yeah, there's all kind of things are important but there is a base that you keep working at, build from strength, build from strengths, build from strengths. What matters most? Are you working on what matters? Even though you know you're good at it but you're continuing to work on those things.

Now, most people are going to say that's innovative. It's just like football. If you can't block a guy out of their home field.

E: I think we have done some things that were ahead of their time and that were right. We were able to see it coming and we were able to position ourselves well for it. We've been able to learn from other people that we lost a principal that we should not have lost to XYZ, an elementary principal at that time when XYZ did a hell lot better.

I really believe that outstanding people are hard to find and you really need to go and do your hardest to go and crack, recruit or court the right people to be part of the district. I interview every secondary hire in the district. I have my director of elementary, my special ed director in addition to the building level people interviews. If you work right with me, you'd have to recommend your person that you're hiring to me and I've got to like that person and I'm going to interview them too. I reject some people. That's in a while spun off on that track but ...

E: It's more, I think my success is more because I really believe the foundation stuff; you got to do the basics well. It's not the fancy stuff. It's do the basics really well, find those opportunities that you can champion what other people are coming up with that don't take you away from our core mission. I'm re-circling around this notion of innovative. I don't like the word in the sense that there's really not a hell of a line out there that we don't already know. It's doing really well with what we already know we should be doing well with that matters most rather than some fancy stuff that fad of the day.

You get here to have some fad of the day. I'm sure but when it's all said and done, it's what you did that created the conditions for other people's success and that really focused on what mattered most that's going to carry the day.

AD: What experiences from your work where you can describe as transformational?

E: Well, you certainly, you work at, my notion of there's transitional and there's transformational. In a transformational sense, you really have to look at not only what you're doing but also yourself differently. We make a lot of transitions like if you move from a high school principal to a superintendent, it will be a transformation. You're ability to apply are hell of a lot of what you already do is going to matter in becoming a superintendent doesn't mean that will be transformational for you. It's transitional by nature.

Transformational is you developing like what I truly believe with what I teach one on my leadership classes that says, hey, you really want to try to try to become a better version of yourself in each stage of the journey. With each one of those transitions, how can I become a better version of myself? It isn't a matter of just building on what I already know. It's coming to different realizations about what's possible for me and what I'm capable of and becoming. I've seen teachers who come in and most of them come in and when I talk to the teachers who are a beginning teacher and say like, if you're not dramatically different as a teacher five years from now than you are today, something is wrong.

Initially, you're still working on just how to make it all work. At some particular point in time, you're going to move to that notion of knowing and believing in who you are and making what matters to you live within your students. You'll make that transition from thinking it's about you to realizing it's really about them. It's about what they understand. It's about,

they walk out of there being able to do that you helped them understand and help them have that become part of what they are that really matters.

That's that kind of a realization that took me four or five years because the teacher, I teach for very long actually, because I was the administrator at 26 but when I finally realized that it wasn't about me entertaining, yeah, zippy lessons and kids were engaged and all that kind of stuff. That kind of transformational notion as a teacher, I think did take place, I've seen my administrators that I've worked closely with developed that sense of, okay, I'm becoming more of who I'm capable of being in this job.

It's the difference between me sitting here and talking to somebody and hearing him or her and really listening to him or her. Then being able to speak to them about what's going to matter for them. What realization. I'm going to say to you the, you can be powerful without having power. I'm going to say to you people that don't have power, organizational power that you can be powerful without having power. If you're an administrator at our organization power and you're powerful without having that power, where does that come? What is the kind of power that you can have a human being working with other people in a domain where it's about people and they're being and becoming what they're capable of?

What are those? What are those things about you? What are those gifts that you have that you're going to make, live and then impact other people? When you come to that kind of an understanding about yourself and what you're there for, you're not distant from the connection and the relationship even though you have to maintain a professional distance with the people that you supervise. When you talk about transformational, people really, they try the best and then saying I could think of, this thing that we speak of that transformational sense could never be found by seeking but only seekers find it.

You can't just go out and seek it but if you're a seeker, it will come to you when you're ready for it. It will come to that beginning teacher when it comes together for them or they then move to that next stage of understanding what it really means to be an impact teacher, to be a master teacher to connect with kids and to teach them such that it's about what they learn and their growth and their development and they will be coming, that really matters, not how great you are.

AD: Was there ever a time where or under what circumstances were you able to completely relax and set aside these demands of the superintendency?

E: Nope. That's what I love about it. I love about it because what I love about it really is even though I take time out, I'm a dirt person. I really can walk around the garden. I'm in transition out there all over the place. I have all kinds of ways that I can feed other parts of what I need that, but I love the job because the job just stretches you and pushes you and you're constantly trying to work with problems and work with building something. You're doing it with people that you care about and you really believe in that matters. I've never separated myself very well from it. That's why I'm still watching myself go through the transition now. It hasn't been long enough to see. I really, really ...

E: It is very. It's too fresh. It's like a real time out but I'm not burned out. I've turned in my keys.

AD: If you were hiring a superintendent today, what would you say or what would you look for? Would you say it was the same when you were hired?

E: Well, I was fortunate that they weren't looking for, they were looking for somebody that needed to clean up and I have a track record of being highly successful at every step of the way. They had known me because I've been a high school principal here. That can work against you; it can work for you it just happened to work for me. They didn't want to, when I applied for the job, they had 60 applicants for the superintendency. I was the only one in the district to apply and they were looking for somebody that they thought could change the district.

They say, we're looking for a change agent that they believe in. I got lucky that way but if you look at the qualities and the characteristics that that person has to have, the one thing that may be underrated some is the balance between really caring emotionally, physically, spiritually, about the purpose of what a superintendent is focused on then when I say the balance and then having the strengths, the resilience to handle the bad because you're going to get it. There are people that wake up in the morning energized about creating their demise all the time.

There are people that really don't like you and really do associate the demise of certain things with you, you know better; you are the prince of darkness. Then there's just the notion of working with the conflict that takes place, working with building relationship with your teaching staff, the union, and your administrative staff. I think that you got to have that inner strength, that sense of confidence but we're all human and we all make mistakes. You've got to be able to do all those things well, what we've been talking about, that operational, the leadership, the instructional

leadership, the strategic, the political and all of that because you're going to be successful learner.

You better do all these things well but you still also going to get beaten. You got to have the belief in what you're doing and you got to have that strength. I've seen administrators trying to do the job and there are probably lots of different ways to do it.

We are very systematic and we have very, very similar expectations process wise as well as curriculum wise, instruction wise in each one of our schools are in particular, a lot of all kinds. We're not little fancy out of the box kind of the organization and I wouldn't be successful in it.

AD: What would you say are the biggest challenge that's facing future superintendents in Oregon?

E: The biggest challenge that I ended up facing that I think was going to continue, my last years, there's too many people trying to help you. There are too many people trying to direct what you should be doing, the federal government, you've got the state. Years ago, the normal pulse was that a state superintendent public construction and the first time I talked right there, I just want three things. I want you to give me the money I need, test my kids and leave me alone.

E: If he'll do that, I'll deliver but I want to do it my way. I need the money that you should give me and you can test the hell out of my kids. I don't care about that; just don't tell me what to do. You look at it right now and it's getting more and more perspective and more perspective and more perspective. We have to spend our time on things for accountability sake and to justify our existence. That doesn't matter.

AD: What advice would you give future superintendents?

E: You got to make it work as best you possibly can. I cannot, I could not see myself making an impactful difference on Salem or the federal government. Now, I was the administrative advisor of the state board of education five times in the 90's.

E: I was sitting with them two different terms for two years and one term where I filled in for a guy that started to do it and then health issue, they called me down. I was able to impact the state board just by being there but you had to be there with them. One day a month essentially you had to be gathering not in your district. That time, because they were making decisions that was just incredibly misguided or they were dealing with a

frame of reference for and all these stuff where they thought they could get everything taught. All the kids by the time they were doing their sophomore year and then we can do all these work and to greater community and real-life experience and stuff like that.

With a certificate of advance mastery, channeling kids into particular domains of learning whether it's going to be medical, technical or it's going to be agricultural where it's going to be.

- E: Yeah. It's just so crazy that, then you come along and then you get to know a child left behind sort of thing. Well, I mean you're going to impact that? You got to be real smart about that, how you use your money and how you get the money that you need. You're going to have to find the way to do the things that you absolutely must do and limit beyond that so that your people can focus on what really matters and that's the heart of it.
- AD: Knowing everything that you know now, would you do it all over again?
- E: Sure, sure. It was a great run and I'll go back to university teaching now and just enjoy trying to work with people and helping people who're going to face those challenges.



APPENDIX F  
PARTICIPANT F

## Participant F

AD: Did you come from a family of educators?

F: I did. I don't know if that was a defining thing or not because I have 2 older brothers had nothing to do with education. Then my younger brother and myself both went into education. My dad was assistant superintendent. During that time my mom was a teacher. I knew I was going to be an administrator. That was no surprise later when I decided to go into administration. I knew when I started I would be an administrator.

AD: If you have any children are any of them involved in education or?

F: No.

AD: Just thinking about your days as a superintendent, what were some of your fondest memories and recollections from those days? Any of the stops?

F: Probably varies all over the place. At WXYZ, I got there and they had failed a levy and we were starting school year. You don't know this but back in days when you failed the levy and you shortened ... People were running 6-month school years. I was really excited and got there and got a levy passed. I don't know how much I had to do with it but it felt pretty good so those things. The school was a mess as far as the discipline. We had a really good discipline program in AABB. I brought that and got the school straightened out. That felt really good.

Then going on, when I got out of my work at the school there was a lot of this democratizing education, site based management. I took that to ABCD and we had our site based teams and all that stuff. It was exciting to bring in some new thinking into a school district. I'm just going through the career here. My next superintendency would have been the XYZ. I think that's probably where I had the most fun as a superintendent. They were struggling because they had gone through the consolidation process.

It was like they were just looking for an identity. It was like, "Who are we? What are we doing?" I bumped into some thinking there along this place based learning, service learning really going on board with that. I think that the neatest thing there for me though we started a program called XYZ Connections. We had about 20 kids in it and they were the kids that were disconnected.

I'm a real believer in you build capacity in people. You don't send them out to do something but they don't know what they're supposed to be

doing or what it's about because you think it's a great idea. We finally got to the point ...

AD: Describe your career trajectory prior to becoming a superintendent?

F: I taught for 5 years and then I went to AABB as assistant to the superintendent kind of go for the superintendent and then from there I went to WXYZ as superintendent principal.

AD: Is there a specific factor what was the biggest reason why you originally said I want to do that superintendent job?

F: Once I got in the doctoral program I think I just started getting a lot of mentors and advocates. In fact, I couldn't believe it the summer I was ... Left WXYZ, was going to come back that summer and work at my dissertation to finish everything up. Our School District needs an assistant superintendent, are you interested?" I just went, "Oh my!" That's the first time it really hit me like I think I'm in the big leagues and I just said no. I want to come back and finish up my work because I was worried I'd never get it done especially if I started a new job like that.

He goes, "Okay." Then the year I got done basically I finished up and then I knew I was looking for superintendency. I can't tell you why I didn't look for assistant jobs. I just started looking at superintendencies and I had interview at a center up here in Freeway and didn't hear anything from them. The next day I was interviewing at ABCD and they got right back to me and said, "Hey you want to take the job?" I think I had the job in you just never know unless you're going to go. I took the job in ABCD.

AD: Did you feel prepared when you became a superintendent? If not what might have helped?

F: Did I feel prepared? I don't think I felt overwhelmed but I think the thing for me I think I knew what the job was, what needed to be done. I was a little intimidated I think because of my age. I was 35 when I went there. How old was I then? Like 31 or something when I went to superintendent principal in WXYZ. You had these older people. It just felt awkward to me. I never had any pushback from anybody I just felt a little intimidated organizing and supervising my elders. It felt strange.

I tell you though I remember when I was interviewing in ABC though and I can't remember exact questions but I just said I have never felt more prepared for a job in my life. I had been in central office in a larger school district which is about 11,000 students, 2 high schools and they're doing

secondary education and I did personnel for a couple of years. I was director secondary ed and I did personnel. Then did my superintendency in XYZ and then came to ABC. That was most I think just confident I felt coming in. My age wasn't a factor anymore. I just felt like I was on top of everything at that point.

AD: What are you most proud of during your days as superintendent?

F: I can tell you and in fact it just happened again the other day I was at ABC and just in the paper this last week when they came out and said that study that showed districts were failing. That's my data. Again, I was really proud of that and pleased to be part of that. Really proud of the team I had there. I had an incredible team in ABC.

Anyway they're just a super team and so I think we did some really good work. I'm actually proud of the work we did.

