

SUPERINTENDENT SECOND-ORDER CHANGE LEADERSHIP
TO ACHIEVE EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE
IN A LARGE FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of 244 school- and district-based administrators who were employed in a Florida school district from 2003-2011 regarding superintendent second-order change leadership decisions and events to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students in the school district. Interviews were also conducted with 11 active and retired school-based and district-based administrators to specifically address any factors that led to equity and access to excellence as well as any challenges the school district faced when implementing those actions and decisions. Quantitative data were used for a historical comparison of the targeted school district prior to and after 2003 to further understand the impact of equity and access to excellence within the school district.

Two superintendent decisions were believed to be extremely educationally significant by respondents: High school reading centerpiece and International Baccalaureate program launch at Seminole High School. Respondents were least familiar with Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition established and Established Principal Forum.

Three events were largely believed to be extremely educationally significant by respondents: District rated A each year of accountability, District designated academically high- performing, and Unitary status achieved. Respondents were least familiar with Florida Center for Reading Research project in high schools and Superintendent Leadership transition.

Responses to open-ended questions indicated that equity and access to excellence were achieved in the school district between 2003 to 2011. The decision to attain unitary status led to other actions and decisions to achieve equity and access to excellence, e.g., the creation of magnet schools, the introduction of open access to Advanced Placement courses. The superintendent's greatest challenge was perceived by respondents as lack of funding.

Interviewees cited poverty as a limiting factor in achievement of equity and excellence. All respondents agreed that working with the lowest achieving 25% of students to improve performance on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test was key to achieving equity and excellence in the school district. Most of the interviewees believed that all students have access to equity and excellence.

In offering advice to other districts, most of the interviewees stressed the importance of focusing on data, demographics, and academic programs, stating that leaders should be committed to achieving equity and excellence and there needs to be total buy-in from the whole district. Further, superintendent success depended on a clear focus, a set of core values and the willingness and courage to implement second-order change.

To my wife, Carolyn;
my three children, Kelly, Brad, and David;
and to my late Parents, H. L. and Bonnie Wilhite

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CHAPTER 1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS

Introduction

In 1987, Secretary of Education William Bennett labeled school and district administrators as “blobs” suggesting that educational leaders were utilizing resources and resisting reform without contributing to student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Educational administrators have been criticized for making decisions and incremental changes that have little overall impact on student achievement or first-order changes, according to Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005). First-order change includes management duties where everyday responsibilities are addressed, but a larger, more significant vision of equity and excellence does not take place (Marzano et al., 2005). For the purposes of this study, equity was defined as providing all students, regardless of their race or family income, access to an education that prepares them for college and beyond (Childress, Doyle, & Thomas, 2009). Excellence was defined as setting high educational standards for district and school administrators, teachers, and students (Marzano et al., 2005).

In order for 21st century students to be competitive with other students around the world, education organizations should strive for excellence with bold, second-order changes (Marzano et al., 2005). Second-order change has different characteristics from first-order change. For example, first-order change is considered an extension of the past while second-order change is perceived as a break from the past. First-order change can be implemented with existing knowledge and skills, but second-order change requires the

acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Also, first-order change is usually more easily accepted than second-order change to which there is greater resistance (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Second-order change is considered to be dynamic change both in terms of identifying the problems facing education and creating the solutions to solve those problems (Marzano et al., 2005).

Researchers have indicated that there is a positive relationship between district leadership and student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007). In their meta-analysis, Marzano et al. (2005) determined school district leadership factors that had a positive relationship to student achievement. Those factors included (a) collaborative goal setting; (b) determining nonnegotiable goals; (c) aligning state, district and local goals; (d) monitoring those goals; and (e) using every available resource.

Further, Marzano et al. (2005) and later Taylor (2010) determined that educational leaders who followed the principle of second-order change took similar leadership actions. For example, second-order change leaders have a deep knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and student assessment tools. They seek intellectual stimulation, are considered change agents, and monitor and evaluate on a regular basis. Though they are flexible, they set nonnegotiable terms once a goal has been determined. They collaborate but have a keen sense of the political process and make data driven decisions (Taylor, 2010).

Cotton (2003) found additional, but similar, educational leadership actions that include ensuring a safe and orderly school environment, having a vision of goals focused on high levels of student achievement, and holding high expectations for student learning.

Second-order change leaders are self confident, visible, and accessible. They promote a positive and supportive climate that is interactive while possessing an ability to reach out to parents and the community (Cotton, 2003).

Although Secretary Bennett's words denigrated administrators, there have been examples of school district administrators who create an organizational culture in which excellence is the goal and student equity is balanced throughout the school system. Taylor (2010) provided a number of examples of leaders who achieved second-order change and improved student achievement through nine leader action themes:

1. Leaders focus the culture of the school or district on learning.
2. Leaders make decisions for student learning.
3. Leaders stimulate intellectual growth.
4. Leaders personally invest in second-order change and are involved.
5. Leaders expect collaboration and results from collaboration.
6. Leaders strategize for consistency to ensure that the leadership team speaks with the same voice.
7. Leaders provide the expectation and support for data-based decisions making at the teacher level.
8. Leaders engage families in the learning process.
9. Leaders influence through the political process. (p. 6)

Marzano and Waters (2009) provided research on second-order change and the goal of achieving excellence and equity at the district level. They also identified common school and district leader characteristics in what they called "high reliability

organizations.” These characteristics centered on school and district administrators’ (a) having clear goals, (b) constantly monitoring to determine the extent to which goals were or were not being met, (c) having an understanding of the necessary conditions under which those goals were met, and (d) taking immediate corrective action when goals were not being met. Marzano and Waters (2009) also noted that high reliability organizations have concrete and specific goals and that these goals must become established and monitored for their effectiveness.

Childress et al. (2009), in their work on leadership and equity, described Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland as an example of a public school system striving for excellence and equity. In the late 1990s, Montgomery County Public Schools had a set of schools that were high achieving and had access to multiple resources, but they also had low achieving schools that suffered from a lack of resources. School district and school-based leaders perceived that it was not worth investing in minority students who were considered to be low achievers. The school board recognized this disparity and hired a superintendent who, by definition, was a leader who believed in second-order change. His vision was one of a school district where equity would exist in each school.

Childress et al.’s research was focused on the social justice problem of achieving equity and providing access to excellence for all students in a large school district. As a historical and perceptual study, the methodology used was mixed, incorporating objective survey data, student achievement data, and qualitative data obtained through interviews with selected participants. Selected documents representing significant events or actions

over an eight-year period from 2003-2011 were used as evidence to further support data obtained through survey and interviews.

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in the conceptual framework of three juxtaposed theoretical constructs: (a) superintendent leadership and decision making, (b) second-order change leadership, and (c) social justice as represented by equity and access to excellence after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Marzano and Waters (2009) identified value added district leadership responsibilities and practices which were effective in adding value to the efforts of teachers and student achievement. They suggested that when school district leaders strive for excellence and equity of instructional quality for each student in every classroom every day, it helps a district reduce the variability in the quality of instruction offered within and between schools. The authors contended that high instructional quality with little variation among teachers was the key to ensuring a high quality education system. Similarly, Taylor (2010) also stated that when superintendents, district leaders, and school board leaders align their priorities, student achievement improves.

Marzano et al. (2005) discussed three sets of practices that make up the basic core of successful leadership: (a) setting direction, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization. They also noted that the more challenges faced by a leader, the more impact a leader could have on student learning (Marzano et al., 2005)

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) observed that leaders committed to excellence find a way for all students to achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any student's race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents or home language. In districts with such leaders, there is no discernible difference in academic success and treatment among different groups of students.

The roles of school superintendents have changed considerably. In the 19th century, superintendents were viewed as scholars who directed curriculum. Their roles became more managerial in nature in the 20th century. In the 21st century environment, superintendents have returned to their roles as leaders who must drive instruction and increase student achievement (McClellan, Ivory, & Dominguez, 2008). The complexities of 21st century school systems have presented superintendents with increasingly complex and non-routine problems that contain educational, managerial, and political components (Fuller et al., 2003). These new problems demand new skill sets including a broad knowledge base, strong analytical skills, abilities to develop personnel, mastery of research-based change strategies, and an understanding of how to translate theoretical concepts into best practices (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005).

Childress et al. (2009) identified six lessons learned that led school and district leaders to ultimately set standards of excellence and equity within their school districts. First, school and district leaders had to establish a set of common rigorous standards to create excellence and equity for all students. Second, school and district leaders had to establish that student achievement was connected from pre-k to the 12th grade. Third, the school and district leaders had to break the traditional, bureaucratic hierarchy that exists

in many school districts and allow access for teachers, parents, students, community partners, the school board, and district leaders in order to become more interactive with each other. Fourth, school and district leaders created a high level of accountability for themselves and teachers to promote student achievement. Fifth, school and district leaders had to divorce themselves from the idea that race was tied to student learning and that regardless of ethnicity; there should be an expectation of high achievement. Lastly, after improving student achievement and school performance in the school district, the school board and school and district leaders came to have the knowledge that insisting on excellence and equity mattered (Childress et al., 2009).

Raising expectations is a requirement for a school district whose superintendent has the goal of excellence and equity. Hornbeck (2009) described four strategies for combating low expectations, making the observation that high achievement that is expected of students must also be expected of teachers and administrators. First, the superintendent has to acknowledge that a problem exists. Second, the superintendent has to insure there is to be a change in classroom behaviors. Third, there has to be a conscious decision to change school practice and policy. Lastly, the goal of raising expectations and student achievement falls on the superintendent and the school board. District leaders have the opportunity to make decisions that will create a culture of high expectations throughout the district and throughout students' school careers. To achieve high expectations, a superintendent has to include the participation of all stakeholders-- administrators, teachers, political leaders and citizens.

The influence that the federal government has imposed on education has placed an overriding focus on academic achievement for the nation's most disadvantaged students. Standard past leadership practices have been determined to have had little impact on academic achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). Stronger and more direct leadership is needed to affect the achievement of all students. This stronger, direct leadership style has been labeled second-order change leadership (Marzano et al., 2005).

In order to embrace the concept of second-order change, one must first understand the meaning of first-order change. First-order changes describe cases where the norms of a system remain the same, and changes or new strategies are layered onto an existing system (Marzano et al., 2005). Only when a change causes norms and values of a system to be challenged and changed is it considered second-order change (Marzano et al., 2005). Second-order change has emerged as an important concept in the quest to meet NCLB goals, to close achievement gaps, and to increase equity in schools.

Marzano et al. (2005) identified second-order change as dramatic in terms of problem identification and the solution that is implemented. They contrasted this with first-order change that was described as incremental and gradual. Second-order change alters any system in very fundamental ways and results in a dramatic shift in the ways of thinking and acting (Taylor, 2010).

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) observed that leaders committed to excellence find a way for all students to achieve high levels of academic success regardless of any student's race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents or home language. In districts with such leaders, there is no discernible difference in academic success and

treatment among different groups of students. Furthermore, leaders committed to excellence insist upon both social justice and equity. Bogotch (2005) wrote that the beliefs and values of school leaders serve as the catalyst to support and advance social justice. He explained further by saying that social justice emerges from someone with a vision and willingness to take risks to see that vision enacted. It is the responsibility of education to translate visions into socially and educationally just actions.

Leaders who can promote and support social justice and equity are aware of their beliefs and values and explore and expose these ideologies as they advocate change and challenge the status quo. Leaders espousing these beliefs have been said to show significant moral leadership (Dantley, 2005). It was Dantley's view that educational leaders must consistently uncover, question, and challenge the status quo in pursuit of equity and excellence for all of the nation's children and that to not do so would be immoral.

Statement of the Problem

Executive leaders in the school district targeted in this study perceived that a culture of learning opportunities that included equity and access to excellence has been achieved. For example, according to the Florida Department of Education (2011), the targeted school district was designated as academically high performing, and school district officials reported that 96% of their 2010-2011 annual budget was spent at the school level to maximize learning opportunities for all students. To document the progress toward achieving equity and access to excellence, the superintendent compiled a

list of events and leader actions that took place from 2003-2011 that he considered significant. Examples included strategic plan revisions starting in 2003, reading becoming the centerpiece in high schools during 2005, achieving unitary status, or dismissal of segregation litigation against the school district achieved in 2006, and launching teamwork, thinking and technology for incoming ninth graders in 2009.

The problem in this research was to identify superintendent actions, decisions or results that were perceived by school and school district administrators to be significant indicators of progress towards achieving equity and access to excellence. Mixed methods were used to identify how significant each of the superintendent identified decisions and events were in making progress towards equity and access goals. The current study mirrored the research of Montgomery County Public Schools by studying the problem of making second-order leadership decisions that were intended to result in greater access to equity and excellence for all students in a large, diverse school district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of administrators, who were employed in the school district from 2003-2011, regarding superintendent second-order change leadership (decisions, actions, events) to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. These administrators were either school-based or district-based and either instructional or operational at the time of the study.

Research Questions

In light of the need for research on equity in learning opportunities , access to excellence, and the need for superintendent second-order change leadership to achieve desired equity and excellence, three research questions acted as guides for this study.

The sources of data for the following research questions are displayed in Table 1:

1. What were the superintendent second-order change leadership decisions that were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the specific events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for the target school district?
3. What were the challenges perceived to be in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed between 2003-2011 in the target school district?

Table 1

Research Questions and Sources of Data

Research Questions	Sources of Data
1. What were the superintendent second-order change leadership decisions that were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey (survey items 8, 9, 11-21)
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the specific events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for the target school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey (survey items 7, 10, 22-25)
3. What were the challenges perceived to be in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed between 2003-2011 in the target school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey (questions 26-30) Interviews with 11 administrators (qualitative data)

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are offered to clarify terminology. The terms are defined in accordance with their significance and context within the study.

Access--the availability to every student of the same opportunity for high standards of teaching, available resources, and equal expectations of academic results (Childress et al., 2009).

Equity--the provision to all students, regardless of their race or family income, of access to an education that will prepare them for college and beyond (Childress et al., 2009).

Excellence--Setting high educational standards for district and school administrators, teachers, and students (Marzano et al., 2005).

First-order change--Small, incremental changes in education, (Taylor, 2010); decisions and incremental changes that have little overall impact toward student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

Second-order change--Changes that require different actions, attitudes and skills of everyone involved in schools (Taylor, 2010); dynamic change both in terms of identifying the problems facing education as well as the solutions that are created to solve those problems (Marzano et al., 2005).

Social justice--Equal educational opportunities for all students (Bruner, 1996).

Unitary status--The court determination that the status a school system achieves when it (a) no longer discriminates among school children on the basis of race or the status of a school system and (b) removes all vestiges of race discrimination of a formerly dual system (Alexander, 2008). Unitary status addresses only black and white students.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in this study was case study methodology using mixed methods that included a perceptual survey, interviews, and document reviews. Initially, a sample of principals and district administrators completed an online Survey of Equity and

Excellence (Appendix A). The study was undertaken with the support of the school district superintendent.

After analysis of the survey data, 11 structured interviews were conducted. Those interviewed were either current or retired principals and district administrators. Semi-structured interviews, guided by 11 questions (Appendix B) were the source of qualitative information regarding perceptions of the (a) extent to which access to excellence and equity had been achieved, (b) challenges which had been encountered, (c) actions taken to address challenges, and (d) other actions respondents would recommend be taken to provide equity and access to excellence for all students. The specific focus of the interviews and the questions asked of the 11 interviewees were determined after analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the Survey of Equity and Excellence. One of the interview questions was not asked because it seemed less important as the interview process continued. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed, permitting coded analysis. Once interviews were completed, the researcher described his own experience with the process. He also reviewed and coded the transcripts to identify significant or common statements using the constant comparison method (Patton, 1990). The concepts from the interviews were grouped into themes with supporting examples based on the responses received.

