

**The Impact of a Structured Mentoring Program on New African American Superintendents in Alabama**

by

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## Abstract

This study investigated the structured mentoring program provided to novice superintendents by the SSA (School Superintendents of Alabama). This study examined new African American superintendents' perceptions of the facilitating factors and barriers that influenced the success of the program and the benefits in terms of attaining district goals and their own career goals, personal growth and development.

A qualitative research approach was implemented as the method of inquiry for this study. Purposeful sampling was used to provide an in-depth knowledge of the structured mentoring program. Data sources included archived superintendent surveys and superintendent interviews. This study sought to provide significant information to the body of work related to mentoring programs for new superintendents from the lived experiences of those involved in the program.

Mentoring has been proven to be an effective way to support new leaders in many other disciplines. However, the perceived effectiveness of structured mentoring programs has not been studied in depth. The impact and benefits of mentoring on underrepresented and minority school superintendents remains limited.

The findings of this research indicated that the SSA structured mentoring program appears to be beneficial for new African American superintendents. Participants indicated that they have seen positive changes in the development of their leadership skills, better understand their roles and available resources and that they are more equipped to handle the demands of the position. This study verifies the importance of providing a mentoring program for new school

administrators. There are areas that need further development, but the program appears to support the clear majority of the needs identified by new administrators.

The findings also identified program components that needed strengthening which were additional training, transitions/next steps and the selection and mentor matching qualities. The components and elements identified in this research are closely related to the elements used in the conceptual model by Zachary (2009), which served as the conceptual framework for this study.

This study fills a gap in the literature and presents new information that should be of value to practitioners and researchers interested in processes focused upon the effective development and growth of new administrative leaders. Although the findings cannot be generalized to other settings, it is hoped that this study will be helpful in creating exemplary mentoring programs for all new superintendents.

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## CHAPTER I. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

This chapter contains an overview of the study. It includes an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the research, research questions, research design, significance of the study, assumptions and limitation of the study, definition of terms and the organization of the study.

Fundamental rapid educational changes have occurred due to external societal challenges. These challenges and demands have come from federal and state bureaucrats, community leaders, parents and other stakeholders on the K-12 educational system. The superintendent needs to discern community values and expectations; they must establish early-on and consistently nurture relationships with key stakeholders (AASA, 2009; Banks, Maloney, Stewart and Weber (2007). Superintendents need the ability to work with a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

In addition, there was the push for school reform, which heavily influenced the role of administrators. According to Point, Nusche, and Moorman (2008), school reforms were based on a new awareness of learning and thinking, advanced pedagogy, totally different forms of school governance and organization, and complex relationships with the communities and the public. For example, Portin, Alejano, Knapp and Marzolf (2006) advised that 21<sup>st</sup> century schools that wanted to be successful and effective should have leaders whose visions met the critical educational needs of the students.

The overall responsibility of aligning the school's vision while producing high student achievement has typically been in the hands of the individual at the top of the organization—the superintendent. Furthermore, according to Cunningham and Cordeiro (2009), school administration is the single most important contributing factor to effectiveness and success of a school. And as aptly summarized by Orr (2011), “Leadership preparation has become one of this decade’s primary approaches to educational reform and improvement of student achievement” (p. 115).

However, the superintendent’s role and job responsibilities have been continuously impacted by Federal legislation in many ways. One of the primary pieces of legislation was NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) in 2002 which was a significant shift forward in terms of shining a light on student progress and the lack of sub-group progress. This focus on achievement and curriculum opened the door for more transparency, responsiveness to student needs and the demand for quality administrators. This legislative act brought about the increased need for effective administrative training and professional development programs. One study by Goertz and Duffy (2002) reported that every state responded to NCLB (2002) mandates by implementing a framework of assessment and accountability measures, with the responsibility for implementation falling on the chief administrator of a school district—the superintendent.

The administrative development and training need became more urgent with the authorization of education legislation such as ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) in 2015. ESSA was originally signed in 1965 as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which was first reauthorized in 2002. This legislation was again reauthorized on December 10, 2015 as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Because of this legislation, the demands on leadership have continued to increase and expand with each legislative act. This was supported by Grogan

(2000) who asserted that the need for increased skills and knowledge is critical to help superintendents handle the vast amounts of information in their new position. Plus, with the high expectations and demands on school administrators, many school systems have found it difficult to retain current school administrators, and have discovered even more problems attracting candidates for vacant administrative positions (Educational Research Service, 2000; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Shen, Cooley, & Wegenke, 2004; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). To further complicate hiring matters, Peters (2010) revealed that the United States Department of Labor forecast that 40 percent of the nation's 93,200 principals have reached retirement age. This means the future superintendent applicant pool has become greatly diminished for a variety of factors, but certainly one is the aging of baby boomers. This administrative shortage comes at a time when the demand for highly qualified school administrators continues to be high and at a critical point in terms of the public's demands for a quality education for all children.

Another important symptom of the administrative shortage crisis has been the high superintendent turnover rate. Reviewing the data from SSA in 2016 shows significant superintendent turnover rates in the last five years. For example, there are a total of 138 Alabama school superintendents; 107 of them were hired in the last five years. This means that roughly seventy-eight percent of Alabama's school superintendents have five or fewer years' experience at the superintendent level. Combine this data with the decline in the potential principal pool and one can begin to understand the dilemma faced by many school districts—the recruitment and retention of highly qualified administrative candidates at both the superintendent and principal levels.

Another factor to consider in this administrative puzzle was a review of the student and educator demographics. Conceptually, it is important to start with understanding the changing

student demographics in Alabama as these are the students in the school districts that will be led by these administrative leaders. Alabama, like most of the south, has experienced significant changes in its student demographics. It is true the racial demographic profiles and break-down of data varied greatly by state profiles. According to Alabama's Children Count (2014), the researchers projected that in the next three years, eighty percentage of the school-age children in public schools in Alabama would be children of color or minorities (<https://www.alavoices.org/research/2017alabama-kids-count/>). From a broader perspective, this data projection was supported by the 2010 Southern Education Foundation Report (SEF) (<http://www.southerneducation.org/>) which had the following data from the State Departments of Education for the school year ending in the spring of 2009 that projected that fifty-one percent of the South's public-school children were students of color. While the fifty-one percent projection was useful from a southern perspective in terms of changing trends, the current Alabama data retrieved from ALSDE Quick Facts (2017) has only forty-five percent of the total student population being students of color. While not as dramatic as the above projections, the state's current data still showed that Alabama had approximately forty-five percent of students of color, trending upwards and closer to the non-minority student population of fifty-five percent.

Furthermore, according to the Digest of Education Statistics (2013), students of color are expected to make up fifty-six percent of the student population by 2024, while the elementary and secondary educator work force is still overwhelmingly White. Further evidence of this racial disparity was provided by SSA in the 2016–2017 school year, which reported that only 6½ percent of all school superintendents in Alabama were African American. This figure was consistent with the national data from AASA (American Association of School Superintendents) in 2016 which reported approximately 6 percent of superintendents nationally were individuals

of color. There are numerous research studies retrieved from the *Diversity in the Educator Workforce* (2016) that supported the fact that diversity in schools, including racial diversity among teachers and administrators, can provide significant benefits to students (p. 1). Even though diversity is an integral part of our society and is valuable for all students, we remain a nation with racial disparity in our educational systems.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As previously noted, the work responsibilities and expectations for superintendents are complex and changing based on many different internal and external societal demands. School Boards and communities invest much time and many resources in their system leaders by giving them professional training and support to aid their ability to lead successful school systems. According to AASA (2015), urban superintendents have a turn-over rate of about every eighteen months, thus creating a revolving door of organizational leadership. This trend had made recruiting and hiring administrators extremely challenging across the nation.

As school districts scramble to find qualified administrators, one approach to developing and nurturing leadership talent within systems has been mentoring. Mentoring and coaching relationships are important in any profession (Bjork & Brunner, 2000) and mentoring has proven to be a successful format for training new employees in many different fields. According to Watkins (2003), mentoring in the early phase of an employee's career can make a huge difference. The importance of mentoring is clearly indicated by Michael Watkins (2013) in his book, *The First 90 Days*. He asserted that the actions taken in the first three months on the job will greatly dictate one's success or failure. However, despite the positive research, Walker (2006) also emphasized that research is limited on the benefits and the impact of mentoring relationships on the influence of the career growth and development of new administrative

leaders. In addition to the gap in literature and research, another important question is raised— are we recruiting, training and developing an inclusive and diverse pool of potential administrative applicants who can be available to be mentored and to lead?

These issues of inclusivity and diversity issue have been raised by Kamler (2006), who stated that even though there have been reported strides in administrative minority recruitment and hiring, there is still a significant discrepancy between the percentage of minorities in the ranks and the percentage who are leading a school district as a school superintendent. More importantly, the administrative pool starts at the teacher level where a lack of diversity also exists. Education Secretary, John B. King, Jr., speaking at Howard University on March 8, 2016, said,

Without question, when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act. We've got to understand that all students benefit from teacher diversity. We have strong evidence that students of color benefit from having teachers and leaders who look like them as role models, and also benefit from the classroom dynamics that diversity creates. But it is also important for our White students to see teachers of color in leadership roles in their classrooms and communities. The question for the nation is, how do we address this quickly and thoughtfully? (p. 1)

In the most recent SASS (National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey report, a nationally representative survey of teachers and principals showed that eighty-two percent of public school teachers identified as White. This figure has hardly changed in more than 15 years as data from a similar survey conducted by the Department in 2000 which found that eighty-four percent of teachers identified as White (p. 1).

The racial disparity issue was best illustrated in the *Digest of Education Statistics* (2016) in the educator pipeline diagram by outlining the career pathway and supply of teachers and educators for the elementary and secondary school workforce. This information was also reported in *Stats in Brief* (2016) which outlined that the types of teachers produced by traditional teacher undergraduate preparation programs impacted every point along this pipeline: 1) postsecondary enrollment; 2) enrollment in teacher preparation programs; 3) postsecondary completion; 4) entrance to the elementary and secondary workforce (after receiving teacher certification or licensing); and 5) teacher retention (pp. 7–8). However, based on this information, the most important point to remember is that the proportion of teacher candidates of color decreases at every strategic point along the teacher preparation and career pipeline. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

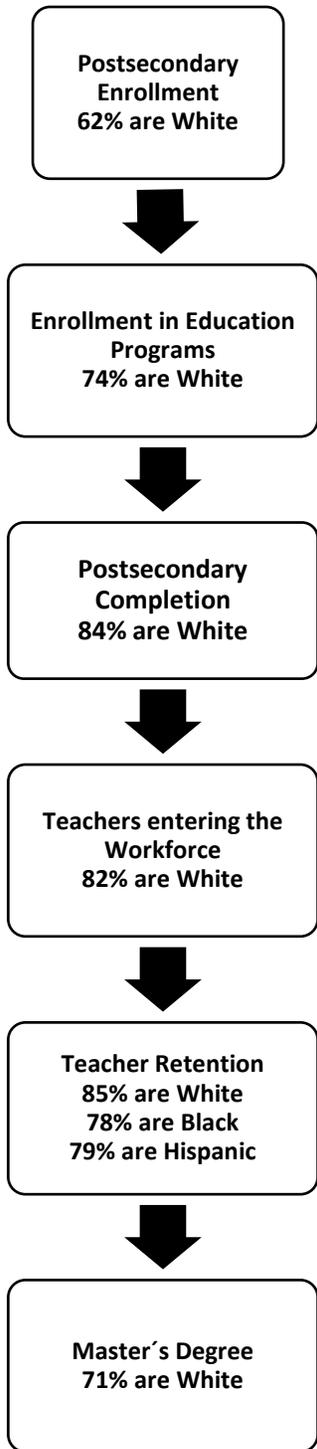


Figure 1. Key Points along the Educator Pipeline (p. 7)

## **Diversity Diminishes at Virtually Every Point**

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 2016, at the first data point, the bachelor's degree, there is already less diversity. For example, sixty-two percent of all bachelor's degree students in 2012 were White, while seventy-three percent of students majoring in education were White (NCEA, 2016). In terms of actual teachers, in 2011–2012 eighty-two percent of public school teachers were White, and seventy-eight percent of teachers with three or fewer years of experience were White. Seven percent of all teachers were Black, while eight percent of all teachers with three or fewer years of experience were Black.

The next data point or step in the same NCES Report (2016) presented that historically, the makeup of the population of master's degree students majoring in education has been less diverse. For example, sixty-four percent of all master's degree students in 2012 were White, but when examined closer, seventy-one percent of all students majoring in education were White at the master's level.

At the next degree level, having a graduate degree and/or certification is required for administrative positions. But for the most part, principals have remained a racially homogenous group. From a national perspective, according to the NCES, in the 2011–2012 school year, “most of public school principals were White or approximately eighty percent, while ten percent were Black and seven percent were Hispanic.” In the 2003–2004 school year, the proportion of public school principals who were White was eighty-two percent, and eleven percent were Black and five percent were Hispanic. This similar diversity data trend over almost a decade clearly established the fact that not much has changed in terms of racial diversity at the principal levels.

The educator workforce pipeline and diversity trends continued to the next highest level. According to American Association of School Administrators (AASA), in December 2015,

minorities composed about six percent of all superintendents nationally. But, the diversity data from the State of Alabama obtained from the SSA revealed that African Americans composed about seventeen percent of all school superintendents in the State of Alabama.

However, for the last three years in Alabama, according to SSA, the number of African American superintendents increased by twelve percent. Also from the same data source, in 2016–2017 there were a total of 27 new school superintendents with only 4 of the superintendents hired being African American. There is a total of 138 superintendents; however, only 24 are African American superintendents. This equates to seventeen percent of the total superintendents in the State of Alabama. These superintendents were identified in both city and county school districts. African American superintendents were in the following school districts for the 2016–2017 school year: *Conecuh County, Choctaw County, Colbert County, Dallas County, Lowndes County, Linden City, Perry County, Sumter County, Wilcox County, Barbour County, Daleville City, Bullock County, Macon County, Montgomery County, Russell County, Bessemer City, Fairfield City, Midfield City, Anniston City, Talladega City, Greene County, Hale County, Selma City and Tuscumbia City* (See Alabama School District map in Appendix A). Overall, in the last five years, there has been a seventy-eight percent turnover of all superintendents in the State of Alabama.

While the number of African American superintendents hired in Alabama represented a significant increase, it still highlights a significant racial disparity in the educator workforce. Superintendents represent the highest ranking educational leaders in the nation and if one group is consistently underrepresented and isolated from reaching and maintaining jobs at the highest level due to a variety of factors, there is an evident problem.

The superintendents' association has made a continuous effort to provide mentoring for all new superintendents. SSA's executive coaching model is a professional alliance between a new superintendent and a successful veteran superintendent. SSA has a cadre of trained coaches available for systems as part of their SSA membership. All coaches have been trained in the Corporate Coach University (CCU) model to effectively work with superintendents during the first year. CCU is a leading global provider of customized corporate coach training and corporate coaching services. SSA has more than twenty veteran superintendents trained to serve as executive coaches. SSA holds new superintendent planning meetings in conjunction with the summer, fall and legislative conferences. Coaches are paired by county districts, i.e., in the same district if possible; being in the same district or region leads to greater ease of interaction. The match is built on trust and confidentiality. Coaches focus on current issues and guide the new superintendents to take appropriate actions. Special assistance is given prior to system personnel action in May and prior to submission of SDE data in the fall that ultimately impacts the district budget. There are officially eight required contacts during the year, of which at least four contacts are personal meetings.

Mentoring has been proven to be an effective way to support new leaders in many other disciplines. However, the perceived effectiveness of this mentoring program has not been studied. The impact and benefits of mentoring on underrepresented and minority school superintendents remains limited. A review of the relevant professional mentoring leadership training and support and its perceived impact would be useful and provide insights for future administrator recruitment, professional development and training.

## Purpose of the Study

The benefits of growing the diversity of the workforce were summarized in *Diversity in the Educator Workforce (2016)*; the researchers clearly documented and listed ways that diversity in schools, including racial diversity among teachers and administrators, supported higher student achievement, higher expectations, stronger trusting relationships more cultural sensitivity and provided significant benefits for all students not just students of color. According to Hong and Page (2014), groups of more diverse problem solvers have been found to outperform groups of less diverse problem solvers. Barta, Kleiner and Neumann (2012) also found that companies with more diversity in their leadership and management areas tended to be the top financial performers. Despite these positive findings, racial disparity still exists in the workforce, in education.

Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that the elementary and secondary student population) will continue to become less White and more diverse. As previously noted in the Digest of Education Statistics (2013), “the elementary and secondary educator workforce is overwhelmingly homogenous with eighty-two percent being White in public schools, but students of color are expected to make up fifty-six percent of the student population by 2024” (p. 1). In fact, the most recent U.S. Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey, a nationally representative survey of teachers and principals, supported this finding by saying, “this figure has hardly changed in more than 15 years; from data conducted by the Department in 2000 which found eighty-four percent of teachers identified as White” (p. 1). Furthermore, across the nation, in the 2011–2012 school year, only twenty percent of public school principals were individuals of color (p. 2). This data has one common factor: little racial diversity among teachers, principals and administrators.