AD: In the flipside is there anything that you think of that you're least proud of?

F: Here's 1. It was the rookie on how to handle situations. I was at ABCD it was I think my second year there but had a complaint from a group

AD: There's a superintendent who said they characterize the position as challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful. What would you add or change to that statement?

F: Let me just a little story and I'll have you ask me that again. I had my fortune cookie opened up and I swear it says it's lonely at the top.

AD: You can't make that stuff up.

F: No you can't. I was just in shock.

AD: This superintendent said challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful. What would you add or change?

F: I'd certainly say interesting. I think the work is incredibly interesting work. I think it's ... was meaningful part of that? I think this grew on me as I went through my career. I think the sense and meaning or doing meaningful work really probably hit me when in XYZ and probably even more when I was in ABC. I think it's real meaningful work.

- AD: Can you think of stories or experiences where equity played an integral role for you as a superintendent?
- F: I can give you a story and you might have followed this a little bit too but it wasn't really that big in the local media. It was the first year it was dealing with a racial issue in the local high school.
- AD: They talk about the superintendent as a teacher scholar like an instructional leader as a manager, as a democratic leader, as an applied social scientist and a communicator. We know that you do all those but if you had to pick 1 and maybe it's not even there but what's something that dominated your time?
- F: I think to me probably would have been the teacher leader or is that what's in it academic thing especially at the first couple of years I was in ABC. We were studying and I was trying to model learning and how important learning was in the work. We're all learning every day. I think that was really important. Then I also think and it's probably said in different ways there but the symbolic leadership that a superintendent brings.
- F: I think I did a lot of that in again when I was at ABCD bringing democracy to the school district. Help me out again. What are we?...
- AD: Through this and through you working as a superintendent, did you see yourself as an innovator?
- F: I did. Yeah.
- AD: Why do you think?
- F: Really every place I went I think I have pretty good sense of what a place needs and doing something about it. When I was at WXYZ to help pass the levy and this played at WXYZ. It wouldn't play in a lot of other places but we were the first districts in Oregon to do a 4 days school week because we were going to cut cost and we had our teachers then work every other Friday. We really talked about then we are going to do a lot of staff development. There's a way you could sell that WXYZ. It made sense and we're going to save money.
- I think that was certainly innovative. Whether it was good or not looking back could be questionable but it worked there and it really moved the district forward. I went to ABCD and we brought in site based management was the big innovation. I went to XYZ. We did service learning, place based learning. I went to ABC where 1 of the first districts

to fully implement professional learning communities. I think every place I went I was doing something and for me I needed that.

AD: Do you think that's an important role for superintendent of today to be an innovator or do you think?

F: I think it depends on the context on the situation. There was enough change there and in particular with all the financial stuff going on and everything that I think they just needed some stability but let's keep going in the right direction. Keep going down the road so ...

AD: Building off of some earlier conversation, can you give me stories or experiences from your work that could be described as transformational?

F: Described as transformational I certainly think the work we did in ABC is transformational. We really changed the way teachers work with each other. In fact their work really changed. We had teachers that maybe had 2, 3, 4 years to go. I can remember 3 or 4 of them that as a result of that work they come to the principal and go "I can't do this." When you have to work with your colleagues every week and talk about what you're doing. It's different than putting on a dog and pony show for your principal twice a year. They couldn't stand the accountability. They just weren't cutting it and they just retired early. Again, what was the question?

F: I think it was transformational. I don't know if my work in XYZ was necessarily transformational. For some kids it certainly was and for some teachers but it wasn't something that we never really got to the point where the whole district had made that conversion to this is the way we're going to learn. When I was in ABCD doing the democratizing the workplace I don't know if that was transformational or not. It was different. I don't have a real sense. I was there for 3 years so we're just getting going at it and I don't know if I could never follow and see that that stay in place or not.

AD: Under what circumstances were you able to completely relax and set aside the demands have the superintendency and what circumstances?

F: I think other than one thing I'm not the person that carries stuff home with me. I don't lose sleep at night. It's not hard for me to relax at all. I do tell you though when I'm out on the golf course I'm not thinking about anything. Enjoy that. Are you talking about during the work day, during the ... ?

- AD: Just the life as a superintendent. Things that I have read. I'm intrigued by how different people are able to set this ... I know about my life as a high school principal and I know that similarities between the jobs in some ways around.
- F: I remember actually this is ... I guess it has to do with your question but it was when I was about I think fifth or sixth grade and I would just be worrying about everything and work I had to do and stuff. One night I just thought if I just go to sleep and wake up in the morning everything will be fine and it was. I can just remember thinking about that. I think that's just the way I live my life then. Just get a good night's sleep, wake up in the morning. Everything is still there. Go forth.
- AD: What would you say are essential attributes of a superintendent in today's world?
- F: I think anywhere I'd say the first thing would be high integrity because people have got to trust you. If you're going to be a leader you have to have a high degree of trust. If it's not there, you're not going anywhere. Probably after that is just communication skills. You better know how to work with a school board because that's about 50% of the job. It depends on the district.
- When I was in XYZ I had 7 board members and I can count on those hands after I left after 6 years a number of times either anybody came in or called me. Unbelievable and they were good smart people.
- AD: Were those the same that were needed when you first became a superintendent would you say?
- F: I think so. I don't think it's changed much.
- AD: Do you have any thoughts or views on the I'm sure you and your wife talked with this the non-traditional route to the superintendency? I know we typically see it in maybe larger urban districts or ...
- F: I think the epitome of that of nontraditional not working is when we bring people from the private sector and to run our HR departments. I hardly ever see that thing work. They just don't get it.
- AD: Linda Darling-Hammond I will read a quote from her book Flat World Education. She explains the new missions of schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that don't exist, creating ideas and solutions for products

and problems that have yet been identified and using technologies that have not been invented. Can you give me a comment on her quote?

F: I think she's exactly right. In fact my comment would be that the biggest fear I think we are so into standards. I'm worried about are we making standard students? Are we sterilizing our curriculum? Are we mechanizing our instruction? I fear that we're driving out the creativity out of the program with instruction. I think she's right on. At some point I think the pendulum is going to swing and it has a bit with new standards.

F: Common core.

F: We're doing a lot more higher order testing those skills. I hope that will be reversed but as a superintendent there's so much pressure to get those scores up. In fact I'm still on this national board that 1 of the core values, the core strategies we talk about is service learning and really talk about hey unless you have somebody that really sees how a hands on learning is going to really be an asset to especially certain kids.

There's so much pressure to get those achievement levels up. To have kids out of school it's just ... Can't do it even though it may produce more of the kids that Linda Darling-Hammond wants to see come out, there's just so much pressure that I think we turn to that mechanized sterilized environment. I think she's right on.

AD: Can you describe experiences or stories that you had from your work where you helped maybe school students, principals, teachers, parents, board members whoever get on winning streaks where you help them as a superintendent get on a couple ... It's a couple good things happen to them and it propels them toward success.

F: I can think of 1 student that I really took under my wing in ABC.

I had worked with her on some different stuff. She was bright kid and went on to be student body president. I wrote her a letter to the admissions department at Stanford. She got into Stanford, kept communication with her all the time once a month. Would send her a \$20 bill to go out to a movie or something. Last spring my wife and I went down to her graduation. She was a kid that I just thought needed a dad so that were a very personal level did. Then I think about more with peers or professional where I had a man I worked with.

AD: What role do you think humor plays in the work of a superintendent?



- F: I think it's important. I think I have a really good sense of humor and no one to bring it in to a conversation or into our work. I can't tell you how or why but we made it fun.
- F: I think it's really important because the work is consuming. Your work is consuming. If you can't relax once in a while and poke fun at yourself or what's going on it's just ...
- AD: What do you say the school boards that you work with would say is your legacy and then maybe if you picked your greatest challenge?
- F: What's my legacy? I think in ABC would be pretty clear.
- I think there'd be some I don't know if integrity can be a legacy or not but pretty much always up front, straight scoop here's what we're doing. Here's why and stepping forward to take responsibility when I needed to take responsibility. I never shied away from taking responsibility. I think people appreciate that. Anyway I think that's probably ...
- AD: In your opinion what are the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon?
- F: You want to say financial is 1 but in many ways it's outside their purview. That's always something they can do especially as a group. I think the biggest challenge would probably be go back to the Linda Darling-Hammond coach you had and say "What are we really need to be doing here for kids?" Right now I think we're just buried with the standards movement and no child left behind but there's got to be other things we're doing in school to prepare kids for their future. For the most part we're probably not doing it very well. That's going to take public education. You can be an innovator but you better know where and when you can innovate.
- AD: What advice would you have for future superintendents? Maybe what advice would you have for their families too?
- F: I think what I learned particularly was the value of team. I learned that when I was in ABCD trying to do things all by myself because if you try to do it by yourself too many bad things can happen. Ask me the question again?
- AD: What advice would you have for future superintendents and their families?

F: Families? There'd be something I guess advice would be really try to get to know your spouse or your parent's work. They don't need to know every little piece of it but then how do you do that I don't know but get an appreciation of what they do. A story has to do with this but it's not education.

I can tell you the faster you can get into a superintendency the better off you're going to be as a family because you have a lot more flexibility with your time. You have a lot more control of your time as a high school principal you're just ...

AD: Looking back knowing what you know now, would you go back and do it again?

F: Absolutely. I love my career. In fact, I keep suckering for these jobs.

AD: What have I missed? You've been superintendent in many different school districts. What have I missed or anything else you would like to add?

F: I don't know if I'd like to add so much as I think a lot of the work is about working with school boards. We didn't talk a lot about that. I think there's probably I don't know what the questions are but how did you work with school boards? Did you ever have a problem with the school board member you had to work with? Just that ground to cover might be missing a bit.

AD: That's helpful. Did you ever have any problem with the school board member? You said ...

F I just think constant communication. One of my rules of thumb and I think most good superintendents have this is first of all you work for the board, you don't work for anyone, school board member but I would always with my boards develop a set of operating principles. I think everybody does that now. One of the things I had in there that I don't know that every superintendent has is any time I would have any substantial conversation with a board member or 2 or whatever that I would always tell everybody.

I didn't want any board members thinking about where you cutting deals over here and what's that about. One of the things I learned in my own work, my dissertation was that it's okay to have a split school board. I'm used to be oh your board has to vote unanimous all the time or you're not doing your job well. It really depends on what community you're in. If you're in a very diverse community a lot of times you can't epically if they're zoned.

You can't expect to have everybody together but what you need to have is people that respect each other and they have a set of rules and guidelines and standards and beliefs they work by so when they are voting in opposition it's not me against him and it's just this is my belief, these are values. This is the way I'm voting. I'd always work a lot of specially the first year or 2 I was in a district to try to establish that culture and then not worry about the 5 to 2 vote.

APPENDIX G  
PARTICIPANT G

## Participant G

AD: We'll start with a couple of demographic questions. You were a school superintendent for how many years? What districts and where did you retire from?

G: I was school superintendent for 32 years.

AD: Did you come from a family of educator?

G: No, in fact I was the first member of my family to go to college.

AD: Do you have any children? Are any of them involved in education?

G: Yes, we have six children and these six. There was one who was involved somehow with education.

AD: What were some of your fondest years or fondest memories and recollections of your years of superintendent?

G: That's hard. It's such a joy I guess to seeing life. I never even had a job, there are times you want to work and it was exciting. I was there every day and there I didn't even back about it. I remember the athletics and watching the kids play in that.

I remember the teachers we've hired and watch grow and blossomed and developed and moved on up and around. The whole thing of watching the people grow and develop is terribly exciting to me and it's hard to pick one thing out of it. I would remember hiring people that looked a little risky and then they grew and did well and just amazing?

AD: Can you describe a little of your career trajectory and priority to become a superintendent?

G: Yes. I am a graduated from college and then I went to work teaching school and I started teaching and it seemed very obvious to me that the curtains have been all funded by the superintendent. I enrolled on that. I went to work on my master's degree.

At that time you had every year after master's degree, you have a superintendent certificate and so I got a superintendent's credential and I had six years in the classroom. As soon as I got my superintendent's credential, I applied for superintendence and I got it.

It was a district and it had a lot of trouble, a world of trouble. They have fired the last five or six superintendents and all my friends said, “ don’t apply for that” and don’t fill in. I said, “No, I want to” and I thought if I fail, at that time I was 28 years old.

I said if I fail, I’m just kind of ride it down as nothing but if I succeed, it’s going to be different. Well, it turns out I got there and I called their Department of Education and said, “Hey come down visit us.” Now, we’ve never been a standard school here and we’d like to be.

I came down and enrolling who’s with that. The slide part in the county superintendent retired at that time so I became the county’s school superintendent.