Population and Sample

The administrator population in the targeted school district consisted of 183 school based administrators and 128 district administrators on September 1, 2011. After

eliminating administrators who had not been employed in the district for the entire period between 2003 and 2011, the sample consisted of 244 administrators eligible for surveying. Interviews were conducted with current school based and district administrators who were selected from volunteers who had completed the Survey of Equity and Excellence. Two retired administrators were also selected for interview due to their knowledge of and experience with the district between 2003 and 2011.

Instrumentation

The Survey of Equity and Excellence was developed by the researcher based on a list of significant events provided by the superintendent. It was reviewed for content validity by knowledgeable experts in school district leadership and second-order change. Doctoral students in educational leadership also reviewed the survey and provided comments related to readability and clarity. Edits were made to the survey based on these inputs.

Section I included demographic information related to respondents. In Section II, respondents indicated their perceptions of the significance of each decision, action, or result related to achieving equity and access to excellence of the superintendent's second-order change decisions and specific events. In Section III, open-ended response items gave participants an opportunity to add any significant events they perceived as having led to access to excellence and equity that were not already on the survey and to identify challenges addressed. Respondents also had the opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed.

Procedures

The proposal for this research and the instruments used in the collection of data were initially approved by the dissertation committee. Approval was also required to be obtained from the school district (Appendix C) and the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board (Appendix D). Once approved, the proposal was presented to school and district administrators at a school district meeting, and they were asked to participate in the online survey. The superintendent provided high profile support as did the deputy superintendent who sent an email to school and district administrators encouraging them to participate. The informed consent letter (Appendix E) was delivered to the superintendent who in turn hand delivered them and by going to the survey link the participants gave their informed consent.

Those who volunteered to be interviewed were assured of confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees prior to being interviewed (Appendix F). Supporting documents (Appendix G) were also reviewed to confirm actions and language of intent to achieve excellence and equity. Patterns were identified in supporting statements, procedures and policies.

Significance of the Study

Through surveys and interviews, the significance of second-order change and bold action by leaders in the targeted school district was analyzed. This study added to the body of knowledge regarding the superintendent's second-order change leadership role in creating equity and excellence in the targeted district's schools. The findings will

be helpful to other school districts interested in pursuing and documenting their progress toward social justice for all students. By examining the perceptions of significance of events and challenges, superintendents may be more informed regarding specific actions that have been perceived to improve equity and access to excellence by administrators. The results of this study will also provide information to educational leadership program faculty on the importance of including instruction on second-order change as part of the curriculum and improving learning for all Pk-12 students.

Limitations

1. The significant events used for the questionnaire and interviews were provided by the superintendent of the targeted school district.
2. By surveying existing district and school administrators in the targeted school district, the objectivity of the respondents may come into question.
3. The concepts and themes that resulted from survey and interview data may not be appropriate to be generalized to other school districts.
4. Case study methodology, used in this study, allows for deeper understanding of single events and organizations and can have empirical validity. There are, however, statistical and design problems inherent in qualitative methods.

Delimitations

1. The surveyed sample was delimited by the researcher to include only school and district administrators who had been employed in the district for the entire time period between 2003 and 2011.
2. The survey sample was delimited due to the low representation of administrators representing a minority population.

Summary

The obligation to provide equity and excellence as school and district leaders is more important in the 21st century than at any time in the history of education in the United States. Administrators need to be viewed as positive forces within their school structures and essential leaders who have the knowledge and skills to improve student achievement for all students. By investigating superintendent second-order change leadership actions, it was possible to identify significant events, the challenges to creating equity and excellence, and how those challenges were overcome by the superintendent and other leaders.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter contains a review of the literature and related research conducted in preparation for the study. Research commenced after meeting with the research librarian at the University of Central Florida in a training session and then individually at the University of Central Florida library research department. The databases that were used included Education Full Text, ERIC-EBSCO Host, Dissertations and Theses-Full Text, LexisNexis-Academic and Google Scholar.

First, historical perspectives on insuring equity and access to excellence with some attention to achievement gaps that persist between non-whites and white students are presented. Literature is shared regarding historical developments in the quest for equity in the public school system leading up to and including unitary status and the impact of unitary status on school districts. Next, school district leadership and student achievement is discussed. Particular attention is devoted to the characteristics of successful school leadership, challenges to superintendents, and superintendent leadership responsibilities related to equity and excellence. The third major section of the literature review is focused on second- order change leadership including the components and characteristics of second-order change and the role district administrators have in embedding equity and access to excellence in academic achievement for all students. In the fourth and final section, equity and access to excellence in exemplary school districts are discussed along with issues related to furthering equity and access. An example is

provided of one school district that has been deemed equitable and excellent, and the policies and practices that led to that distinction are described.

Historical Review of Integration and Equity in Public Schools.

Williams and DeLacy (1996) stated that the origin of school desegregation started with the United State Supreme Court's 1954 decision *Brown v Topeka Board of Education*, (1954) and was one of the most significant decisions by the Supreme Court in the 20th century. This decision reversed a long held policy of "separate but equal" and finally gave meaning to the concept of equal protection and due process under the law. Legislation in the 1960s such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 furthered the dismantling of desegregation. This amendment established that busing students to schools could be used as a method to desegregate public schools. Early in the 1970s, the United States Supreme Court reaffirmed the use of racial classification (black and white) to determine student assignments in order to accomplish school desegregation in their ruling in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971). In addition, the Court in the Swann case ruled that the federal courts had the power to deny school construction and school closings that perpetuated segregation and to make necessary changes to achieve a unitary school system. In *Freeman v Pitts* (1992), the Supreme Court stated that a school district must demonstrate its commitment to a complete course of action that gives full respect to the equal protection of the law that is guaranteed by the Constitution.

McNeal (2009) reported that school desegregation since Brown has concentrated on the effect of desegregation on the academic achievement of students and the issue of

whether or not court ordered desegregation produces what he called white flight. McNeal (2009) noted that despite court mandates, minorities have continued to be subjected to substandard educational opportunities (McNeal, 2009).

In order for the federal courts to recognize that a school district has achieved unitary status, the school district has to eliminate all vestiges of discrimination in student achievement, facilities, transportation, faculty, extracurricular activities and educational programs. The lack of commitment by many school systems to integrate fully is evidenced by the large number of school systems still under court-ordered mandates to desegregate (McNeal, 2009).

In the 1970s and 1980s, school desegregation was dealt with by using physical integration of black and white students using means such as busing, school choice, magnet programs and inter-district transfers (Jenkins, 2002). The courts also mandated required changes to the curriculum and resource allocation, ordered minority hiring and reassignment of faculty and staff and decided which schools should remain opened or closed (Jenkins, 2002).

On July 10, 1970 the U.S. Department of Justice filed a suit against the target school district, as well as many other Florida districts for the purpose of ending their “dual” system of education. In order to embrace school desegregation the target school district entered into many successive Consent Degrees with the Department of Justice. In 1998, the district developed a five-volume plan and implemented numerous programs to satisfy the court order (Jenkins, 2002).

As time has passed economic segregation has been recognized in addition to racial segregation. Kahlenberg (2001) reinforced the argument that the integration of schools in the United States along socioeconomic lines is a necessary precondition for successful educational reform. Kahlenberg (2001) noted that public schools in the United States remain highly segregated by socioeconomic class. The concentration of low income students in the nation's schools places unfair burdens on teachers, parents and administrators. By redistributing students within school systems, policymakers can ensure that every child attends a school in which the majority of students come from middle class homes (Kahlenberg, 2001). Kahlenberg (2001) asserted:

High-poverty schools are marked by students who have less motivation and are often subject to negative peer influences; parents who are generally less active, exert less clout in school affairs, and garner fewer financial resources for the school; and teachers who tend to be less qualified, to have lower expectations, and to teach watered-down curriculum. Giving all students access to schools with a core of middle-class students and parents will significantly raise the overall quality of school in America. (p. 47)

There has been such an emphasis on equity in the nation's school systems that The National Education Association has created the U.S. Department of Education Equity and Excellence Commission. The Commission was established in 2011 to examine the disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to achievement gaps. The Commission's mission has been to promote student achievement

and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access (McNeal, 2009).

Achievement Gaps Among Student Racial Sub-Groups and White Students

Ending discrimination in schools would not alone provide equity in education to all students. As the 21st century approached, the achievement gap among student sub-groups and white students had become an ongoing issue.

There has been considerable research devoted to studying the achievement gap among students, and lower measured achievement in urban schools is well documented. In a study by Sandy and Duncan (2010) of vocational aptitude battery scores of students in urban and suburban schools, scores indicated a resultant gap of approximately 75% and was explained by high concentrations of disadvantaged, low income students in the urban schools. It was suggested by the researchers that poverty, not test scores, should be of primary interest in the achievement gap among students. Differences in measures of school quality such as small classes explained very little of the gap in scores (Sandy & Duncan, 2010).

Williams (2011) reported that a gap in achievement between white and nonwhite students was already present before students enter kindergarten. It has been difficult, however, to determine any one specific factor that has led to a gap between white students and nonwhite students. The possible causes range from genetic factors to social factors. Williams reported that researchers have focused on income level, home language, parent involvement, and overall cognitive potential of the students. Often, the

only variable that has been related to achievement has been socioeconomic status (Williams, 2011).

Scheurich and Skrla (2003), in their research on equity and excellence in education, observed that there were several common beliefs held by educators regarding achievement gaps. Though achievement gaps were long perceived to be a result of genetics, a more recent view has been put forth that external factors facing nonwhites cause an achievement gap. Those external factors include socio-economic issues and a belief that some parents do not know how to help their children succeed in school. Children may come from an environment where education is not particularly of value and where children may not come to school ready to learn (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Artiles (2011) examined race and disability differences and suggested that there continues to be a concern that inequities exist among those groups as compared to the white population. For example, students labeled with learning disabilities increased 400% between 1948 and 1966. During the last quarter of the 20th century, this population grew over 200%. Nonwhite students with a learning disabilities diagnosis have, however, had more limited access to related services and have been placed in more segregated programs than their white peers with the same disability diagnosis (Artiles, 2011).

In terms of equity in educational settings, Ross and Berger (2009) defined educational equity as raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of student groups occupying the highest and lowest achievement categories. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) suggested that high expectations and

respect in the classroom for all students were the key ingredients to creating a sense of equity and excellence in school settings. For a culture of equity and excellence to exist, school and district administrators must provide professional development that is focused on what they refer to as culturally responsive teaching. The basic premise is that teachers should teach using philosophies and methods that they respect and value, using the strengths of students' home cultures, contexts, and language in a positive manner (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

Little research has been conducted regarding district-wide school success in relation to equity and narrowing the achievement gap in student achievement. The majority of school reform and school improvement research has focused on individual schools. Ainscow (2010) concluded that there is not sufficient knowledge about school district level equity and access to excellence. As the 21st century began, however, there have been more examples of sustained, district-wide academic success for nonwhites and those from low income homes. States such as Maryland, New York, North Carolina and Texas have developed stable, accountable school districts. These school districts have begun to serve nonwhite and low income students at a high level of academic success (Williams, 2011).

There continues to be conflicting data whether the achievement gap is narrowing between non-white and white students. In a study comparing state test scores and test scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for non-white students, Gordon (2009) found that test results varied among different regions of the country. For example, performance of non-white students on state assessments would not

necessarily predict performance of non-white students on the NAEP assessments in the Midwestern, Western and Southern states. However, performance of non-white students on state assessments would possibly predict performance of non-white students on the NAEP assessment in the Northeastern states. Generally, proficiency for non-white students on any given state test ranges from 22% to 11% percent and proficiency on the NAEP ranges from 6% to 2%. Gordon's research revealed that there continues to be unanswered questions as to how states set standards, establish assessments and conduct staff development that address the issues of the achievement gap.

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) (2012) noted that Florida had made progress in closing the achievement gap between white and non-white students. The FLDOE reported that Florida was one of only seven states where the gap between white and non-white eighth-grade students decreased significantly in eighth-grade mathematics in 2007. Florida also was a top-gaining state in eighth-grade reading (Florida Department of Education, 2012).

Williams (2011) noted that everyone in a school district, from school board members and the superintendent to parents and students, must be accountable for the achievement of students. Efforts aimed at better supporting learning for all students so that they can successfully progress through school must include changes that address the overall fabric of education. In order to truly move toward closing the achievement gap between nonwhite and white students, a district needs to recognize that change has to come from all parties and must be supported by school district leaders (Williams, 2011).

Systemic Reforms and Student Achievement

Researchers have studied school districts that implement systemic reforms that are long lasting. Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) studied several school districts in the United States and abroad and identified common components that make school improvement possible. The first component was a compelling conceptualization. Fullan et al. (2004) contended that a school district's vision must include building a coalition of leaders who can put the vision into practice. Without internally driven leadership, change is not possible. Second, was a collective moral purpose which made clear the goal of raising the bar and closing the achievement gap for all individuals and all schools. Fullan et al. expressed the belief that district leaders must foster a culture in which school principals are concerned about the success of every school in the district, not just their own, and minimize any competition among schools. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) called competition among schools within districts counterproductive, stating that it undermined interdependence, trust, and loyalty.

Fullan et al. (2004) argued that a successful school district must have the "right bus" (p. 43) or the right structure for getting the job done. For example, Chicago Public School District had 24 clusters of schools that led to increased equity and access to excellence for students in the Chicago school system. Fullan et al. viewed "capacity building" (p. 44), and "lateral capacity building" (p. 44) as two components that would make school improvement possible. Capacity building related to the importance of effective school leaders focusing on both student achievement and the development of future leaders. Lateral capacity building was concerned that schools within a school

district work closely to develop new ideas, skills, and practices. Rolheiser, Fullan, and Edge (2003) provided one example of lateral capacity building from the United Kingdom where school teams from over 140 schools met seven days each year to learn from one another to improve literacy achievement.

Ongoing learning, whereby effective school districts used student performance data to continually refine the vision and goals of the district, was also cited by Fullan et al. (2004) as a common component in successful school improvement initiatives. Productive conflict and a demanding culture were two somewhat related common elements cited by Fullan and his colleagues that make school district improvement possible. Successful school districts must engage in a difficult balancing act in dealing with conflict. They evolve into collaborative teams that view disagreement as a normal part of change. Successful school districts learn from their mistakes and remain disciplined while they are learning (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). In a demanding culture, successful school districts hold a high level of trust among the participants. In Chicago's public school district, its high-trust school culture was found to be more likely to take action against an incompetent teacher not only because the teacher was bad for students but because that teacher could poison an effective culture (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Fullan et al. (2004) noted the value of external partners and focused financial investment as the two final common components found in districts ripe for reform. Successful school districts engage external partners into a win-win partnership who can provide resources and valuable expertise (Fullan, et al, 2004). School districts that are

successful also understand that, given financial constraints, they must ensure that existing resources are concentrated in the areas of teaching and learning (Fullan et al., 2004).

School District Leadership and Student Achievement

There has long been the belief that administrative leadership influences student achievement. *A Nation at Risk* (U. S. Department of Education, 1983) recommended strong leadership as a way for school and district improvement. Instructional leadership was considered a key component in creating a positive educational environment and high achieving schools. In schools and school districts where students performed better than expected based on poverty and other demographic characteristics, effective leaders were in charge. Effective educational leaders were thought to affect student achievement through teachers and staff members (U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

In 2002, The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) forced districts and their leaders to take more substantive roles in addressing student achievement and equity. NCLB essentially codified into law that achievement gaps should not exist (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). New roles for districts in reform activity were specified, and school districts were held accountable for the learning of all students. As a result, school districts were required to make crucial decisions about the use of resources for school improvement. Student achievement and high performance of school districts took on new importance and relevance for researchers who studied various aspects of issues related to school improvement (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

Sebring and Bryk (2000) reported that high performing schools and districts that demonstrated improved student achievement had a culture that focused on student learning. Educational leaders in these situations provide clarity to a district's mission which impacts everyone's expectations. These leaders have a vision that (a) allows staff and parent involvement in shaping that vision, (b) holds teachers and themselves to high standards, (c) recognizes student achievement, (d) communicates academic achievements to the community, and (e) encourages teachers to take risks in trying new methods and programs. These researchers also found that effective educational leaders exhibit a sense of teamwork in planning and assessing instruction. These leaders (a) involve teachers and staff in instructional decisions, (b) provide opportunities for staff members and parents to assume leadership roles in charting instructional improvement, (c) act as facilitators for instructional staffs, (d) create a feeling of trust through cooperative working relationships, and (e) have the willingness to provide the necessary materials, equipment and professional development opportunities in order to be successful (Sebring & Bryk, 2000).