This racial disparity in the educator workforce is evident in the State of Alabama. The Department of Education (2016) certification data documented that approximately twenty-five percent of the Level AA certifications for superintendent applicants were African American. Also reported in the same year, approximately fifteen percent of the Level A certifications were African American at the principal level. The total state number of African American superintendents has increased by twelve percent in the last three years, for a total of seventeen percent for the State of Alabama.

In summary, in the 2016–2017 school year, Alabama had a total of 138 school superintendents, with minority superintendents composing seventeen percent of the group. However, it would be unfair to assume that everyone who received an administrative certification applied for an administrative position. But, based on ALSDE data, there were approximately fifteen percent of minority applicants that received principal certification and twenty-five African American superintendent applicants that received administrative certification. This data documented there was an adequate educator workforce pool of certified minority candidates available to be hired at the superintendent or principal levels.

Given the current racial educator workforce disparity trends in Alabama and the knowledge about the benefits of having a diverse educator workforce, the question becomes how to increase and recruit a diverse pool of qualified applicants and how to support them once they are in leadership roles. According to Browne-Ferrigno (2014), the University Council for Educational Administration supported that educational agencies and states should set up programs for novice leaders to develop leadership skills and beliefs that are necessary to support the needed changes in school systems and an emphasis on good instruction (Brown-Ferrigno, 2014). This study examined mentoring—one of those “support” systems for new administrators.

Mentoring is an approach that supports novice school administrators and has been frequently proposed by researchers since its advent in the mid-1080s (Crow & Mathews, 1998; Daresh, 2004). A mentor is one who provides emotional and career support and can serve as a role model. According to McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007), a mentor helps another person through an important transition such as a new job in career development and personal growth. Patton and Harper (2003) upheld that, “Mentoring has been considered one of the most salient factors in the academic and career success of leaders” (pp. 67–68). Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the perceived impact of SSA’s mentoring program for new African American school superintendents by describing how those individuals felt about the value, training and support in navigating their emerging leadership roles, career goals, personal growth and their professional development.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This increased demand for quality administrators has led to the need for a variety of different types of professional development for leaders to meet these new challenges. At the forefront of these professional training models is the use of mentoring, which has become increasingly popular in teacher education and school administrator development (Daresh, 2004). The current popularity of mentoring is based on several factors such as the quest by the job holder for career success and the school systems’ need for an effective and efficient method for developing and retaining administrators as found by Moberg and Velasquez (2004). Alsbury and Hackman (2006), Braus (2002), Johnson (2002), and Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995) have noted that mentoring in the private, corporate sector, and in teacher education has been widespread and found to be effective in enhancing professional development. But despite these

findings, Alsbury and Hackman (2006) noted that research focusing on the effectiveness of administrative mentoring programs has been somewhat limited and minimal.

This study gathered the perceptions of superintendents who participated in a formal mentoring program offered by the State Superintendents of Alabama organization. Thus, it is important to use the characteristics of formal mentoring programs in the conceptual framework. The program examined is a formal mentoring program. Formal mentoring is the most recognized and pervasive type of mentoring. According to Haung and Lynch (1995), “Formal mentoring is the dance between two willing and consenting partners, a dance of giving and receiving each other’s gift” (p. 5). Mullen (2005), added that “formal mentoring is an institutionalized mentor-mentee arrangement based on assignments to the relationship through one-on-one cohort formats” (p. 25). These formal mentoring statements were also supported by Zachary (2011), who suggested that “formal mentoring relationships were typically with a program within an organization.” And Zachary (2009) suggested the formal mentoring cycle consisted of four processes: 1) preparing, 2) negotiating, 3) enabling, and 4) coming to closure (pp. 7–8).

Daresh (2004) expanded these definition by suggesting, “that most formal mentoring programs are formed in compliance with state mandates, and relationships are developed as marriages of convenience rather than naturally developed ones” (p. 503). This statement by Daresh has remained accurate especially regarding the establishment of most formal mentoring relationships in school settings. Even though the formal mentoring relationship may be required, they still can vary greatly with school districts in the implementation, structure and process.

For a formal mentoring to work best, it typically has some structure, guidelines and components to produce optimal results. Zachary (2009) developed eight steps that have proven

to be very useful in selecting a mentor in a formal relationship. Earlier, Zachary (2009) provided the following guidelines; well-defined goals; criteria or way to measure success; accountability guidelines; ground rules; safeguards for confidentiality; set boundaries and topics to avoid; set protocols to address issues; both sides agree on the agreement; and devise a work plan (p. 56). Zachary (2009) went even further when she suggested that a criterion-based model was needed for decision-making in the selection of the mentor for the relationship.

Other researchers, like Hansford and Tennent (2004) found a similar mentoring design and structural need. These researchers asserted that effective formal mentoring programs should have the following design outline with ten key components for school districts to use for formal mentoring programs: Orientation and Entry; Mentor Selection and Matching; Mentor Selection Criteria; Mentor Training; Mentors' Responsibilities; New Administrators' Responsibilities; Other Principals (Non-mentors) Responsibilities; District Responsibilities; A Fair Climate for Growth; and Program Evaluation.

The conceptual framework of formal mentoring by Zachary (2009) provided structural guidelines, characteristics and recommendations. Zachary's focused primarily on the individual mentoring relationships, responsibilities and setting guidelines while providing guidelines in terms of structure, implementation and process by offering substantial guidelines for a formal mentoring program.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the degree to which the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership and management roles?

2. What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the most effective elements of the mentoring program?
3. What are the superintendent's perceptions of their mentoring experiences alignment to the standard formal mentoring process identified by Zachary (2009)?
4. What are the superintendents' perceptions of the ways the mentoring program could be improved in terms of weaknesses and methods for improvement?

### **Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative methods to help identify the new superintendents' perceptions about how the mentoring program provided by the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) assisted or did not assist them in attaining district goals and their own career goals, the personal growth and professional development goals of new African American superintendents in Alabama. Data collection in this study used two data sources: 1) SSA archived superintendent surveys, and 2) superintendent interviews.

The archived survey data were obtained from the School Superintendents of Alabama (SAA). The SSA superintendents' survey was developed based on ALSDE's Standard Seven. This is one of the standards required of all school administrators in Alabama by the Department of Education. The SSA survey questions dealt specifically with issues involving instructional programs and goals established with the board, central office and principals in each school district. The questions asked how the superintendents felt the SSA mentoring program and training supported the achievement of the identified goals.

The superintendent interview questions used semi-structured, open-ended questions that revolved around the main research questions in the study. The interviews probed the participants' perceptions about the structured mentoring program and its benefits in a variety of

areas such as attaining career goals, personal growth and professional development goals. The interview questions used were based on the characteristics of formal mentoring found in the conceptual framework. This was supported by the protocol drawn from Creswell (2006), who recommended that the key concepts found in research literature on the topic to be studied. The interviews were recorded electronically since that was the essential process for “logging the data” as suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995). The survey and interview data and analysis processes will be described in full detail in Chapter Three.

### **Significance of the Study**

A factor impacting school administration is the mass exodus of veteran administrators. The projection is that the retirement rates of veteran school administrators will significantly increase in the next few decades (Gajda & Militello, 2008; Michael & Young, 2006; Schuman, 2004), potentially leaving many unfilled administrative positions. Unfortunately, these positions have become increasingly difficult to fill; according to AASA (2015), the average superintendent turnover rate for urban superintendents was 18 months. These relatively short administrative turnover rates have led to significant job insecurity and instability in the field of education. In summary, these trends point to a crisis in the field of education because there is a growing need to recruit and hire highly qualified administrative candidates. Because of this demand, new administrators expect assurances of appropriate professional training and continual support as they transition into new administrative positions.

This study is significant because of the continual national decline of veteran administrative retirements along with other individuals who have chosen to leave the field for a variety of reasons. It is also important because it addresses the issue of diversity in the

superintendency and should provide important information about how mentoring programs can be most beneficial to this group, which is expected to expand in the years ahead.

There has been and will continue to be an increased demand in the educator workforce to hire new administrative leaders who are qualified, highly skilled and whose status reflects the changing student demographics. This study examined one of the professional development and training programs recommended for new administrators that could be used to replenish the ranks of school administrators, that being formal mentoring.

There continues to be examples of racial disparity found in the educator's workforce in Alabama, compelling one to closely examine the professional development systems in place for minority administrators. Because there have been limited studies that have assessed the perceived effectiveness of mentoring on underrepresented administrators, this study examined one underrepresented group by describing the perceived effectiveness of SSA's mentoring program for new African American superintendents.

The information from this study will add to the literature. This study would be useful for professional development in terms of reflection and rethinking for minority leadership training options and professional development initiatives. This study should also add justification for more emphasis on professional development, training and support in the form of mentoring, not only for minority superintendents but for all new school superintendents. In the end, this study would contribute to the knowledge base regarding the benefits, value and meaningful insights for the mentoring programs for new underrepresented superintendents.

### **Assumptions**

There are some assumptions the researcher had concerning this study. It was assumed that the SSA surveys and documented mentoring materials and surveys would reflect the honest

opinions of the new African American superintendents. The surveys would be transparent, readily available, and reflective of the superintendents' real perceptions and feelings. It was also assumed that the interviewees would answer the questions honestly.

### **Limitations**

This study does have some limitations. The survey, because it was administered at one point in time, may restrict the quantity and quality of the data. This study is being conducted in Alabama and may not be generalizable to other states. Additionally, the data were based on a relatively small sample size, with only one ethnic group. And the results may not be able to be generalized to other populations in the State of Alabama or elsewhere. This study was conducted and is applicable with only public-school superintendents, not private or parochial school superintendents.

### **Definitions**

Definitions are important to this study and necessary to describe and ensure the understanding and meaning of the terminology. All terms, unless developed by the researcher, have citations.

**Administration:** A group of people who manage the way a school or other organization functions that relate to running a school or other organization. Titles may vary but this group may include the principal, vice-principal, central office personnel, curriculum specialist and/or school superintendent.

**American Association of School Administrators (AASA):** A national professional organization with more than 14,000 members made up of superintendents and senior level cabinet members. The organization provides professional development and training, advocacy, job and career assistance, legislative updates, and legal aide to its members.

**Career Development:** The process by which individuals make career choices (Duffy, 2009).

**Coaching:** Coaching is primarily concerned with the immediate development and improvement of performance and skills by tutoring or instruction (Parsloe, 2000). Coaching is an art which calls for all the techniques and styles (Altman, 2000). Coaching is a form of development in which a person called a coach supports a learner or client in achieving a specific personal or professional goal.

**Formal Mentoring Program:** An official program established by a public, private or parochial school system involving a mentor-mentee relationship of administrators. Some colleague or other educational personnel are officially assigned to a mentee to give support, which encourages the administrator's ability to do the job. Formal mentoring relationships often involve scheduled meetings with agendas (Collin, 2009).

**Leadership:** According to Davis (2003), the term leadership implies movement, taking the organization or some part of it into a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programs, building organizational structures, and improving quality. Research also highlighted that school leadership always depends on the specific context, such as the interplay of systemic, organizational and personal factors (Brauchmann, 2012; Bush & Glover, 2003).

**Leadership Styles:** Styles are relatively consistent patterns of social interaction that typify leaders as individuals. Leadership styles are not permanent behaviors but encompass a range that typify leaders as individuals that have a meaning or that serve a function (Eagly, 2007).

**Mentee:** A mentee is “someone who is an inexperienced or novice administrator who benefits personally and professionally from the mentor-mentee relationship” (Daresh, 2004, pp. 502–503).

**Mentor:** Daresh (2004) defined a mentor as an experienced school administrator who works with a new or inexperienced administrator in describing policies, procedures, and normal practices in a school system. A mentor helps the novice to transition into their administrative roles and master the necessary leadership skills to effectively perform the duties required. A mentor is one who provides emotional and career support and can serve as a role model.

**Mentoring:** Mentoring is a supportive framework to obtain new skills and knowledge which help in securing upward movement in one’s career (Zachary, 2000). “It is an important process of training and preparation that has been linked to successful outcomes” (Tiggerman, Keams & Marshall, 2007).

**Personal Growth:** The impact of stretching, learning, growing and applying knowledge from your own and others’ experiences to change one’s life for the better.

**Principal:** A person whose job is to manage a school or other organization. A person who has authority for a school. This includes “development and evaluations of curriculum and instruction, use of instructional time, disaggregation of data, analyzing classroom practices, faculty and staff development, and curriculum alignment with standards” (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006, p. 136).

**Professional Development Goals:** Vary depending on the field a person works in, but typically fall into three broad categories. Job-specific goals should do with tasks that are part of the job responsibilities. Skill-set goals are broader and related to what a person does. Educational goals are about gaining advanced knowledge in a subject.

**School Administrator:** School leaders have a variety of titles and job responsibilities specific to their positions. They may serve as school leaders for the federal government or the state government; as superintendents working with local communities, boards of education and as lead principals of individual systems or schools.

**School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA):** A professional organization for school superintendents and central office positions in Alabama. The organization provides a forum for professional development and training, advocacy, and disseminates pertinent information about public education.

**Superintendent:** The superintendent is viewed as the person that has executive oversight and charge over the entire school system or other organization. The superintendent is held responsible for managing and directing the system. Superintendents create and administer policies on hiring and have curriculum and budgetary oversight responsibilities, and are typically viewed as the number one instructional leader held accountable by many stakeholders of the educational process (Hartley, 2009).

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 included the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the research, conceptual framework, research design, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, assumptions of the study, and definitions. Chapter 2 consists of the review of the literature related to leadership and leadership style, types of leadership, definitions of mentoring, characteristics of the mentor and mentoring and minority superintendents. Chapter 3 outlines the methods used to include the research instrument, sample population, data collection process and the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 details the findings

and analyses that resulted from the study. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived ways in which the SSA Mentoring Program assisted new Alabama African American superintendents in navigating their emerging leadership and management roles. In the study, the researcher described the impact of mentoring on the growth and development of the new superintendent's leadership roles, and the superintendent's instructional and curricular goals. The study also provides an examination of the effectiveness of mentoring programs on African American superintendents' career development, personal growth and professional goals in the field of education.

This chapter contains a review of literature on leadership and mentoring function related to the study. It begins with an overview of leadership definitions; theories of leadership, and various styles of leadership. The next section discusses mentoring functions. This is followed by literature on the definitions of mentoring, mentoring program components, types of mentoring and characteristics of mentors. The researcher then examines the topics of race and leadership, with attention given to the position of school superintendents. The chapter ends with a review of literature on mentoring African Americans in the position of superintendent.

### **Leadership**

School districts in this nation are fluid systems affected by social, political, legal, and external economic issues currently at play in the broader society and the local community. These issues impact our school systems and the people in charge of leading them. This study examined

one of the leadership preparation programs mentoring models and professional development for new school superintendents. To provide background information relevant to this study, it is essential to examine the research on school leadership and its impact on student and school success.

Leadership has been widely credited as being a contributing factor in the success of schools in advancing learning for all students. Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson and Wallstrom (2004) stated, “There are no documented instances of troubled schools being improved or changed without the intervention of a powerful leader. Many other factors may be present for school turnarounds, but leadership is the primary catalyst” (p. 17). This finding was supported by Wood, Finch, and Merecki (2013) who found that the school administrator plays a critical role in the efficacy of a school and can have a substantial influence on student success and school climate. This research was further supported by Cunningham and Cordeiro (2006, 2009), that school administration is the single most important contributing factor to the success of an effective school. Though leadership is a key factor in school success, there are many other factors and difficulties that impact leaders and their ability to lead. Kawolski (2013) notes that problems these leaders have are related to a complex mix of contextual, societal and institutional variables. This complexity may be one of the reasons that Bennis (1999) stated that “Effective leadership requires training and that the most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born—that there is a genetic factor to leadership. In fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born” (p. 163).

To gain a better understanding of the issues facing leaders in the role of superintendents; it is necessary to outline some of the major societal demands that have created these issues at this point in our educational system. First the focus on state standards and accountability systems has

driven local decision-making and policies in ways that were unprecedented. Also, the financing of local school systems has moved in many states, gradually to the state, while in some cases the local responsibility stayed in place. Whether funding was state or local, variations in the amount of funding impacted many decisions particularly the operational struggles faced by superintendents daily. According to Brace and Jewett (1995) and Fitzpatrick and Hero (1988), the political climate often decided the outcome of these funding trends.

Federal reports that assess the status of education have always had an impact on educational systems. One of the federal commission reports that had a substantial influence on the educational system the 1983 federal commission report, *A Nation at Risk*. This Commission's recommendations were rapidly noted and highlighted by the mass media according to Bracy (2003). This report was further supported by proponents of outcomes-based education (Rubin & Spady, 1984). The report laid a foundation for the call for more demanding and challenging curriculum and emphasized the specific skills that students needed to possess (Romberg, 1994; Wiggins, 2001). Also, civil rights proponents asserted the standards might be a way to address the poor quality of education for students of color (Abrams, 1985). These proponents saw the standards as a pathway to address educational deficits and that the standards could be used to demand opportunities to better educate these students (Porter, 1993).