We were doing some very exciting kinds of things and at that time, they’re looking at converging county school offices and to enter the education districts around the nation.

They wanted to be the education service centers and we were the first superintendent’s office in the county schools superintendent office to have a countywide special Ed program. We were the first to have the county wide gifted child program.

We were the first to do countywide accounting. We had two rooms bigger than this full of computers. I mean they were huge things and the district sent the stuff too. It’s on rolls of tape and we have embedded over here and were also that the one of the first in the nation of countywide educational libraries.

Filmstrips, films, and those kinds of things we were the four runners of all that development that happened later. The Department of Education saw us doing all of those things. We’re just kids. I was by that time 29 or 30. I had a couple people about that same age working with me.

We were just kids and they came up and they took a film strip about us and distributed it around the country and showed what our education district could do if you want to. At that time, they pass elementary and secondary education act.

The Office of Education called and said, “Would you be interested in and I’m sure I have looked back then” and said, “Who can we get to do this and worry about that kid up and let him worry with it” and so they called and asked if I’d be interested.

They had a job in San Francisco and wanted to work and they see and I said, "Well you know I probably will understand the San Francisco job but they won't come back and talk to us" and so I went back and talk to them about it and it was kind of interesting.

I didn't hear from them for about six, seven weeks and then I got a phone call one day and said, "Well do you even got to thinking about it and we've decided that what we want you do is come to Washington to head the program manager for the program."

"You will have that office in San Francisco. They'll be working for you but you'll be in charge of that in San Francisco and we'll let you come here in Washington DC." Wow. I called my wife and said, "What are we going to do?" We make most back then, they want it in two weeks.

G: I called my wife, we had a house and those things and I talked to Louise and she said, "Well I think we ought to go." I said okay and so what do we do with our house? How about our house and my wife said, "I'll sell the house" and she sold that house for our asking price.

I always was fond of that. That was some of God's work in that; like that sort of thing that happened and I felt that. I felt that and we're free to do that and went to work in DC and incredibly strange there. I was young but I was very high up in the Office of Education.

I was topping the salaries casually on and we were six or eight people that are really running things and I happen to be one of those six or eight and just amazing. They appointed a committee called Urban Task Force. They were burning the cities then.

They appointed an urban task force made up from people in the Office of Education from employment and those places and we were trying to bring programs in the cities in the summer to involve with people so they wouldn't burn their house in the summer.

Somehow, I got appointed vice-chair of that. When I went to the different places I was in charge to government delegation. It's simply remarkable at that time I was 33 in this, 34 it's remarkable kind of experiences that I got to be a part of that large sort of thing.

G: Then along the road block because I was the youngest one at the group by far. They would say, "Could you take care of that?" so I would say yeah and I was gone three or four weeks at a time on the road for a while and I finally decide I can't do this.

I came back to Oregon. Even there I'm beginning to think that I can't make a difference and I did.

I often wondered if that really God's leading or my leading on that was more arrogance but it did work there. We did because the district head had no money and they got a lot of federal funds there, we won the national role of experimental schools.

We had early childhood education programs and we were the largest recently in the federal funds under capital based and in the school district and they shifted and they had just a whirl of federal funds coming in. It did a lot of good things. When I went there, the kids in the school were 65%, were really in the lowest scores at that time.

The college graduates were in the range of all 18, 17, 18% would go onto college a year and those things were in fact in the reading program is just disastrous and so we began working on some of those things and that federal funds have just change it.

We develop an early childhood education program-involving parent very heavily. It's going along the research about how the best thing to happen for kids pre-school is to be born super mothers. The women in this county are distinctive.

They know how to mind education, the value of the day-to-day life of a child. Some kids come to school their vocabulary is for the words. Some kids come to school and vocabulary is 450, 600 those kids has a better chance to read and some kids come to school with the skill of following directions.

The skill of discriminating, a whole series of things and most can just teach and so we developed a program to help the mothers who hadn't thought about those things and teach those. We had a reading program around but those efforts on reading program when I left 65% reading in the after quarter title, I felt pretty good about that; just this complete switch around.

G: 55% of our kids were going onto college and we had some of the same strategy that we had in other places. There is the first place I really thought through only will access them later and even then called the people strategy. We've hired the best people we could. We would do the best we could with them in terms of their growth and development and out of that, we would expect high-level performance and we got it.



AD: That's great. When you were originally, like you said you were 28 or so when you got your first job, was there any factor that originally said ... You kind of hit on a little bit when you said you have fun but is there any factor that led you to becoming a superintendent?

G: I was once. I was doing and that just looked to me like that's where the fun was. I even met me at the board and meeting with the people and hiring the staff and being involved with the whole kids. I thought, "Hey, that looks fun to me."

AD: That's great.

G: I said that's what I want to do.

AD: Did you feel prepared when you took your first superintendent job?

G: Yeah. I was always a pretty good student and I felt I've had studied it and read along about it.

AD: Great. When you look back, can you pick out one or two things that you say in 32 years of being a superintendent that you're most proud of and why?

G: I'm pretty proud of the early childhood education program that we had. I was proud of that. That we really for these ground fact I was later Harvard hired me to evaluate early childhood education program for the Office of Education in Wisconsin.

As I went through Wisconsin with the early child programs, they were all using materials that we've created. It's on the front poll, all over. It's just spread across the country not that we did there and if you think about that a little bit, the notion of giving parents skills to really make substantial difference in their children is a good notion.

We set up a way to do that. We had young grandmothers. They are willing enough forwarding their pretty successful rate in their kids. I hired a couple of early childhood educators to develop materials to share with the mothers and those kids.

We had probably 500 mothers involved in that program and that was very good. I'm very proud of that. I guess a couple of other things is quite probably one was the program that we had at ABCD which was in effect working with our staff to provide for their growth.

That area became a notion of mine that if we were going to be successful in the school district it had to be because the people we had and the fact that those people were growing, they weren't being stagnant. There was a growth going on in those people.

We've put that program into ABCD. I was proud and then another thing that was rendered was not so evident but it was very valuable. When I'm at Harvard, I know that a little bit of it of the change in my perspective.

I knew what need to be done and want to get it done. At Harvard, somehow I don't quite know where I was out but somehow the notion came that if you really want to help communities, you have to change their understanding about their schools are and what they might be.

When I got to ABCD, I began a major program. It was rendered then in a Middle Town and the schools weren't really very successful. They were below state averages in almost everything and so in that here, I began a program to talk to the whole community.

I don't know how many copies that I had but I had several copies that they have for a year. Not just meeting for groups of parents and we talked about what would you want your school to be like. What can we do, how can we do it and building an awareness and appreciation for school.

We worked pretty hard on that all the time I was here. Identifying was a part of the job of leadership in the community. It's helping the community think well about their schools. To think rigorously about their schools and so the community began to give it.

I think that that's one of the major contributions that were made in ABCD. We change the community perception of what's good and could be about. That's one thing in our problem. I don't know at least I'm happy that worked, that kind of way those two things and betting on people and putting resources into that.

The other one is building community awareness. It's the significant value of education. How parents can make their contribution and I see the situation today in Oregon schools. They need to do some rethinking about that. Our schools are not doing very well. They really aren't. There are lots of things that didn't seem like very good.

AD: If you look back kind of flip that, what things are you least proud of in your time of being a superintendent?

- G: Least proud of, I had those not proud of it a series of problems with teachers involved with students.
- AD: I found a quote that you, I'd like to get your opinion on that's some of the superintendent had characterized the position as challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful. What you change or add or disagree with that?
- G: It's not lonely. The fact is with a good super involved, they never do. You ought to be surrounding yourself with people and the issues in leadership are group-ish not so much individual issues that you're leading a group of people. I would say lonely is not a part. The others are right.
- AD: Challenging, delightful, difficult.
- G: I often didn't find it very difficult. I found the issues challenging but we were able to find solutions to most of them and worked pretty well with them. I didn't find it either lonely or especially difficult. There's always work to be done. That's part of it but it wasn't, especially difficult. I've far beyond being a schoolman, I finish concrete and what's difficult was 10:00 at night in this desk setting up on, it's the fact that you can't get to it. You've got 2,000 feature trials. That's difficult.
- AD: Can you give me some stories or experiences where equity played a role in your position as superintendent?
- G: Equity, how do you define equity?
- AD: One is looking at equitable experiences for all of our students. When I think of something your early childhood conversation and I think you're looking at for each and every child and sometimes our students who maybe on the home front, they don't have the 450 word. Their mom wasn't able to do that, what do you do for that child? Just thinking in terms of the equity on that.
- G: There is that. I thought it was important particularly in the high school to have very broad offerings. Lots of kids are interested in different sorts of things and they need broad offerings. With those broad offerings, it's so easy to focus on the specifics of those offerings there.
- The general information and then the broad offerings, you need to be focusing on the general education aspects in specifics, yeah there too but it needs to be a caring of the general education. It was searching things and the fact that I wouldn't have to worry about it now is a good sense of tendency.

To evaluate our schools on the basis of some kind of testing sort of thing that they almost, was almost totally, that they almost missed that broad general sense of education of being an educated person, a range of things which from stating some of that in colleges too.

G: It's becoming much more specific and yet our kids are best served by having a broad general knowledge and then also needs the specific things. We need us to get focused on specific I think rather than general. The other issue, in fact, would be the, is as important as the role of the women in the schools.

The girls in schools that I think would be a much better than we did but there was a time that we probably didn't do a very good job on that. I think athletics when I first began teaching, we didn't do a very good job with equity and athletics and those kinds of things.

Not only that we had for girls cheerleading and then we've changed that and I was always very supportive of women in various administrative programs around the school. That was kind of badly in some ways when other professions doing the same thing, we lost our unique position with women. We got way more than our share of challenge with the women in any profession, so there and I think it is some of those incredible women that I've worked with.

AD: I've been reading out from superintendents that position, the complexity of the position yet it's simple at the same time. Not simple is not the right way to put it but there are some roles that some people throw out. I wanted to know if any of these you felt like dominated your time and maybe on purpose.

The role as an instructional leader, manager, a democratic leader, applied social scientist, and a communicator. Any of those jump out of you or maybe there's something that we're missing?

G: Yeah. They did just not exactly. We talked about what I saw myself once. I saw myself as an educator. That I had various groups of people to educate; I had a group of community to educate about schools. I had a faculty dedicated that you probably I know you know it.

I would spend many of my lunch hours and eat in the faculty lunch rooms to visit with the faculty and we would talk about education issues, kids learn or problems we were having, a hard core, telling them whose working those kinds of things so it wasn't at all for me to be aware of the problems.

Just go to the principal's drawer because I was meeting with the faculty and I thought that was a bit into it, that I would define the role as an educator that I needed to know a lot about how kids learn to read. I need to learn about how lesson planning went.

I need to know a lot about things other than teachers with burnout issues. I think helping an educator kind of role and talk about it in ways that will help them, that very important role to educate the community about schools and educate your board about schools.

Board members come and you elected the board but they necessarily don't have the expertise so you have to provide some education to them so they'd be able to understand the schools were like that. I would say the superintendent is maybe educator in chief to these responsible. Working with leadership teams, my job really wasn't so much to say where we're going. It was to educate the people in what the options were and how we could, that sort of thing.

AD: Tell me a more about those luncheons, that's interesting. Tell me about the luncheons, did you enjoy those?

G: Yes.

AD: Was it well received that the superintendent was going to have a lunch with them.

G: Yes, you've got to expecting you know?

G: They knew me. Yeah, they expect that I will just be going and we'd just talk how things are going, what's happening.

AD: That's great. Did your principals enjoy it too?

G: Yes.

AD: Good.

G: I know where he does as principals. Very often, they wouldn't be there. I should be in there with the faculty.

AD: Right, right, the alumni.

G: Yeah, sometimes the principal would be in there but I really enjoyed that but I thought it was an important part as the superintendent's role. I didn't

join the Lion's Club and the Rotary and those things. Principals join though and I said you need to do that but I don't have time to meet with the Lion's. If they're not supporting the school, we're in trouble anyway.

G: What I want to be is with the faculty and so I tried to do that, find that entire meeting with them and visit, just chat about what happened with their lives and what's going on just generally. If they knew me and I knew them but I also was able to, a lot of the conversations were on education. I was able to I think provide some insights and I get some learning from teachers too. I learn too from the faculty being there. It's a good thing I did.

AD: Do you see yourself as an innovator?

G: Innovator, I wouldn't describe myself that way. That on the wide in this strip, you're just the problem solver better than innovator, we get a lot of innovation but we didn't innovate for the sake of innovating, we solved problems and sometime you took approaches to solve those particular problems.