Scheurich and Skrla (2003), in focusing their leadership investigation on equity and excellence, identified three essential characteristics of leadership for equity and leadership. First, a leader should have a strong moral and ethical commitment to providing equity and excellence. Second, a leader should possess a deeply held belief that both equity and excellence are possible in an educational setting. Third, a leader should never quit working for equity and excellence.

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) also provided 10 suggestions and strategies for leaders to use in working towards equity and excellence.

1. A leader cannot work alone. Others have to share the same commitment.
2. A well connected network of administrators, teachers, parents and community members needs to be present.
3. Insure that everyone is treated with respect and appreciation.
4. Leaders for equity and excellence must deliver the message of equity and excellence wherever they go.
5. Leaders for equity and excellence, more times, than not, view themselves as facilitators not as bosses.
6. The vision for equity and excellence must be clear and straightforward.
7. Most leaders for equity and excellence are servant leaders.
8. Successful leaders for equity and excellence are not easily corrupted by power or ego.
9. Leaders for equity and excellence do not fear or shy away from criticism.
10. Leaders for equity and excellence honor and keep commitments made to all those involved in the process. (p. 104)

In reflecting on their 10 suggestions, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) cautioned that for a district to ultimately become equitable and excellent, all leadership must be constantly improving.

From the time period from the 1980s to the present, the role of district leadership has changed. District leaders were expected to perform ordinary administrative and

managerial duties such as budget oversight, and operations to other responsibilities such as curriculum development, data analysis and instructional leadership (Marzano, 2003). Marzano (2003) wrote about educational leaders as a powerful force for school reform. Strong district leadership has been found to be present when district leaders work to channel people's time and energy, to develop a collective sense of responsibility for school and district improvement, to find resources and training, to provide opportunities for collaboration, to make time for instruction, and to help the district staff perform in spite of different situations (Marzano, 2003).

Waters and Grubb (2004) reviewed research that focused on the effects of both school and district leadership on student achievement. The results of this research showed a significant, positive impact of instructional leadership on student achievement. Leadership, according to Leithwood et al. (2005), not only matters but is second only to teacher quality among school related factors that affect student learning.

In 2005, Marzano et al. conducted a meta-analysis that examined the findings of 27 studies conducted since 1970 that used rigorous, quantitative methods to study the influence that school principals had on student achievement. In their research on principals, Marzano et al. found that principal leadership had a correlation of .25 with average student achievement in a school. This implied that the actions of the principal in a school had a moderate, but significant, relationship with average student achievement in the school. Certain behaviors on the part of the principal were found to influence policy in the school, the behaviors of the teachers, and maybe even the behaviors of students.

Marzano and Waters (2009) posed a question as to whether district leadership was an important mix of actions that, in the aggregate, had a causal effect on student achievement. They sought to determine whether leadership at the district level actually had an impact on student achievement or whether it was, in fact, detrimental. They conducted a meta-analysis that examined the findings from 1210 school districts that sought to uncover the underlying relationship between district leadership and student achievement. In their findings, they described the following five initiatives that had some relationship in increasing district-wide student achievement: (a) insuring collaborative goal setting; (b) establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction; (c) creating school board alignment with those goals; (d) monitoring achievements; and (e) allocating resources to support those goals.

Leithwood (2010) conducted a qualitative and quantitative five year study where he collected responses from district leaders in 43 school districts and collected student achievement data for literacy and mathematics measured by adequate yearly progress. As a result of his investigation of several school districts across the country he determined common characteristics of high performing districts. In these school districts, there was a district-wide focus on student achievement and curriculum and instruction as well as accountability. The school districts built and maintained good communications and relations with each learning community, invested in instructional leadership, and professional development was embedded in the culture for leaders and teachers.

Successful School District Leadership

Marzano et al. (2005) pointed out that there were three sets of practices that make up the basic core of successful leadership: (a) setting direction, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization. They also found that when a leader faced more challenges the more impact a leader had on student learning (Marzano et al., 2005)

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) observed that leaders committed to excellence find a way for all students to achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any student's race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents or home language. In districts with such leaders, there is no discernible difference in academic success and treatment among different groups of students. Furthermore, leaders committed to excellence insist upon both social justice and equity. Bogotch (2005) wrote that the beliefs and values of school leaders serve as the catalyst to support and advance social justice. He explained further by saying that social justice emerges from someone with a vision and willingness to take risks to see that vision enacted. It is the responsibility of education to translate visions into socially and educationally just actions.

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) suggested that educational leaders are knowledgeable about policy, have the skills to collaborate with various stakeholders in the community, and are less likely to be blinded by political mandates that undermine the pursuit of social justice. School leaders cannot simply succumb to policies that reinforce the status quo and ignore the social injustices of society that leave many of children behind (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Marshall and Olivia (2006) stated that leaders for social justice must be able to argue and demand that inadequate policies and programs be reframed and must be

able to present arguments that educational excellence means moving beyond test scores and working with parents and communities to build inclusive, safe and trusting spaces. It is unfair to assume that a school's scores on standardized tests reflect equity (Marshall & Oliva, 2006).

Another challenge of leaders for social justice is fighting the tendency of some educators who falsely suggest that students who fail in school are victims of internal cognitive or emotional deficiencies or social or economic shortcomings (McKenzie & Schuerich, 2004). McKenzie and Schuerich coined the term, "equity trap" (p. 601), which they defined as the thinking patterns and behaviors that trap teachers, administrators and others, preventing them from creating schools that are equitable, particularly for students of color. A common result of the equity trap in schools has been that a large number of minority students have been over identified for special education. These students have, in turn, been subjected to segregation because of language barriers, received stricter disciplinary actions, dropped out of school, and been subjected to a negative school climate. McKenzie and Schuerich also suggested that a significant amount of inequity in schools and school districts was linked to the assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of teachers and administrators and that equity trap can be changed by systematically exploring, exposing, and addressing commonly held assumptions.

Leaders who can promote and support social justice and equity are aware of their beliefs and values and explore and expose these ideologies as they advocate change and challenge the status quo. Leaders espousing these beliefs have been said to show significant moral leadership (Dantley, 2005). It was Dantley's view that educational

leaders must consistently uncover, question, and challenge the status quo in pursuit of equity and excellence for all of the nation's children and that to not do so would be immoral.

Superintendent Leadership Responsibilities

The roles of school superintendents have changed considerably. In the 19th century, superintendents were viewed as scholars who directed curriculum. Their roles became more managerial in nature in the 20th century. In the 21st century environments, superintendents have returned to their roles as leaders who should drive instruction and increase student achievement (McClellan et al., 2008). The complexities of 21st century school systems have presented superintendents with increasingly complex and non-routine problems that contain educational, managerial, and political components (Fuller et al., 2003). These new problems demand new skill sets including a broad knowledge base, strong analytical skills, abilities to develop personnel, mastery of research-based change strategies, and an understanding of how to translate theoretical concepts into best practices (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005).

In 1999, Ragland, Asera, and Johnson studied 10 school districts. The researchers claimed superintendents were able to have an effect on student achievement through several actions. Important was creating a sense of urgency for the improvement of academic achievement and creating an environment in which academic achievement became top priority by creating shared decisions about academic achievement. Ragland et al. (1999) also found that superintendents who exhibited instructional leadership

established goals that were non-negotiable and maintained a clear focus. They changed the focus of the central office from a managerial role to that of creating and supporting high expectations by ensuring the availability of resources and support.

Seven years later, in 2006, Marzano and Waters conducted a meta-analysis involving over 2,800 school districts that specifically addressed the roles and responsibilities of successful superintendents. Including all stakeholders in establishing goals for the school district and focusing all staff on school improvement to increase student achievement are priorities for effective superintendents. They must also, according to Marzano and Waters, allocate the necessary resources, i.e., money, personnel, and materials, to accomplish the district's goals.

In their research, Marzano and Waters (2006) identified best practices of superintendents in fulfilling their responsibilities. Included were (a) the development of goals based on student achievement, (b) the establishment of clear priorities among the district's goals which must be agreed upon by the school board, (c) the evaluation of principals based on student achievement data, (d) the provision of extensive professional development for principals and teachers, (e) the development of a shared vision, and (f) provision for principals and teacher autonomy. Marzano and Waters reaffirmed the earlier findings of Ragland et al. (1999)

Hoerr (2005) commented on the potential distractions of superintendents due to the different demands placed on them. In advocating that superintendents maintain their focus on student achievement, he shared the following observation:

We simply cannot do all these things and do them well. Finite hours and energy mean that we must prioritize and focus our efforts. If we do not, we will wander here and there, like Alice (in Wonderland), following whims and responding to spur of the moment crises. Without a focus, we are likely to spend our time heading in two directions, both counterproductive. On the one hand, we may spread our energies too widely. When this happens, we cannot achieve enough progress in any one area to make a difference for our students or to generate a sense of satisfaction for ourselves. On the other hand, we may simply continue with the same behaviors and activities of previous years, regardless of their effectiveness. Doing this is a disservice to our students and teachers (and to ourselves). (p. 47)

Marzano and Waters (2006) discussed the importance of arriving at written, non-negotiable goals in order to set specific achievement targets for districts and schools. Once established, participants can be made aware of them, and plans can be created for targets and goal achievement. Marzano and Waters believed the goals should be written in order to inspire the school community and the community at large.

Jasparro (2006) addressed the use of a strategic planning process as another essential component of effective leadership. He stated the main reason for strategic planning was to establish a focus and direction for future work in the district. In addition, the planning process allowed the leadership to establish clear and concise goals and objectives for teaching and learning.

Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) emphasized the importance of communication with both staff members and school boards. In their review and study of guidelines for the preparation of school administrators used by several professional societies including the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), they found that school board members, if coached, trained, and supported by the superintendent regarding their respective roles and responsibilities, would, in turn, support the superintendent. Marzano and Waters (2006) also acknowledged that training board members was an essential step to ensure the success of superintendents in their quest to raise student achievement.

Marzano et al. (2005) suggested that superintendents need to be actively engaged in establishing and maintaining clearly defined curricular and instructional goals and objectives. Once established, the superintendent must make a deliberate effort to maintain these goals and objectives. In this regard, effective superintendents visit schools on a regular basis as a means of maintaining and monitoring the district's goals, and they regularly evaluate principals and other administrators. Marzano et al. stressed that though specific school administrators were primarily responsible for the effectiveness of their schools, superintendents were the most influential figures in determining whether or not these individuals were successful with curriculum and instruction.

Effective superintendents ensure that the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals. In this regard, Marzano and Waters (2009) stated, "Resources are the lifeblood of any reform effort" (p. 77). Given the resource limitations which have been increasingly imposed on

school districts across America, district leaders have a challenge in focusing limited resources on instruction (Ragland et al., 1999).

It has been shown that student achievement rises with the number of resources made available to school districts when they are focused on instruction. Duke et al. (2007) identified a number of characteristics of successful schools. Among them were timely student assistance; teacher collaboration to identify struggling students and provide assistance; and the use of data to make decisions on resource allocation, student needs, and teacher effectiveness. The importance of leadership in setting the tone for school improvement, teacher training, and a school organizational structure that adjusts for improvement was also noted along with the alignment of testing, regular assessments, the involvement of parents, and the establishment of schedules that increase academic work time in their characteristics list (Duke et al., 2007).

Duke et al. (2007) offered a number of strategies used to support their characteristics of successful schools. They advocated for timely small group support to help struggling learners, data usage to make larger school decisions addressing instruction, and they included teachers in the decision making process. They further suggested maximizing instructional time by guarding against distractions, continuous learning as an organization by ongoing professional development, and the usage of instructional coaches to expose and educate staff on best instructional and curriculum practices.

Garcia and Donmoyer (2005) gathered and analyzed data in public schools in Texas about the perceptions teachers had of what initiatives either supported or inhibited

their attempts to teach. They found that effective school districts established comprehensive staff development and that administrators had to be actively involved throughout the process of establishing staff development opportunities. Marzano et al. (2005) indicated that it was imperative for an effective school district to commit adequate time for staff development programs to produce expected results before discontinuing them.

Waters and Marzano (2006) noted that effective superintendents create a condition of “defined autonomy” with their principals. Marzano and Waters (2009) defined the idea of autonomy as the relationship between superintendents and principals that allows them to create mutually agreed upon, non-negotiable goals. Follow-through responsibilities are, however, given to the building principals. Building administrators and their staffs are responsible for ensuring that district goals are met for their individual buildings. Marzano and Waters stated:

While it is true that schools are unique and must operate in such a way as to address their unique needs, it is also true that each school must operate as a functional component of a larger system. It is the larger system-the district-that establishes the common work of schools within the district, and it is that common work that becomes the “glue” holding the district together. (pp. 89-90)

School districts with building level autonomy also had an easier time working toward district goals. Leaders of those districts were better able to manage the instructional programs needed to improve student learning (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

According to Cobb, Glass, and Crockett (2000), challenges facing superintendents in the current educational climate are unique and as high stakes as they have ever been. Some of those challenges include: accountability of a school district, dealing with financial matters, leading a more diversified public school system, communication with school boards and those in politics, and the evolution of a superintendent's role from a managerial position to more of an instructional leader.

Cobb et al. (2000) viewed accountability as one of the most significant challenges that superintendents face and observed that the superintendent's role has evolved to identify more with curriculum, teaching, learning and increasing student performance on standardized tests. Cox (2006), however, in reporting the findings of an American Association of School Administrators survey, noted that financing of schools was the greatest concern. School funding issues lead to both superintendents losing their jobs and leaving the field. In an age of increasing public scrutiny and rising levels of accountability, superintendents must manage local politics and build professional organizations, while maintaining the instructional focus of their work (Fuller et al., 2003).

The Impact of Second-order Change Leadership

The influence that the federal government has imposed on education has placed an overriding focus on academic achievement for the nation's most disadvantaged students. Standard past leadership practices have been determined to have had little impact on academic achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). Stronger and more direct

leadership is needed to affect the achievement of all students. This stronger, direct leadership style has been labeled second-order change leadership (Marzano et al., 2005).

In order to embrace the concept of second-order change, one must first understand the meaning of first-order change. First-order changes describe cases where the norms of a system remain the same, and changes or new strategies are layered onto an existing system (Marzano et al., 2005). Only when a change causes norms and values of a system to be challenged and changed is it considered second-order change (Marzano et al., 2005). Second-order change has emerged as an important concept in the quest to meet NCLB goals, to close achievement gaps, and to increase equity in schools.

Marzano et al. (2005) identified second-order change as dramatic in terms of problem identification and the solution that is implemented. They contrasted this with first-order change which they described as incremental and gradual. Second-order change alters any system in very fundamental ways and results in a dramatic shift in the ways of thinking and acting (Taylor, 2010). Marzano et al. made the following statement in regard to second-order change:

Second-order change requires leaders to work far more deeply with staff and the community. It is possible that second-order changes will disrupt cooperation, a sense of well being, and cohesion. Second-order changes may confront group identities, change work relationships, challenge expertise and competencies, and throw people into stages of conscious incompetence. (p. 8)

Leaders who are considered second-order change leaders change the culture of a school district to focus on a high level of student achievement. Those leaders expect

collaboration among teachers but also hold teachers accountable for student improvement (Taylor, 2010). Second order leaders study and share data with other administrators and teachers. Administrators and teachers draw conclusions and develop an action plan collaboratively. This is followed by implementing accountability measures for all who participate (Taylor, 2010).