The next major impact on the educational system was No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2002. According to Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008), these NCLB (2001) school reforms were based on new perceptions of learning, advanced pedagogy, different forms of school leadership and organization, and improved relationships with communities and the public. This was another Federal initiative that brought higher stakes standards and assessment. These federal mandates and guidelines set standards that local school systems, individual schools

and school administrators were expected to meet to document adequate and continual student achievement. Schools not meeting these criteria were deemed failing schools. According to the Department of Education, the number of schools considered to be failing has increased every year since 2001. As a failing school, the data required by NCLB (2002) highlighted specific areas of concern in educational systems from academic gaps, graduation rates and drop-out data. These type of assessments and data exposed the wide discrepancies in achievement within student subgroups. Because of NCLB (2002), school systems were held accountable for student achievement in all subgroups. Instructional programs and professional development initiatives that increased student academic achievement became a sought-after component in the effort to meet student achievement goals. However, after many years of implementing NCLB, Usher (2010) reported that, “after a decade of collective effort, more than 91,000 K-12 schools, or approximately 38% of the public schools in the United States, failed to reach their AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) goals by 2010” (p. 9). The annual failing school reports opened the door to more scrutiny about the reasons for the poor student performance. And Grubb (2006, as cited in Guterman, 2007), stated, “If administrators did not raise scores or standards, they would lose their jobs” (p. 1). The academic achievement issues and the required progress on state testing responsibility fell clearly on the shoulders of the leaders at the school and the district level. This new level of accountability led to the next major undertaking—finding programs and teaching strategies that worked for struggling students who did not meet required academic criteria.

This examination of the factors impacting student success, coupled with previous calls for change, help lead a shift in the role of school administrators, moving them from managers to instructional curriculum leaders. This created a drastic shift in expectations for many leaders.

This change was supported by researchers like Schubert (1986), who suggested that leaders must design programs that influence learning, skills, attitudes, and values of others; therefore, they are curriculum developers. These educators can work more efficiently if they understand and are knowledgeable about the research and teaching methodologies and would be better able to work more efficiently with the ability to lead and advise the curriculum development progression. Eisner and Jackson (1983) claimed, nothing counts more than curriculum in field of education. These studies were corroborated by researchers for the Wallace Foundation (2006), the researchers found a connection between instructional leadership and, high quality teaching and student learning. The researchers stated, “behind excellent teaching and excellent schools is excellent leadership—the kind that ensures that effective teaching practices do not remain isolated and unshared in a single classroom” (p. 3). Researchers at NEA (2008) also found that increasing student learning through effective instructional skills was a high expectation given a high correlation between the quality of leadership and student achievement. This was also verified by Hesse and Kelly (2005), who suggested that in this “new accountability era school improvement rested to an unprecedented degree on the quality of school leadership” (p. 245). This research not only highlighted the importance of leadership to achievement, but also suggested a significant shift and focus to the need for curriculum leaders. The findings of this research meant retraining for many leaders because curriculum and instruction was not necessarily their background. Educational leadership programs should model what they teach and practice what they preach (Kochan & Sabo, 1995). There were also demands for changes in institutional programs such as insights about moving from a traditional organization of education leadership program to more inclusive approaches which had a community building emphasis by Kochan, Reed, Twale and Jones (1999).

This curricular need created a laser focus on what really worked or what were the most effective programs, and the professional training necessary to improve student achievement. According to National Education Association NEA Report (2008), the researchers in this study highlighted and confirmed that there are difficulties with creating a learning framework for teachers to evaluate skills, think about data, and share quality teaching practices that improve student learning in a meaningful format. Likewise, there were numerous curriculum theories that claimed to increase or improve student learning; school administrators and instructional leaders, had to be able to differentiate between the genuine curricular programs, teaching strategies, and methods that produced results and those that did little to help struggling students.

For many administrators, this meant obtaining additional training for the instructional skills required in their administrative job. Discussions about this issue have been going on since the mid-1980s (Barth, 2003; Daresh & LaPlant, 1994). However, the discussions have often been confusing depending on different perspectives. For example, Queen and Schumacher (2006), believed that administrators throughout the United States realized that school administrators needed more than just a compendium of administrative skills. However, as Davis (2008) stated, there was a problem because “The limited empirical evidence linking credentialing program elements and individual performance on the job is emblematic of the tenuous relationship between research and educational reform in general” (pp. 1–2). Based on this information, one of the critical questions that emerged was — “How do we design professional development programs that support our current and next generation of school leaders from the theoretical curriculum frameworks to the practical knowledge and skills necessary to lead challenging and complex school districts?” Doing this adequately requires determining and defining what leadership is.

## **Definitions of Leadership**

As the field establishes a better understanding of the importance of leadership, its impact on achievement and the organization; it is necessary to review exactly what kind of leaders need to be developed for the future. This requires a review of the diverse definitions of leadership. Different scholars have proposed new definitions of leadership as the topic evolved over the years (Chan, 2005; McEwan, 2003). One of the reasons for this proliferation of definitions, according to Barnett (2004), is that as demands on today's leaders grow, the definitions are constantly being redefined.

Although there are leadership definitions found in the dictionary, researchers contend there is not a single agreed upon definition of leadership that is a totally accepted definition. Vroom and Jago (2007) suggested that in the end, leadership is a method of inspiring people to work together and cooperate to achieve impressive things. Another researcher, Bennis (2003), stated "leadership is first being, then doing, everything the leader does reflects what he or she is" (p.132). By contrast, Wharton (2005) believed that "leadership is an art" (p. 270). In Wharton's report in Washington, DC, at the Global Leadership Forum (February 15, 2005), he stated, "competence, knowledge, and interpersonal skills are important traits to have, yet the ways you use these skills is what makes you a leader" (p. 270). By contrast, Howard (2005) claimed that that leadership was a process of communication. The Wallace Foundation (2010) suggests that leadership is best demonstrated through the possession of good skills in curriculum and instruction which promotes above-average expectations for teaching and learning in a supportive environment. Despite a lack of a single definition of leadership, it appears that most researchers appear to agree that leadership is a critical skill for any administrator.

One way of analyzing definitions of leadership is from a chronological approach. According to Fleishman et al. (1991), there are over 65 different classifications systems created to define different aspects of leadership. Rost (1991) created an historical review of the leadership definitions from 1900 to 1929, which exceed over 200 distinctive meanings of leadership which emphasized a centralization of power and control under an umbrella of dominance. In the 1930s, leadership emerged more as overall influence rather than domination. Researcher Hemphill (1949) found that in the 1940s, leadership moved into the group approach, with leadership being defined as the behavior of an individual while involved in directing group activities.

During this period, the leader's influence over and with their followers became a dominate theme. In the 1950s, three new themes emerged in the study of leadership: 1) group theory; 2) relationships that developed shared goals with staff and community; and 3) effectiveness became important. In 1960, Seeman underscored, "the predominant definition of leadership as behavior that influences people towards shared goals"; he conceptualized leadership as acts by persons which influence other persons in a shared direction" (p. 53). According to Northouse (2013), in the 1970s, leadership became perceived as a reciprocal process which connects people with similar interests and motives to develop their goals.

In the 1980s, the leadership definitions became prolific. Burns (1978) defined leadership as a transformative process. Transformative in the sense that he believed the leader's power was in the relationship with their followers and the leaders' ability to develop mutually accepted goals. Peters and Waterman (1982) in their book, *In Search of Excellence*, emphasized leader traits. Other scholars debated and attempted to separate management from leadership

(Northouse, 2013). In the end, leadership is a multifaceted concept impacted by numerous factors which all contribute to the definition remaining in flux for some time to come.

During the last couple of decades, the definition of leadership has continued to evolve based on societal demands and contextual situations. For example, Gibson (2002) described 21st century leaders as “those who stay ahead of the change curve, constantly redefining their industries, creating new markets, blazing new trails, reinventing the competitive rules, and challenging the status quo” (p. 15). By contrast, Lambert (2003) suggested that the most vital aspect of leadership lies in its relationship to learning. The implementation of NCLB (2001) unleashed more transparency, which led to societal pressures from parents, politicians and community members causing some leadership functional changes to the definition. According to Davis (2003), “the term leadership implied movement, taking the organization or some part of it into a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programs, building organization structures, and improving the quality of the learning environment” (p. 4).

The responsibilities of a leader began to encompass new activities that previously would not have been such. For instance, Davis (2003) stated “that leadership has been recognized as an activity that can bubble up in various places within schools and no longer is only focused on formal leadership roles” (p. 4). Like previous leadership definitions, good leadership skills continued to be a focus. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated, “a leader, by definition, can effect change around him or herself: It is not only what you do, but how you do it that makes the difference in any given situation and environment” (p. 5). Owens (2004) further expanded the leadership definition by asserting that leadership refers to the quality and character of the connection between leader and follower. One of the major societal pressures during this period was the implementation of NCLB (2001) which was shown more in the expanded

responsibilities of the role of the leader. Ultimately, despite the varying leadership definitions, good leadership skills continued to be a focus. According to Sussmuth (1998), “the future-capability of society involves rethinking in the educational sector, above all among those doing the learning and teaching” (p. 1). Orr (2011) also precisely summarized the connection of leadership to education: “Leadership preparation has become one of this decade’s primary approaches to educational reform and improvement of student achievement” (p. 115). Brauckman (2012) and Bush and Glover (2003) suggest that school leadership always depends on specific contexts, such as the interplay of systemic, organizational, and personal factors.

This review demonstrated the fact that leadership definitions have evolved over the years. These variations have reflected many societal pressures and issues. Like the variety of leadership definitions; there are many leadership approaches which are applicable to different contextual situations. This includes not only examining leadership definitions, but leadership approaches to better understand their function and applicability.

### **Leadership Theories**

Leadership has many different facets and components and it is important to understand the leadership theories used by leaders. Furthermore, according to Bennis (2003) until you truly understand yourself, strengths and weakness, know what you want to do and why you do it, before you cannot succeed in any way. For example, it is important to understand how one leads, so they can better handle different situations. The next facet or component of leadership to review is the leadership theories, applicability and the evolution of various leadership approaches. One of the most recognizable leadership approaches to leadership was the “trait” leadership theory.

## Trait Leadership Theory

The originator of the trait theory was Ralph Stodgill in 1974. The trait leadership theory gained popularity as the result of the book, *In Search of Excellence* by Peters and Waterman (1982) which was widely regarded as one of the top thought-provoking management books of all time. Basically, the trait leadership theory was based on the great man theories. According to Bass (1990), the *trait* leadership theory reinforced the belief that only certain individuals were born with leadership traits that prepared them to be great leaders, such as Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. Furthermore, these traits readily distinguish leaders from followers.

Initially, Stogill (1948) disputed the worldwide belief in leadership traits. Because the trait approach focused primarily on the person in charge and the traits that person had, without regard to the variety of situations which might call for different kinds of leadership. However, later, Stogill (1974) published another survey where he identified the following traits associated with trait leadership that are pertinent to the situation: 1) Responsibility and task completions; 2) Persistence in pursuit of goals; 3) Risk-taking and problem-solving; 4) Drive to start social situation; 5) Self-confidence; 6) Willingness to accept consequences for behaviors; 7) Absorption of interpersonal stress; 8) Able to influence others; and 9) Structure social systems for a set purpose. Stogill's (1974) second survey results were a more balanced belief that reflected that leadership was based both on personality and situational factors, and ironically substantiated the earliest trait leadership ideas that these qualities are features of leadership.

Other researchers like Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) also proposed trait leadership theories. They proposed a trait approach, and contended that "it is unequivocally clear that leaders are not like other people" (p. 59). Furthermore, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) developed

six traits which distinguish leaders: drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge. While Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) also developed a trait leadership theory, all the theories have similarities and differences. Several of the traits appear in all the leadership studies and others only in one, making it difficult to designate a definitive trait leadership approach. However, some of the common major leadership traits that appear in both theories are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability.

Also, social abilities in this leadership category came to the forefront because of many empirical studies. For example, studies by Zaccaro Kemp and Bader (2004) also supported that social intelligence was a key leadership trait. Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) included social abilities in their category of leadership traits. However, according to Northouse (2013), this highly selective choice of leadership traits does not consider leadership outcomes nor has it been found to be most useful approach in helping to determine professional development.

### **Skills Leadership Theory**

The trait leadership studies and discussions led to further inquiry by researchers and to the skills approach. By contrast, the “skills” theory was first proposed by Katz (1955) who believed that skills rather than traits distinguish a leader. Katz (1955) suggested that “effective administration (leadership) is formulated on three basic skills: technical, human and conceptual. Leadership skills can be taught or acquired so these skills can be developed” (p. 34). Both trait leadership and skill leadership try to capture “what” leadership is, but in vastly different orientations. Trait leadership theorist believed leaders were simply born with certain desirable traits that made them great leaders. Whereas skill leadership theorist believed that these desirable leadership abilities were not innate, but were skills that could be taught and learned.

According to Katz:

*Technical skill* is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity. It includes competencies in a specialized area, analytical ability, and the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques.

*Human skill* is knowledge of and the ability to work with people. It is quite different from technical skill, which must do with working with things.

*Conceptual skills* involve working with ideas; the ability to work with abstractions and hypothetical situations. (p. 175)

A slightly different but supportive approach of the skills approach was developed in the early 1990s by the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense with the researcher M. D. Mumford. By testing the problem-solving theory on organizational behavior, Mumford (2000) developed a model that is categorized as a capability model. The model provides a framework to examine the relationship between a leader's capabilities and skills and the leader's performance" (p. 12). According to Mumford, his Skill Model has three components: 1) individual attributes, 2) competencies, and 3) leadership outcomes. This model is built on three *competencies*. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000) asserted that the leader's knowledge made them effective leaders which is significantly different from what the leaders do. Mumford et al. (2000) also indicated that the leader's knowledge would sustain them through demanding duties with support from mentoring, appropriate training, and hands-on experience in solving new and unusual problems.

This approach also recognized that certain skills may be more effective at a variety of situations within the system. And this approach is most helpful within the academia as it helps to frame the curricula for leadership education. However, it does not function as a predictive model in terms of performance nor does it explain how skills specifically influence effectiveness.

According to Northouse (2103) the individual attributes in this model may be a little confusing and at times surprisingly similar and trait-like. But the primary advantage with this approach is that it gave the leader the ability to identify their weaknesses and strengths and potential areas for further improvement.

### **Style Leadership Theory**

Compared to the previous leadership theories, the “style” leadership theory focused instead on the leader’s behavior made up of task behaviors that facilitate the closure of goals and of relationship behaviors that make everyone feel comfortable with each other and the situation. Both Ohio State University and the University of Michigan piloted a study to assess the collective theory of leadership; however, their research in this area was inconclusive. The most well-known model of managerial behavior is the Management Grid which first appeared in the early 1960s and has since been refined and revised several times (Blake & McCauley, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1985). According to Northouse (2013), the *Leadership Grid* “has five major leadership styles: country-club management, impoverished management, middle-of-the road management, and authority-compliance and team management” (p. 79).

The style leadership theory is not a theory, but a measurement to determine leadership or a way to provide a measurement for leadership. This approach describes the leaders’ behavior and what they do in situations based on task and relationship styles. This approach cannot identify definite leadership characteristics, but, using it, leaders can assess how they appear to others. The leadership grid provided for the style approach gives the leader a way to look at his or her own behavior. The grid is based on two behavioral dimensions: concern for production and concern for people. The grid offers a means of evaluating or measuring the behavior of leaders and their influence on others by explaining the key parts of their behavior. Northouse

(2013) asserts that this approach is applicable to almost everything a leader does in work and organizational situations.

Perhaps more importantly, this knowledge is invaluable to leaders in determining their effectiveness and impact (positive or negative) within the organization. Leadership is a complicated process with a variety of different leadership types and styles; highlighting some of these styles gives us a better conceptual framework of the different dimensions of leadership.

### **Styles of Leadership**

A conceptual overview of the different leadership styles is important as we look at the relevance of leadership in school systems. Often there is some confusion between leadership and management styles. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what we mean by leadership styles. Perhaps the best distinction between leadership and management styles was asserted by Bennis and Nanus (1985), asserted that managers do activities, such as organizing, planning and daily routines, whereas leaders influence others, construct and implement change and create dreams. Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggested an even clearer distinction this quote, “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing” (p. 221). This research study is focused on leadership; those leaders who influence the direction of the district and making decisions that move the system forward to achieve goals.

Leadership is a complex process and it often takes years for leaders to develop their own leadership style. Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson and Jinks (2007) asserted that one of the primary stumbling blocks to the development of an individual’s leadership style is that there are so many leadership style variations. According to Gardner (1993), Leaders’ styles include how they relate to others within and outside the system—how they see themselves and their roles—and to a significant degree if they are successful as leaders. Furthermore, according to Ng (2008),

styles are tailor made to different situations. Different leaders must have their own styles and the styles must be able to adapt to different people and situations. Also, leadership styles can be based on and influenced by personal philosophy, personality, or experience of the leader. This information while useful still raises many questions and necessitates the need to further explain the different leadership styles to gain a better conceptual overview.