We created different kinds of things to do that and I was always kind of in the spot for what we're doing quite a lot of different kinds of things but we weren't doing it for those reasons.

AD: Would you believe innovation is important in the role of a superintendent or is it like you described it more of a problem solver?

G: Not something that you need to. I think the superintendent side needs to do a few things. They need to have a discipline to stay at best in the field. They need to do readings and research. They need to be in the literature.

They need to subscribe two or three educational magazines and they need to come and change to pursue that and then talk about ongoing education and background. They have to have a lot of conversation with their staff about those things. I think that's very important in the leadership role. It's educator in chief I think.

AD: I love that. I enjoyed thinking about the educator in chief. There's not in the literature like that, there should be.

G: I know.

AD: Describe experiences from your work that were transformational.

G: I think transformation from several levels. One is transformation for me. The things that I did that I became a different person like my experience at Harvard with that. Harvard made me see things differently and it's not because of what they tell us but just being there.

Being in that environment that made things different so I was transformed in that kind of sense and I think that the attitude that we had at most places I wasn't particularly at ABCD, where we ask people that they came on board to develop a professional growth plan.

Then the fact that we funded it to get track of the progress on that growth plans. I've even had this transformation. I think it changed an awful lot of the way people thought about themselves. They began to see themselves in a different role and now are focused on that I think caused that shift. Of course, I like to think that our education was very transformative.

AD: Can you tell me a little bit more about the people strategy?

G: At first began to crystallize that notion when I was young. We had serious problems, no money, and the kind of faculty you'd expect to find in a community that didn't have much money and didn't have very high aspirations for their kids or for their schools.

The community that had been brought by divisions from all sorts, in fact you could hardly think of the school, they had more difficulties. As I got there, we began looking at those problems. It became evident to me that perhaps the main problem was the faculty.

That if we wanted to have good schools there, we were going to have to create a different kind of faculty and so as we begin to create that different kind of faculty, the notion in my mind is really a people strategy but we're going to improve schools not through better buildings.

Not through better books or better curriculum, we're going to improve these schools by getting better with people so we were very hard. Very hard to get better people and I continued that here in ABCD. They did it with ABCD on that.

I'm not getting here was aware I was doing it but when we sent people to conferences, I would tell them if see somebody there that really looks pretty good, let me know and they go, they had Tom first in and come back and then say, "Hey that guy over at xyz is a pretty good teacher."

I will contact the guy, write him a note or something and call them over. They know our people down at that Math conference and they were pretty impressed with your presentation there. Now have you ever thought about joining ABCD School District?

We don't have a job opening right now but we will know would open some day and we're kind of interested in people like you helping us. Think some about coming to work for us. You'd be surprised I've got them bought in. They were bought in.

AD: That is great.

G: I did and you'd be surprised how many people we were able to track that way so that I know good things happen to them. When I first came to work for the board at ABCD, there was when I was chairman of the board and when they hired me, she said, "I got you hired and I'd agree."

They said, "There's one thing you need to know about us. You have a reputation for turning athletic programs around when you're getting a lot of federal money." He said, "We want you to know that neither one those are priorities in this district."

I said, "No? What are your priorities?" He said, "Frankly, we're tired of playing second fiddle to abc as we go." I said, "Okay, you won. If you're really serious about that, then I've got to have a good song rescheduled.

That's hard to attract the kind of people to do that with abc figuring they will pay a couple of thousand dollars more for Ed than I can and she said, "We will give you the best salary schedule in the state" and they did. For many years, I don't know whether she's still there or not.

But for many years, ours is the best salary schedule in the state now, we didn't start the highest and we didn't end the highest but we put our people. Every year I had plotted on the salary spent of other people surrounding and our salary schedule always paid our people more money than any other salaries carried in the state but it paid them.

That was a part of the people strategy. You need to have good things formed but you also need to give them good salaries to attract them and I believe they just, I mean equivalently built the finest staff in the state than most staff compared with though I thought I'll live in school last year a year and a half ago here to anybody to maybe you know that.



- AD: Absolutely. Where there other under any circumstances or under what circumstances where you able to completely relax and set aside the demands of the superintendence?
- G: Two things. One, it was never a burden. I never wanted to set it aside. I took limited vacation. My heart and soul, my interest was here and it wasn't a burden. It was never a burden. I enjoyed getting up every day and go hang out. I love the people who I was working with.
- I love what we were doing. It was great for me. It was tough. I had to get federal funds to do the things that need to be done and so we had to write a lot of federal grants and I was just spending a lot of time doing that. But I didn't do that here. We got very few federal grants here and I get a few of them to write on about.
- AD: If you were hiring a superintendent today, what are essential attributes you would look for and then are those the same or different from maybe when you were superintendent?
- G: I don't know. It's hard for me to talk about it what's happened in the last 20 years so I know it's hard when we talk about that. The thing that I would most want is somebody who's deeply dedicated to the notion of schools and kids and community and the contribution that the school can make.
- I believe that all the problems in the world can be solved by education. It may be an overstatement but I believe it.
- AD: What are your views toward the non-traditional route to superintendency?
- G: By non-traditional you mean people who found the superintendence without having a background in education?
- AD: Yes.
- G: I say those are tragic and I think the superintendence is an educative challenge, is an educator. It's not businessman.
- AD: Educator in chief.
- G: That's right, educator in chief and not a businessman. You can hire business people. It's hard to hire people who really know about schools and learning and teachers and kids and the superintendent needs to know

about those things they make. I think just needed being a superintendent and you're going to hire a business manager. We hired good ones.

AD: Sure. I have quote from Linda Darling-Hammond. She wrote a book that we read and a lot of principals I meet today read this and it's called Flat World in Education.

She explains the new mission in schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that do not exist. Creating is and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified using technologies that have not yet been invented. What's your thought on that?

G: I would change it just a little bit. I would say that they kept training the students to work in jobs. They're training the students to live in a world that has not yet been created. It is not the focus on jobs out of all the education. They focus on a broad range of skill that allows us to live well. Other than that, I'm thinking yeah.

AD: Can you describe experiences or stories where you help schools or students or principals and people get on winning streaks. Where a couple of good things happen to them and you helped propelled them towards success. Can you talk about a big savior, giving them the opportunity?

G: That's kind of hard me to think about that because so much of my interest in work was in groups. I've focused trying to move groups and things and we were onto pretty successful trajectories in these. I don't know if we kind of thought about schools.

It's wanting the best in all fields that we bought an electron microscope. At least, I had the chance to get one and got one for the chiefs about electron microscope. Kids did that over there for a while. I guess there's a part of me that wishes. I thought about that in more discrete turns but I almost thought about it almost in competitor.

I want our kids to have the best opportunity than anybody else in the state. I want our kids in science to have better opportunities than any of the other kids in the state. I want our kids in the English department to have the best opportunities.

I want our kids in drama to have the best opportunity. We have an incredible drama program in ABCD.

That we want to be the best, that this group of people, whatever we're doing, we would like for our first graders to have the best education

experience in the State. Now, I thought about it that way rather than the thing about the best education possible because I wasn't quite sure what the best education possible was.

But I could know what other schools and this is what you're doing and did and tried to build a program. When I saw good things, I was unashamed in willing to take them. When somebody is doing a good job at something, oh man yeah let's do it. I thought he's the best athletic director in the state and I hired him.

AD: What role does humor play in the work with superintendents?

G: I think that's an important role for everyone to have. Perhaps it is great tension reliever. I never thought I had enough of it.

AD: Looking back, what would you say your school boards would say was your legacy and then maybe your possible greatest challenge?

G: Legacy. I think maybe the legacy that I left, the most places I was with this was the notion that, get good people, get good folks and perhaps. One of the overall challenges always is having enough resources to fund the things that you think of to be funded, always and we did pretty well with that always.

I could see that and I was able to organize one of them. I think pretty alumni claim some fame in your catch. One time in the state legislation on the floor state legislator, they were proving me for some state commission or something and she said, "He is the best politician in the state." That's most of the things funded they don't even needed the fund but that was always a bit of a challenge. I would find the money and do things.

AD: What are some of the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon?

G: One of the advantages that I had was that we pretty much ran the school through local communities. That's been shifted large with the sale and that is an incredible challenge. I don't know that one who had my mindset in my way of working with these people could be successful in this.

I worked with legislation a while. I was down there constantly for 30 years and I think if I really had talked about something that was probably a failure was my efforts to influence the legislation. They were very nice to me, they said nice things but they didn't pay straight up bit of a tension when I tell them how to make things better.

Even some of those as you know for a while I was close to president and I was on commissions, I was on state board for five years and I remember in this position, I said they should have listened more. I don't think they did much.

AD: What advice would you give to someone like myself who maybe wants to be a future superintendent or maybe to our spouses and families, as well?

G: Yeah, two or three things. One, it is absolutely the greatest job in the world. There is no job like it. There isn't that I had the sense everyday coming home, I hadn't done something that is important and worth doing and not many people I think had that advantage.

It is a job that's worth doing and in many ways, it's the community giving you an opportunity to influence the community in ways that hardly anybody who gets the job out had the chance to do. Doctors don't get that chance, lawyers don't get that change, and legislators don't get that chance.

You're right there working with the community, with the families and the parents and the kids right there and here they are. I worked with the church. Everything is right here. It is an incredible opportunity to make a difference I think and it does take time but that's about it, good stuff.

G: I really liked it.

AD: Do you have any advice to spouses and families?

G: I think my kids may have paid the price. A little bit of the price for it. They went to school when I was the superintendent and I think there was a little bit of engine around that. My wife might be better at that than anybody else. Most wives of the superintendents are very supportive.

No calls waiting in the community, they're almost all that lay, she would never do that. She was always smiling, very gracious even if people are saying bad things about me.

AD: Obviously, I think I know the answer to this one but I have to ask you. Knowing what you know now, you had to do it over, would you become the school superintendent?

G: Oh my, if I had 10,000 lives in me, I'll be every one of these school superintendents. I just loved it.

- AD: Someone that you may know has made a comment and this is my last question for you. It says that, "Successful superintendent needs to commit to a rather simple set of values, be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard and be mission driven"
- G: I would somehow say in it that to have a good understanding of education and that may be mission driven but I think the school superintendent ought to hope to be one of the best educators in the community. That doesn't mean that he necessarily has to be.
- There are maybe other people in the staff that are equally good but there ought to be that notion that I'm going to ride to that very upper tier of educators not only here but also throughout the state. That I intend to do the discipline, the kind of homework that it takes to remain to that natural on.
- I think lots of superintendents have and then want it but many superintendents become business managers and that's not what being a superintendent is about and it's not about scheduling bus routes.
- G: Yeah. That is important work for those people too. The superintendent has the responsibility to educate the janitors as well as to educate the teachers and others and maybe some depth of responsibility in that with good schools, everybody is learning. Everybody is getting more proficient and getting better.
- AD: You were superintendent for a considerable amount of time, 32 years during which you've experienced many things, some of which we may not discuss. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
- G: I can't think of anything just now.
- AD: I really appreciate your time.

APPENDIX H  
PARTICIPANT H

## Participant H

AD: You were school superintendent for how many years and then what district and what year you retire from?

H: 13

AD: Did you come from a family of educators?

H: I actually did. My mom was elementary school teacher and my dad, although he was career military for most of his life then retired and got his doctorate and became a dean at a college in New Jersey.

AD: If you have any children, are any of them involved in education?

H: No

AD: If we could start, can you think back to some of your fondest memories and recollections of your time as superintendent?

H: There are a lot of them. I suspect that one that stands out most for me is the colleagues that I had the fortune to work with and we've talked about some of them. I also had some great opportunities for ongoing learning. I really enjoyed my two stints at Harvard, one in the superintendent leadership program and then working with the urban superintendents program and some of the folks back there, and the opportunity to service a mentor superintendent for some of the interns through that program that was great.

One of the things that probably you'll find as we talk is that I strongly believe in the strength of community and, as a superintendent, really emphasized that we are the communities of schools and that we really serve parents and community. It's important that the relationships we have amongst ourselves and with our community be one that we place at a high priority, at a high premium and quite honestly I think that paid off. We never lost a bond measure or levy in the 13 years that I was superintendent and we did number and we usually won by very substantial margin. We're talking 60, 70 percent.

AD: Can you tell me a little bit more about that Harvard superintendent leadership program?

H: The superintendent leadership program was I want to say three years with some residency. It was a great program I thought because it took from three schools, not just GSE.

We had professors from one of the folks you'll know, one of the people that we worked a lot and I became good friends with was Pedro Noguera, who is now at NYU. He was one of our key professors and Ron Heifetz. If you know Ron Heifetz, but international business consultant with ... but did a lot of work with schools on governance and leadership.