Second-order change occurs when practices and policies fundamentally shift, requiring people to shift their mental perceptions and to see things from different perspectives. Second-order change shifts the status quo and it alters the existing power structure (Korach, 2011). Leaders who promote second-order changes are in the business of generating chaos, confusion, and conflict (Korach, 2011). Most people are uncomfortable with these conditions and tend to mount resistance to change. A second-order change leader must, therefore, possess exceptional skills in building relationships while mitigating tension and anxiety about change.

Bolman and Deal (1997) stressed the complexity of second-order change and the environment in which leadership is exerted. They proposed four frames of reference through which successful leaders approach their work: structural, human resource, political and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Second-order change requires leaders who understand the structure of an organization in order to determine where human resources should be developed or deployed. They must also understand the political realities at work in the system and how the symbolic nature of their roles includes expressing the vision in such a way as to bring all the stakeholders along (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Eiter (2002) described seven dimensions of second-order change leadership. Second-order change leaders needed to be (a) strategic thinkers, (b) drivers of change, (c) modelers of a teachable point of view, (d) coaches, (e) creators or champions of culture, (f) decision makers, and (g) drivers of results.

Diverse school systems deal with cultural, structural, political, and environmental issues that can enhance or inhibit strategic planning. They require leaders that understand the educational, political, and managerial aspects of the job (Eiter, 2002). Eiter (2002) and Bolman and Deal (1997) viewed lasting, second-order change as demanding strong, multi-dimensional leaders who can successfully engage others in accomplishing common goals.

Korach (2011), like other researchers such as Eiter (2002), identified certain characteristics and behaviors that second-order change leaders possess. Eiter saw these leaders as having an increased understanding of personal responsibility and accountability and moving from compliance culture to a collaborative one. Second-order change leaders, according to Eiter, have moved from a negative to a positive view of inquiry and conflict. They emphasize accountability from everyone and consider it to be their responsibility to help and provide support.

After interviewing 62 school and district administrators located throughout the southeastern United States, Taylor (2010) identified nine factors that second-order change leaders employ, seven of which were earlier identified by Marzano et al. in 2005. Leaders, as determined by Taylor, focus on the culture of learning, make decisions for student learning, stimulate intellectual growth, and invest personally in change. Second-

order change leaders also expect collaboration to optimize success, strategize for consistency, provide the expectation and support for data-based decision making, engage families in learning, and influence through the political environment (Taylor, 2010).

Shannon & Bylsma (2007) also identified several common themes of second-order change leaders. Those themes included effective leadership, quality teaching and learning, support for system wide improvement, and clear and collaborative relationships. Shannon and Bylsma spoke of the changing role of the superintendent in the relatively new climate of accountability as being constantly in a state of flux. Though superintendents have always been responsible for managing the fiscal and physical resources of a district, they have more recently been required to be very much more student centered. They must foster teamwork and be responsible for building strong relationships. They must have a keen understanding of teaching and learning and what works for students. Superintendents have to know their resources, personnel, and the data to set goals and measure results. Superintendents, in the opinions of Shannon and Bylsma, need to possess traits which will let them be effective in dealing with second-order change related to: (a) vision and values, (b) core knowledge competencies, (c) instructional leadership, (d) community and relationships, and (e) management.

Equity and Access to Excellence in Exemplary School Districts

Noted in the foreword written for *Leading for Equity* (Childress et al., 2009), whites will comprise less than half the population in the United States by 2050. Despite the growth of nonwhites, at the time of the present study, the widest achievement gaps in

education were being experienced by Hispanic and African American students when compared to their white counterparts. These groups have continued to lag behind white students in reading and mathematics, and almost half are projected to not graduate from high school. Many school districts across America have not met the challenge of addressing the academic needs of minority students.

There are, however, school districts that have begun to make courageous reforms within their school districts so that student achievement is no longer predictable by race or income. Examples of innovative school districts are coming from large urban areas such as New York (Bowers, 2008).

In their book written specifically to describe the transformation of one school district in terms of providing equity and access to excellence, Childress et al. (2009) told the story of the Montgomery County Public School District in Maryland. The authors described a 10-year journey in one school district moving from business as usual to designing and achieving equitable access for every student regardless of race or family income.

The lessons learned in Montgomery County started with a visionary superintendent, but it also included broad based leadership from many groups including the school board, union officials, teachers, administrators, and elected officials. These groups embraced the idea that no child deserves to be left behind. The result has been that every sub-group in Montgomery County Public Schools has made significant gains in student achievement since 1999.

Montgomery County Public Schools identified steps that they could take to change conditions in schools so that downward performance would begin to move in another direction. Those steps included developing a system of shared accountability, workforce excellence through targeted training and action research, broadening the concept of literacy, family and community partnerships, organizational excellence, integrated quality management, and data driven decision making. Lessons learned in this process, as reported by Childress et al. (2009) were as follows:

1. Implementing a strategy of common, rigorous standards with differentiated resources and instruction can create excellence and equity for all students.
2. Adopting a “value chain” approach to the K-12 continuum increases quality and provides a logical frame for strategic choices.
3. Blurring the lines between governance, management, staff, and community increases capacity and accountability.
4. Creating systems and structures that change behaviors is a way to shift beliefs and leads to student learning gains.
5. Breaking the link between race, ethnicity, and student outcomes is difficult without confronting the effect that beliefs about race and ethnicity have on student learning.
6. Leading for equity matters. (p. 10)

Equity and Access to Excellence: Related Issues

Schools and school districts in the United States are facing hardships in the wake of the global financial crisis. As a result most states have experienced cutbacks in education funding. Questions have been raised, however, as to the extent of the cutbacks, their equitable distribution and their effect on equity and students rights and access to excellence. Rebell (2011) wrote that The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities surveyed 24 states, 21 of which said they were spending less on education in 2012 than they did in 2011. For example, in California, the average amount spent per pupil dropped in 2010-2011, causing school districts to cut between eight and ten instructional days from the school year. For the same time period, average elementary students per class in Los Angeles were increased. In Miami, Florida schools eliminated after-school programs. (Rebell, 2011).

Rebell (2011) stated that although researchers had not indicated that it was disastrous to increase student numbers in elementary school classes, it was significant to increase students in a high school class. Furthermore, the effect of the financial crisis, according to Rebell, was affecting schools in other ways. Courses were being eliminated, e.g., advanced placement courses for college bound students, and services to high needs students and inter-city schools trying to overcome achievement gaps.

Rebell (2011) discussed the dilemma that school districts have faced due to the economic crisis. In some instances, districts have been forced to make decisions that are counter to the federal mandates laid out by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Although class size is one place where districts can save money, it has become a litigated

item. In New York, as one example, the courts have said that students have a right to “reasonable” class sizes. Reasonable has not, however, been defined.

Odden (2011) also commented on the fiscal realities of cutting education budgets while, at the same time, responding to the pressure to improve student performance. He advocated for school districts and schools to react positively to these actions by resisting the pressures to reduce cost that erode education budgets but do little to improve performance, e.g., preferences for small class sizes, demands for more electives, and automatic pay hikes for teachers. Though most educators and parents desire smaller class sizes, researchers have reported that small classes make a difference only in Kindergarten through third grade. Lowering class sizes have had little or no effect on student achievement (Odden, 2011). Odden reported school leaders need to be flexible about class size and be prepared to eliminate excessive and expensive elective classes and freeze salaries for the short term. Staff development and instructional coaches should have a higher priority than smaller classes (Odden, 2011).

Similarly, it has not been shown that taking more electives improves performance in core subjects, but it has been indicated that many high schools spend up to three times as much on electives as core classes (Odden, 2011). Odden called on education leaders to set clear goals particularly for higher levels of achievement in the core subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history.

Odden (2011) said that while teachers do need to be paid more through performance pay structures, automatic pay increases benefit the teachers and have little impact on student performance. Teachers need to have access to, and use formative

assessments regularly in their classrooms and to have the time to analyze the data in collaborative settings along with an instructional coach. School districts must have a plan of action to turn around low performing schools by placing effective teachers and principals at those schools (Odden, 2011).

Odden (2011) also suggested that school leaders tap into the power of technology. Florida Virtual School's costs, as one example, are only half those expended in traditional school settings. Even offering blended instruction in a traditional setting using technology could save resources (Odden, 2011).

Rolle (2011) shared two primary concerns regarding the educational financial crisis: equitable resource allocation and efficient expenditure of resources. Rolle wrote that there is disagreement about the term equity. To some school leaders, equity means an absolutely equal distribution of dollars and/or resources per student. To others, equity means looking at individual students and determining the amount of funding that will be required to provide an adequate education.

Guthrie (2011) discussed the educational resources required to support school personnel. In the 1980s, the ratio of students per teacher was 28 students per teacher. In 2011, the number had declined to 15 students per teacher. Almost every industry, with the exception of schools, has become more efficient through use of modern technologies. Guthrie listed a number of practices in place that are vulnerable to budget cutting and may be debated between school districts and states. Paying teachers for out-of-field masters' degrees, salary increases for experience, and reimbursement to districts for 100% of special education costs may all be time-honored practices that may no longer be

taken for granted. Guthrie also commented on the use of instructional aides, indicating that their presence has not been shown to substantially benefit student achievement. Like Odden (2011), Guthrie addressed class size as being controversial and only supported in the primary grades. He also spoke to the likelihood of closing small schools and schools in rural areas. Guthrie's suggestions for positive actions to support students and increase learning were to (a) augment labor with technology, (b) centralize school employees' health insurance at the state level, and (c) outsource local services such as transportation, food services and reprographics (Guthrie, 2011).

Summary

This chapter served to provide a review of the literature and related research relevant to superintendents' second-order change leadership to achieve equity and access to excellence. Four major sections were used in organizing the review. Presented first was a historical review of integration and equity in public schools addressing the steps school districts took to earn unitary status. Included was literature related to achievement gaps that persist between sub-groups. Next, literature was reviewed related to school district leadership and student achievement with particular emphasis on the characteristics and responsibilities of successful school district leadership and the specific leadership responsibilities of superintendents. The third major section of the literature review was focused on second-order change leadership and the roles district administrators have in embedding equity and access to excellence in academic achievement for all students. The fourth section of the literature review contained a

discussion of equity and access in exemplary school districts and of related issues. One school district's journey toward equity and excellence was also discussed.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter contains a description of the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. The research design used in this study was case study methodology using mixed methods that included a perceptual survey, interviews, and document reviews. This chapter has been organized to present the purpose of the study, a description of the population and sample, and the research questions used to guide the study. Information related to the instrumentation used in the study including reliability and validity are also presented along with data analysis procedures and a chapter summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of administrators, who were employed in the school district from 2003-2011, regarding superintendent second-order change leadership (decisions, actions, events) to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students.

Research Questions

In light of the research on equity in learning opportunities and access to excellence and the need for superintendent second-order change leadership to achieve equity and excellence, the following research questions acted as guides for this study:

1. What were the superintendent second-order change leadership decisions that were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the specific events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for the target school district?
3. What were the challenges perceived to be in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed between 2003-2011 in the target school district?

Population and Sample

The administrator population in the targeted school district consisted of 183 school-based administrators and 128 district-based administrators on September 1, 2011. The administrators identified were determined using a list of school principals and assistant principals as well as a list of district administrators provided by the Deputy Superintendent of the targeted school district. After eliminating administrators who had not been employed in the district for the entire period between 2003 and 2011, the sample consisted of 244 administrators eligible for survey. Interviews were conducted with current school-based and district-based administrators who were selected from volunteers who had completed the Survey of Equity and Excellence. Some retired administrators were also selected for interview due to their knowledge of and experience with the district between 2003 and 2011.

Instrumentation

Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence

The Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence (Appendix A) was an online survey designed by the researcher. It was a 30-items survey developed after meeting with the superintendent and deputy superintendent during which significant events were identified. It was then reviewed by Drs. Rosemayre Taylor and George Pawlas and subsequently administered to a group of graduate students in the educational leadership doctoral program at the University of Central Florida to gain additional feedback.

The 30 items in the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence were contained in four sections. Section I contained six items which were used to obtain demographic information about the respondents. In Section II, items 7-25 sought the perceptions of respondents regarding actions and events in the targeted district. Respondents were asked to determine their perception of the educational significance of each of 15 actions and events by choosing (a) extremely significant, (b) significant, (c) insignificant, or (d) extremely insignificant. A fifth response of “no knowledge” was also available if respondents were not aware of the action or event. The possible range of each action and event was between 1 = extremely significant, and 4 = extremely insignificant. Since each action and event were ranked, the outcomes were considered for their educational significance since no other formal tests of statistical significance were conducted. The closer a score was to 1 the more educationally significant respondents felt as a whole that the actions and events were important. A score closer to 4 indicated the educational

significance that the respondents felt as a whole that the actions and events were less important.

Section III contained three open-ended response items asking respondents to list any additional actions or events that were not listed that may have contributed to equity and access to excellence and anything that fell short of expectations. Item 26 asked that respondents list any significant events, superintendent decisions or programs that they perceived to be educationally significant in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students which were not included in Section II. Item 27 addressed the challenges that respondents believed the superintendent or district leaders encountered related to achieving social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students. Item 28 sought information as to actions taken by the superintendent or district leaders to address the previously noted challenges. Item 29 provided an opportunity for respondents to share their views on other actions or strategies that they might recommend for any superintendent to take to provide equity and access to excellence for all students in their school districts. Section IV was devoted to obtaining contact information from those respondents who expressed willingness to be interviewed and participate in the next phase of the research.

The survey of equity and access to excellence was designed using the online survey service, Zoomerang. Subscription to this service was obtained for an annual fee and allowed the researcher to customize the survey to meet the needs of the study with the questions, formats and respondents.

Structured Interviews

Additional data were gathered through personal interviews using questions (Appendix B) designed by the researcher to guide the interviews. The specific focus of the interviews and the questions asked of the 11 interviewees were determined after analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence. Table 2 displays the themes under which the 11 questions were grouped. The first three questions were demographic and informational questions. Questions 4 and 5 asked about the interviewees' perceptions as to what had led to achieving equity and access to excellence in the targeted school district and their perceptions of actions and/or events that fell short in achieving these goals. Additional separate questions asked about any challenges the target school district faced (question 6), any groups of students who had more or less access to excellence (question 8), and the interviewees' perceptions of how change in equity and access to excellence related to student achievement in the targeted school district (question 9). The last two questions queried interviewees as to the next steps for the targeted school district in relation to moving forward with equity and access to excellence (question 10) and what other school districts who want to improve equity and access to excellence need to know as they proceed (question 11). One question in the original set of questions was eliminated after the first interview (question 7) because it was addressed in the other questions.

Table 2

Instrument Constructs and Interview Questions

Constructs	Interview Questions
Demographic information	1, 2, 3
Perceptions about what helped achieve equity and what fell short. Perceptions of equity and relation to student achievement	4, 5, 9
Challenges to equity Groups' access to equity	6, 8
Next steps for targeted district	10
Recommendations for other districts	11

The interviews were scheduled in the last three days before the semester ended in the target school district, and two additional interviews with retired administrators were conducted within two weeks of the original interviews. Prior to commencing the interviews, participants were reminded that the interviews were voluntary, confidential, and that interviewees were free to withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty. They were also informed that the interview would be recorded and the recording would be also confidential and destroyed once the research was completed. Only after participants reaffirmed their willingness to voluntarily participate did the researcher initiate the interview.