### **Transactional Leadership**

As stated earlier, there are many different leadership styles, but two of the most often cited leadership styles are transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership is based on Bandura's social learning theory (Deluga, 1990). Another definition came from Hartog et al. (1997) who described transactional leadership as being built on the connection of a series of interactions or implicit deals between leaders and supporters. According to Northouse (2013), leaders in this relationship act as power brokers where power is exchanged for benefits; for example, good job evaluations for cooperation, and compliance of followers. The transactional leader's style differs from the others because this type of leader offers rewards or incentives for productivity (Nahavandi, 2003). An expanded view came from Chan and Chan (2005) and Hartog et al. (1997); they suggested there are several dimensions of transactional leaders: contingent reinforcement or contingent reward, and management-by-exception – with active or passive leaders. As an example, in the first dimension, the leader rewards a supporter for reaching a certain performance level. Chan and Chan (2005) believed that mutually agreed upon performance levels increased the chances of workers working much harder. Dimensions two and three, management-by-exception, are used only when things go wrong and standards are not met. Transactional leaders avoided giving directions if the old ways work and followers met their performance levels. A management-by-exception leader can either be active or passive. For

instance, a passive leader only acts after the irregularity has occurred. An active leader acts before the irregularity occurs.

The transactional model was based on the belief that compensation entices an employee to accomplish tasks. Hackman and Johnson (2009) also described transactional leaders as those who attempt to satisfy the basic needs of their followers. Northouse (2013) described a transactional leader, as an autocratic leader, with more of a top-down approach. Overall, the transactional leadership style is considered more controlling and control is contingent on extra benefits or favors from the leader.

### **Transformational Leadership**

The other frequently cited leadership style is transformational. Owens (2004) explained that the idea of transforming leadership was conceptualized by James McGregor Burns and later expanded by Bernard Bass who came up with four dimensions of leadership: charm, motivation, individual thoughtfulness, and intellectual stimulus. Owens (2004) indicated that a transformational leader looks for possible purposes in followers, and wants to meet higher wishes, and relates well to the follower. For example, according to Osborne (2008) transformational or distributive leaders use intrinsic ways such as praise and gratitude for a job well done to show the followers' value and worth and that in most cases this method was more important and meaningful than monetary items. Also, Chan and Chan (2005) suggested that transformational leaders had charismatic characteristics that were highly admired, respected, trusted, and had a high level of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-determination. According to Northouse (2013), "transformational leadership is a process that transformed people. This type of leadership dealt specifically with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term

goals” (p. 185). He defined the other three characteristics of a transformational leader as follows:

- *Inspirational motivation* is where leaders convey high expectation to followers, and motivating them to be a part of the shared vision in the system.
- *Intellectual stimulation* occurs when leaders stimulates followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their own beliefs and values.
- *Individualized consideration* allows leaders to act as coaches while assisting followers to become fully actualized. These leaders may use delegation to help followers grow through personal trials. (p. 193)

Northouse’s definitions gave more substance and a clearer explanation of the characteristics of transformative leadership. These characteristics were supported by Avolio (1999), and Bass and Avolio (1999a) who distinguished transformational leadership by suggesting that transformational leaders were interested with helping the functioning of their supporters better and growing supporters to their fullest potential. And Kuhner (1994) also substantiated this belief by suggesting that leaders who have transformational skills demonstrate strong internal values and ideals, and are effective motivators for the greater good over self-interest.

The transformational leadership style continued to gain support from a variety of researchers. For example, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) reported that the transformational approach to leadership had a significant influence on student engagement. These results were confirmed by Hackman and Johnson (2009) who contended that a transformational leader is inspiring and empowering.

In general, transformational leaders are working for the greater good with decisions and actions that benefited and developed their followers rather than their own individual needs or power. This leadership approach differs significantly from the more individualized focus use of incentives found in the transactional style of leadership.

### **Servant Leadership**

Another popular leadership style is servant leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf (1970), in his seminal work on the topic, coined the term 'servant leadership': "*Servant leadership* values community and allows individuals the opportunity to experience interdependence, respect, and trust so individuals can experience growth" (p. 221). According to Hale and Fields (2007), servant leaders put the good of followers and their development above their own self-interest. They exhibit believable and ethical behavior toward their supporters (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010), and ethical behavior towards the system, and other participants as cited by Bowman (2005) and Ehrhart (2004).

For example, Taylor et al. (2007) described this style of leadership as an extension of transformational; according to these researchers, servant leadership involved creating and sustaining relationships based on a shared sense of goals and responsibility for the whole. Consistent with this, Neill, Hayward, and Peterson (2007) suggested that servant leadership is about creating shared power, serving the people's needs to be an effective leader. Overall, Taylor et al. (2007) found this style of leadership requires integrity and humility since leaders must willingly give up their leadership position to whoever has the best ability.

To explain servant leadership for practitioners, Spears (2002) classified ten characteristics based on Greenleaf's (1977) writings: 1) Listening, 2) Empathy, 3) Healing, 4) Awareness, 5) Persuasion, 6) Conceptualization, 7) Stewardship, 8) Commitment, 9) Building

Community, and 10) Foresight (pp. 5–8). These ten characteristics are helpful in identifying behaviors that could be exhibited by a servant leader.

It appears that this style can impact group dynamics. For instance, Liden et al., (2008) stated when “leaders in a group assume a servant leadership orientation, an entire culture of serving others within and outside the group is created” (p. 162). The importance of this type of leadership in educational institutions was affirmed by Crippen (2005), who said servant leadership is a worthwhile ideology for present day school systems. In summary, servant leadership represented a meaningful shift in leadership behavior, beliefs and orientation to power setting the stage for shared power that meets the needs of others.

### **Authentic Leadership**

Authenticity has been examined throughout history from Greek philosophers to the work of Shakespeare in that famous quote, “To thy own self be true.”– Polonius in *Hamlet*. So, it is not surprising that authentic leadership has been explored sporadically as part of the modern management frameworks. The two most popular approaches to authentic leadership are from Robert Terry (1993) and Bill George (2003). In Terry’s (1993) view, a leader is constantly answering two basic questions: 1) what is going on? and 2) what are you going to do about it? Terry (1993) used the *Authentic Action Wheel* to explore alternative explanations for the problem. He developed the *Authentic Action Wheel* to assess and concentrate on the issues embedded in the system. According to Northouse (2013), Terry’s approach is based on reacting to what is true in yourself.

A slightly different approach was taken by George (1993). His approach was based on the characteristics of an authentic leader. George identified “five dimensions of authentic leadership: purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart” (as cited in Gardner, 2011,

p. 113). Terry's approach (1993) can be considered practice-oriented while George's approach (2003) focused on the qualities of authentic leaders. Whereas, in Terry's (1993) opinion, authentic leadership is more dependent on the situation George (1993) has a more personal perspective and focus. However, both require the individual to be true to themselves and face the facts about the situation or themselves as leaders.

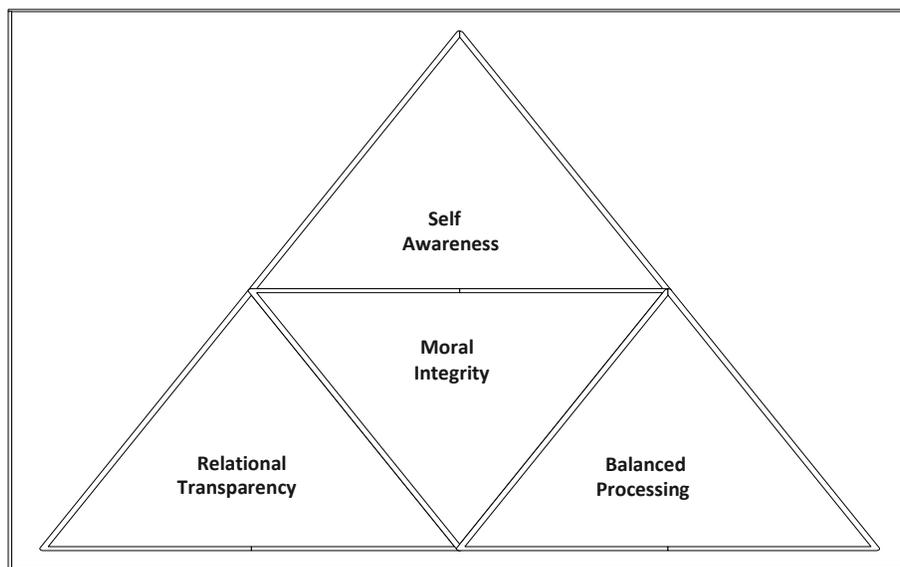
Another way to describe authentic leadership was proposed by Eagly (2005). He outlined authentic interpersonal leadership as personal, shaped by the person in charge and by their supporters. It results not from the person in charge alone, but also from the feedback of the supporters. A similar intrapersonal perspective was proposed by Shamir and Eilam (2005), who stated that authentic leaders show real leadership, based on their principles. They stressed that such leaders are totally genuine people.

Avolio and Gardner (2005), Gardner, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2005), and Walumbwa, Avolio, Garner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) presented authentic leadership as a collection of traits that can be developed in a leader. Their concept was somewhat different from that of others. The important distinction was their belief that these traits were not inherently fixed.

Examples of authentic leadership continued to be expanded in the work of Walumbwa et al. (2008). These researchers suggested that authentic leadership was a series of behaviors that were constructed on the leader's strong beliefs and mental qualities. They introduced four components of authentic leadership which are presented below:

- Self-awareness – leaders have a keen self-concept, know who they are, and are comfortable with that knowledge. Their values and actions are closely aligned and they walk their talk. These leaders take risks and lead from the front.

- Relational transparency – They build and use support teams, empower people with open and honest relationships. They are deeply interested in the success and development of their co-workers.
- Balance processing – They rely on data rather than biases and seek input from others. Their processes are consistent and known. They have some tolerance for uncertainty and take the time for qualitative decisions.
- Moral Integrity – Their visions are co-created along with performance measures which are reflected in future goal setting activities. Leaders know what is right for themselves and their colleagues (p. 423).



*Figure 2.* Four Components of Authentic Leadership by Walumbwa (2009).

The chart by Walumbwa et al. (2009) explained its four components and these components were supported by Northouse (2013) who also discussed these four components. Northouse (2013), “tied them to critical life events, positive psychological capacities, and moral

reasoning in the development of authentic leaders” (p. 263). According to Northouse (2013), authentic leaders are active rather than passive. Task accomplishment and follower development are equally important to them. Authentic leaders have the adeptness to understand and identify with people from different backgrounds and situations. Furthermore, within this approach, there is an emphasis on strengths as opposed to punishing or correcting weaknesses. This is supported by the work of Yammarin et al. (2008) that asserted authentic leaders can an encouraging influence on system results. Within this leadership style, there is more of an emphasis on strengths as opposed to punishing or correcting weaknesses. Overall, within this approach, there is an emphasis on strengths as opposed to punishing or correcting weaknesses. In summary, according to Northouse (2013), authentic leadership is a lifelong process dependent on one’s values and experiences. Authentic leadership appears to have a positive impact given the leader’s empathy towards others and their support of staff members. But it does involve a great deal of self-reflection (getting to know oneself), and the courage to do the right thing in difficult situations.

### **Situational Leadership**

A lot people frequently use the term situational leadership loosely to explain their leadership style while their assessment may not be entirely accurate. There are a variety of perspectives on situational leadership. According to Northouse (2013), the notion of situational leadership was developed and studied by Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey. Hackman and Johnson (2009) stated that Hershey and Blanchard created a theory of situational leadership that matched the maturity level of workers with the fundamentals of the task. According to Wickman (2008), employees have different levels of performance, and that a leader needs to know which employees to assign in differing situations. For example, the focus of their theory was that the

leadership style or employee developmental level should be used depending on the job that needed to be accomplished. He identified role-playing as a tool that situational leaders could use in training for various circumstances.

Nahavandi (2003) described this type of leader as being capable of different behaviors that were effective in diverse situations which is an important skill for today's school administrators. In other similar research, Lewin (1951) presented his Field Theory model that acknowledged a change in leader behavior may need to occur in different situations. He explained that when a person analyzed a situation, he or she might realize a change in behavior could be needed. But Lewin's focus was more on the behavior change of the leader as opposed to the worker.

An enhancement of this leadership style presented by Wallach et al. (2005) depicted a situational leader as one who could determine based on a person's expertise whether he or she was suited for a job instead of using the hierarchy level to organize all activities. But probably the most commonly and frequently used theory was introduced by Coffee and Jones (2005). They suggested that effective leaders must be able to react to fast-changing conditions which requires flexibility and adaptability in many different environments. There is a plethora of definitions for situational leadership and they will probably continue to evolve with the rapidly changing demands of administrative jobs.

Another slightly different example of situational leadership was more of a personal aspect that was formulated by Kouzes and Posner (2011). They asserted that it was essential to let the workers know that they were not being asked to perform tasks their leader would not be willing to perform. As stated earlier, the societal demands are constantly changing and their personal

aspect is reflective of the need for sensitivity to workers from different backgrounds, disabilities, gender equity and socio-economic levels who desire to be treated fairly by the leaders in charge.

In a report from the Center for Leadership Studies (2004), their researchers suggested that the situational leadership model was the most recognized, utilized and effective leadership tool in the history of behavioral sciences. Overall, situational leadership provided leaders with a grasp of the relationship between an effective style of leadership and the stage of readiness their follower's exhibit to handle a specific task. This leadership style is exemplified in the book by Jim Collins (2001), *Good to Great*. One of his critical points was the importance of putting the right people on the bus, and in the right seats and that's what these leaders do.

### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership has been pushed to the forefront for a variety of reasons. However, one of the major reasons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century came from the demands for greater accountability to increase student performance. Federal and state expectations required school systems to ensure student mastery of certain skills. And as a result, leading instructional initiatives in school systems has evolved into one of the primary roles of school administrators. This was documented in studies from professional associations such as the American Association of School Superintendents (AASA) in 2010, their researchers asserted that administrators needed to be aware of best practices, teaching strategies and techniques to provide leadership as curriculum leaders rather than managers.

But this movement was not new to the educational field. Sergiovanni (1984, 2001) proposed one of the earliest models of instructional leadership. He identified five aspects of such leadership: 1) technical, 2) educational, 3) human, 4) cultural, and 5) symbolic. According to Sergiovanni (1984), "the technical and human leadership skills are generic and not unique to

schools; they should be present in any organization where strong leadership is evident” (pp. 6–13). Many other researchers have supported and expanded the instructional leadership style such as McEwan (2003) who took it a step further by identifying the three remaining characteristics of instructional leaders—educational, symbolic, and cultural—which are directly related to the school setting.

McEwan (2003) found that there are seven steps to effective instructional leadership. These steps are neither new nor revolutionary in leadership studies but consist of variations on the theme:

- Establish, implement, and achieve academic standards. There should be consistent and coherent programs at every level.
- Coherent and consistent programs at every grade level or content area with similar outcomes and a coherent program connected from the beginning to the end.
- Be an instructional resource for the staff. “Instructional leaders function as unique ombudspersons and references who are constantly helping faculty to find solutions that they need to solve problems” (p. 33). Resource providers are responsible for finding, allocating, planning and developing programs.
- Create a school culture and climate conducive to learning. Beliefs, values, and the feelings of people are defined as culture in this context.
- Set high expectations for you and your staff. This is one of the most time-consuming steps, but it is important in creating a school community.
- Develop teacher leaders. Effective instructional leaders recognize the importance of teacher leaders and work to help develop them.

- Develop helpful relationships with students, staff and parents. Successful leaders are concerned about people. They are good listeners, counselors, or friends as needed. Building a solid rapport and having good human relations skills is vital for all stakeholders. (p. 15)

By comparison, Hallinger (2000) defined instructional leadership with only three dimensions: clarifying the school's vision, handling the curricular plan, and encouraging a progressive school climate. Hallinger (2000) stated that, "These three dimensions merge traditional leadership models with evolving trends in education reform such as shared leadership, empowerment, and organizational learning" (p. 330).

Other scholars also discussed various participatory qualities that are essential for an instructional leader. According to Enomoto, Gardiner, and Grogan (2002), they felt, "it was someone who could bring people together to work on improving teaching and learning and who is "committed to education and to students" (p. 212). In a similar way, Daresh (2001) found that

Instructional leaders have a vision derived from ongoing discussions with all interested parties; the use of participatory techniques to give teachers meaningful input in decision making; the primary responsibility is the enhancement of instruction, knowledgeable about the happenings in their schools and by being visible in the hallways and classrooms; and obtaining funding and resources for the school. (pp. 45–46)

Other examples of instructional leadership came from Jenkins (2009) who also asserted that knowing the curriculum and defining attainable goals are characteristic of an instructional leader. Brown and Wynn (2007) suggested that an instructional leader inspires progression and enhancement and understands that others seek value and support in professional development. In everyday terms, completing any school improvement process requires assessing the data to

assess student needs and oversee the instructional program to assess if the student needs and goals are being met. This requires specific skills which fall under the instructional area. Given current administrative expectations, significant gaps in this knowledge area make leading almost impossible. Although the definitions vary somewhat, overall the literature supports the need and the importance of instructional leadership.