It was quite amazing program. We were fortunate enough as a result of that to be able to secure a grant that lasted for about seven years to train administrators and teams of building principals and teachers around different professional development but professional learning communities and those kinds of things and have those kinds of support, so quite an experience.

AD: Would you mind sharing a little bit before you became a superintendent? What was your career trajectory?

H: I don't know if I'm quite a nontraditional superintendent but teaching was not my first choice. I didn't follow a traditional route to the superintendency. My first job in K-12 education was as a human resource manager. I was hired as Assistant Personal Director and Affirmative Action Director at the time. I was working actually for the XYZ, Department of Education but at the county level on doing HR kinds of stuff and he hired me. It was really my first job in K-12 education.

Then I ended up working for him as HR Director in ABCD.

AD: When you jumped into that role, did you feel prepared?

H: No. When I left that, I didn't really feel prepared to be honest even after 13 years and spending a lot of time in getting my work done at the university and did continuing license and so forth. I felt it was a continuous growth thing. There was always different challenge and new challenge and sometimes challenges coming back again, but it was a job I've enjoyed a lot more than I thought I would.

I quite honestly decided that I ... because one colleague would often say, "You should think about becoming a superintendent," and I'd say, "I've been working with you for all these many years and watched you doing this and I'm not the politician that you have to be to be a superintendent." I don't like that stuff. I just want to be able to do my job and get it done and



not have to worry about what board member I'm keeping happy and which one is not happy, whether the mayor is happy or whoever and so forth and so on.

I actually found it rewarding when I was in there. I think that probably what some others said that they think I am a good listener and I don't always come with a problem like I already what the solution is before what other people have to say.

AD: Did you feel like is there anyone factor or anything that influenced you to say I'll end up doing the superintendent job?

H: One was I love the district and was committed to the district. Two, I also had good experience with the school board and I often think that superintendents when they go into a job don't pay enough attention to what the board is like. As an HR person, I had established pretty good relationships with the labor unions and with some of the colleagues.

AD: Did you remember any of the pitfalls that he mentioned?

H: Obviously, he was big on finance and making sure you have a handle on budget, how money is being spent and where the revenues are coming from and trying to do a good job of anticipating what the legislature may do and those kinds of things. He also taught about, these aren't his words, nurturing and feeding your board so that you have a good relationship. You don't get so close that it's a cozy relationship but a respectful caring relationship where they never feel like you're trying to do things behind their back or cut a mouth of things that they feel like they ought to be involved in.

AD: Looking back from your time there as a superintendent, what do you think you're most proud of and why?

H: I would probably say getting the district's focus on equity and that's not to say that there wasn't work. I think we strongly invested in equity.

H: This was 15 years after the strike. Because of that and having to work with the union and then pushing back and so forth, she had not been able to move in equity agenda as much as she would like to. I think I was able to not only move it and a get union support but also get the board strongly invested. When, I don't know the exact year, but one of the things that's interesting because I don't know what they're doing with it now, we got to establish excellence, equity and choice, as the three overriding goals and

focusing all of their decision-making realm and asking themselves each time how is this play out.

We had some issues around school choice that I thought I handled pretty well, considering that it's a very sensitive issue, and was able to change some things and move some school and actually closed a couple of what we used to call alternative schools with some angst and with some outcry, but nothing that was couldn't get by. I think part of that is ... I would sat there and had people screamed at me and parents say, "How can you close our little what seemed almost like a private school on public school money," and work with the board around it.

I think that was one of the better things we've done. They still have some choices and I think their choice is right if it's handled the right way and if it needs the equity and excellence criteria as well. We worked through that for several years but finally got to where the community and the staff and the board were on board with that. We didn't rush it and we didn't try to force things down to people's throat. We tried to sell and worse than to tell that kind of thing.

- AD: Flipping the question there, can you think whether things that you shake your head you're not as proud over at least proud of?
- H: In spite of our efforts with equity and excellence and choice, we still didn't make the significant dent in closing the achievement gap, not for want to trying or effort and quite frankly I think teacher's work hard to try to do it just for summary. We'd get some progressing like we'd get two steps forward and one step back so that would be one that I would say the whole civic stadium thing I don't know if you're familiar that. It's the non-instructional kinds of things that sometimes kill you.
- AD: I took a quote from a superintendent that said that characterized position is challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful; challenging, lonely, difficult, and delightful. What would you add or change to that?
- H: Challenging, lonely ... I think I agree with all of those maybe for different reasons. I don't know by delightful will mean rewarding because I definitely think it's rewarding. One of the things I've done since I retired is mentor some kids at middle school and high school. Part of the reason for that is I did believe as superintendent that what we do with kids makes the difference as most educator, I think all educators do.

In that fashion, I do think it was rewarding. One of the things I did was setting up and doing advisory committee and putting it together working

with staff. I don't want a committee that all leadership kids. I want a variety of kids from different backgrounds who are doing different perspectives. I don't want all jacks or all leadership folks. I want kids who just are normal regular day kids and that's one of the best things I ever did.

I would run budget by them, programmatic decisions, curriculum kinds of things just to get the input. They weren't decision making but it was something and I would have board members sometimes come and key staff members who had key issues that they want just to get student and these were high students grant and they weren't middle, but arranged from freshmen to seniors. Actually, there weren't many seniors on the list, not the first couple of years. It became seniors eventually.

We had kids with special needs. We had kids from different ethnic backgrounds, kids from different poverty, socioeconomic status. The first six months or so the kids were okay and so forth, but once they actually got into it and felt like they could make a contribution and that with they came up with have an impact and would be respected and dealt with.

For example, one of the things they did was work with staff on putting together a student survey around bullying and harassment that went to all the high schools and middle schools and they won. They, a matter of fact, said, "We need to do it in middle school, too, because a lot of it starts there and get as much information around it. That was one of the things around rewarding. I found working with kids I would say it's rewarding.

I would say and I don't know whether that fits in that challenging of political. I don't know if I'd say that is one of those but it clearly ... and I think sometimes that superintendents don't fully grasp or want to understand the political aspects of the job.

- H: Everybody thinks that they ought to have ... They do have opinion to share itself. I think it's important that folks understand that there is a political nature to that.
- H: Political would be one. What else, challenging, delightful?
- AD: Can you describe experiences or stories where equity played an integral role for you as a superintendent?
- H: It played an integral role in almost all. As the superintendent today, if you imagine this was our some staff that love conference role, we had key concepts of equity, excellence, and choice on the sides of the walls. As we

were looking at deliberations, we would refer to so how do this fit in each one of this. Key budget decisions were one of the ones.

Quite frankly, part of the reason we got selected as initially one of the, one of twelve in the country, the only one in Oregon. It was because they thought we were doing some groundbreaking things around equity and I think we were. We were trying to do some things and I think the board, we got a board that was pretty much, I don't know if I'd say practically based, but more concerned about the financial aspects of the district, what the ending fund balance was and those kinds of things.

We used an equity lens before the term that's now around the state. Obviously, it's being used within specific colleague that we talked about it as an equity lens. One of the key hires I made after I was superintendent was someone who worked on Equity and Community, and her role was to make sure that we focused on equity both from the community and the school standpoint, district standpoint.

We had a strong community-based and staff-based equity committee that we established that worked as advisory to the superintendent but we had board members on it. They met twice a year in a workshop with the school board to talk about equity issues. Then, of course, the it was equity based. It was basically based on equity.

We were able to have some key folks like Heifetz and Pedro and other folks who come to the district and do work with board and transpose that was impressive. We had what I called ... There are people who thought that probably and I don't know whether in would call it transformative leadership but that we put too much power in the hands of principles. Obviously, when they still had the psych-based decision-making thing but we did maybe more than that.

What I just talk with principles about was what I called permission test and I don't remember the exact words now but it was something like if it's not illegal, if it's not immoral, if it doesn't hurt kids, a couple of other things and you're willing to be responsible for the decision, don't ask permission just do it.

H: It was principals who like to trust me.

H: Sometimes they direct area sups as the directors didn't like it, but the ones who did great job with overseeing the principals directly I think eventually did because they got to trust you and mistakes were forgiven. If you make a mistake for what you think you're doing the right thing, then you don't

need to worry about the repercussions which is, "Okay, next time." Maybe he's doing a little different hoping that's changed, the new superintendent.

Quite frankly, the board I think wanted more top down than they hired and then when they got it they got all the pushbacks from teachers and principals and so partially I think they're to blame for the consequence, the set situation that they're in now, but I think that happens. I had a leadership style that was more about trust and engagement. They hire good people and letting do their job and try to support them.

To some extent near the end I think of my term, maybe they needed a little more hammer and I understand why. I think that they would have liked they're seeing and I was one of the ones who is most critical that we weren't doing this enough to close the gaps as we need it to be done.

AD: In doing some superintendent studies and research, there's some positions that you would hit on a little bit but I'm just curious. One way that some people look at this is to break the position down into instructional like a teacher scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. Can you paint and maybe those aren't perfect and I hear you talked about the political nature and I think that fits in. Is there a role that when you were superintendent for those 13 years it dominated your time and you allow that out of those?

H: I'd probably say democratic leaders.

H: One of the things I tried to do because I recognize that having not been a teacher or even a building principal that that was not strength of mine so I tried to hire instructional leaders like chief academic officer who could focus on that. Over the years, I always learned a lot more because I spent a lot of time in school and doing programs and so forth.

Then my focus was probably more on the social ...

AD: Applied social science.

H: ... applied social. I really had a strong sense of labor relations working with unions. I think I was a good communicator. Even when the teachers didn't agree with some of the decisions I made, I think they always felt they had opportunity to voice those concerns and that I would listen to them.

AD: During this time, do you see yourself as an innovator? Do you actually think that's important for future superintendents or not?

H: I do but I would say a pragmatic innovator and we had a number of innovations, but I also think we did some things that were faddish, those things that we tried that didn't work and have gone away but there are also some things that have stopped. I think a lot of the stuff we did with has stuck around equity and those kinds of things.

AD: I've already talked about transformational earlier. Can you give me any experiences or stories that you would describe from your work as superintendent that were transformational?

H: I think part of it one was the piece about the principal leadership and putting more faith and trust in principals to provide instructional leadership moving away from the principal as manager.

That's the kind of innovation that we thought we were doing and thought it was transformative and maybe it was to some extent I think the leadership got better as the result. The whole thing of choice, ABC had a long history of choice in letting parents and some staff essentially create their own school but what we found when we looked at the data was that it was disparate and that certain schools were 98 percent highest yes and little of no free and reduced and other schools were 98 percent free and reduced.

We took that on and took us a number of years to change it but we did and probably the balance on all of our schools now is probably between 30 and 65 percent. We took on high school form some of which worked and stranded.

Oftentimes, a principal will come and say, "I've got an idea. Will you work with us on putting it together?" Then I think the work with the board was transformative

AD: Under what circumstances were you able to completely relaxed and set aside the demands of the superintendency?

H: It's a 24-hour job and actually it's interesting. I try to remember. I don't remember which levy it was. One of the levies ... It wasn't a levy. No, it wasn't a levy. It was an election and one of the ... It was the city counselor. There's a board member who was running for election ... Oh, legislator. It was the legislator. It was ... which one. Anyway, I can't remember which one. There was the one who's ... He's not a legislator anymore but had wanted me to endorse him for the legislature and I said, "I think that as a public official I can't do that."

His argument was but, "You're a private citizen some of the time." I said, "Let us ask the Secretary of State." I didn't particularly want to endorse him anyway. They came back and said, "No. The superintendent is superintendent 24 hours a day, seven days a week." I can't endorse which is the answer I wanted.

AD: If you were today hiring a superintendent, what are the essential attributes would you look for and then do you think that those were the same or different from when you have the job and then the last piece of it falls up on your nontraditional route to the superintendency? What are your views on that?

H: Let me say my views on the superintendency I think of more than based on my time as superintendent although I've only worked for probably, let's see, two, three four, five superintendents in my entire career,

I think part of it goes back to some of the reasons I said just having been that close to superintendent. There's a certain luxury in being in a number two spot or that's next level that you have, that you don't have as superintendent, because you still have the buffer of the superintendent between you and board, some expects between you and the community and so forth and so on.

Superintendent doesn't have that I think that the board and community and other expectations and so on.

I'd say superintendents have to be bright and intelligent but they don't have to be the brightest and most intelligent person in the room. They need to have the skill to get some bright and intelligent other people in the room with them. I think they have to be good communicators. I think they have to have a commitment and I'm going to say to public service but public service in an educational environment.

I think that the superintendents have to be open to different viewpoints. I think that obviously some of the things you just said I think superintendents have to be courageous. They have to be willing to make hard decisions once they have the facts or as much as the facts that you ever get. There were times when as a superintendent you have to make decisions and you know that there's still some stuff you don't know but it's time to make a decision.