The interviews were audio taped and transcribed, permitting coded analysis. Once interviews were completed, the researcher described his own experience with the process. He also reviewed and coded the transcripts to identify significant or common statements using the constant comparison method (Patton, 1990). The concepts from the

interviews were grouped into themes with supporting examples based on the responses received.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

The statements created for the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence and the interview questions designed by the researcher and the dissertation chair were linked directly to the research questions so as to provide for content validity of the instrumentation used in the study. Table 3 shows the linkage of survey statements and interview protocol to the three research questions along with the type of analysis to which the data were subjected.

Content validity and reliability of the instrument was pilot tested by administering the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence to a group of 20 educational leadership doctoral students at the University of Central Florida. The group was asked to complete the survey as if they were actual school based and district administrators. They were asked to report how much time the survey took to complete, to assess the accuracy of the questions in regard to content validity, to review the wording of the statements, and to edit survey items as needed. Pilot testing determined the average length of time required to complete the survey was about 10 minutes.

The Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence was also reviewed by Drs. Rosemary Taylor and George Pawlas, experts in the field of educational leadership. They reviewed the survey for accessibility, aesthetics, wording, and revisions of items related to content validity. This aspect of the field test was performed to improve

guidelines, decrease redundancy, enhance wording of items, and ensure that survey statements were written correctly.

Table 3

Research Questions, Sources of Data, and Data Analysis

Research Questions	Sources of Data	Data Analysis
1. What were the superintendent second-order change leadership decisions that were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey (items 8, 9, 11-21)	Quantitative
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the specific events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for the target school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey (items 7, 10, 22-25)	Quantitative
3. What were the challenges perceived to be in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed between 2003-2011 in the target school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey (items 26-30). Interviews with 11 administrators	Qualitative Qualitative

Data Collection

Prior to the collection of data, a copy of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence and the questions to be used in the personal interviews were submitted to the University of Central Florida (UCF) Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. After receiving UCF-IRB approval, the study was initiated by requesting approval from the targeted school district. The request was submitted to the targeted school district, and

the approval letter from the school district was obtained by email from the Deputy Superintendent (Appendix C). The approval letter, along with additional information, was also submitted to UCF-IRB. Additional documents including consent forms and the dissertation proposal approval were attached to the online form. The study was determined to be exempt from IRB approval on October 19, 2011 (Appendix D).

The study was discussed with district and school based administrators at a district meeting on September 8, 2011. Once UCF-IRB authorization was obtained, hard copies of the consent letters to participate in the online survey (Appendix E) were delivered in person to the district office of the targeted school district on October 25, 2011. The Deputy Superintendent distributed the letters to district- and school-based administrators, and the survey was opened for participation on November 8, 2011. A second letter was distributed on December 15, 2011 reminding those administrators who had not participated in the survey that the survey would close on December 28, 2011. After the second contact was made and after closing the survey, a total of 90 administrators completed the survey for an overall return rate of 37%.

During the open online survey period, 11 active and retired administrators agreed to be interviewed. Originally, it was intended that only those administrators who had been in the employ of the school district for the entire period of 2003-2011 would be eligible for interview; however, at the request of the superintendent, two retired administrators who had been integral to the district's initiatives during the time period were invited to participate in the interview process.

Interviews were scheduled over a period from Tuesday, December 20, 2011 to Wednesday January 4, 2012. Prior to conducting the interview, all interviewees were required to sign a consent letter (Appendix F) agreeing to be interviewed and to have their interviews audio recorded. A co-researcher participated in 7 of the 11 interviews.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were derived from several sources. They were (a) the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence, an online, 30-item survey designed by the researcher (Appendix A), (b) the Access to Excellence and Equity Interview Questions (Appendix B), and (c) district grades and graduation rates (Appendix G).

Analysis of the data for this study involved separating data in the various sections of the survey. Data analysis included the use of descriptive and quantitative and qualitative data. The critical value with an alpha level of .05 was used to perform inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the first six survey questions. The 20 items regarding the educational significance of events or actions leading to equity and access to excellence were downloaded from the Zoomerang Internet survey into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Each research question was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0), a statistics analysis software program. Additional data derived from four open-ended response items in the survey were analyzed.

Data were gathered from the interviews conducted with 11 administrators using the Access to Excellence and Equity Interview Questions contained in Appendix B.

Interviews data were analyzed to identify recurring themes from district-based, school-based, and retired administrators in the target school district.

Summary

Data were used from the Equity and Access to Excellence Survey to determine demographic information and frequency of perceptions about the actions or events that may have led to equity and access to excellence in the target school district. Further, data were reported from the short response questions on the survey along with the interviews conducted with 11 administrators.

The results of the data analyses are described in Chapter 4 and the results are summarized and discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of administrators in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 regarding superintendent second-order change leadership (decisions, actions, events) to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. This study was grounded in the conceptual framework of three juxtaposed theoretical constructs: (a) superintendent leadership and decision making, (b) second-order change leadership, and (c) social justice as represented by equity and access to excellence after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Executive leaders in this study perceived that a culture of learning opportunities including equity and access to excellence had been achieved. For example, according to the Florida Department of Education (2011) the target school district was designated as academically high performing, and school district officials reported that 96% of their 2010-2011 annual budget was spent at the school level to maximize learning opportunities for all students. To document the progress toward achieving equity and access to excellence, the superintendent compiled a list of events and leader actions that took place from 2003-2011 that he considered to be of educational significance. Examples included strategic plan revisions starting in 2003; reading became the centerpiece in high schools during 2005; achieving unitary status, or dismissal of segregation litigation against the school district, was achieved in 2006, and launching teamwork, thinking and technology for incoming ninth graders was stressed in 2009.

The problem addressed in this research was to identify superintendent actions, decisions or results that were perceived by school-based and school district-based administrators to be educationally significant indicators of progress towards achieving equity and access to excellence. Mixed methods were used to identify how educationally significant each of the superintendent identified decisions and events were perceived to be in making progress towards equity and access goals. The results of the data analysis, as reported in this chapter, were intended to determine the extent to which administrators in the targeted school district perceived improved equity and access to excellence existed in the district

Research Questions.

The following research questions this guided this study:

1. What were the superintendent second-order change leadership decisions that were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the specific events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence in the target school district?
3. What were the perceived challenges in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed from 2003 to 2011 in the target school district?

Research Design

The research design used in this study was case study methodology using mixed methods that included a perceptual survey, interviews, and document reviews. The study was undertaken with the support of the school district superintendent.

Data for this study were collected using the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence, an online, 30-item survey designed by the researcher (Appendix A), the Access to Excellence and Equity Interview Questions (Appendix B) and district grades and graduation rates (Appendix G). After analysis of the survey data, 11 structured interviews were conducted. Those interviewed were both current or retired principals and district administrators. Semi-structured interviews, guided by the Access to Excellence and Equity Interview Questions, (Appendix B) were the source of qualitative information regarding perceptions of the (a) extent to which access to excellence and equity had been achieved, (b) challenges that had been encountered, (c) actions taken to address challenges, and (d) other actions respondents would recommend be taken to provide equity and access to excellence for all students.

Population and Sample

The administrator population in the targeted school district consisted of 183 school-based administrators and 128 district administrators on September 1, 2011. After eliminating administrators who had not been employed in the district for the entire period of time between 2003 and 2011, the sample consisted of 244 administrators eligible for surveying, all of whom received the online survey. The distribution of the online survey

was initiated in November of 2011 and completed in December of 2011. Of the 244 administrators surveyed, 90 completed the online survey for a 37% return rate.

Demographic Description of Respondents

Tables 4 through 9 present the demographic data for the sample obtained from the first six items of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence. Table 4 displays the ethnicity data. Of those who responded, 77 (89.5%) of the respondents were Caucasian, five (5.8%) were African American, three (3.5%) were Hispanic and one (1.2%) was Asian.

Table 4

Ethnicity of Respondents (N = 86)

Ethnicity	<i>f</i>	%
Caucasian (total)	77	89.5
District operational administrators	7	
District instructional administrators	8	
School-based administrators	62	
African-American (total)	5	5.8
District operational administrators	1	
District instructional administrators	1	
School-based administrators	3	
Hispanic (school-based administrators)	3	3.5
Asian (school-based administrators)	1	1.2

Note. Not all respondents provided this information.

Table 5 indicates that 50 (58.1%) women and 36 (41.9%) men responded to this question. Table 6 reports that of those who responded, 41 (46.6%) were assistant

principals, 29 (33%) were principals, 10 (11.4 %) were district level instructional administrators, and 8 (9.1%) were district level operational administrators.

Table 5

Gender of Respondents (N = 86)

Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Female	50	58.1
District operational administrators	1	
District instructional administrators	8	
School-based administrators	41	
Male	36	41.9
District operational administrators	7	
District instructional administrators	2	
School-based administrators	27	

Note. Not all respondents provided this information.

Table 6

Position of Respondents (N = 88)

Position	<i>f</i>	%
Assistant Principal	41	46.6
Principal	29	33.0
District Instructional Administrator	10	11.4
District Operational Administrator	8	9.1

Note. Not all respondents provided this information.

Table 7 indicates the grades served by those who responded to the survey. A total of 26 (28.9%) worked in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, 12 (13.3%) worked in pre-

kindergarten through 12th grade, 14 (15.6%) worked in sixth through eighth grades, two (2.2%) worked in sixth through 12th grades, and 33(36.7%) worked in ninth through 12th grades. Table 8 shows the highest degrees earned by survey respondents. A total of 20 respondents, (22.2%) had doctoral degrees, 17 (18.9%) had education specialist degrees, 51 (56.7%) had master’s degrees, and two (2.2%) had bachelor’s degrees.

Table 7

Grade Responsibilities of Respondents (N = 90)

Grade Range	<i>f</i>	%
Pre-Kindergarten-5	26	28.9
Pre-Kindergarten-12	12	13.3
6-8	14	15.6
6-12	2	2.2
9-12	33	36.7
N/A	3	3.3

Note. Not all respondents provided this information.

Table 8

Respondents' Highest Degree Earned (N = 90)

Degree	<i>f</i>	%
Bachelor’s	2	2.2
Master’s	51	56.7
Educational Specialist	17	18.9
Doctoral	20	22.2

Note. Not all respondents provided this information.

Table 9 reports the initial employment dates for those administrators who responded to the survey. Of the 80 responding administrators, almost all had been employed since 1990. The largest number, 48 (60%) had been employed since 2001. A total of 23 (28.8%) were originally employed between 1990 and 2000.

Table 9

Respondents' Initial Employment Dates in Target School District (N = 80)

Initial Year	<i>f</i>	%
1971-1979	2	2.5
1980-1989	7	8.8
1990-2000	23	28.8
2001-plus	48	60.0

Note. Not all respondents provided this information.

Analysis of Data

Research Question 1

Which superintendent second-order change leadership decisions were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?

The Survey for Equity and Access to Excellence was sent to school-based and district administrators to measure their perceptions of decisions made in the target district. School-based and district-based administrators indicated their perceptions of educational significance by marking whether a decision was extremely significant,

significant, insignificant or extremely insignificant in terms of a decision's impact on contributing to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence.

Table 10 summarizes respondents' ratings ranging from extremely significant to extremely insignificant, plus a no-knowledge option for each survey item. The outcomes from Table 10 report that embedding "Triple A" (academics, arts and athletics), putting into place the high school reading program, International Baccalaureate program, as well as the impact of school re-zoning were considered extremely significant or significant related to equity and access to excellence for students. These particular decisions largely impacted high schools in the target school district.

A number of survey respondents had no knowledge of four decisions in particular among the list provided by the superintendent. Those included the high school reading program, the Principal Forum, School Boards Coalition, and succession planning.

Table 10

Respondents' Perceptions of Educational Significance of Superintendent Decisions

Item	Survey Stem	<i>f</i> ES	<i>f</i> S	<i>f</i> I	<i>f</i> ES	<i>f</i> NK
8	Embedded "Triple A" (N = 90)	42 (46.7%)	44 (48.9%)	3 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)
9	High school reading (N = 88)	54 (60.0%)	24 (26.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (11.4%)
11	Salary restructure (N = 88)	20 (22.7%)	43 (48.9%)	12 (13.9%)	1 (1.1%)	12 (13.6%)
12	Principal Forum (N = 87)	9 (10.3%)	48 (55.2%)	9 (10.3%)	1 (1.1%)	20 (23.0%)
13	School Boards Coalition (N = 88)	4 (4.5%)	29 (33.0%)	3 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	52 (59.1%)
14	School rezoning (N = 88)	35 (39.8%)	40 (45.5%)	7 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (6.8%)
15	Launched virtual school (N = 86)	12 (14.0%)	60 (69.8%)	12 (14.0%)	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.2%)
16	Succession planning (N = 89)	23 (25.8%)	46 (51.7%)	9 (10.1%)	1 (1.1%)	10 (11.2%)
17	8/9 Summer transition (N = 88)	35 (39.8%)	38 (43.2%)	4 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (12.5%)
18	Embedded Three "T"s (N = 88)	31 (35.2%)	46 (52.3%)	6 (6.8%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.5%)
19	IB Program (N = 89)	48 (53.9%)	31 (34.8%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	8 (9.0%)
20	Focus on the Future (N = 89)	25 (28.1%)	50 (56.2%)	4 (4.5%)	1 (1.1%)	9 (10.1%)
21	Strategic Plan 2.0, (N = 88)	14 (15.9%)	53 (60.2%)	11 (12.5%)	1 (1.1%)	9 (10.2%)

Note. ES = Extremely Significant; S = Significant; I = Insignificant; EI = Extremely Insignificant; NK = No Knowledge

Table 11 reports the means, standard deviations, and 95% confidence interval for each item. The possible range of each action and event was between 1 = extremely significant, and 4 = extremely insignificant. The closer a score was to 1 indicated that respondents felt as a whole that the actions and events were educationally significant. A score closer to 4 indicated that the respondents felt as a whole that the actions and events were less important and less educationally significant.

It is important to note that the values for *N* and the means and standard deviations did not include responses of participants who indicated having no knowledge for that particular question. This step was taken to avoid contamination of the means with data representing responses that did not fall on the scale of the significance rating. Otherwise, a question with a large percentage of no- knowledge responses would have its mean artificially skewed toward a higher (worse) number, representing a high extremely educationally insignificant rating than was necessarily true. Therefore, the separate percentage of no knowledge was provided for referential purposes.

Also, it is easy to determine whether two items differ educationally significantly from one another by examining the confidence intervals about the mean. If two ranges have overlap, there is no significant difference; if they do not overlap, there is some evidence that the means are significantly different from one another at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level of statistical significance.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Significance of Superintendent Decisions Related to Equity and Access to Excellence

Item#	Survey Stem	N	M	SD	95% CI	
					LL	UL
8	Embedded "Triple A" experience	89	1.56	0.56	1.44	1.68
9	High school reading	78	1.31	0.47	1.20	1.41
11	Salary	76	1.92	0.69	1.76	2.08
12	Principal Forum	67	2.03	0.58	1.89	2.17
13	Public School Coalition	36	1.97	0.45	1.82	2.12
14	School rezoning	82	1.66	0.63	1.52	1.80
15	Launched virtual school	85	2.02	0.58	1.90	2.15
16	Succession planning	79	1.85	0.66	1.70	2.00
17	8 th -9 th Summer transition	77	1.60	0.59	1.46	1.73
18	Embedded Three "T"s	84	1.73	0.65	1.59	1.87
19	IB Program	81	1.44	0.59	1.31	1.58
20	Focus on the Future	80	1.76	0.60	1.63	1.90
21	Strategic Plan 2.0	79	1.99	0.61	1.85	2.12

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

A mean of one represented a perception of highly educationally significant, whereas a mean of two represented a perception of educational significance. No means were essentially higher than two; therefore, on average, all items were generally perceived as at least significant.