### **Distributive Leadership**

Our world is rapidly changing for a variety of reasons. People are considered as vessels of knowledge; once they used manual labor or their hands, now they use their minds. According to Friedman (2007), in his book *The World is Flat*, commented, “more individuals today can reach farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper, than ever before and this is equalizing power” (p. 7).

Elmore (2000) emphasized that in a knowledge-intensive world, it would be difficult for one individual leader to perform every task in an organization; therefore, success is reliant on the distribution of responsibilities. And this is exactly where Distributive leadership fits within the school system. According to Northouse (2013), distributive leadership “involves the sharing of influence by team members who step forward when situations warrant providing the leadership necessary and then stepping back to allow others to lead” (p. 289). This was supported by Wallach et al. (2005); they suggested that a distributive leader makes decisions on who leads and follows based on the task or problem, not based on any hierarchy. This non-hierarchy approach is supported by Kouzes and Posner (2010); they found that if one uses this leadership style, the leader is not actually in charge of the staff; instead, a framework of relationships is developed, and everyone works together to problem solve issues. In such a non-hierarchical system, a leader can demonstrate his or her worthiness of being followed by exhibiting emotional intelligence.

Another aspect of distributive leadership was identified by Anderson (2007) who stressed the importance of the staff solving problems together, so a school can form a whole team of critical thinkers. Furthermore, the Bank Street College of Education (2009) found that collaborative efforts allow learning to emerge around educational practices, colleagues, and oneself. Examples of this type of collaborative learning would be book study groups and school learning communities that are routinely used as professional development formats. A distributive leader is someone who feels comfortable with redefining self and areas of weakness according to the Bank Street College of Education (2009).

Distributive leadership has been shown to work in a variety of ways in a school system. According to Perkin, Jewell-Sherman, Kelly, and Boozer (2011), distributive leadership works best in school systems where the school superintendent is firm and self-assured. And it can more of an impact, according to Lashway (2003), who found that integrated and shared leadership influenced more people than when the role is fulfilled by only a few individuals. A distributive leader does not delegate responsibility or shift responsibility but instead uses the thoughts and talents of others. For example, Maxwell, Scheurich, and Skrla (2009) suggested that all school employees should consider themselves both followers and leaders. Their study on collaboration involved all school staff including secretaries, bus drivers, cooks, janitors, and teachers in the decision-making process.

Another perspective of superintendent's leadership style came from a study conducted by Bird and Wang (2013). They focused specifically on the leadership style perspectives of superintendents of 301 superintendent respondents. Each superintendent completed a leadership style survey. The results from the leadership style survey found that the clear majority or approximately 97% of the participating superintendents felt their leadership styles fit into these

categories: distributive, situational, servant, and transformational leadership styles. These superintendent's perspectives were informative, but not surprising based on the research; due to the overall applicability of these leadership styles in a variety of administrative settings. These leadership styles have been shown to give today's superintendents the best range of options and the skills to meet challenging job and societal demands.

In summary, the distributive leadership offers a vision for the future. However, as Lashway (2003), suggested this model required rethinking and reorganizing the architectural structure of most existing organizations. Also, Kouzes and Posner (2012) stated that the Foundation of Distributed Leadership was valued as having a deep-rooted set of values that could help leaders to focus on improving the existing system.

Distributive leadership is based on the premise of using all the best talent in the pool, regardless of the hierarchy to solve problems and issues facing school systems in the future. And this may be necessary based on future predictions by Friedman (2007), we are in a phase that he called the "flattening of the playing field" (p. 7). The distributive leadership style is the ideal style to take advantage of this chance to utilize all the best minds to solve problems and issues. The researchers on distributive leadership identified many positive advantages and attributes of this type of leadership. Distributive leadership is based on a shared power philosophy and this shift represented an important change in the field of educational leadership. To meet societal demands in the future, the distributive leaders' skills are invaluable because these leaders can fully utilize the best talent regardless of their professional hierarchy.

However, now that some of the dominate leadership styles have been identified, the question remains, "How do you develop and support the types of leaders necessary for the

future?” The next segment examines that question by reviewing the relevance of one of the professional development and growth models for leaders—mentoring.

### **Mentoring: Definitions and Rationale**

Today, leaders need opportunities to continue to nurture and develop leadership skills. We know that effective leadership skills are a critical component in transforming failing schools. Therefore, hiring and retaining highly skilled and effective administrators had become a priority for many school districts. But the road to acquiring effective leadership skills requires more than just hiring promising new leaders. Furthermore, based on studies like Michael and Young (2006) there is evidence that simply carrying out administrative duties is insufficient to prepare administrators. This thus remains a critical issue facing many school districts. One solution to that problem is to provide high quality mentoring to school leaders.

There are many different definitions of mentoring. According to Zachary (2009), “the word mentor has often been used loosely to refer to various leaning relationships” (p. 1). Thus, it is still important to highlight the wide-range of definitions in this area Cooley (2002), claimed the word mentor originated from Homer’s *Odyssey* which occurred over 3000 years ago in Greek Mythology. An elder named Mentor was given the tasks of taking care of King Odysseus’s son, Telemachus. In taking care of the king’s son, he became not only a guide but his teacher. Thus, over the years, the name of the teacher — Mentor — has come to be known as a surrogate parent, trusted advisor and someone who is wise and kindly who acts as a guide.

Mentoring is a strategy frequently proposed for supporting educational leaders in the development of those skills. According to Crow and Mathews (1998), and Merriam (1987), mentoring leads us along the voyage of our lives. Mentors symbolize our hopes, lead a pathway way ahead, translate hidden signs, and alert us to potential threats. Dodgson (1986) depicted a

mentor as trusted and experienced counselor who influenced the career development of an associate in a warm, caring and helping relationship. While King (1986) perceived a mentor as a “teacher, coach, role model, trainer, opener of doors, protector, sponsor, developer of talent”, Zachary (2009) suggested “A mentor acts as a guide who helped us define and understand our own goals and pursue them successfully” (p. 1). These definitions, while slightly different, still support the fact that the purpose of a mentor is to help another person to develop and grow in a variety of ways in a supportive learning environment.

The purpose of mentoring does not change as we examine the mentor definitions in educational literature. In school administration, according to Pascale (1984), mentors are best viewed as individuals who will assist others in achieving their goals by ensuring that they are guided in positive career paths. English (1999) stated, mentoring is not a lifelong commitment, but a way of helping new administrators work through the challenges of the first year. This was supported by the work of Bandura (1997) and Daloz (1999), who recognized the value of mentoring as an avenue to help individuals assume their new roles, job identities and job-related expectations. According to Wasden (1988, as cited in Villani, 2006), a mentor is described as “a master at providing opportunities for the growth of others, by identifying situations and events which contribute knowledge and experience for life of the steward” (p. 17). Also, Hayes (2005) suggested that mentoring can help to develop the new administrator’s career, professional and personal development. And Villani (2006) defined mentors as those who “need to be effective and experienced colleagues who are trained and continually coached to help new administrators to reach heightened job performance and self-reflection” (p. 17).

These definitions of mentoring all suggest that mentoring is a method that could be used to improve professional development and growth. But our goal is to determine if mentoring is

one of the best ways to develop effective leadership. Because effective leadership is a critical component in transforming failing schools, it is essential to understand the impact of mentoring on the professional growth in the development of effective leaders.

School boards and communities tend to invest a lot of time and resources in their system leaders; giving them appropriate professional support is another important factor in developing and retaining highly qualified administrators. In the world of business, mentoring has been an accepted form of new employee development and training. Mentoring is a vital administrative training process with groundwork that has been connected to successful results based on studies from Cody (2002), Gardiner, Tiggerman, Keams and Marshall (2007), and Warren (2005). Kay, Hagen and Parker (2009) claimed that “the road to success is often paved by a good mentor”. Their statement was supported by Patton and Harper (2003), who stated that mentoring has been considered one of the most salient factors in academic and career success of leaders. Studies on mentoring practices by Daresh (2004), and Davis et al. (2005) were significant because they added to the knowledge base regarding the pros and cons of administrative mentoring support structures and their relationship to leadership practice in urban school settings. The results indicated a positive relationship and improvement in leadership practices in the following areas:

- Curriculum enhancement
- Developing a culture of learning and professional development
- Making community connections

The study also found support in the structures that supported implementation which were:

- Mentor training
- Weekly meetings between the mentor and protégé

- Planning tools
- Relationships that developed between the mentor and protégé

All these research studies support the importance of mentoring to the training and preparation process for new school leaders and the belief that mentoring in a career can make a huge difference in fostering success.

Daresh (2004) mentoring relationships have become very popular in teacher education and school administrator development. Furthermore, according to Kram (1985), the mentoring relationship between a mentor and a mentee goes beyond the role of supervisor and subordinate. Kram (1985) described mentoring as a developmental relationship among peers and managers and subordinates. According to other researchers, such as Scandura (1992), mentoring can offer:

- Professional support that consists of what is relevant to the career of the mentee, and success in this realm will guide the advancement of the mentee through the organization.
- The mentor can introduce the mentee to professional contacts and facilitate networking with individuals who are in positions to advance their career.
- Mentors can also offer protection from negative influences that may hinder their advancement. (pp. 169–174)

Scandura (1992) offered a very concise and focused overview of the mentoring benefits. This view was expanded by Berg, Berg, Mortimer, Walton-Moss and Yeo (2005) who found that the mentor-mentee relationship was a personal relationship that should move the mentee forward by offering support, gaining knowledge, and fostering professional development based on the mentor's previous experience. This research supports the benefits of mentoring for school leaders.

A variety of previously documented research studies, mentoring has been used as a professional development framework to develop and support new administrative skills and knowledge in school leaders. Although there is research on the benefits of mentoring in fostering high quality school leadership, the research on this type of effort for school superintendents has not been widely examined. Further research is needed to support the value of superintendent mentoring and its effectiveness for professional development and growth with new administrative leaders. This type of information would be extremely useful and valuable for school districts and universities. The next section outlines and examines some of the recommended components of mentoring programs.

### **Mentorship Programs (Initiation, Structure and Process)**

Mentoring can create a supportive learning culture for new administrators. Mentoring relationships can vary from a structured formal program to an informal and unstructured one. As Zachary (2009) states, “Mentoring relationships can look different in all shapes and sizes with varying models, one-to-one and groups, in diverse organizational settings” (p. 8). Kay, Hagan, and Parker (2009) identify three potential mentoring dimensions: initiation, structure, and process. According to these researchers, the three mentor dimensions help to explain the duration and types of relationships.

The initiation dimension is the beginning of what sets in motion or kicks off a new program. This dimension was comprehensively examined effectively in a study by Cohen and Sweeney (1992). They analyzed over 40 large urban school districts with respect to how these school districts utilized formal mentoring programs for new administrators. They found that most mentoring models had the following components: initialization, structures and process of mentor selection, training, rewards, multiple mentor planning, and socialization. They found that

the success of the mentoring program depended on the value placed on mentoring within the school district. This early study clearly set the stage regarding the significance of the school system's commitment to mentoring for professional development and its corresponding success. These researchers also found that mentoring could be particularly important for underrepresented administrative groups.

Preparation is a critical part of the initiation process which includes the program components necessary to begin the implementation process. There are school district and system-wide preparations that need to be addressed (Gross, 2006). For instance, school systems striving to establish a mentoring program should consider the following questions first:

1. How should a district interested in mentoring organize their work?
2. What is accessible in literature on this topic?
3. What theoretical framework will be used to organize the program for unity?
4. What example of leadership-mentoring will be studied as the emerging model?
5. What are the qualities for a model mentoring program?
6. How would this program be implemented and linked to district priorities?

According to the Gross (2006), answering these questions will allow a school district to assess its own level of readiness and identify gaps.

Other studies highlighted several other major program components necessary for an effective mentoring program. For example, Zellner et al. (2002) studied the *School Leadership Initiative*, which was a 3-year mentor program. The researchers in this study had the following recommendations: 1) The need to review practices for administrative hiring and sustaining administrators; 2) The design, managing and implementing of school mentoring programs; 3) The need for support networks for mentoring and on-going help; and 4) Linking theory to

practice: administrators need contextual experiences. Their recommendations focused more on linking theory to practice, networking and leadership practices necessary to support administrative management. But this study is an important example of a long-term study which is not that common in this area and the information provides another useful perspective.

A more district-wide responsibility focus for mentoring preparation was developed by Hansford and Tennent (2004)/ They recommended that effective formal mentoring programs require the following key components: Orientation and Entry; Mentor Selection and Matching; Mentor Selection Criteria; Mentor Training; Mentor's Responsibilities; New Administrators' Responsibilities; Other Principals (non-mentors) Responsibilities; District Responsibilities; Fair Climate for Growth; and Program Evaluation

While all the program components add value and are noteworthy, the mentoring process really starts with the individual. The individual focus starts with some of the most important steps that a mentee should bring to the program. First, as one considers mentoring, it is necessary to understand your own strengths and weaknesses. For example, we all have different learning styles and preferences. According to Zachary (2000), a person's learning style influenced mentoring in several ways: how you work with your mentor, how you learn, and how you handle situations. There are several tools recommended to help determine one's learning style such as *The Kolb Learning Style Inventory* by D. A. Kolb (2005) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (the MBTI) in *Type Talk, the 16 Personality Types that Determine How We live, Love, and Work* by O. Kroeger and J. M. Thuesen (1988) or *Becoming a More Versatile Learner* by M. Dalton (1998). These are useful tools that can help to set-up a better learning situation with the mentor.

However, there are other skills that the mentee needs to bring to the mentor relationship. This was supported by research from Daresh and Payko (1995) who found that mentees need the following skills and outlooks in the mentoring relationship:

- A. A good grasp of the teaching process
- B. Good attending and interaction skills
- C. Openness and collegiality
- D. Commitment to mentoring

However, these researchers also cautioned that the mentoring structure may not be a good match for all individuals and their learning styles.

According to Zachary (2012), the mentees needed to access their own proficiency in the following areas before starting a relationship with the mentor were: giving and receiving feedback, self-directed learning, building relationships, communication, goal setting, effective listening, follow-through, reflection, initiatives, and valuing differences. Zachary (2009) also stated that “self-awareness about your own skills is an important step in preparing for your mentorship relationship” (p. 32). According to Searby (2014), a mentee with a mentoring mindset takes initiative, possesses a learning orientation, has a goal orientation, and is relational and reflective.

Another programmatic consideration deals with the mentor needs. Muse (1992) found the mentoring relationship to be more valuable if the practicum placement was longer and the mentors were experienced administrators. Barnett (1995) further suggested that the objective of mentoring is for mentors to facilitate the transition of their mentees from the stage of dependency and inexperience in terms of problem solving to one of autonomy and expertise. And this letting go process, moving to independence, may be the most difficult for the mentee and mentor.

Slightly different mentoring components or qualities were found by other researchers. Walker and Stott (1994) found that trust and respect were found to be critical qualities. For example, Walker and Stott (1994) found that successful mentoring was reliant on developing trust, communicating expectations, developing mentors, growing a relationship beyond the school environment, and nurturing facilitator participation and flexibility. Trust was the most essential element in a mentor-mentee relationship because it sanctions both the mentor and protégé to identify, agree to, communicate, and consequently work to improve ineffective practices (Porter, 1998). Daresh (2001) found that mentor-protégé relationships are based on several fundamental skills that effective mentors need to exhibit. Daresh (2001) found these included mentor skills, such as treating others with respect, facilitating team membership, developing informal relationships, recognizing and responding to individual differences, and demonstrating a willingness to learn from others.

Another requisite skill that is important in the mentoring relationship was communication. Communication is an important job skill, but is equally important in the mentoring relationship. This is based on information from Zachary (2000), who asserted that effective communication is also important to successful mentoring, just as it would be in any other relationship. Communication was based on effective listening, supportiveness, and trust. This belief was expanded by Lee et al. (2006) who suggested that an effective listener is one who can listen and learn about others interest, needs, and goals. In the end, these studies support the mentee-mentor relationship.

Communication skills supported the next important preparation step for mentoring which is the ability to develop goals. Jung (2007) recommended the guide to the development of quality goals and objectives in this mentor process is through specific, measurable, attainable,

realistic, and timely (S.M.A.R.T.) goals. According to Jones and Pauley (2003), the mentee and mentor should be thoughtful about the goal setting process, and about laying out new ideas to use while participating in discussions about what worked and what did not work. Mentoring is highly dependent on one's written and oral communication skills, which is also important for the job, but communication is a skill that can be developed and improved over time.

Another important consideration in mentoring is role modeling. According to Bandura (1997), the role modeling function is based on social learning theory. Bandura states that mentees absorb information by watching the actions of the mentor. While a role model could be a mentor that is not always the case. Based on studies by Lockwood et al. (2002), role modeling may involve the recall of a factual role model from the participant's past, but frequently researchers refer to a role model as someone specific to the study at hand. This also means that a role model does have to be someone with whom the participant had a personal or fact-to-face relationship. This is entirely different for a mentor relationship. A mentor, by contrast, does not have to be someone with whom the participant has an interpersonal or face-to-face relationship. This mentor relationship fact was supported in the literature by Hitt, Tucker, and Young (2012), and Mitgang (2012), and is a significant difference.