I think they have to have good people skills, labor relation skills and labor relation skills doesn't mean just going along and get along. It means understanding that there's a place for unions in public education and

they're not going to go away. There are ways to be collaborative and be interest-based on how you look at some things.

I think they have to be willing to listen to principals and teachers. They need to I think come in with an agenda based on what they know about the district and the board and the community but be willing to be malleable based on what's happening in the environment at the time. They need to be a part of the community. I don't know exactly what to say about that but be at least perceived as a part of the community.

Sometimes that's not easy if you're coming in new but there are ways to do that, which means in the first year or so you may not have much time to do a lot of other things just to establish credibility within the community and the staff and parents and have to care about kids.

- AD: Linda Darling-Hammond explains the new mission of schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solution for products and problems that have not yet been identified using technologies that have not been invented. Can you comment on that?
- H: We did a lot of work with Linda. She spent a lot of time actually in ABC years ago. I will comment that I think it's accurate, but because I can't see that far into the future it's hard for me to mention exactly what that means. What I think it means and knowing Linda is that we have to teach kids to be lifelong learners, explorers of learning who are willing to ... I guess you teach kids to use technology but quite frankly, most of the kids I know have to teach me about technology.
- I think what Linda is saying is don't get so much caught up in what it is that we're teaching as opposed to facilitating, helping kids motivate do their own learning.
- AD: Can you describe experiences from your work where you help schools, students, principals, teachers, parent, board members get on winning streaks where two or more good things are happening and propels them to success?
- H: We had a process we used to use with superintendent staff about getting little wins and how do we help schools and folks get the little wins so that they can feel some success and move on to the larger kinds of things we want them to be able to do.
- AD: What role if any does humor play in the work of a superintendent?



H: A lot and self-effacement probably does. I think what other folk is telling, the first back to school I did after I was superintendent, all the districts do that, was I made fun of myself. I can't sing a lick and I got up and sang a song as well.

H: Folks thought I was a kid that I'd be willing to put myself on the spotlight then and be able to see the humor and situations.

I don't think you can take yourself too serious, whether it's humor or humility, I think both are important. I don't know where this fits in because for me it's just my personality. I think there's a place for ego but not too much ego and I don't know how to exactly describe that. The superintendent who has so much ego that never wrong or never make a mistake, staff and people who work with you I think have problems with them.

AD: What would you say the school board would say was your legacy and maybe your greatest challenge?

H: I don't know if closing schools would be one. I think equity would probably be the one, bringing them around to have a strong foundation around it and support it

Nobody says they're against equity but when you get them into a conversation about so, "What do you think equity means," there are very different perceptions about what it means. We spent a lot of time with the board in conversations in developing statesmen around here's what equity would look like and here's how we know it if we saw it and those kinds of things.

I think they pretty much got on the same page so I would say that's one of legacy they would on the same page and staff. I think in terms of tangibles, they would probably say building new schools, although they would also say community respect I think for the board and the superintendent in schools.

AD: In your opinion, what's the biggest challenge or what are some of the biggest challenges facing future superintendents here in Oregon?

H: I think growing diversity is going to be one of the challenges that include ELL and how do we deal with that. As part of that, continue to close the achievement gap. I'd been pleased to see that there have been a couple of things that OEIB and ODE had been doing around poverty and what helping schools understand that.

The finances of the state, how the state funds schools and how that whole process works and some of the unknowns that assumed tenants always working with, thinking what you may have and so forth so I think that's one.

The finances piece is a big one

AD: What advice would you give future superintendent?

H: I would say don't take the superintendency just because you want to be a superintendent. Take the superintendency that you want because you feel that you're a good match for the community, the system and that you can be transformed into them the same thing. Principals, too, don't take the first principalship that comes along just because you want to be a principal. Make sure you feel like it's a good match and one that both you and the system will feel good with.

Get to know colleagues that you can lean on, the piece in there about superintendency being a lonely job. You are at the place where the bus stops. Hey, I've got this one that I just really don't know what the heck to do with. What kind of advice or consult would you give me?"

AD: Would you have any advice for spouses and families?

H: Yeah. It's back to the community piece. I'm being a little bit fictitious. Don't come in as a superintendent particularly in private school. I'm just being a little bit fictitious but you sometimes have to think about, "This seems like it makes sense to me," but from a community perspective or even people who work for me as a superintendent what will they see this as and I don't know.

The superintendent usually is the most visible public figure in the community. People are going to be interested in and looking to see what you do, one versus what you say and how you present yourself in the community.

AD: That's great. Knowing what you know now looking back and I really appreciate your time here, I've loved it. If you had to do it over, would you become school superintendent again?

H: Yeah, I would. Whether I would ... I would be very selective. I think the piece I went back saying to you about whether it's first superintendency or second or third superintendency, I think the tenet applies. Make sure it's a place where you are going to feel comfortable with both the community

and the system, not just because you want a bigger superintendency or more money or those kinds of things but that you really feel you can make an impact and be transformative.

AD: One school leader actually explained that successful superintendent needs to commit to a rather simple set of values. Be positive, be curious, be honest and work hard and be mission driven. Can you respond to that?

H: Yeah. I might say it in reverse order. Mission driven to me is that's both personal mission and organizational mission for me, making understand that you're doing it for the kids. One of the things I used to always say when I would talk to community groups I say, "These aren't the school board schools, they're not the superintendent schools and then not even the staff schools that are community schools. We work for you and we try to do the best job we can for you but ultimately we're accountable to you." I think that that account yourself.

AD: You were a superintendent for several amount of time. Is there anything that I missed or anything else you would like to add as we wrap up here?

H: I don't think so. I have probably gone on more than I should have.

H: I would say this. I spent I think seven, maybe eight years on the Urban Superintendents Program Advisory Board at Harvard and so a lot of people go through the program and get their doctorates and become superintendents. Most all of that was based around ... The urban superintendents program was really focused on developing superintendents and in some cases the system superintendents wherever they ended up being who had a strong equity focus and primarily to work in urban settings and to face some of the challenges that urban schools have.

One of the things I observed was that while in some cases the challenges maybe different in terms of scale that even small less urban district have those same challenges. I would say regardless of where a person goes as superintendent don't think that I'm going to so and so district and it's a small district with just elementary schools maybe, I don't know what would that might be, so it's going to be a lot easier because it is.

The challenges may not be quite the same but the same challenges will exist and maybe a matter of scale, but there's a difference. To be honest, in a much larger urban district you may be able to hide more easily. You can't in a small rural district.

H: I think folks need to understand that. I think that the superintendency is a great job and the people with a passion and understanding of what they're getting into can go in and do great work and we need folks who can do that.

APPENDIX I  
PARTICIPANT I

## Participant I

AD: Can we start with just some demographics. How many years were you're a school superintendent and what districts were you? Where'd you retire?

I: 14 years.

AD: Okay. Did you come from a family of educators?

I: No. No. My mom didn't work and my father was a mechanical engineer. I didn't have anybody in my family that was educator. Yeah.

AD: Are your kids involved in education?

I: No.

AD: Thinking back to years as superintendent, can you think of some of your fondest recollections and memories of any of you're.

I: Let's see. Let's do the positive things. When I came to ABC, they had a superintendent that they weren't very happy with. They were ready for a positive change. I don't know, we built team overtime and we established some traditions, some things that I'm proud of.

Our opening of school tradition around kicking school off in a positive way with some stories and successes as opposed to let's talk about HIV transmission and how we're going to lift heavy boxes, which is what we usually were doing on those days.

We made some shifts like that. Probably one of the most positive things that I thought I did when I was there was we got started with classified and certified folks meeting together in small groups and sharing some stories. They were very uncomfortable to do that.

When we started, they were very suspicious. Like, what are these stories for? Why are we doing it? What are you going to do with it? What happens if we don't do one? That kind of things.

I worked really closely with the association leadership and short version has overtime we collected these stories every year and we add it to them and we actually published internally. When I left, we gave a book to every staff member.

I: It was very positive. I had a lot of folks come up afterwards and talk about that every year. The opening of school became a big event. For whatever reason, I never intended it to be this way but I seem to be ... my opening of school speeches, people would cry.

I don't know why but I always had a story or to that I had saved from over the year and shared it next August in service. People would ... When the superintendent sends the letter back to school letter, they'd go, and "It's time to get my Kleenex."

Every year, people would come up and they, I don't know exactly what it was, but it was a big deal that opening of school. I have a lot of memories about that, things like that.

I: Did you really? I don't know, I wish I could tell you logically what combination of things resulted and that it ... I'm sure some of it was timing. I'm a pretty easygoing, not hierarchical person. I got really close to a lot of people

I think we cared about each other and what we were doing. That for me was the thing that matter. That's why it's really hard for me to leave ABC. I ... When I applied, I had actually two other job offers.

I took the job in ABC and my kids were like, "What do you mean? You're going to ABC?"

I don't know how to explain it, I went to ABC and I sat in the parking lot and I watched the kids and I talked to some of the kids. I don't know, I just like to get my hands dirty kind of person. There are a lot of FFA types in ABC and it was just a really good fit for me.

AD: That's great. Can you describe your career prior you becoming the superintendent?

I: I was a high school teacher, middle school teacher and moved up the ranks, VP, staff development, principal and then I went to district office.

I decided I wanted to be a superintendent probably for the wrong reasons. I was pretty happy but we had a superintendent that I didn't think very much of. I decided I needed to move. I start looking for superintendency and I got offered a job elsewhere.

I thought, that makes sense; I'll go do that. We have adventure in a small little school district. I did have an adventure. I had a great learning experience. I had no idea what ...

AD: Could you pinpoint one final factor that said, "Okay I got to ... I'm going to go do the superintendency thing."

I: I think I ... The wrong reason was that I was moving out of the situation rather than toward something.

AD: Right. Right.

I: Every time I change jobs in my career whether it was at the building level or one in the district office. I just got bored. It was like, "I already ... I know how to do this now." I'm looking around for something new.

I had all of that plus all curriculum, K-12 and it was myself as secretary and one other person. It was pretty tough.

You just have to put your finger in the dike that was about the best you could do. I certainly wasn't bored. I had plenty of work to do. The superintendent that came, I had come up under, I don't know, you're so much younger than I am but [inaudible 00:12:59] people like that that ... They were just watched.

They laughed and we got the superintendent in that I thought was pretty much a lightweight and played games. I'm not a game player. It's just like; I can't work for somebody that I don't want to march up the hill for.

I left for the wrong reasons. I never regretted it because most of my professional friends stayed in ABCD. Of course I made ... We are professional friends but the folks that I went through the ranks where there's a teacher and a VP and principal, they mostly stayed in ABCD.

We get together when it's ... They couldn't help it. You only know what you know, right? They're in this big district. Even with all the budget cuts and [inaudible 00:13:50] and ABCD is cutting, everybody is cutting. They still had more left as did [inaudible 00:13:56].

Some of the small districts even ever had to begin with. If I had not left, I never would have learned that lesson. We get together and they ... They'd be talking about their politics and all this stuff. Then, they'd go, how is it in that small district over there on the coast where you are?



They used to piss me off. Then I finally ... It was like; they don't know anything about this world. What I learned was I had to do transportation, special ed, food service. We had to close a school; we had oil leaking into the XYZ river.

We had to do DEQ and the EPA and I had no background. I was the curriculum and instruction person in ABCD. My learning curve was huge. I had such a great experience. I had a wonderful board. They were all just solid as rock.

I: I never regretted it. I met a lot of wonderful people, but I also came to understand that there was some great teaching going on. You didn't have to have a lot of money or be well heeled as a district to have the teaching. That was just such a wonderful lesson for me to learn.

I thought it was a good move and I was working on my doctorate at the same time.

I'd work on my dissertation till 1 or 2 in the morning, then I'd go home and crash and then I'd go to work. Also that's how we got at [work 00:16:46]. Andy was a huge factor for us being able to survive this family because I went for intellectual reasons. I'm ready for change job and I don't like the way this person operates. I didn't think it through in terms of what does it mean to commute. It's an hour and a half but it's not really ...

I: Then you come home and there are dirty clothes and somebody has got to get lunches ready.

I: It was crazy. Anyway, I had a great education. I mean, I'm a learner. I will have to say that, I'm a learner.

AD: Did you ... Thinking about that, did you feel prepared when you took that superintendent job? Did you ...

I: No.

I: No. The school financed part of it. I had no background and have to wrestle it. You can figure out the regulations for special ed or the head cook is going to tell you how we have to do this, when the cheese rolls up

Yeah, I gave them my word. We start looking and of course what we find is that they'd buried some big fuel oil tank out in the back and it was leaching out into almost the river. You can't just patch that together, but

these are farmers. Their idea to fix stuff is just put some barbed wire around it and some duct tape. That would get them out.