Perceived by the responding administrators to be the greatest contributors to excellence and equity were: high school reading centerpiece ($M = 1.31, SD = 0.47$), launched International Baccalaureate program ($M = 1.44, SD = 0.59$), embedded Triple A (Academics, Arts, and Athletics) experience ($M = 1.56, SD = 0.56$), and summer transition program for ninth graders ($M = 1.60, SD = 0.59$). Four of these five were high school initiatives.

Least educationally significant perceived contributors to excellence and equity included established Principal Forum ($M = 2.03, SD = 0.58$), launched virtual school ($M = 2.02, SD = 0.58$), strategic plan 2.0, new history making goals ($M = 1.99, SD = 0.61$), and Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition established ($M = 1.97, SD = 0.45$). Each of these initiatives took place at the school district, not the school level.

The confidence interval associated with high school reading centerpiece [1.20, 1.41] indicated that its mean level of importance was educationally significantly different than those associated with nearly all other questions, with the exception of launched IB program [1.31, 1.58]. Likewise, confidence intervals associated with established principal forum [1.89, 2.17] and launched virtual school [1.90, 2.15] were educationally significantly different than many of the other featured metrics.

When analyzing the survey responses for district-operational administrators, district- instructional administrators, and school-based administrators, the data showed that the percentages of responses for many of the survey stems were similar among the three groups. Responding school-based administrators were comprised of 26 elementary school administrators, 14 middle school administrators, and 33 high school administrators. A total of eight district-operational administrators and 10 district-instructional administrators responded as well.

There were several survey stems for which there was a significant percentage of no knowledge responses from the different administrative groups. Over 10% of all of the groups reported they had no knowledge of high school reading, the Principal Forum and the Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition. Of the responding district-instructional administrators, 30% reported they had no knowledge of a salary restructure. A total of 24% of district-operational administrators reported they had no knowledge of both embedding the “three Ts” and the focus on the future initiative.

The perceptions of decisions of educational significance by district-operational, district-instructional, and school based administrators are displayed in Table 12. A complete table representing the results of all of the various administrative groups who responded to the survey questions is displayed for each group in Appendix G.

Table 12

Perceptions of Decisions of Educational Significance by District-Operational (DO), District-Instructional (DI), and School Based Administrators

Item #	Survey Stem	Type	% ES	% S	% I	% EI	% NK
9	High School Reading	Overall	60.0	26.7	0.0	0.0	11.4
		DO	62.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	13.0
		DI	50.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
		SB	63.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	12.0
11	Salary Restructure	Overall	22.7	48.9	13.9	1.1	13.6
		DO	25.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	10.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	30.0
		SB	25.0	47.0	13.0	2.0	13.0
12	Principal Forum	Overall	10.3	55.2	10.3	1.1	23.0
		DO	14.0	72.0	0.0	0.0	14.0
		DI	10.0	70.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
		S.B	10.0	50.0	14.0	2.0	24.0
13	School Board Coalition	Overall	4.5	33.0	3.4	0.0	59.1
		DO	0.0	50.0	13.0	0.0	37.0
		DI	10.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	60.0
		SB	4.0	32.0	4.0	0.0	60.0
18	Embedded Three "T"s	Overall	35.2	52.3	6.8	1.1	4.5
		DO	38.0	25.0	13.0	0.0	24.0
		DI	30.0	60.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	35.0	53.0	7.0	2.0	3.0
20	Focus on the Future	Overall	28.1	56.2	4.5	1.1	10.1
		DO	38.0	25.0	13.0	0.0	24.0
		DI	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	24.0	61.0	0.0	2.0	10.0

Note. ES = Extremely Significant; S = Significant; I = Insignificant; EI = Extremely Insignificant; NK = No Knowledge.

Research Question 2

Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the specific events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence in the target school district?

The Survey for Equity and Access to Excellence asked respondents to rate specific events that took place in the target school district based on their perceptions of the significance that each event had on equity and access to excellence for all students. Table 13 summarizes respondents' ratings for each of the pertinent questions. Ratings ranged from extremely educationally significant to extremely educationally insignificant, plus a no- knowledge option.

Survey respondents rated the district's high performance, the district's "A" rating and obtaining unitary status as extremely significant events that related to equity and access to excellence. There was a significant number of survey respondents who had no knowledge of the superintendent transition and reading research.

Table 13

Perceptions of Events of Educational Significance Related to Equity and Access to Excellence

Item	Survey Stem	<i>f</i> ES	<i>f</i> S	<i>f</i> I	<i>f</i> ES	<i>f</i> NK
7	Superintendent transition (<i>N</i> = 90)	33 (36.7%)	28 (31.1%)	6 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	23 (25.6%)
10	Reading research (<i>N</i> = 89)	15 (16.9%)	35 (39.3%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	38 (42.7%)
22	Unitary status (<i>N</i> = 87)	62 (71.3%)	17 (19.5%)	2 (2.3%)	1 (1.1%)	5 (5.7%)
23	High performing (<i>N</i> = 89)	64 (71.9%)	23 (25.8%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)
24	District "A" (<i>N</i> = 89)	70 (78.7%)	17 (19.1%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)
25	Community College (<i>N</i> = 89)	43 (48.3%)	39 (43.8%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	5 (5.6%)

Note. ES = Extremely Significant; S = Significant; I = Insignificant; EI = Extremely Insignificant; NK = No Knowledge.

Table 14 lists the means, standard deviations, and 95% confidence interval for each question. The closer to one of the mean, the more respondents rated the item as extremely educationally significant; the closer to four of the mean, the more respondents rated the item as extremely educationally insignificant.

It is important to note that the values for *N* and the means and standard deviations did not include responses of participants who indicated having no knowledge for that

particular question. This step was taken to avoid contamination in the means with data representing those who did not fall on the scale of the significance rating. Otherwise, a question with a large percentage of no- knowledge responses would have its mean artificially skewed toward a higher (worse) number, representing a higher extremely insignificant rating than was necessarily true. Therefore, a separate percentage of no knowledge was provided for referential purposes.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Events in the Target School District Related to Equity and Access to Excellence

Item#	Survey Stem	N	M	SD	95% CI	
					LL	UL
7	Superintendent transition	67	1.60	0.65	1.44	1.76
10	Reading research	51	1.73	0.49	1.59	1.86
22	Unitary status	82	1.29	0.58	1.17	1.42
23	Academically high performing	89	1.31	0.56	1.20	1.43
24	Rated District "A"	89	1.25	0.53	1.14	1.36
25	Community college/school district partnership #1 in nation	84	1.52	0.59	1.40	1.65

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit

A mean of one represented a rating of highly educationally significant, whereas a mean of two represented a rating of educationally significant. No means reached two,

which means that all items were generally regarded by respondents as slightly above educationally significant.

The most educationally significant perceived contributors to excellence and equity included district rated A each year of accountability ($M = 1.25$, $SD = 0.53$), unitary status achieved ($M = 1.29$, $SD = 0.58$), and district designated academically high performing ($M = 1.31$, $SD = 0.56$). The least educationally significantly perceived contributors to excellence and equity included FCRR reading research project in high schools ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 0.49$) and superintendent leadership transition ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.65$). These two items also had much higher percentages of no knowledge responses.

The confidence intervals associated with the three items perceived to be most important, district rated A each year of accountability [1.14, 1.36], unitary status achieved [1.17, 1.42], and district designated academically high performing [1.20, 1.43] were statistically significantly different than the confidence intervals associated with the least importantly perceived items, Florida Center for Reading Research project in high schools [1.59, 1.86] and superintendent leadership transition [1.44, 1.76]).

Table 15 presents the perceptions of events of educational significance by district-operational, district-instructional, and school-based administrators. The results displayed in Table 15 indicate that each administrative group reported that unitary status, the high performing rating and the district “A” rating were extremely significant or significant events that led the target school district toward equity and access to excellence. Further, all of the administrative groups showed that a significant number had no knowledge of the superintendent transition plan or the reading research project.

Table 15

Perceptions of Events of Educational Significance by District Operational (DO), District Instructional (DI), and School-Based (SB) Administrators

Item	Survey Stem	Type	% ES	% S	% I	% EI	% NK
7	Superintendent transition	Overall	36.7	31.1	6.7	0.0	25.6
		DO	63.0	25.0	1.0	0.0	11.0
		DI	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
		SB	33.0	31.0	8.0	0.0	28.0
10	Reading research	Overall	16.9	39.3	1.1	0.0	42.7
		DO	38.0	23.0	1.0	0.0	38.0
		DI	30.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
		SB	13.0	39.0	10.0	0.0	44.0
22	Unitary status	Overall	71.3	19.5	2.3	1.1	5.7
		DO	63.0	13.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	72.0	19.0	1.0	2.0	6.0
23	High performing	Overall	71.9	25.8	1.1	1.1	0.0
		DO	50.0	38.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	73.0	25.0	0.0	2.0	0.0
24	District "A"	Overall	78.7	19.1	1.1	1.1	0.0
		DO	87.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	70.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	78.0	18.0	2.0	2.0	0.0
25	Community college	Overall	48.3	43.8	1.1	1.1	5.6
		DO	50.0	26.0	12.0	0.0	12.0
		DI	40.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
		SB	49.0	45.0	0.0	2.0	4.0

Note. ES = Extremely Significant; S = Significant; I = Insignificant; EI = Extremely Insignificant; NK = No Knowledge.

Research Question 3

What were the perceived challenges in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed from 2003 to 2011 in the target school district?

Survey participants were asked to respond to four open-ended questions regarding equity and access to excellence in the target school district. The responses to each of the open-ended questions were used to identify themes related to events, decisions, and challenges addressed in the target school district.

The first open-ended item asked participants to indicate events or superintendent decisions they perceived to be significant. Two themes emerged: (a) obtaining unitary status which means the status a school system achieves when it no longer discriminates among school children on the basis of race or the status of a school system and removes all vestiges of race discrimination of a formerly dual system (Alexander, 2008) and (b) the establishment of magnet programs which served to remove those vestiges of race discrimination within and among schools. Table 16 presents the events, decisions, or programs perceived as educationally significant by respondents that had not been included on the list within the Survey for Equity and Access to Excellence.

Table 16

Themes: Events, Decisions, or Programs Perceived as Educationally Significant (N = 34)

Themes	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations
Establishing Magnet Programs	15	“Magnet programs and programs of emphasis.”
		“Opening of Millennium and Sanford Middle School programs.”
		“IB programs at Middle Schools.”
Obtaining Unitary Status	11	“Establishment of the magnet program at the north end of the county.”
		“The decision to pursue unitary status was the linchpin to changing culture that accepted the status quo.”
		“Using Cheerleading as the activity to attain unitary status.”

The second open-ended item queried respondents about the challenges the superintendent or district leaders encountered related to achieving equity and access to excellence for students. Three themes emerged: Funding issues and budget cuts, the re-zoning of schools within the target school district, and the human effect which included morale issues among teachers

Table 17

Themes: Challenges Encountered by Superintendent or District Leaders Related to Achieving Equity and Access to Excellence for all Students (N = 50)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations
Funding	20	<p>“I believe budget constraints over the last several years have hampered our ability to be innovative and adaptive to our changing workplace.”</p> <p>“Loss of funding-most notable negative effect on instructional programs, staffing, and employee morale.”</p> <p>“Budget cuts.”</p> <p>“Reduced funding to the district.”</p> <p>“Mandates placed on us without funding.”</p> <p>“Decreased funding for public schools.”</p>
Re-zoning	14	<p>“Re-zoning schools.”</p> <p>“New zoning to new high school.”</p>
Human Effect	10	<p>“Some things just showed up without processing with people that we were to implement, such as the “triple T” (teamwork, thinking, technology) experience. It was added to the district plan with no communication. Definitely a breakdown in communication in recent years.”</p> <p>“Teacher morale. We all know that the teachers make the difference daily and we need to do all we can to support our teachers daily.”</p>

The third open-ended item asked what actions the superintendent or district leaders took to address the challenges identified in the previous question. Three themes emerged and are presented in Table 18. First, the superintendent and district leaders were

prudent in their efforts but there were significant budget cuts as a result of a referendum for a half-cent sales tax that failed to pass. Second, the superintendent and district leaders faced opposition to re-zoning and had to make difficult choices; during this process, the superintendent has tried to be transparent. Third, the superintendent and district leaders have communicated clearly with teachers to combat low teacher morale.

Table 18

Themes: Actions Taken by Superintendent or School District Leaders to Address Challenges (N = 48)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations
Funding	10	<p>“Tried to secure local funding (unsuccessful).”</p> <p>“Meeting federal mandates.”</p> <p>“Prudent but significant budget reductions.”</p> <p>“Budget-continue transportation but looking at ways to cut costs.”</p> <p>“Program cutbacks, cutting positions.”</p>
Re-zoning	11	<p>“Leadership faced fierce opposition to re-zoning from the public and made the difficult choices. They did allow for much public input.”</p>
Human effect	12	<p>“The superintendent has tried to be as transparent as any leader I know. He strives to communicate actions clearly, internally and to the broad parental and business community of the targeted school district. It is always challenging to help newcomers have an understanding of any area’s history and what it has had to do to move to modernity.”</p>

The last open-ended item asked the respondents what other actions or strategies they recommended for any superintendent to take who wants his/her school district to provide equity and access to excellence for all students. The three themes that emerged were: (a) equity and access to excellence have to be the core belief of school leaders, (b) it is essential to ensure that all school administrators have a vision of equity and access to excellence for all students, and (c) the superintendent needs to have a clear focus and be proactive. Table 19 presents the themes and quotations of participants supporting them.

Table 19

Respondents' Recommended Other Actions for Superintendents (N = 37)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations
Core beliefs	37	<p>“Equity and excellence has to be the core belief of a leader.”</p> <p>“The superintendent needs to be clear with purpose.”</p>
Commitment to vision		<p>“Superintendent must have a total commitment to the vision of equity and excellence.”</p> <p>“Ensure that all administrators share a vision of equity and excellence. Hire principals and school leaders who have a passion for excellent schools.”</p>
Political Leadership		<p>“Any superintendent needs to do the right thing for students and not bend to political pressure.”</p> <p>“Be more proactive in marketing public education. Must take a leadership role in fighting the legislative positions that are putting public school systems in jeopardy.”</p>

Personal Interviews with District- and School-Based Administrators

School district- and school-based administrators completing the Equity and Access to Excellence Survey were asked to provide contact information if they were interested in participating in personal interviews. Personal interviews were conducted with 11 school-based and district-based administrators between December 20, 2011 and January 4, 2012. A co-researcher accompanied the author on six interviews.

Table 20 provides background information on the administrators interviewed for this study. Participating administrators included one high school principal, one middle school principal, two elementary school principals, five school district administrators and two retired administrators. Five of the interviewees were male, and six were female. Two of the interviewees were African American and nine were white. All of the administrators who were interviewed had more than 10 years of experience working in the school district.

The interviews were voluntary and were conducted using the Access to Equity and Excellence interview questions (Appendix B) designed by the investigator and co-investigator. The interviews were conducted to collect information on the perceptions of district- and school-based administrators regarding equity and access to excellence in the targeted school district that may not have been addressed in the survey.

The interviews were scheduled in advance by either telephone or email, and the researcher informed the administrators that the interviews would last approximately 30 minutes. All interviewees gave their permission and signed the informed consent prior to the start of the recorded interviews. The researcher notified the administrators that the

interviews would be recorded, would remain confidential, and be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. All interviewees' comments were identified using the coded format displayed as the Interviewee Identifier in Table 20. The Access to Equity and Excellence interview consisted of 11 questions; however, it was determined in the first interview that one question was redundant, so this question was not asked in subsequent interviews.