### **Structures of Mentoring Relationships**

Structure in this study refers to the arrangement and organization of the mentoring elements which may include the types of mentoring, the components and other pertinent patterns found in those mentor relationships. Generally, mentoring structures fall into two categories: formal and informal.

**Formal mentoring.** Formal mentoring is the most recognized and pervasive type of mentoring in the mentoring research. However, according to Bartell (2005), it's only in the last

several decades that formal mentoring has found an important place in the education and professional development continuum. According to Erich et al. (2004), formal mentoring programs differ in terms of their nature, focus, and outcomes.

According to Haung and Lynch (1995), “It is the dance between two willing and consenting partners, a dance of giving and receiving each other’s gift” (p. 5). However, Daresh (2004) stated, “most formal mentoring programs are formed in compliance with state mandates; and relationships are developed as marriages of convenience rather than naturally developed ones” (p. 503). Daresh’s statement remained accurate especially regarding the establishment of most formal mentoring relationships in school settings.

This statement was also supported by Zachary (2012), who suggested that “formal mentoring relationships are typically developed as a program within an organization. Generally, the formal relationship may follow these steps: 1) identifying goals, 2) setting the terms of the relationship, and 3) closure” (p. 9). Mullen (2005), notes that “formal mentoring is an institutionalized mentor-mentee arrangement based on assignments to the relationship through one-on-one cohort formats” (p. 25). Even though, the formal mentoring relationship may be required, their structure and quality varies greatly.

To work best, formal mentoring programs that guidelines and components to produce optimal results. This point was made by Zachary (2012), who suggested that a criterion-based model was needed for decision-making in the selection of the mentor for the relationship. Zachary (2012) developed eight steps that have proven to be very useful in selecting a mentor in a formal relationship. However, mentee-mentor agreement with these responsibilities was crucial to the relationship. Zachary’s (2009) eight guidelines are listed as follows: “well-defined goals; criteria or way to measure success; accountability guidelines; ground rules; safeguards for

confidentiality; set boundaries and topics to avoid; set protocols to address issues; both sides agree on the agreement; and devise a work plan” (p. 56).

Other researchers, like Hansford and Tennent (2004) found a similar mentoring design and structural need. These researchers, asserted that effective formal mentoring programs should have the following design elements: Orientation and Entry; Mentor Selection and Matching; Mentor Selection Criteria; Mentor Training; Mentors’ Responsibilities; New Administrators’ Responsibilities; Other Principals (Non-mentors) Responsibilities; District Responsibilities; and A Fair Climate for Growth and Program Evaluation.

Guidelines and recommendations proposed by researchers vary a little in terms of focus and detail. For example, Hansford and Tennent (2004) includes more of a district’s responsibility focus, mentor training and overall climate concerns whereas Zachery is focused primarily on the individual mentoring relationship, responsibilities and setting guidelines. However, both complement each other and provide school systems good viable considerations in terms of structure and substantial guidelines necessary to begin a formal mentoring program.

In addition to the types of mentoring, there are also some related studies that suggest other components that should be present in the mentoring structure. Michael and Young (2006) studied how to gather guidance and understanding from experienced school leaders on how to develop and help the next cohort of educational leaders using staff development and mentoring. They analyzed the data and used a rigorous qualitative methodology approach with open-ended responses. Several common themes aligned with professional development emerged:

- Coursework and field-based experiences linked to theory
- Instructors who were seasoned practitioners could better match text to real world experiences

- Social sciences seem inadequate in the leadership curriculum
- Networking options with colleagues across the region, state and country
- Develop mentoring interactions when possible
- Foster professional staff development opportunities

Their study clarified the need to link theory with real life experiences in the course work with the real world. School environments are becoming increasingly difficult for new administrators. AASA (2010) reported significantly higher superintendent turnover rates in urban school districts.

Many researchers suggested that a solid mentoring relationship may go through several phases of formation (Bouquillon, Sosik, & Lee, 2005; Hayes, 2005; Zachary, 2000). These four mentoring phases from Zachary (2009) include:

- preparing and developing trust
- negotiating roles
- enabling, implementing and maintaining the relationship
- coming to closure. (pp. 7-8)

These four phases have been considered the most dominant and accepted organizational structure for most mentoring relationship. Zachary (2009) developed guidelines for all these phases which has been extremely helpful and useful for the mentee, the mentor and the organization in terms of oversight and evaluation.

**Informal mentoring.** Another type of mentoring is informal mentoring. According to Mullen (2005), informal mentoring “is a mentor-protégé relationship that is spontaneous and self-directed, not managed, structured, or officially recognized” (p. 25). Cox (2005) called it “coincidence and development capability” (p. 410). Hu, Thomas, and Lance (2008) found that

this relationship usually developed without an organization, institution or system arranging the formal pairing or organizational incentives. However, they noted that informal mentoring was still very critical in organizations that did not have formal mentoring programs. Informal mentoring is valued option for training and developing new employees. Often in informal mentoring, the relationship develops based on a common interest or a need and is typically voluntary. It may start out as a friendly relationship that involves gaining knowledge that eventually impacts and improves one's career.

### **Other Mentoring Structural Aspects**

As noted, mentoring can be formal or informal. Additionally, there are other structural aspects of mentoring in terms of how it is delivered. Two of the newest types of approaches are e-mentoring sometimes also called virtual mentoring and collaborative mentoring that tends to engage more than two people in the mentoring process.

### **E-Mentoring or Virtual Mentoring**

E-mentoring or virtual mentoring is one of the newest types of mentoring to come on the scene. Due to the widespread availability of the world-wide web and the internet, it has become possible to use virtual mentoring (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Mullen, 2004). Bierema and Merriam (2002) characterized e-mentoring as the use of computerized email and conferencing systems to support a mentoring relationship when a one-to-one interaction is not possible. Despite its advantages, Bierema and Merriam (2002) also stated that, "E-mentoring is not bound by the national or local culture, a factor that can be both detrimental and beneficial" (p. 219).

Another positive element of e-mentoring is that the mentee had access to a broader variety of mentors. Communicating via a chat room, email, or list serve eliminates the barriers of logistics and helped people to be mentors who would not otherwise be able to participate. It

created the opportunity for mentor relationships to cross the boundaries of geography, time zones around the world, and even cultural barriers (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). According to Knouse (2001), a mentee may be more open to discussing sensitive issues or personal problems with anonymous people through an e-mentoring relationship than with a one-to-one contact.

Muller (2004) praised e-mentoring as cost effective and efficient because a large group of mentors and mentees can be matched and coached continuously using blogs, conference calls, skype, face time, and email. According to Bierema and Merriam (2002), “E-mentoring is another way to develop an innovative definition of mentoring. It can offer a modern method of facilitating learning and mentoring in this evolving technology age” (p. 223).

However, Purcell (2004) cautioned that email is good for some communication, but not all things. It may work effectively for article critiques or scheduling, but not for handling personal and sensitive issues. According to Muller (2004), deducing meaning from a variety of non-verbal cues can lead to miscommunication or the wrong idea. Computer malfunctions are another potential problem with e-mentoring. Technical support is critical given the heavy reliance on technology for communication (Kealy & Muller, 2003). Another important factor to be consider is that long distance relationships can be difficult to build and maintain between a mentor and mentee (Purcell, 2004).

E-mentoring or virtual mentoring is here to stay and will only become more pervasive in the future. Technology is constantly evolving and this format or some updated version will continue to be a mainstay for communication due to its convenience, costs and ease of use. But more importantly, it allows one to have a mentor with expertise who lives on the other side of the world; this is not only possible but already a reality.

## **Collaborative Mentoring**

Collaborative mentoring has brought new opportunities for mentees and mentors. Collaborative mentoring represents a relationship that is reciprocal and mutually beneficial for both participants. According to Homes, Land and Hinton-Hudson (2007), in this type of mentoring, a more equal relationship exists where each person contributes to the progress and growth of the other. Within this type of relationship those involved support one another's learning and provide feedback to one another. Zachary (2012) found that "each mentor brings their own experience to the relationship increasing shared meaning and resulting in something greater emerging from this process" (p. 3). Adding to that information, Mullen (2000), suggested that "when professional support networks use a collaborative mentoring model, new possibilities become available for relationship and intuitional change" (p. 1). This mentoring approach was found to be mutually beneficial for the mentees and the mentor and will probably continue to expand in the future and may be the most appealing for many new school leaders. Kochan and Pascarelli (2012) label this type of mentoring as transformative. They suggest that the roles continually change and the purpose of such mentoring often involves transforming the cultural context within which those involved are operating (p. 193).

### **The Mentoring Process**

In this study, process is a systematic series of actions, steps or plans directed to achieve a result; in this case the result is the mentoring program. For any of the actions or plans to be effective, it is necessary to set the stage for the best learning in a mentoring relationship. In terms of processing information, a study by Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) stressed that most adults learn best when they apply newly acquired knowledge in

authentic settings and follow it by engaging in critical self-reflection (Brandt, 1990). This finding supports and is exactly the basis or premise for the mentoring relationship.

When this foundation of learning is absent from the mentoring relationship, the relationship is simply transactional. According to Zachary (2009), “Mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship between the mentee and the mentor. To be effective, the relationship needs the following elements: reciprocity, learning, and relationship” (pp. 2–3). The mentoring relationship should be goal-oriented and self-oriented as outlined by Malcolm Knowles (1980). Zachary (2011) called this viewpoint of process-oriented mentoring relationship a learner-centered mentoring paradigm. The process in which the mentee is taught how to share responsibility for the focus, achievement and funds leads to becoming self-directed. This foundation is a primary part of the mentoring process that needs to be in place for the most effective mentoring relationships.

Another important part of this process is the selection of the mentor. The mentor-mentee match can be critical to the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. Also, form mentoring in the fields of education, business and medicine, Ehrich et al. (2004) found that professional expertise and/or personality mismatch was one of the most commonly cited issues with mentoring partnerships. This problem was discussed in 12.6% of the studies for mentees and 17% for mentors. This concern was previously documented in an earlier study by Long (1997). His study reviewed the adverse points of mentoring and listed six studies that document failed matches between mentor and mentee. Since this is an important element in the mentoring, it is necessary to review other options that could help with this mentor selection match. For example, several studies below have reviewed participant response on and appraisal of the pairing matches in mentoring programs.

These mentoring studies were all completed in the United States except for one (Madison et al., 1993). Overall, the data from the studies demonstrated conflicting results on the best methods to the pairing process. According to D'Abate and Eddy (2008), and Ragins et al. (2000) found that the mentor pairs studied with the use of a program facilitator did reveal satisfactory mentor relationships in studies.

However, even though Ragins et al. (2000) found satisfactory relationships with mentors aided by program facilitators, he asserted there was little support for the hypothesis that involvement by mentees and mentors in the matching process would produce increased good attitudes and be more efficient than mentoring assigned by program facilitators. By comparison, a completely opposite opinion and statement came from Chao et al. (1992), who claimed the “haphazard allocation of mentees to mentees is analogous to blind dates: with a small probability that the match will be successful” (p. 634). This statement was supported by the study from Viator (1999) who discovered the significance of participant involvement in the mentor matching selection. He found that mentees who were not involved in the pairing selection were much less content with their mentor. This research was supported by Allen et al. (2006); they found that mentee input into the matching process was preferred by mentees. However, according to Metros and Yang (2006) there are some identified issues linked to mentees choosing their own mentor:

- Will a working or personal relationship be damaged if the future mentor turns down the request?
- Will a potential mentor feel the request is an honor or an obligation?
- Does the mentee comprehend how others in the system will feel about this mentor choice?

- Is the mentor well respected in the system and the broader profession?
- If the mentor fails, will the mentee fail by the connection? (p. 51)

These are important considerations for the mentee as they consider their future in a field where administrative networking is critical. Obviously, more definitive research needs to be done in mentor selection to determine the best approach. However, there are proactive steps school districts can still take to help the mentoring process operate better.

One recommendation that would be helpful for school systems to avoid unproductive mentor-mentee assignments was to carefully select the most qualified mentors. This recommendation was based on research from Geismar, Marris, and Lieberman (2000). Some school systems allow the mentees to pair with mentors who they feel would be good matches for them and have their best interest in mind. But in these cases, the pool has been pre-screened in terms of quality.

Another mentoring recommendation comes from Zachary (2009). She recommended the mentor selection process would work better using a criterion-based decision-making model with the following steps:

- 1) Identify your goal
- 2) Create a list of criteria for the mentor
- 3) Determine qualities that are “musts”
- 4) Rank the remaining criteria (wants) in order of importance and assign a value to each
- 5) List the possible options
- 6) Eliminate options that don’t meet the “musts”
- 7) Rate each option against “wants”
- 8) Make the decision (p. 41–44)

This criteria-based list by Zachary (2009) is intended to be a helpful tool in establishing a good match with a mentor. According to Zachary (2009), these steps are built upon well-defined goals which helped the mentee and mentor maintain their focus and keep the mentor relationship on track. Furthermore, Zachary (2000) in her book, “outlined the need for ground rules to ensure the good use of time, confidentiality and accountability.” She acknowledges “three levels of accountability: accountability for the relationship, accountability for the learning process and the accountability for the completion of the learning goals” (p. 124). According to Zachary, the *Mentee’s Guide* contains the following list of possible or essential mentor attributes: “Approachable; capable of honest self-examination; care about and respect of others; committed to being an active mentoring partner; committed to self-development and self-improvement; emotionally intelligent; empathetic; feel secure about myself; follow up on ideas and suggestions; goal-oriented; innovative problem-solver; not threatened by the success of others; open to new ideas; positive role model; reflective; resourceful; strong interpersonal skills; trustworthy and willing to trust others; value difference; and willing and able to spend time” (p. 124). Overall, Zachary (2009) laid out some essential guidelines about mentee attributes that would be highly beneficial for most mentor relationship.

The final key component to effective mentoring is the development of reflective practice. Reflective questioning, according to Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995), instead of authoritarian advising, “puts mentors where they need to be, out of the action, looking on, encouraging, rather than taking over and doing the work of the learner” (p. 25). The importance of reflection was confirmed by Zachary (2009) who stated that, “reflection is an instrumental part of the mentoring process” (p. 19). Zachary (2009) defined “reflections in the context of mentoring as the ability to

critically examine your current or past practices, behaviors, actions, and thoughts to more consciously and purposefully develop yourself personally and professionally” (p. 18). Reflection is a skill that is being recognized more based in terms of relevance and this was highlighted by Bruce Barnett (2004) in his book *Reflective Practice: The Cornerstone for School Improvement*. Barnett (2004) stated that “The meaning of reflection and its value are rarely made explicit in our personal and professional lives and pointed out that when you combine hindsight, insight, and foresight you can make the most of your reflective powers” (p. 6). But the best example of reflection was given by Jones and Pauley (2003); they stated that the “mentee and mentor should be reflective of the process, putting new ideas to use and engaging in dialogue about what worked and what did not work” (p. 25). In other words, without reflection being a part of the mentoring process, it became more difficult for school administrators to completely understand their successes and avoid future mistakes.

Another important part of the mentor process is mentor selection. And there are some models and steps that school districts have taken to lessen the mix-match selection process between mentors and mentees. However, one of the variables that still impacts the mentor selection process are the personal characteristics of mentors; unfortunately, these characteristics may vary greatly. The following research outlines the most frequently mentioned and desired traits for good mentors. According to Leslie, Lingard, and Whyte (2005), they found that mentors should be a “good match in terms of practice, vision and personality. A good mentor should be able to provide a broad perspective while prioritizing the mentee’s best interest” (p. 694). A shift to the qualities necessary to promote solid interpersonal relationships with the mentor was presented by McDowell-Long (2004) which included: being friendly, approachable,

understanding, and patient. He felt that mentors who were dedicated, compassionate, honest, and respectful were the most effective mentors.

This important relationship perspective was continued by Johnson (2007) who asserted that it was essential “that a good mentor had virtue, acquired skills, and the ability to integrate these into the relationship with the mentor” (p. 75). Johnson (2007) highlighted three attributes of a competent mentor: caring, integrity, and prudence.

Caring referred to a pattern of respect and sensitivity to the needs of others. The lack thereof can be easily detected by the mentee. Integrity refers to consistency in behavior in different situations. Good mentors understand and respect confidentiality and the need for privacy. The last attribute of mentor competency is prudence: Prudence indicates appropriate action and evidence of good decision making. (p. 75)

Based on this research, the ideal mentor possesses many virtuous attributes and characteristics. These mentor attributes may be difficult to access without prior experiences based on interactions, referrals and/or networking to gain knowledge about these high-quality mentors.