AD: What are you most proud of during your time as superintendent?

I: There is probably ... How we got through the budget crisis, I'm very proud of. They were used to a superintendent that had money in the bottom drawer and whoever the last person in the door that was the answer. We had to build the process and we had to build trust around that and every year we had to cut.

They weren't used to working K-12, so it was elementary versus middle versus high school and everybody was pitted against one another. We really built a K-12 collaborative process with a lot of information that everybody had so that when we made choices, hard choices, even if it impacted a certain level more than another, people understood it and there wasn't the feeling like they had been done unto. I was very proud of that.

We also passed two bonds and when I first got there, they had just failed the passage of a bond, which I think was, as much about they wanted the superintendent to leave. He had been there I think 11, 12 years and so they didn't pass this bond but they needed one. We passed two.

I'm very proud of that because I was an outsider and I came in to that situation where we went out and write it right again. They had voted it down and we went right back out. I had to build relationships and trust enough with the community that I wasn't part of that people said, "Okay, she seems to have already screwed on and she says it's [inaudible 00:23:52], so I guess it's set to a vote yes." I was very, very proud of that.

AD: How did you do that? How did you build those relationships?

I: A lot of time, talking to people one on one, a lot of [inaudible 00:24:04] at the local cafe and go on to Rotary, go on to Lions, go on to chamber, doing school tours. We started ... It's hard to tell, often we did it. I think we ended up doing it every other ... every month, but we had a luncheon with a superintendent thing that we started where we just got to each school to just pick randomly three or four people and so then we'd have a luncheon for like 40 people and they could ask anything they wanted, anything they wanted to know and open agenda, stuff like that.

People understood that, yeah, this person is approachable. If we want to know, we've got that information. They didn't feel like there was slight of hand going on. I don't know. I think the other thing is I think that the

community had always been proud of the fact that they supported the schools. Now for a lot of people that meant activities and athletics. They didn't get too upset about reading scores.

AD: Right.

I: They had a very viable booster, a PTA organization. I think they were a little bit embarrassed that they didn't have respond, and so it was an opportunity to close that door and move forward with the new person. It's hard to get what's a little bit of that too.

I spent the first year just talking to people trying to put a face on the needs that they had in the district and we were overcrowded and we had leaking going on and we didn't have a home for the district office, it was in a trailer. We ... You never can get money for a district office.

I: To make some spaces but I felt really good about our team. I was very proud of that. I ... Of course after you leave; people ... They want to tell you what they don't like about them, the next regime. I was very careful not to get sucked into any of that. When I left, I left.

I still see a few people but not many. They need to move on and put their allegiance with a new person and get on that team and ... Quite a few people have left since I've been gone in the six years of [inaudible 00:26:37].

AD: On the flip side, is there anything you would look back that you were least proud of?

I: What's the least proud of ...

I: I think when they did the board recall in XYZ that second year I was there, it wasn't that I'm not proud of it, it's just that if I had been a little wiser I'd probably would have taken a little more time. The result might have been the same because they didn't get what they wanted. I probably would've spent more time because I would've been a little more politically. I was pretty green.

No, I can't think of anything. I mean there were ... There were always small decisions maybe that you think maybe it would have been better to do this. Overall, you did the best you can and you try ... For me it's important you tell the truth and if you make a mistake you own it. You don't try to blame on somebody else and you give the best information you can and then you have to make a decision.

There were some hard things; the budget cuts were terrible they're just terrible.

AD: Someone described that superintendency is challenging, lonely, difficult and delightful. Would you agree or what would you add or change to that statement?

I: I don't know about delightful. I can't think of any delightful about it. Lonely, let's talk about that. Yeah, it's lonely sometimes because there's only one of you. I don't care how tight you are with your team. It comes down to you have to make a call and ... It's lonely.

Probably though, the most lonely I ever felt was, probably two times. One, the incident I talked about that one when we shut down for 9/11 and we've been the only school district. I thought, we really stood that up.

That felt pretty alone. Then we had a threat one time with a note that we had picked up at the high school was kids said they were going to kill some people. We had to involve the police and they involved the county and we had graduation ceremony in June with SWAT teams on the roofs of the high school.

That felt pretty lonely because it's like, you can say it's out of my hands now. This is what the police think we need to do. Ultimately if it goes sideways you're wearing it, it happened on your watch.

I: I was like, that was the longest ceremony I have ever endured but nothing happened.

I: There were things like that where you just want it to be done. Then all of the RIF and layoff that was lonesome because even though you understand licensure and you've done the best you can to preserve as much a program as you can. Then you have to make those bone-deep cuts, it's still people's lives and so we would synchronize that.

I was always ... I would get so angry. I don't get angry about many things but I don't like sloppy. When it was time to tell people, it was synchronized. I will not going to leak information, this isn't going to come out through the grapevine. We're not going to do rumor control. When it's time to move, we got the letters ready, every principal is going to have a conversation between noon and 1:30 p.m. on this day.

I: We did. We did that well. When that was happening, that hour and a half or two hours that was happening, when you knew those letters were being

hand-delivered and those teachers are getting the word or the bus drivers or whatever that had no health benefits that was lonely. You did the best you could for the information and the licensure requirements but it's people's lives. That ...

I: That was hard. Firings ... firing people is always messy.

I: Even if it's the right thing to do, it's always hard because usually it's because they're so screwed up. I would say that not delightful, what were the other two attributes?

AD: Challenging and difficult.

I: I don't think ... People used to say we go get a massage some time. In ABC I'd go about every two months and she go like, "You just tied up a notch, you have such a hard job." I said, "I never felt like it was a hard job. It was intense but I never felt stressed."

I would feel but I always thought well, I can only do the best I can do and in order to do that, I have to get information, I have to be thoughtful. I can't jump the gun. I can't let my emotions get in the way. If all those things were in place, then I made the best toll I could and then I saw that it wasn't stressful.

If it didn't work out, then it was like, okay, then you'll deal with that but it was ... I didn't second guessed myself a lot. That to me is a source of stress ... I do the right thing? I didn't do that. It was all on the front-end and then it was ... it was okay. For better or worse, we're moving.

AD: Can you think of some maybe experiences or stories from your position as where equity played an integral role for you?

I: Equity in terms of like, race or gender?

I: That kind of equity?

AD: Yes. Gender, race or any other issues that ... Whatever you deem equity.

I: Yeah. I would say probably the one that comes to mind is that when I got to ABC, we had no ELL program. What we had were some really dedicated teachers trying to do the best they could.

When a parent would show up in the office, the secretary would go grab a kid out of class and say, "Here, talk to these people, tell me." That's what

we have. Not only did we have to build a program and of course, there is the philosophy and the differences of opinion about how best to acquire a second language, so we had to deal with that.

Most critically, we had to very carefully take money that was for ELL kids and the funding formula that had been spent on other stuff and we had to ... get it away from those other places. Garner it for what it was intended to do without setting off a big storm. That was difficult.

Then in that context, I hired a couple people.

I: Then I hired our first Latino principal in a school that was putting together a bilingual program.

AD: An instructional leader, a manager, a democratic leader, an applied social scientist and communicator. Many hats, which one dominated your time?

I: I would say, I spent a lot have time in a counseling role that's ... that would ... Not in terms of fixing it but it's ... because nobody ever comes to see you when they're happy. They come to see you because they didn't get what they wanted from the teacher, the coach, the principal, the board member.

They're mad usually when they get there. Mostly what you have to do is listen. Then as best as you can, sort out because everybody is emotional and you want to support the AD.

I: Of course, they were always going insane. After a while, you did learn it didn't really matter what you did. They were going to be mad. That's what I'm saying, is that you got to have to sort out these really messy situations where everybody is mad and try to do the best you can with decisions that have been made or things that have been screwed up. That's counseling. I don't know if that's the right word ...

I: Problem solving, I guess. It's not a lot about charging up the hill. It's about unraveling the mess that's been dumped in your lap. Doing it calmly ... I can't ... The number of parents that I would have to say, "What is it that exactly you want me to do?" "I want you to fire that teacher."

I said, "Actually you can fire a teacher but there's a process. It takes some time and it's not about one parent who's mad." I'm not going to fire the teacher.

I hope you can do that because when I come back, I really like to have a conversation about making this better. You can't just come in here and yell at me because I got other stuff I got to do." Like that and then they go like. Then you leave because I got to save face. Everybody is going to save face.

I: You got to help people get bad from a brink. It doesn't always work or "I'm going over your head superintendent." Then that doesn't work. "I'm going to the board." That's the other thing. They go to ... Some people go to the board.

You got to get lined up with your board. As soon as they want to start getting in your business and decide where the boundaries should go or what bus the kid wants to ride or whatever, then you have to say, "If you want to hire the baseball coach, I'm good with that. I don't think that's the way it's supposed to work."

Sometimes you have to do that in front of the whole board because you got one little rogue of guy that they don't want to deal with. They're afraid to deal with it. You got to say, "I can't move forward until we talk about this." That ... Those are some hard things.

The board doesn't know the whole deal. The problem solving for the day-to-day is one set of issues. Then, when everybody gets out of your office, you got another five percent of process that you have to keep on going.

That part was actually more stressful than the other stuff because sometimes you just want to slack. I'm not able to do. I just want to go, "Are you kidding me? You didn't what?" No, I'm not going to do that.

I: A lot of superintendents, at least when I was still in the business, you talk to people, it always deal with the board that pushed me out.

I: Or they push out the superintendent because they want ... It's an easy solution, get rid of the superintendents. It doesn't really change anything.

AD: During your time, do you see yourself as an innovator? Is that something that you think is an important attribute for superintendents?

I: Absolutely. I think, we throw around like the term instructional leader.

I: I think that there are a lot of superintendents and principals, the truth were known. People could feel safe. They don't have the first idea about what to do about because it's not been in focus in their training.

All of a sudden, they're trusted in this role where the accountability and the test scores is such a big deal. To be able to talk about that and actually to make some interventions and some program changes and move staff and move principals, that's, to me, that's where the heart of innovation is.

Because we've still run schools pretty much the way we ran them a hundred years ago if you really look at the infrastructure of schooling. It's just hard. It's just hard. It's hard to make change.

AD: Can you look back to say that any stories or experiences that were transformational?

I: For me personally or for the district?

AD: For the district.

I: I think the story I shared with you about when we collected those stories and published the books. I had grown men in tears. I ... Afterwards, I remember going for a beer with the union president. We structured it. They had to do two short little pieces.

One was about a teacher or an adult; it didn't have to be a formal teacher, that it had a positive impact on their life. Then the other story was a kid that they knew that made a difference for. Even if they couldn't see it in the short term or the student never told them, but they knew right in their heart.

Because that's what it is. It's about the heart of the deal, right? I had people ... I'm not kidding you. I'm not making this up, cry, crying. I ... When I went for the beer with the union guy, I go, "I do not know what we have unleashed."

What have we unleashed, right? Then we did it for several years after that. The best we could figure out was that first of all, they were in mixed groups, which they didn't have a tradition of doing that. The high school always met by itself. It was K-12.

They were talking to teachers they never interacted with and we had classified them. Then we actually had the groups run by an adult and a couple of students. The whole dynamic was different and they ...

I: Then, I guess, nobody ever asked them that. I don't know. I still don't understand that. All I know is that that not only did they weep but it was like it started this tradition of, oh my, she's going to make us cry again.



They were all true stories.

I: They weren't things I contrive. They would ... They cry and it was like I guess it's transformational but they all started with this thing about a kid who made a difference.

I: Then, for a long time I thought, when I retire I wanted to write a book. Of course, I hadn't done it

I: Stories, too, do that.

AD: As you're thinking through and looking back was there a time where ... Or I should rephrase it. Under what circumstance were you able to completely set aside the demands of the superintendency and just exhale and relax?

I: What I would ... There were two things that I did on a pretty regular basis that helped me do that. One was I would get out of the office and I would go sit in a kindergarten classroom. I would go watch little kids. It took me ... I don't know anything about elementary. I was a secondary person.

I: I'd go and I would sit in a kindergarten classroom. They would make me happy. It made my heart happy to see these little kids. I do remember talking to this one teacher. I said, "I don't understand why every time I go in a kindergarten classroom, all they're doing was coloring and cutting."

I said, "I'm not into the pre-reading readiness. We don't have to drill and kill when they're five years old. Why did ... " She goes, "You're such an idiot.?" She goes, "Don't you know it's about their motor skills that we're developing their hand-eye coordination so they can hold a pencil?"