Table 20

Profile of Interviewees

Interviewee	Level	Location	Status	Gender	Interviewee Identifier
1	School- Based Principal	High School	Active	Male	HSP#1
2	District- Based	Leadership Center	Active	Female	DA#1
3	District- Based	Leadership Center	Active	Female	DA#2
4	District- Based	Leadership Center	Active	Male	DA#3
5	District- Based	Leadership Center	Active	Female	DA#4
6	District- Based	Leadership Center	Active	Male	DA#5
7	School- Based Principal	Elementary School	Active	Female	ESP#1
8	School- Based Principal	Middle School	Active	Female	MSP#1
9	School- Based Principal	Elementary School	Active	Female	ESP#2
10	District- Based	Leadership Center	Retired	Male	DA#6
11	School-Based Principal	High School	Retired	Male	DA#7

Access to Equity and Excellence Interview Results

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the responses of administrator interviews are displayed in Tables 21-26. Table 21 contains the two themes to emerge when those interviewed were asked about their perceptions of what led the target school district to achieve equity and access to excellence for students. These themes were related to the impact that unitary status had on achieving equity and access to excellence for all students and open access for all students in the school. Unitary status is achieved when all vestiges of race discrimination are removed from a formerly dual system district (Alexander, 2008).

When asked what the actions and/or events were intended to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students, three themes emerged: (a) addressing poverty in the target school district, (b) working with the lowest 25% students in academic achievement, and (c) the leadership roles that exist in the target school district. Table 22 contains the interviewees' responses related to these three themes.

Table 21

Interviewees' Perceptions: What Led to Achieving Equity and Access to Excellence (N = 11)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations	Interviewee Identifier
Unitary Status	7	“The consent decree by the Justice Department required our school system to begin its quest for equity and excellence.”	HSP#1
		“The court order to move toward unitary status.”	DA#2
		“The Justice Department was coming in, and their involvement was a significant event the led to equity in the targeted school district.”	DA#3
		“Unitary status and the decision for open access to advanced placement courses for all students led to equity and excellence.”	DA#4
		“We started seeking unitary status in the 1990s, but actually looking at data and facts made us move toward equity and access to excellence.”	DA#5
		“The decision to move from a dual school district and move to reach unitary status.”	ESP#2
		“We were under court order to move from a dual school system toward unitary status.”	DA#6
Open access to Advanced Placement	4	“The decision for open access to advanced placement courses for all students led to equity and excellence.”	DA#4
		“The huge thing was the push to open access and encouraging students to take advanced placement and honors courses and the international baccalaureate program.”	ESP#1

Table 22

Interviewees' Perceptions Related to Lack of Equity (N = 11)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations	Administrator Identifier
Poverty	3	“We still have high rates of poverty that have not been fully addressed.”	DA#2
		“Poverty causes us to fall short of our goals.”	ESP#1
		“Poverty is still an issue, and it is difficult to deal with budget issues.”	DA#6
Student Access	2	“Everyone has to have access to excellence. Equity means leveling the playing field. Not every kid is engaged.”	DA#3
		“I don’t think that the lowest quartile gets access to things they need, because we require them to take two periods of reading and one of math. They don’t get to take physical education or participate in ROTC.”	MSP#1
Educator Variables	3	“We have fallen short in providing more leadership roles in the district for minorities.”	ESP#2
		“We have fallen short in discipline.”	DA#4
		“Lack of focus by leadership on how to teach students better.”	HSP#2

Interviewees were also asked what challenges were encountered by the superintendent and school-based and district leaders in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students in the target school district. Two themes emerged: (a) working to improve the academic achievement of those students in the lowest 25% and (b) the concern that administrators and teachers in the target school district will lose a

sense of the district’s history. Responses regarding students in the lowest 25% in academic achievement and the district’s historical significance are displayed in Table 23.

Table 23

Interviewees' Perceptions of Challenges Related to Achieving Equity and Access to Excellence for all Students (N = 11)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations	Administrator Identifier
Student Access	4	“No matter what, we need to take care of the lower- quartile students.”	HSP#1
		“I do believe we have made improvement with academic options for lower- performing students, but we still have a long way to go. We don’t consider those students first when developing a plan.”	DA#4
		“It is really important to work with the lower quartile.”	DA#5
		“Providing access to different programs for our lowest group will be a challenge.”	MSP#1
Institutional history	2	“I think the access is there, but my biggest fear is that as we bring in new people, we could lose the history and could go back to a black –and- white world.”	DA#3
		“It is not part of the orientation of the district to know the history of the district. There is a big turnover, so a lot of teachers don’t know the history.”	DA#6

Respondents were asked if there were groups of students who had either more or less access to equity and excellence in the target school district. Two themes emerged:

(a) all students do have access to equity and excellence and (b) all students do not have access. Interviewees' responses regarding these themes are presented in Table 24.

Table 24

Interviewees' Perceptions of Groups of Students With More or Less Access to Excellence (N = 11)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations	Administrator Identifier
Access is available to all	3	“The access is there for all students.”	DA#3
		“Everyone has access. But if you go to a cluster school, there may be more access, but the clusters are under more scrutiny in meeting federal and state demands.”	ESP#1
		“All the students have access to equity and excellence.”	MSP#1
All students do not have access to equity	4	“We have come a long way, but we can do more, especially with kids of poverty.”	DA#2
		“Access is available to all students, but more work needs to be done for our lower- performing students.”	DA#4
		“There are students that don’t have access to equity. There is more the school district can do and work with the community.”	ESP#2
		“We are not identifying gifted kids at the elementary level.”	HSP#2
		“All kids have the right to a middle-class education.”	DA#6

Interviewees were asked what steps the school district should take to ensure access to equity and excellence for all students in the target school district. Two themes

emerged: (a) there needs to be teacher investment in students and (b) all students should be included in academic achievement and there should be open access for all students in Advanced Placement classes. Responses regarding these themes are found in Table 25.

Table 25

Interviewees' Perceptions of District's Next Steps to Ensure Access to Equity and Excellence for all Students (N = 11)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations	Administrator Identifier
Teacher qualities	4	“We still have to find ways to have our teachers buy in. We have teachers that need to go.”	DA#2
		“I think everybody has to teach all of the kids. We have made progress with intensive reading and math. It is the teacher in the classroom who doesn’t have deep knowledge that is concerning.”	DA#4
		“I think the next step is that there is a segment of teachers that can move themselves to the next level of teaching. There is a group of teachers in the middle that can improve to another level.”	DA#5
		“Our schools need to be safe where teachers welcome the students and they feel happy to be there.”	ESP#1
Teacher preparation	2	“I do think there can be more training for teachers that students come from many backgrounds, and we need to reach out to our students who appear to come on in a very negative way but they are struggling to survive day in and day out. Training always needs to be in the forefront. We have people with great knowledge, but sometimes they don’t understand outside influences.”	ESP#2
		“Teacher preparation and ensuring the idea that a teacher must want to work in this profession.”	HSP#2
Open Access to Advanced Placement	1	“We need to offer more Advanced Placement programs. We need to find ways for teachers to become better and we must find ways to improve literacy among the students.”	HSP#1

Interviewees were asked what other school districts should do who want to improve access to equity and excellence for their students. Two themes emerged: (a) district leadership should have core values and (b) commitment to students and leadership and decisions should be data informed decisions. Interviewees' responses to the two themes are displayed in Table 26.

Table 26

Interviewees' Recommendations for Other School Districts (N = 11)

Theme	<i>f</i>	Participant Quotations	Administrator Identifier
Core values	3	“It is very critical for other school districts to keep to their core values.”	DA#1
		“Select a leader that is committed. Select leaders that will challenge the status quo.”	DA#4
		“School districts have to realize that it comes down to the kid, the kid, the kid. Changes happen when you inspire change.”	MSP#1
Leadership	2	“First, they would want to carefully select a strong leader. When you have a leader who is going to sit and frankly share where they are and what they need to do and the need to be a team people will support the goals of the district. And the district needs to build trust with the public.”	ESP#2
		“Districts need to decide first that they really want to do it. Remain dedicated to it. And then if you do it, you have to work it and make sure the organization has bought into this with you. And once you have a good year, don’t stop.”	HSP#2
Data informed decisions	3	“All districts need to look at data, demographics, and academic programs and make sure they are meeting the needs of all students.”	HSP#1
		“Honestly look at the data. They have to make planned strategic steps to improve a district.”	DA#2
		“Know that whatever you are measuring you want to raise the mean but also reduce the variance. Equity meant you closed the variance. Excellence said you raised the mean.”	DA#6

Ancillary Documentation

Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test scores reported that the target school district earned A ratings from 2003 to 2011 (Appendix G). Also, the graduation rates of students in the school district were over 92% for the last four years (Appendix G).

Summary

The data analyses for both the Access to Equity and Excellence Survey and the responses of 11 current and former district- and school-based administrators to the Access to Equity and Excellence interview questions have been presented in Chapter 4. Demographic information for the respondents was reported using data from the Access to Equity and Excellence Survey. This was followed by analysis of the responses to specific survey items designed to answer Research Questions 1 and 2.

Responses to the open ended questions from the Access to Equity and Excellence Survey were analyzed and emergent themes were reported. A summary of responses from selected questions from the Access to Equity and Excellence interview questions were also displayed and reported in thematic units.

Chapter 5 contains a summary and discussion of the findings. Conclusions, recommendations for future studies, and the investigator's perspective will also be provided.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The final chapter of this study contains a review of the purpose of the study and a summary and discussion of the finding. Also presented are conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of administrators, employed in the target school district from 2003-2011, regarding superintendent second-order change leadership (decisions, actions, events) to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. These administrators were either school-based or district-based and either instructional or operational at the time of the study. All administrators who were invited to participate in the online survey for equity and access to excellence were actively employed at the time the survey was distributed.

Summary and Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1

What were the superintendent second-order change leadership decisions that were perceived to have contributed to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district?

The possible range of each action and event was between 1 = extremely significant and 4 = extremely insignificant. Since each action and event was ranked, the outcomes were considered for their educational significance, because no other formal tests of statistical significance were conducted. The closer a score to 1 the more educationally significant the respondents felt as a whole that the actions and events were important. As a score moved closer to 4, it indicated that the respondents believed as a whole that the actions and events were less important and of less educational significance.

Two items were believed to be extremely significant by many respondents: high school reading centerpiece (60.0% extremely significant) and International Baccalaureate program launch at Seminole High School (53.9% extremely significant). Respondents were least familiar with Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition established (59.1% no knowledge) and Established Principal Forum (23.0% no knowledge).

The items in which there was the largest split decision (many individuals selecting extremely significant, significant, and insignificant) included launched virtual school (14.0% insignificant, 69.8% significant, and 14.0% extremely significant); highest salary increases, schedule restructure (13.9% insignificant, 48.9% significant, and 22.7% extremely significant); and succession planning (10.1% insignificant, 51.7% significant, and 25.8% extremely significant).

It is interesting that the decisions perceived to be most significant were related to secondary schools and improving achievement in high schools. On the other hand, the decisions perceived to be mixed in significance were district-wide items and items that

may only affect a few people such as succession planning or the launch of the school district virtual school.

Research Question 2

Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the significant events perceived to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence in the target school district?

Very few respondents rated any event as extremely insignificant (no higher than one respondent per question). Similarly, very few respondents rated any event as insignificant. This was not surprising, as the list was generated by district leaders who believed each item on the list represented important decisions and events leading to access to equity and access to excellence. Only superintendent leadership transition was rated insignificant by 6.7% of the respondents and this was the highest rating of all. One might expect that few district leaders were aware of the transition, as it affected only the few at the top of the organization. Had it affected many either positively or negatively, it is possible that it would have been rated as educationally significant.

Three items were largely believed to be extremely significant by a high number of respondents, and all affected most employees of the school district and certainly the administrators: District rated A each year of accountability (78.7% extremely significant), District designated academically high- performing (71.9% extremely significant), and Unitary status achieved (71.3% extremely significant). Respondents were least familiar with Florida Center Reading Research project in high schools (42.7%

no knowledge) and Superintendent Leadership Transition (25.6% no knowledge). The item of Reading Being the Centerpiece of High Schools was closely related to the Florida Center Reading Research high school research study, so the dichotomous rating of the two items indicated that the administrators were aware of the focus on high school reading but not necessarily of the study or may not have valued the study.

Research Question 3

What were the challenges perceived to be in creating equity and access to excellence for all students, and to what extent were these challenges addressed between 2003-2011 in the target school district?

In virtually every open-ended response in both the Access to Equity and Excellence Survey and the Access to Equity and Excellence interviews, responses indicated that equity and access to excellence were achieved in the school district during the period of 2003 to 2011. However, many respondents noted several decisions and actions that took place before 2003 that contributed to the success of the school district in 2003 to 2011. Those decisions included the determination of the school district to attain unitary status once the federal government mandated that be done. Unitary status is the status a school system achieves when it (a) no longer discriminates among school children on the basis of race or the status of a school system and (b) removes all vestiges of race discrimination of a formerly dual system (Alexander, 2008). This decision led to other actions and decisions to achieve equity and access to excellence such as the creation

of magnet schools, International Baccalaureate program, and the introduction of Advanced Placement courses in the schools.

Those responding to the open-ended questions in the Access to Equity and Excellence Survey stated that the biggest challenge that the superintendent encountered related to achieving equity and access to excellence was funding or lack thereof. The loss of funding had a negative effect on instructional programs, staffing, and employee morale. Related to employee morale was a concern that there were some breakdowns in communication. Furthermore, it was obvious in reviewing both the open-ended survey responses and later in interviews that the superintendent and school district leaders encountered individuals and groups who were unaware of the history of the school district and of the decisions and actions taken to achieve access to equity and excellence. Based on this, it can be inferred that telling the history could assist with continued progress. A second challenge were the decisions regarding re-zoning schools to equalize educational challenges related to poverty among high schools.

Despite the challenges and concerns noted by the responding administrators, most stated that equity and excellence must be the core belief of a leader and that the superintendent needs to do the right things for students and not bend to political pressure. The successful superintendent ensures that all administrators share a vision of equity and excellence.

The personal interview responses were generally similar among the 11 interviewees, but these administrators placed more emphasis on the impact of achieving unitary status than did the survey respondents. The move to achieve unitary status

required the school district to begin its quest for equity and excellence. Furthermore, the push to make way for open access to Advanced Placement classes among all students, especially minority students, was an important step toward creating equity and access to excellence.

Those interviewed cited actions and events that limited the achievement of equity and excellence. The challenge of students in poverty has caused the school district to fall short of some goals. All of the respondents agreed that working with the lowest achieving 25% of students on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) was a key component to achieving equity and excellence in the school district. They advocated for continued academic options for those students in the lowest achieving 25%. Most of the interviewees expressed that all students have access to equity and excellence. However, some responses indicated that Hispanic students were still lacking access to equity and excellence as were some gifted elementary students.

All of the interviewees stated that more Advanced Placement programs need to be offered to a much broader group of students. They also stated that teachers need to have the opportunity to advance to another level of teaching. There was a concern among the interviewees that many school district employees did not know the historical significance of the decision to achieve unitary status.

In advising other school districts in working toward achieving equity and excellence, most of the interviewees stressed the importance of focusing on data, demographics, and academic programs. It was their belief that leaders should be

committed to achieving equity and excellence and that there needs to be total buy-in from the whole district.

The overarching conclusion from the 11 personal interviews was that when the United States Judiciary put the school district on notice to move to unitary status, a watershed moment in the school district's history took place. This mandate by the United States Judiciary led to actions including the idea of open access for all students, including minorities, in their Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs as well as a change in the culture at all schools in the school district.

The result of this decision to move to unitary status led district administrators to recognize there was a high rate of poverty that existed in the school district. Those interviewed were concerned, even in the current climate, that poverty and those who live in poverty continue to be a challenge to equity and access to excellence for students. Nearly all of the interviewees noted that those students who score in the lowest 25% on state tests need the most attention. Several interviewees suggested it was necessary to provide professional learning for teachers to address students in the lowest achieving 25%. However, there was a concern among all interviewees that the lack of funding and the high turnover of teachers could negatively affect, or at least be an obstacle to, equity and access to excellence for all students. Several interviewees expressed the concern that teachers need to teach all students. This suggests that there was a tendency to teach only to those 75% of students who are generally successful anyway. Those interviewed stressed the need for more training for teachers to be able to address and work with students from many different backgrounds.