These personal characteristic perspectives were expanded by the report from the *Citizenship in Action and Leadership Theory and Application* (2005). The researchers in this report outlined additional qualities a good and successful mentor should possess:

- a. Job knowledge; being flexible and open-minded
- b. Knowledge and usage of effective communication skills, such as
  1. Ability to listen and accept different viewpoints
  2. Ability to have empathy for another person’s struggle
- c. Apply effective leadership skills such as problem solving, goal setting, decision making; the ability to see opportunities, solutions, and barriers

- d. Have a personal commitment to work with other people; being available and supportive when needed
- e. Respect for individuals' being patient, trustworthy, honesty, and having a sincere and caring attitude. (p. 393)

These personal attributes were aligned slightly more with practical skills and applied knowledge categories than strictly personal qualities. In summary, Zachary (2009) stated, “a mentoring partnership includes considered choices and trials as each of us think about what we might become and to remember Ralph Waldo Emerson’s sage words, what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us” (p. 129). The mentoring research has given us an exhaustive list of personal qualities and characteristics that would be beneficial for a mentor to have in the mentoring relationship. Ultimately, the mentoring process starts with the administrator, the school district and their willingness to make a commitment to learning and developing into a better leader.

### **Mentoring and School Administrators**

School boards, community members and parents have high expectations for new school administrators. However, these high expectations have typically not been aligned with the awareness or need for continual professional training and development for the person in charge, the superintendent. But according to Andrew Garner (2000), “there is a reverse hierarchy of needs for coaching and mentoring. The further you go up the organization, the more experience and skills you need- and the skills your mentor needs. For lower and middle management, it means initially just filling up the toolbox of skills” (p. 21). The research reviewed in this study supported the need for continual professional growth and development and distinguished between leaders and managers. Mentoring has been used to train and develop new

administrators for years. Using mentoring as our professional development framework, we will explore how mentoring impacts the professional growth and development of underrepresented groups like minorities at the highest level in school systems.

### **Minorities in School Administration**

Before we explore how mentoring impacts professional growth and development impacted of underrepresented groups, it is first necessary to frame the changing economic and demographic factors facing new administrators in the southern region of the United States. The demographics in the United States are changing rapidly across the United States, but nowhere as quickly as the southern region. These demographic changes were documented by the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) in 2010, titled “The New Diverse Minority”. The SEF (2010) report had data about the emergence in 2006 of a new majority of low income students in the South’s public schools for the first time in more than a half century.

Another economic factor was documented by the SEF (2010) data. The South has the biggest number and the largest percentage of low income public school students in the nation. In 2008, fourteen states across the nation had most of low income students in the public schools. Eleven of the fourteen states with the largest percentage of low income students were in the southern region. In other words, the largest number of students in poverty live in the South. Poverty has its own share of challenges for administrators. This has been well documented by Ruby Payne (2009). According to Payne (2009), in school, learning is abstract (represented on paper or computer), verbal, and proactive (students must plan). In the learning environment of poverty, learning is based on the physical world, it depends on non-verbal information as much as verbal, and it is reactive. These two worlds could not be more diametrically opposed for children in poverty. For example, often these students enter school with little or no exposure to

academic skills, poor healthcare, and potential abuse and mobility issues. All these factors impact the student's achievement and ability to learn in a school setting.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2014 predicted that students of color will represent 56 percent of the student population in 2024, while White students will represent 46 percent, a drop from 51 percent. During the same 12-year period, the proportion of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students is projected to increase. Hispanic public-school students are projected to represent 29 percent in 2024 and Asian/Pacific Islander students are projected to represent 6 percent of the total enrollment in 2024 (p. 4). These projections all illustrate and support the changing student racial demographics in public schools.

The Southern region of the country, which is where this study occurred, has the most low-income students and minority students in the public-school system. This trend appeared earlier in a few states, but was unparalleled and not present in any other region. These new developments constitute perhaps the greatest challenges that the South has faced since the 1954 Supreme Court opinion prohibiting school segregation. According to the SEF (2010), these staggering numbers are profound and meeting the significant needs of these low-income students will be complex and challenging. Meeting the diverse needs of this increasingly high percentage of low-income students will require an unprecedented transformation in education. That means successful leadership will have to be able to handle diverse cultural and lower socio-economic situations; this change clearly calls for innovative leadership approaches, innovative curriculum and additional research. One problematic issue in this situation is that as American society continues to become more diverse, students' demographics in public schools reflect that diversity; that same diversity is not often represented in the administrative positions.

According to Sperandio (2009), institutional barriers have resulted in discrimination in societal and cultural norms of leadership and socialization in schools. For instance, based on research from Mendez-Morse (2000) and Ortiz, (2000), “although many minorities have entered the ranks of educational administration within the last few decades, the participation of minorities and women in educational leadership positions remains minimal” (p. 171). This trend has impacted the numbers of minorities and women in leadership roles not only in the south, but nationally. This was also demonstrated in the study by Haar and Robicheau (2008), involving the lack of minority leaders in Minnesota school districts. Although the student populations were comprised of 50% or more students from diverse backgrounds, the number of minority school administrators was extremely low.

Low minority representation at the higher level administrative positions may be due to several factors. In one study by Walker and Dimmock (2000), “It was acknowledged that the field of educational leadership and management had developed along ethnocentric lines, heavily dominated by Anglo-American paradigms and theories” (p. 144). Additionally, educational administrative theories are known not only to be Anglo-American dominated, but also male-dominated. This male dominance was supported by Bush (2003) who wrote, “The androcentricity of educational management is evident in the United States where school administration evolved into a mainly female occupation of teaching” (p. 29).

Some studies have even proposed that minorities and women didn’t desire to become administrators because of their lack of focus on instructional matters and the lack of time available for family obligations, this was suggested by Wynn (2003, as cited in Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Marshall and Hooley (2006) further suggested that one reason minority representation is not high in school administration is due to special risks. Several risks were

identified by Wynn (2003) such as the difficulty establishing professional rapport with White colleagues and being alienated by other non-minority administrators due a lack of respect (as cited in Marshall & Hooley, 2006). While interesting, these studies and examples do not account for the historic marginalization of an entire race of people from positions of power. According to Murtadha and Watts (2005), prior to the 1960s, there were some opportunities for African Americans, particularly males, to obtain administrative positions in primarily segregated schools that served only African American student populations. But, African American women were hired primarily for teaching positions.

This historic marginalization of minorities was documented in a study on the administrative area by Haar and Robicheau (2008). Unfortunately, this narrative is not surprising given our history and struggles with human rights and education as a nation. This is easily demonstrated by *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) which was a landmark decision on the segregation of public schools; that case was followed by the massive Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Overall, the Civil Rights movement and the subsequent laws were an attempt to gain equal rights for minorities in every sector of society, including work and schools.

Even after these laws have been in place for decades, there are still some apparent barriers facing minorities who attempt to enter school administration. The barriers faced today by minorities were examined and reported on by Sperandio (2010), Lumby and Morrison (2010), and Eagly and Carli (2009). For example, Eagly and Carli (2009) wrote, “the glass ceiling has been replaced by complex and circuitous obstacles to high-level leadership roles” (p. 578). The researchers concluded that women and minorities have made some strides in terms of representation in educational leadership within the last few decades. Eagly and Carli (2009) also

reported, there are still instances in which workplace equality with their White male counterparts has not been reached and this is also reflected in the leadership training programs.

The findings of Carli (2009), Derrington and Sharratt (2009), Lumby and Morrison (2010), Sperandio (2010), and Eagly and Carli (2009) exposed a list of barriers in reaching administrative positions. These barriers, whether institutional or self-imposed, were repeatedly mentioned in the study:

1. Lack of role models, mentors, or sponsors
2. Lack of peer acceptance
3. Self and family constraints
4. Exclusion from informal networks and informational resources
5. Subjection to subtle or overt acts of racism and sexism
6. Subordinates challenging authority
7. Subjection to higher performance level requirements compared to their White colleagues
8. Racial and gender stereotyping associated with weak job performance
9. Restrictions placed on decision-making responsibilities
10. Limited advancement opportunities

Another complicating factor is simply the smaller size of the available pool of minority administrators. It is difficult to fully gauge or comprehend this problem because recruitment and admission practices among university leadership training programs has varied considerably across the United States. Carr, Chenoweth, and Ruhl (2003) stated, “The individuals enrolled may or may not mirror the existing demographic composition of the local district and community” (p. 207). This does not include the layer of institutional structures which may

include promotion procedures and job requirements that may represent a barrier for many underrepresented groups. Lumby and Coleman (2007), and Sperandio (2010) asserted that, “there is a general agreement that the profile of educational leaders and the enactment of leadership is exclusive rather than inclusive, and that the systems which maintain these positions were multiple, complex, structural and persistent” (p. 5). Their study exposed the fact that even though there are some highly visible leaders from underrepresented groups, those isolated positions and changes were not reflective of the norm.

Overall, there have not been a vast amount of research and studies that have focused on this issue of underrepresented groups in educational administration. Murtadha et al. (2005) stressed that as more minorities and women enter the field of administration, the lack of interest in research studies focusing on the leadership of marginalized groups such as women and minorities is beginning to decrease. The few studies that are available support that discrimination against minorities has occurred throughout American history, in a variety of areas including their pursuit to positions of leadership in school districts.

To deal with these types of practices, Hear and Robicheau (2008) suggested that, “Clearly, schools will need to create programs and systems responsive to the special needs of a diverse, multi-ethnic student body. Effective leadership in a contemporary multicultural environment will require a different understanding of more complex issues compared to 30 years ago. (p. 7)

Marshall and Hooley (2006) stressed that not only do minorities need to learn how to deal with the challenges associated with school administrators, but also, as aspiring school leaders, they should receive some type of leadership preparation, regardless of sex or ethnicity.

## **Conclusion**

This review has documented consistent recommendations for aspiring school leaders to have mentoring relationships. This has been documented in studies by Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010), Daresh (2004), Haar and Robicheau (2008), Marshall and Hooley (2006), and Villani (2006). These studies have supported a variety of benefits from a mentoring relationship. This may be particularly important for superintendents and especially for those from minority groups. As Mendez-Morse (2004) state, “The benefits of a mentoring relationship familiar to and practiced by men in senior or leadership positions are assumed to be transferable to women and minorities” (p. 562). Therefore, if one group is underrepresented and isolated from reaching jobs at this highest level within school systems, it is important to understand how mentoring could better support the professional development and growth of these individuals. Research on underrepresented groups has been limited; however, even a small sample can provide valuable insights since there is a gap in the literature. This information would be beneficial in bridging the underrepresented administrative educator’s workforce gap and providing helpful training insights for all future school leaders.

## CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the methods used to collect data to investigate answers to the research questions generated for this study. The chapter describes the purposes and significance of the study and the researcher provides the methodology of the study which includes: a) the research questions; b) design of the study; c) context; d) instrumentation; e) data collection; f) data analysis; and g) summary. Along with the rationale for qualitative research, and concerns about validity, reliability and credibility are addressed. Assumptions and limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter ends with a summary that demonstrates the connections with the main sections presented as a part of the research design methodology for this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how a structured mentoring program fostered and supported new African American superintendents in Alabama with their emerging leadership skills, career goals, and personal and professional growth goals from the superintendent's perspective. As noted in Chapter II, the literature review revealed a great deal of research supporting teacher and principal mentoring, yet limited studies describing the influence of mentoring on new superintendents or higher-level administrators in school systems across the nation.

In the state of Alabama, all newly seated school superintendents are paired with a mentor through the SSA. Participation is mandatory. Each superintendent completes a survey about the outcomes of this mentoring experience at the end of the first year as a superintendent. The research was focused on the mentoring experience as perceived by new African American superintendents involved in the program and its alignment with the standard mentoring processes.

### **Research Questions**

This study was designed to allow the researcher to answer the following questions:

1. What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the degree to which the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership and management roles?
2. What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the most effective elements of the mentoring program?
3. What are the superintendent's perceptions of their mentoring experiences alignment to the standard formal mentoring process identified by Zachary (2009)?
4. What are the superintendents' perceptions of the ways the mentoring program could be improved in terms of weaknesses and methods for improvement?

### **Significance of the Study**

In Alabama, African American superintendents are under-represented in school districts, when the percentages of African American students and educators in Alabama schools are taken into consideration. Thus, the researcher will explore the perceptions of African American superintendents who participated in the mentoring program to ascertain if this structured mentoring program helped to add or assist them in achieving their career, personal and professional development goals. The success and effective preparation of superintendents

through the mentoring program is a serious and important issue due to the high turnover rates and demands placed on school administrators. And many school systems are finding it difficult not only to retain those who are currently in school administrative positions, but also to attract candidates for new vacant administrative positions (Shen, Cooley, & Wegenke, 2004; Witaker & Vogel, 2005). Ultimately, all new school leaders need to continually grow professionally so it is critical that they receive the best training possible to be able to create the optimal learning environment for all students.

### **Design of the Study**

In this study, the researcher used qualitative methods to help identify the perceptions about how the mentoring program provided by the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) added to and assisted in the attainment of district goals, career goals, and the personal growth and professional development goals of new African American superintendents in Alabama. Qualitative research was chosen because this type of research deals with the how, what, and why in situations calling for more in-depth exploration to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2005).

Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of perceptions and behaviors as it relates to specific topics or issues. The results of qualitative research are typically more descriptive rather than predictive. James P. Spradley (1972) gave a clear example of qualitative research:

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them and to explain them as you would explain them.

This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of those school administrators involved in a structured mentoring program. According to Creswell (2008), there are typically five approaches to qualitative research and those include: narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case studies research. This research involved a case study with a selected group of administrators in a structured mentoring program. Creswell (2005) defines case study as “a variation of ethnography in that the researcher provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an event, a process, or an individual) based on extensive data collection” (p. 439).

According to Creswell (2013),

A hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that presents an in-depth understanding of the case. To accomplish this, the researcher collects many forms of qualitative data, ranging from interviews, to observations to documents to, to audiovisual materials.

Relying on one source of data is typically not enough to develop this in-depth understanding. (p. 98)

This study has a variety of data sources.

### **Context**

While the number of African American superintendents hired represents a significant increase, it is still significantly below the demographic data represented by students of color ratio which is forty-five percent ([www.alsde.edu/sec/comm/QuickFacts/QF-2017-online.pdf](http://www.alsde.edu/sec/comm/QuickFacts/QF-2017-online.pdf)).

Superintendents represent the highest ranking educational leaders in the nation and if one group is consistently underrepresented and isolated from reaching and maintaining jobs at the highest level due to a variety of factors, there is an evident problem.

SSA (School Superintendents of Alabama) has made a continuous effort to provide mentoring for all new superintendents. According to SSA's brochure,

Their executive coaching model is a professional alliance between a new superintendent and a successful veteran superintendent. SSA has a cadre of trained coaches available for systems as part of their SSA membership. All coaches have been trained in the Corporate Coach U (CCU) model to effectively work with superintendents during the first year.

CCU is a leading global provider of customized corporate coach and mentor training and corporate coaching services. SSA has more than twenty veteran superintendents trained to serve as executive coaches. SSA holds new superintendent planning meetings in conjunction with the summer, fall and legislative conferences. Coaches are paired by county districts, i.e., in the same district if possible; being in the same district or region leads to greater ease of interaction. The match is built on trust and confidentiality. Coaches concentrate on current issues and help the new superintendents to utilize and implement appropriate actions. Attention is given to meeting prior to the annual personnel deadlines in the spring which includes non-renewal notices and prior to submission of ALSDE student enrollment and free-reduced data in the fall that provides the foundation for the district budget. There are officially eight required contacts during the year, of which at least four contacts are personal meetings.

### **Instrumentation**

Two research tools were used in this study. The data research instruments were: 1) School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) archived surveys, and 2) face-to-face interviews.