I go, "No. Nobody ever told me that. How am I supposed to know that?" Stuff like that. I thought kindergarten teachers are just about the most gifted people on the planet. I would do that on a pretty regular basis. Then, the other thing I would do on Friday night. I'm not a ... I've never been much sports person, physically.

I play golf and I love baseball but ... Having to go to the sporting events and make small talk in the stance is not my thing. I would work in the concession stand at the football games, and I loved it. I loved it because the kids would come up and they'd say, "Oh, aren't you that lady that was in my classroom the other day?" They don't know who I was.

- I: I go, "Yeah." That part was fun but it was just a different way to interact with the community. Selling red vines five for a dollar. Yeah, I can do that. I really ... Stuff like that...
- I: ... would be stress relieving. I would like to do things like that. I just go talk to principal. Some of the principals you go visit and they wanted to do show and tell. It's like; they're going to talk you around. Then, I don't want to do that. I just wanted to talk to them as a human being about how things were going, what their issues were.
- We have the conversation and then we might not have another one for two or three weeks. Just go talk to the people that were doing their work and stand on the same page. I spend a lot of time with the Union. Those were very productive.
- We would have breakfast, you know, and I ... Stuff like that would help me do my job because it was the people that made it work. Yeah, I don't know if that's answering your question.
- AD: Yeah, if you're going to hire a new superintendent, what are essential attributes you'd look for and do you think that those are the same when you were superintendent?
- I: That's a really good question. You have to have technical skills, right? You can't fake that.
- I: The budget, special ed, personnel law, this ... You might ... If you're in a district big enough was with directors ...
- I: ... Or specialist that's helpful but you need to have a good grounding in the technical aspects of the job, that's important. I think you need to look for somebody that can handle the politics of education, which is a lot about money and priorities and testing and the legislature.
- Doesn't lose sight of the fact that it's a people business and it's the people who moved the train that they have to feel it in their heart for kids and for teachers and the bus driver. They got to understand the work. Then they can't themselves too seriously; I'm not much of a hierarchy person. If you think that you're at the top and because of that position, you know the answers you're totally screwed up. It's the opposite.
- You got to have a flat administration and you got to listen to people if you're going to have many credibility and if you're going to make good decisions. If you think you know stuff, I would look for some humility and

some recognition that they have some strengths of those things they don't know. Then that's fine, we all have that, right? Then the follow up question is, "How are you going to learn about so and so?"

The answer needs to be I want to go talk to the people that are doing more and work in a collaborative fashion. I think that's so important. You still have to make decisions. I've worked for people that are very collaborative. Somebody has to ... you got to move forward, you can't talk about it forever either.

I: I know, it's cerebral to a certain degree, you have to have a brain. That if you can't make people laugh and trust you, then that's about eye contact and meeting them where they are on an issue. I don't know how you can do that, I really don't.

AD: I also have a quote from Linda Darling-Hammond from her book "Flat World and Education," it came out 2010 but she describe she said, "A new mission of the schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that don't ... do not yet exist creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified and using technologies that have not yet been invented."

AD: What are your thoughts on that?

I: Yeah, okay. You've got to be a problem solver, you've got to be information gatherer, and you have to have analytical skills, right? You have to ... We have to work in the team. I also think just for some reading I'm doing on my own right now. You know the book that's called "Quiet"? It's about the power of introverts.

I think there are some generic skills around problem solving and data gathering and common sense and logic and facts that stands you in good stand no matter what the issue is even for something you haven't anticipated. I don't know.

I: Charisma is nice.

I: I think it's more about trust. It's about believing in one another that you've done the best you can, analyzing the situation and so you move forward together and you're going to deal with whatever you're going to deal with. That to me is what you're trying to come ... you're trying to do.

AD: Anyway can you think of any other experiences or stories that you can share on the winning streak concept of two or more good things happening to a person to propel them toward success?

I: To me, RTI was a great metaphor from moving an organization forward because organizations are so haphazard, everybody is working more but are they working on the right stuff?

I: Are they working ... Are they one in the same direction? The RTI ... We actually use that model to look at not what is happening necessarily around interventions for kids but at a program level for district, school intervention. A lot of ways, not just about how we taught reading, but about how we did budget or about how we hire and staff building and so we used it as a metaphor to look at where are all the pieces of this puzzle that we can't even see them because we never ask the question that way.

That would be an example, again I'm not answering exactly that question but it was like once we could leverage information and we could see what we were doing then it was easier to say, "Let's shift this resource over here, instead of doing this, let's do this." We got some wins off that absolutely because we would like to celebrate them.

Everybody was working hard, that was never the issue. I don't see how you can survive an education for not working hard. Working smart is a different thing altogether, right? How do you share information, identify the ... We don't have any money we don't have any resources.

I don't know, are we sure we don't have any resources? What are we doing now? By the time you put title one and title two on the table, well I know those are federal, I know that's not general fund. Is there something we can do with those resources to move this agenda? I don't know. Those people over there control that. We don't know that.

AD: What role does humor play in the life of a superintendent?

I: Oh, you got to laugh. You got to laugh at yourself and you got to find the humor in situations. You got to help other people laugh when things are really tough.

I: You have to tell jokes about yourself.

I: It just popped out, stuff like that. You have to be able to find some humor.

I: I mean, it's about kids and kids are hilarious.

- AD: Looking back, what would you say your school board would say is your greatest legacy or your legacy?
- I: They probably picked the budget process, the remodeling and the building of a school. I would hope that they would say ... They might not because boards don't get it sometimes. You try to keep them away from the day-to-day business.
- I: That's probably not their fault that they don't get it because you don't want them involved.
- I: I would hope that at least the principals would say that we built a true team and we shared information.
- I: I was always very clear about I didn't want surprises and they didn't either and so I think we were respectful in that way.
- I: Oh, that's okay. It's okay
- AD: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing future superintendents in Oregon?
- I: I think just to be really candid, I don't think that we have a tradition of leadership in this state either from our professional organization, COSA, or from the department. We have our 90-member school board known as the legislature. When I was a superintendent, I tried as best I knew how to get COSA to talk about something other than school funding.
- If you're perceived only as coming to the legislature or coming to the table when it's about money, I think it's not ... you don't get as far because you don't have a position on the other things that matter like nutrition and health care and kindergarten readiness and teen pregnancy or any of the other issues that you could take. Or, the assessment issues that are killing us, you know?
- I: I was involved in some of that when I first retired. I know I'm not as up to speed on what they are trying to do right now. I think more could be done to support new superintendents. Not feeling so alone.
- Some networking, you know, would be really good. You know, we're pretty inbred. People say, "If you don't know Oregon funding, you know, it's a disadvantage." School funding is school funding. The formula might look a little different.

- I: The work is essentially the same. The language might be a little different but I don't think that's an issue. I think we need people that have the intellect and the stature to stand up and be counted around issues other than money. I just think that's so important. Especially now that the legislature is not meeting every two years.
- I: It seems to me like they all ignore the dialogue about other issues so that when it comes time to fund for their kindergarten, they know why. It's not about we want more money, it's ... This is what it means in terms of kids development down the line and why it matters.
- AD: What advice would you give to future superintendents and then maybe to their staff as their families?
- I: I don't think I did a very good job putting my family as a priority, so I'm not going to say that that's what they should do because I don't think that's possible. Maybe I could have done a better job with that. I think everybody needs to go into it with his or her eyes open that are not ... It could be a 24/7 kind of deal.
- I don't know if it's in a more of a time crunch than the high school principalship. I mean, you've got stuff every single night. I think in a lot of ways, that's the
- I think both of them are very demanding jobs and I think anybody that's going to need one of those jobs their family needs to understanding children. You can try to do better and you can take your small kids to the gym to shoot baskets while you're working on your emails, but that's what you have to do.
- I: You're going to miss some stuff or make yourself sick trying to do everything. That's what I think.
- AD: Knowing what you know now if you have to do it over would you become a school superintendent?
- I: Oh, yes. In fact, when I left ABC, I made the decision to leave like in October and I made it for like, I don't know, a couple of reasons. One was we thought the funding crisis was kind of done and it was going to get better.
- I: I thought, okay, the worst is over. We had just finished all this work with two bonds, so we had solved all the enrollment crisis and taking care of the buildings and the kids and the teachers. They didn't have buckets in

the hall anymore. The district office set home. You know, everything was good.

I: Facilities were good and I thought the money will stay home and this is a true story. That fall, when I got up to do my speech...

AD: Yeah.

I: ... I did not have a story.

I: I know you probably think I'm making it up but I'm not making it up. I had a story but it wasn't the story. I always, every other time, I knew what the story was going to be. It's like in August when I'm gone. I know that story. I did my speech and we worked in the things and, you know, whatever. It wasn't the same and I knew it wasn't the same.

It was like, you need to listen to, you know, trust your gut and maybe it's time. I talked to our attorney about it. He and I worked together in several districts. He said, "I don't know why you won't just put your feet up. You said you've done all these hard things ever since I've known you.

You know you've been going in schools and board recalls and done two bonds and things were stable. Why don't you just like take a deep breath and put your feet up." I said, "Because they deserve 150 percent and I'm not sure I'm giving them 150 percent." The story wasn't there. He didn't get it, you know. He didn't get it.

I: I thought, well, it's probably the best thing I can do for ABC is hand it off to a new person when it's a stable as possible.

I: You have to know that that there comes a time and you have to move on and it's a natural order of things. It felt right to me that things were stable. It had been such a roller coaster financially. I made the decision kind of intellectually. Then, I spend the rest of the year crying, you know, and people would come in and they've all, you know, do hugs.

Then I ... that was the only time, only decision really that I ever made that I second-guess myself. It's like, why are you leaving these people? You love these people and you love this work. It was like, well, you're 58 years old, time to do something else. You want to learn about other things. Whatever, I went ... I did it.

I: I'm a hands-on, roll up your sleeves, and get your hands dirty kind of person in the trench, you know. It's like coming in and helping people,

help facilitating and then you leave and you don't know whether they are going to do it or they're not going to do it the way it should be done or the way you think it should be done and you're not in charge of anything. It's not that I needed to be in charge but I needed to be on the team that was going to get the work done. After six years, it's like, you know.

- I: I know myself well enough because I'm a person; I've never not worked in my whole life. I actually let my administrative license, superintendent license expire.
- AD: A successful superintendent in Oregon once said that in order to be a successful superintendent, you need to commit to a rather simple set of values, be positive, be curious, be honest, work hard and be mission driven.
- I: Oh, absolutely. I don't know who said that but I want him on my team. Yeah. That's a pretty good list.
- I: It's a pretty good list.
- AD: Is there anything that I ... what did I miss? Or what you wished we would have discussed or talked about?
- I: No. These were great questions.



APPENDIX J  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## Informed Consent Form

Lewis and Clark College

Explanation of the Study:

The study in which you will be participating is part of research intended to document the lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon.

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to meet the researcher and be interviewed about your experiences as a public school superintendent in Oregon. The interview will be audio recorded and your answers, along with those of approximately 8 other participants, will be used to identify common themes and experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents in Oregon.

Your participation in this research will take 90 minutes in one face-to-face interview with the researcher scheduled at your convenience.

Informed Consent to Participate in the Study:

I consent to participate in this study of lived experiences of transformative retired public school superintendents. I understand that I will be asked to participate in one 90-minute interview, and that I will have the opportunity to personally review a transcript of the interview before the research is completed.

I understand that the data from the interview may be used and directly quoted in the researcher's final doctoral dissertation research study. I understand that he will maintain confidentiality as well as change my name in his research. Subject codes will be used to maintain confidentiality. I permit publication of the results of the interview with the agreement that participant confidentiality is ensured.

I understand that I have the right to refuse any question (s) that I am not comfortable with.

I understand that I may terminate my involvement in the study for any reason without penalty.

I understand that the interviewer is willing to answer any questions I might have after I have participated in the interview. The interviewer reserves the right to answer questions regarding the findings of the study until after the project has been completed.

I understand that my confidentiality is of paramount importance. Subject codes will be used to maintain confidentiality. I permit publication of the results of the study with the agreement that participant confidentiality is ensured.

I understand that matters relating to this study can be directed to Aaron Downs at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or [xxxx@lclark.edu](mailto:xxxx@lclark.edu) or the faculty advisor, Dr. Kenneth Brinson at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or [xxxx@lclark.edu](mailto:xxxx@lclark.edu). If I have additional questions or concerns about this study, I can contact the Lewis & Clark College Human Subjects Research Committee at xxx-xxx-xxxx or [xxxx@lclark.edu](mailto:xxxx@lclark.edu).

Again, I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the ability to withdraw at any point without penalty.

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Participant's Name (Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

I have presented this information to the participant and obtained his/her voluntary consent.

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Researcher's Signature

Date