All of the interviewees were concerned about preserving the history of what the school district went through to achieve the gains made. It was their belief that, for the school district to continue to make positive strides toward equity and excellence, looking at data, demographics, and academic programs was crucial to success. Furthermore, the leaders of the school district, despite turnover that may occur, need to remain committed to the vision of equity and excellence for all students in the school district.

Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test scores indicated that the target school district earned A ratings from 2003 to 2011. Also, the graduation rates of students in the district were over 92% in each of the last four years. The survey results, the responses from the interviews, the district grades, and assessments strongly suggest that, overall, the perceptions of school-based and district-based administrators were that the superintendent, through his actions and through events that occurred over the period of 2003 to 2011 did achieve equity and access to excellence for students.

Conclusions

This study was focused on superintendent leadership and decision making, second-order change leadership, and measuring the perceptions of school-based and district-based administrators regarding equity and access to excellence for all students in the target school district. Executive leaders in the school district targeted in this study perceived that a culture of learning opportunities that included equity and access to excellence had been achieved. Marzano and Waters (2009) suggested that when school-based and district-based leaders strive for excellence and equity of instructional quality

for each student in every classroom every day, it helps a district in its goal toward equity and access to excellence. Taylor (2010) also stated that when superintendents, district leaders, and school board leaders align their priorities, student achievement improves.

The problem in this research was to identify superintendent actions and decisions that were perceived by school-based and district-based administrators to be educationally significant indicators of progress towards achieving equity and access to excellence. The Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence measured respondents' perceptions of educational significance of actions and decisions made by the superintendent and the district.

Very few respondents marked any actions or decisions that were perceived to be extremely insignificant. There were some actions and decisions regarding equity and access to excellence where the respondents had no knowledge of their educational significance. The actions and decisions that were perceived to have an effect on equity and access to excellence tended to be centered on actions and decisions that impacted secondary schools, especially high schools, in the target district. For example, respondents perceived that the greatest contributors to equity and access to excellence included the focus on reading in the high schools, launching of the International Baccalaureate program and the summer transition program for ninth grade students. Further examples that the respondents perceived as educationally significant were achieving unitary status and the dismissal of segregation litigation against the school district and adopting the idea of open-access for all students to participate in Advanced Placement courses. Earning unitary status was significant, especially when a large

number of school systems are still under court ordered mandates (McNeal, 2009). The open-ended questions on the Survey for Equity and Access to Excellence also provided evidence that establishing magnet programs, achieving unitary status, and an open-access policy were perceived as significant among those that responded.

The interviews with the school-based and district-based administrators confirmed that reaching unitary status, establishing magnet programs, and providing open-access were perceived as educationally significant actions and decisions that led toward equity and access to excellence in the target school district. The interviews, however, did also raise concerns in other areas. There was a concern among the interviewees regarding poverty that exists in the school district and that more needs to be considered when addressing the challenge of reaching the students scoring in the lowest 25% on statewide standardized testing. Other concerns included future funding challenges and difficult decisions, e.g., school closings, reductions in transportation opportunities, and elimination of programs, that may emerge due to a lack of funding.

Although concerns exist, the general perceptions of school-based and district administrators was the target school district has achieved equity and access to excellence. Further, perceptions were that the superintendent and the school district established a set of core values, a clear vision, and a commitment to students that has led to equity and access to excellence for all students. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) stated that educational leaders needed to have a moral commitment to overcoming poverty and work toward equity and access to excellence; that equity and access to excellence was possible and

leaders should never quit. The perceptions of the respondents in this study support that the superintendent and the target school district reached those goals.

Investigator's Perspective

The investigative process of this research has led the researcher to conclude that this study of the school district made the course work in educational leadership at the University of Central Florida relevant and significant. The actions and decisions of the superintendent and the school district touched on all of the academic topics studied in the Educational Leadership program in the researcher's course of study. For example, the study of organizations, visions, mission statements, and goals was illustrated in real-world terms when analyzing data obtained from this school district. Furthermore, this study provided real-world examples of finance and fiscal challenges. Finally, and most significantly for the investigator, this research connected the doctoral classroom discussions of leadership styles, organizational behavior, and development (Bolman & Deal, 2008) and the notion of second-order change versus first-order change (Taylor, 2010) with real-world examples, showing how research and studies of school districts such as this are applicable to the success or failure of school districts.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. A follow-up study should be conducted to determine the perceptions of teachers in the school district with regard to superintendent second-order decisions and actions.

2. A follow-up study should be conducted to investigate the effect that local school boards and community leaders have in affecting and shaping second-order leadership change behaviors.
3. A similar study should be conducted in another school district in Florida and in other areas of the United States.
4. Further research should be conducted on how second-order change leadership behaviors can be translated to other school districts in the country.
5. A study should be conducted to investigate how funding, or the lack thereof, effects the ability of leaders to make second-order changes.
6. A study should be conducted to determine the relationship between second-order change decisions and the learning gains of students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of administrators, employed in the target school district from 2003-2011, regarding superintendent second-order change leadership (decisions, actions, events) to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. These administrators were either school-based or district-based and either instructional or operational at the time of the study.

In this chapter, the findings of the study have been summarized and discussed. Conclusions, based on the findings, have been stated, and the researcher has offered his perspective in regard to the study. Finally, recommendations for future research have been offered.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY OF EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE

Section I

Directions: Please check the appropriate box that best describes you for questions 1 through 5 and fill in the blank for question 6.

1. Ethnicity
 - Hispanic
 - African American
 - Caucasian
 - Multi-racial
 - Asian
 - American Indian
 - Other
2. Gender
 - Female
 - Male
3. Current position
 - Teacher
 - Dean
 - Assistant Principal
 - Principal
 - District Instructional Administrator
 - District Operational Administrator

4. Select the grade range that most represents the grades served in your current position.

- Pk-2
- Pk-5
- 6-8
- 6-12
- 9-12
- Pk-12
- N/A.

5. Highest Degree Earned

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Education Specialist Degree
- Doctoral Degree

6. What year were you first appointed as an administrator in this school district?

Section II

Directions: For each item, check how significant each item was in contributing to the achievement of equity and access to excellence. 1 = extremely significant, 2 = significant, 3 = insignificant, 4 = extremely insignificant and 5 = no knowledge.

	Extremely significant 1	significant 2	insignificant 3	Extremely insignificant 4	no knowledge 5
7. Superintendent leadership transition in 2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. "Triple A" experience embedded in the school culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Reading becomes the centerpiece in high schools, 2005	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. FCRR Reading Research High School Project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11.	Highest salary increases ever/schedules restructured 2005-06	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Established Principal Forum, 2004	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	CFPSBC established, 2004	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	School rezoning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Launched virtual school, 2008-2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Succession planning in process, 2008-2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Summer transition program for incoming 9 th graders implemented, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Three “T”s, teamwork, thinking, technology embedded into culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Established International Baccalaureate program at Seminole High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Focus on the Future to prepare students for careers and colleges, 2010-2011	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Strategic Plan 2.0 with new history making goals under construction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Unitary status achieved March 21, 2006	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	School District designated Academically high performing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	School District “A” each year of accountability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Community College/School District partnership identified as #1 in the nation, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section III

Directions: please provide any additional information for questions 26 through 29 that will assist the researcher in understanding the school district's journey towards equity and access to excellence.

26. Please list any significant events, superintendent decisions or programs that you perceive to be significant in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students which were not included in Section II.

27. From 2003 through 2011 what challenges do you believe the superintendent or district leaders encountered related to achieving social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students?

28. What actions did the superintendent or district leaders take to address the challenges you identified in question 28?

29. What other actions or strategies would you recommend for any superintendent to take who wants his/her school district to provide equity and access to excellence for all students?

Section IV.

If you would like to participate in a confidential follow-up interview please provide your name and contact information.

Name:

Email:

Best telephone number to reach you:

Best time to call:

Best day to call:

Thank you for your participation in this survey

APPENDIX B
ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Access to Excellence and Equity Interview

Name:

Title & work location:

Date:

1. What is (or was) your primary role in this school district?
2. When were you first a student or an employee in this school district?
3. If you have retired from the school district, when did that take place?
4. During your experience in the district (student, employee, etc.), what do you perceive has led to achieving social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students?
5. Were there actions and/or events that were intended to achieve social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students, but in your opinion fell short of those goals?
7. What do you think were the reasons?
6. From 2003 through 2011 what challenges were encountered related to achieving social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students?
7. How has student access to excellence changed during your association with the district?
8. Are there groups of students that have more or less access to excellence?
9. How does your perception of the change in social justice equity relate to student achievement in the school district?
10. What do you think the next steps are that the school district should take?
11. What should other school districts who want to improve social justice know as they proceed?
- 8.

APPENDIX C
DISTRICT APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

September 13, 2011

Mr. Paul Wilhite

1751 Mohawk Trail

Maitland, FL 32751

Dear Mr. Wilhite,

I am in receipt of the proposal and supplemental information that you submitted for permission to conduct research in the Seminole County Public Schools. After review of these documents, it has been determined that you are granted permission to conduct the study described in these documents under the conditions described herein.

Each school principal and assistant principal has the authority to decide if he/she wishes to participate in your survey. Therefore, your first order of business is to send your request to the principals of the schools that you wish to involve in your research and explain your project and seek permission to conduct the research. This contact will be thru a US mail invitation. Include a letter explaining the reason for the research, this district letter of approval, and the survey. Do not use SCPS email system to disseminate your research information.

Please forward a summary of your project to my office upon completion.

Good Luck!

Sincerely,

Anna-Marie Cote, Ed.D.

Deputy Superintendent

Instructional Excellence and Equity

AMC/jr

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research
From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138
To: Paul F. Wilhite and Co-PI: Rosemarye T Taylor
Date: October 18, 2011

Dear Researcher:

On 10/18/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:
Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Superintendent second-order change leadership to achieve equity and access to excellence in a large school district
Investigator: Paul F Wilhite
IRB Number: SBE-11-07881
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 10/18/2011 09:54:44 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator

Page 1 of1

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Administrator:

November 8, 2011

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important study about the leadership this school district took to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. You are among approximately 300 administrators invited to provide input. My hope is that this study will contribute to our understanding of how meaningful bold, decisive, second-order change leadership is perceived as it relates to equity and excellence for all students.

A research study is something you volunteer for, whether or not you take part is up to you, you can agree to take part now or later change your mind, and whatever you decide it will not be held against you.

The study is confidential and survey responses are anonymous. Your identity will not be known to the researcher unless you have a desire to be interviewed later and then your identity will be confidential.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits to participating in this study. There is a one month window in which to complete the online survey in order for your input to be included in the study. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The school district will receive the results of this study. The link to the survey is <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22DFWZL5XWG>

If you have any questions about this study on leadership, please contact me at paul.wilhite@ocps.net. My faculty advisor, Dr. Rosemarye Taylor, may be contacted by phone at (407) 823-1469 or by email at rosemarye.taylor@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the UCF Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Central Florida, Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The phone numbers are (407) 823-2901 or (407) 882-2276.

By going to the survey link, you are consenting to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at anytime without consequence. If you choose to withdraw your consent, please contact me using the provided email address. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your time and effort are appreciated.

Best Regards,

Paul Wilhite
Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida

APPENDIX F
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW

Dear Administrator:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important study about the leadership this school district took to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. You are among 10 administrators invited to provide input. My hope is that this study will contribute to our understanding of how meaningful bold, decisive, second-order change leadership is perceived as it relates to equity and access to excellence for all students.

What you should know is that someone will be available to explain this research study to you, a research study is something you volunteer for, whether or not you take part is up to you, you can agree to take part now or later change your mind, and whatever you decide it will not be held against you.

The interview is confidential and your identity will be known only to the researcher. The interview will be recorded but only for the purpose of insuring that the researcher is accurate in reporting the information resulting from the interviews. The interview data and findings will be reported in aggregate, not individually.

By signing in the space below you are giving your informed consent to participate in an interview with the researcher.

Interviewee

Date: _____

Researcher

Date: _____

If you have any questions about this study on leadership, please contact me at paul.wilhite@ocps.net . My faculty advisor, Dr. Rosemarye Taylor, may be contacted by phone at (407) 823-1469 or by email at rosemarye.taylor@mail.ucf.edu.

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the UCF Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Central Florida, Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The phone numbers are (407) 823-2901 or (407) 882-2276.

Best Regards,

Paul Wilhite

Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida

APPENDIX G
ANCILLARY DOCUMENTATION

Perceptions of all survey respondents for district operational administrators, district instructional administrators, and school-based administrators regarding superintendent decisions related to equity and access to excellence

Item	Survey Stem	Type	% ES	% S	% I	% EI	% NK
8	Embedded “Triple A:	Overall	46.7	48.9	3.3	0.0	1.1
		DO	50.0	38.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	47.0	49.0	3.0	0.0	1.0
9	High School Reading	Overall	60.0	26.7	0.0	0.0	11.4
		DO	62.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	13.0
		DI	50.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
		SB	63.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	12.0
11	Salary Restructure	Overall	22.7	48.9	13.9	1.1	13.6
		DO	25.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	10.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	30.0
		SB	25.0	47.0	13.0	2.0	13.0
12	Principal Forum	Overall	10.3	55.2	10.3	1.1	23.0
		DO	14.0	72.0	0.0	0.0	14.0
		DI	10.0	70.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
		SB	10.0	50.0	14.0	2.0	24.0
13	School Board Coalition	Overall	4.5	33	3.4	0.0	59.1
		DO	0.0	50.0	13.0	0.0	37.0
		DI	10.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	60.0
		SB	4.0	32.0	4.0	0.0	60.0
14	School Rezoning	Overall	39.8	45.5	8.0	0.0	6.8
		DO	50.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	40.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
		SB	38.0	46.0	10.0	0.0	6.0
15	Launched Virtual School	Overall	14.0	69.8	14.0	1.2	1.2
		DO	0.0	88.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	20.0	70.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	12.0	70.0	14.0	2.0	2.0
16	Succession Planning	Overall	25.8	51.7	10.1	1.1	11.2
		DO	50.0	38.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
		DI	50.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
		SB	19.0	54.0	13.0	2.0	12.0

Item	Survey Stem	Type	% ES	% S	% I	% EI	% NK
18	Embedded Three "T"s	Overall	35.2	52.3	6.8	1.1	4.5
		DO	38.0	25.0	13.0	0.0	24.0
		DI	30.0	60.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	35.0	53.0	7.0	2.0	3.0
19	IB Program	Overall	53.9	34.8	1.1	1.1	9.0
		DO	57.0	29.0	1.0	0.0	13.0
		DI	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	54.0	35.0	0.0	2.0	9.0
20	Focus on the Future	Overall	28.1	56.2	4.5	1.1	10.1
		DO	38.0	25.0	13.0	0.0	24.0
		DI	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	24.0	61.0	0.0	2.0	10.0
21	Strategic Plan	Overall	15.9	60.2	12.5	1.1	10.2
		DO	25.0	38.0	25.0	0.0	12.0
		DI	20.0	50.0	30.0	0.0	0.0
		SB	14.0	63.0	10.0	2.0	11.0

District Grade 2003 to 2011

District Number	District Name	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
59	SEMINOL E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

(Source: www.fldoe.org)

2008-09 Four-Year and 2009-10 Five-Year NGA Graduation Rates and Percent Changes
in Target District

2008-09 Four-Year Graduation		2009-10 Five-Year Graduation		2008-09 to 2009-10
Graduates	Rate	Graduates	Rate	Percent Increase
4,196	92.0%	4,263	93.9%	1.9%

(Source: www.fldoe.org)

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