The first data instrument in this study was the archived surveys. Survey research is appropriate when the goal is to collect participants' opinions or perception on some issue (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). SSA has been compiling questionnaire/survey data on their

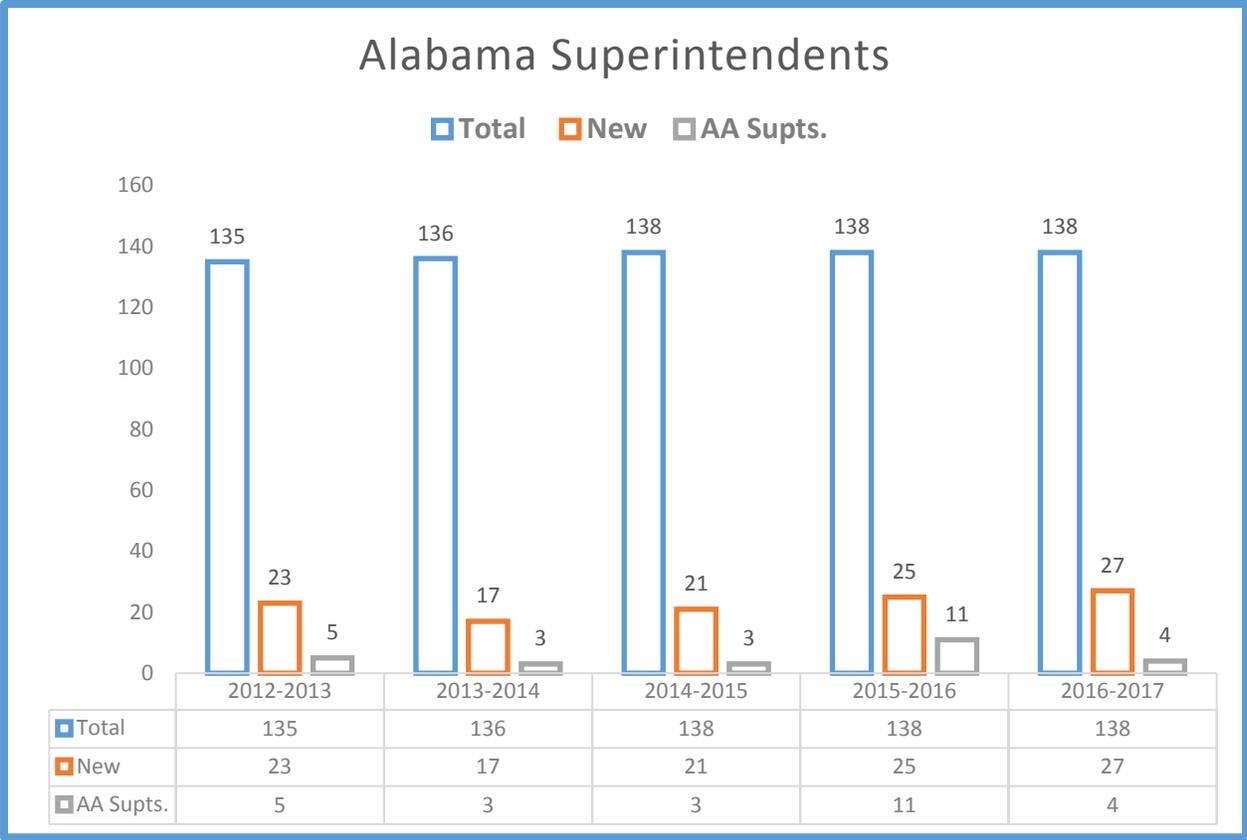
mentoring programs since the 2006–2007 school year. Permission was obtained from SSA in Spring, 2016 to access their survey files. Their survey instrument was developed based on Standard Seven. The mentoring survey is based on the superintendent’s experiences in terms of their goals, general issues and support provided by SSA’s mentoring programs. The information from the transcribed surveys will be hand-coded. Coding helps researchers uncover and methodically analyze multifaceted events in unstructured data. Coding is a tool that lets the researcher locate, and explain findings in primary data material, to weight and assess their importance, and to envision the often-complex connections between them. According to Saldana (2009), “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3).

The next research instrument, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with superintendents, will contain questions on the perceived ways that the mentoring program assisted in the career, professional and personal growth and general competencies of new superintendents in terms of helping to attain district goals. The interview questions will focus on these components. This formal mentoring process was developed and outlined in the work of Lois Zachary (2009). The mentoring processes, according to Zachary (2009), includes four distinct stages: 1) Preparing, 2) Negotiating, 3) Enabling, and 4) Coming to Closure.

Based on ethnicity/racial data from SSA (2017), there are 138 total superintendents with seventeen percent of the total school superintendent’s in Alabama being African American. Based on those numbers, this study has a relatively small sample size of new African American school superintendents in the interview pool.

The names and addresses of school superintendents for the interviews were obtained from the Alabama State Department of Education Directory. The State Department of Education's staffing information is updated annually and it is an on-line document that lists all school districts in alphabetical order by county. The names of the superintendents are given for each city or county school district. For the purposes of this study, only new African American superintendents were selected.

The names and ethnicity of these superintendents was verified by the SSA for the two school years identified in this study. Among those in the two-year designated timeframe, the researcher identified thirteen "new" African American superintendents. And an equal number of "experienced" superintendents were chosen for interviews. In this study, an "experienced" superintendent was defined as an administrator with five years or more of experience in the State of Alabama. This list of new and experienced superintendents was identified by the Alabama Association of School Boards for interviews was retrieved from [www.alabamaschoolboards.org](http://www.alabamaschoolboards.org) in December 2016.



*Figure 3.* Alabama Superintendents’ Hiring Status over the Last Five Years (Alabama Association of School Board, 2016).

**Data Collection**

Purposeful sampling was used to identify the population and sample. Purposive sampling is the qualitative research process in which the researcher selects individuals with an intentional purpose (Creswell, 2005). The criteria for selection included all new school superintendents in the State of Alabama for the designated timeframe. The selected sample pool for this study encompassed new African American school superintendents currently employed less than two years in the State of Alabama.

The primary source of data will come from the face-to-face interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed since that was the essential process for “logging the data” as suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995). Participants were given an informed consent form to sign which explained the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary and participants could remove themselves from the study at any time. To better understand their experiences, the interview questions consisted of questions that were semi-structured, open-ended questions that revolved around the main research questions in the study. The interview questions will probe the participants’ perceptions about the structured mentoring program and its benefits in a variety of areas based on the standard model of a mentoring program.

The interview questions used in this study were based on the characteristics and processes found in the conceptual framework. Creswell (2007) states “the key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information” (p. 39). All interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted from 45–60 minutes. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed. Transcripts were share with the interviewees to allow for member checking. Throughout the data collection process, interviews were reviewed based on common themes. An equal number (set) of experienced superintendents were interviewed in the second set of interviews. The second set of interviews had the same questions but was administered to experienced superintendents with five or more years of experience. This timeframe was chosen because, according to AASA retrieved from [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org) in December 2015 the average length of time it takes for school administrators to feel comfortable assuming and fulfilling their superintendent roles is five years.

The second source of data will come from archived SSA data. The archived survey data were located on-site and were obtained from SSA in their official office. The SSA superintendents' survey was developed based on ALSDE's Standard Seven: Management of the Learning Organization. This standard is required of all school administrators by the Alabama Department of Education. The SSA Survey has two primary questions: 1) Describe 3-5 issues you dealt with in your school system this past year and explain for each issue how your participation in the New Superintendent Program helped you to handle it (One of these issues must involve the instructional program and you must describe how your training impacted the issue in a manner that was beneficial to student achievement in your system), and 2) Develop 3-5 goals for the upcoming year in working with your board, your central office administrators, and your principals and describe how you will work to implement them based on your new superintendent training. The SSA Survey's questions requires documentation that highlights the impact of the new superintendent's mentoring program.

### **Procedure**

Data was collected during the 2016–2017 school year, recorded and analyzed by the researcher. A proposal to conduct the study was submitted to Auburn University's Institutional Research Board (IRB). Following approval of the IRB (See Appendix), an informational letter explained the study, interview process and ensured anonymity was electronically sent via email to all African American superintendents in Alabama selected for the designated time. The contact and email address information of the primary investigator was also included. A follow-up email was sent two weeks after the initial email.

The face-to-face interviews with school superintendents used semi-structured, open-ended questions. Open-ended responses were viewed to obtain further information from

participants and to identify potential areas for future research, but not to draw full synthesized conclusions, where there may be some misinterpretation of responses and some inconsistent comments (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The face-to-face interview questions was used with the thirteen “new” African American superintendents hired in the previous two school years (2015–2016 and 2016–2017). These African American superintendents were verified by SSA ([www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org)) as being superintendents in Alabama. Participants were asked to sign consent letters before the start of the interview.

These interviews consisted of fifteen open-ended, semi-structured questions. The interview questions used were based on the characteristics of formal mentoring found in the conceptual framework. The interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes but varied depending on follow-up and clarifying questions. The interviews were recorded for transcription and analysis. None of the participants would be considered vulnerable. The participation in the study was strictly voluntary. There was no compensation for participation in the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

This study included two data sources (interview questions, and archived surveys) which provides a basis for triangulation of data. In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple sources to provide corroborating evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). The interview process allows the researcher to compare people’s opinions at different stages of their career concerning the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring program. Interviews will be analyzed to determine similar themes and patterns of information among the participants and those that are different.

The information from the superintendent face-to face interviews were transcribed and hand coded due to the small sample size. Coding refers to the process of assigning categories,

concepts, or codes to segments of information that are of interest to the research objectives. Coding is a tool used for qualitative analysis of textual, graphical, audio and video data. It also allows the researcher to collect and organize the data that co-occur across all data or just some selected primary documents. Overall, it helps to organize the coded data into meaningful classifications, by categorizing and identifying themes and patterns of information and connecting and interrelating the data.

This process provides corroborating evidence to shed light on a theme or perspective for another powerful validation strategy related to their career, job competencies, personal growth and professional development and general competencies. The superintendent interview questions were based on concepts drawn from research literature that would elicit responses that addressed the research questions. This step was necessary to collect the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

Field notes would be utilized to formulate the researcher's thoughts and comments related to the conceptual model. In addition to field notes, another triangulation strategy was member checking from the transcribed interviews. Member checking is when data, analytic categories, explanations and conclusions are tested with members of the group from whom the data was originally obtained. Lincoln and Guba (1985) put forward that this is one of the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility. Overall, member checking gives an opportunity for participants to correct errors and challenge what are perceived as wrong interpretations.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Researchers must consider their own position as it relates to the research participants and research setting. The reconstructing of insider/outsider status in terms of one's positionality in respect of education, class, race, gender, culture and other factors, offer us better tools for

understanding the dynamics of researching with and across one culture (England, 1994; Merriam et. al, 2001; Rose, 1997). In general, the benefit to be a member of the group one is studying is usually acceptance along with a level of trust and openness.

As a researcher, I have a personal connection in that I am African American. Also, being an educator and former superintendent, the researcher found it easy to connect with the participants. This helped in terms of participants being open and comfortable during the interview. I could also relate to many of their comments since I have over a decade of experience in similar positions. I was a superintendent of a large urban school district in Alabama. And many of the participants were familiar and/or had knowledge of my prior district's issues and concerns. As a result, I felt they were more comfortable sharing their own vulnerabilities and were not as threatened by follow-up questions and scrutiny.

However, the researcher did participate in a mentoring program as a new superintendent in 2009. The researcher had six years of prior superintendent experience in the Midwest before coming to Alabama. Furthermore, this study and research does not include any of the researcher's personal input from archived survey data. The timeline for the study, which were the 2012–2017 school years, occurred after the researcher's involvement with the mentoring program.

### **Validity and Reliability**

There are many definitions for validity in qualitative research. But Creswell (2013) considers, “validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants” (pp. 249–250). In this study, one method to establish validity was triangulation. Triangulation makes use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence. This

researcher located evidence to demonstrate codes or themes from different sources of data, such as superintendent interviews and archived surveys. Plus, all participants were given a copy of their transcribed interviews to validate their responses and correct any errors. This is member checking which another way to strengthen internal validity.

Creswell (2013) stated that, “reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape. Further coding can be done with the use of computer programs to assist in recording and analyzing the data” (p. 253). The researcher used field notes, interviewee transcriptions an electronic software for interviewee transcription to ensure accuracy and coding analysis software for or help with organizing, categorizing, tabulating or otherwise recombining data.

### **Summary**

Chapter III provided a description of the research methodology in this study. The chapter consisted of the statement of purpose, followed by research questions, significance, population sample, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Consideration was given to the researcher positionality. Chapter IV has been organized to present the analysis of the data collected as it relates to the research questions.

## CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

### Introduction

The work responsibilities and expectations for superintendents are complex and changing based on many different internal and external societal demands. Most School Boards and communities invest much time and many resources in their system leaders by giving them professional training and support to aid their ability to lead successful school systems. Despite efforts to provide professional development experience, the high expectations and demands on school administrators, many school systems have found it difficult to retain current school administrators, and have discovered even more problems attracting candidates for vacant administrative positions (Educational Research Service, 2000; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Shen, Cooley, & Wegenke, 2004; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). To further complicate hiring matters, Peters (2010) reported that the United States Department of Labor forecasts that forty percent of the nation's 93,200 principals have reached retirement age. This means the future superintendent applicant pool has become greatly diminished for a variety of factors, but certainly one is the aging of baby boomers. This administrative shortage comes at a time when the demand for highly qualified school administrators continues to be high, and at a critical point in terms of the public's demands for a quality education for all children.

There are numerous research studies retrieved from the *Diversity in the Educator Workforce* in July, 2016 (<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/higered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversityworkforce.pdf>) that support the fact that diversity in schools, including racial diversity

among teachers and administrators can provide significant benefits to students (p. 1). Even though diversity is an integral part of our society and is valuable for all students; we remain a nation with racial disparity in terms of teacher and leaders and the students they serve within our educational systems.

The question then becomes how to increase and recruit a diverse pool of qualified applicants and how to support them once they are in leadership roles. According to Browne-Ferrigno (2014), the University Council for Educational Administration proposed that educational agencies and states should set up programs for novice leaders to develop leadership skills and beliefs that are necessary to support the needed changes in school systems and an emphasis on good instruction (Brown-Ferrigno, 2014). Mentoring has been proven to be an effective way to support new leaders in many other disciplines.

As school districts scramble to find qualified administrators, one approach to developing and nurturing leadership talent within systems has been mentoring. Mentoring and coaching relationships are important in any profession (Bjork & Brunner, 2000) and according to Watkins (2003), mentoring in the early phase of an employee's career can make a huge difference. The importance of mentoring is clearly indicated by Michael Watkins (2013) in his book, *The First 90 Days*. He asserted that the actions taken in the first three months on the job will greatly dictate one's success or failure. However, despite the positive research, Walker (2006), also emphasized that research is limited on the benefits and the impact of mentoring relationships on the influence of the career growth and development of new administrative leaders.

Additionally, the perceived effectiveness of this mentoring program for new superintendents has not had in-depth study. The impact and benefits of mentoring on underrepresented and minority school superintendents remains limited. The purpose of this

study was to assess the perceived impact of a mentoring program for school superintendents; by describing how those individuals felt about the value, training and support the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership and management roles, career goals, personal growth and their professional development. The population studied was African American superintendents. The study also examined the superintendents' perceptions about the ways the mentoring program could be improved in terms of weaknesses and methods for improvement. Finally, the study looked at the degree to which the mentoring program met exemplary standards.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

A case study approach was utilized for this research. Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2013),

A hallmark of good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case. To accomplish this, the researcher collects many forms of qualitative data, ranging from interview, to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials. Relying on one source of data is typically not enough to develop this in-depth understanding. (p. 98)

Evidence in this study was collected from a variety of data sources including archived surveys, field notes and semi-structured interviews, review of the primary source documents and a review of the related literature. Data collection and analysis function simultaneously to create emergent data in qualitative research (Merriman, 2009). Data collection in this study used two primary data sources: 1) face-to-face interviews, and 2) surveys.

The face-to-face interview questions used semi-structured, open-ended questions that revolved around the main research questions in the study (see Appendix B). Interviews are an

essential source of case study evidence because many deal with human affairs or actions (Yin, 2014). The interviews probed the participants' perceptions about the structured mentoring program and its benefits in a variety of areas such as attaining career goals, personal growth and professional development goals. The interview questions used were based on the characteristics of formal mentoring found in the conceptual framework. This was supported by the protocol drawn from Creswell (2006), who recommended that the key concepts found in research literature on the topic to be studied. The interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed since that was the essential process for "logging the data" as suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995). Throughout the data collection process, interviews were transcribed. The common patterns and themes that emerged were noted. Interview data was transcribed verbatim from the participants which allowed for the interpretations to closely reflect the lived experiences of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The transcribed interviews were shared with the participants for member checking. The questions were developed by the researcher to gain insight of the lived experiences of the participants and the interview responses were coded and grouped in the following categories:

- 1) **Mentoring program structures** – which included the mentor selection and matching process, length of mentorship, quality of mentor and technology.
- 2) **Mentoring preparation/relationships** – which included cultural/poverty awareness, collegial and board/superintendent relationships, and transitions.
- 3) **Mentoring outcomes** – which included communication, fiscal management, networking, and leadership skills.

The second source of data collection was surveys. The archived survey data were obtained from the School Superintendents of Alabama (SAA). The SSA superintendents' survey

was developed based on ALSDE's Standard Seven. This is one of the standards required of all school administrators in Alabama by the Department of Education. The two SSA survey questions were: 1) Describe 3-5 issues you dealt with in your school system this past year and explain for each issue how your participation in the New Superintendent Program helped you to handle it (one of these issues must involve the instructional program and you must describe how your training impacted the issue in a manner that beneficial to student achievement in your system; and 2) Develop 3-5 goals for the upcoming year in working with your board, your central office administrators, and your principals and describe how you will work to implement them based on our training. Overall, the survey questions focused specifically on the mentoring program and training and the required supportive documentation of its impact based on the participant's goals. The surveys were coded and grouped in the following categories:

- 1) **Goals** – which included areas for improvement such as student outcomes, data use, safety/security and accountability.
- 2) **School system issues** – which included legislative, personnel and resources, revenue, programming and culture/climate.
- 3) **Outcomes** – which included system-wide priorities, strategic planning, engagement, superintendent/board relationship and communication.

From these two data sources, themes and patterns of information emerged from the data collection analysis and those themes were used to develop the analysis and discovery categories.

## **Research Questions**

This study was designed to allow the researcher to answer the following four questions:

1: What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the degree to which the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership and management roles?

2: What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the most effective elements of the mentoring program?

3: What are the African American superintendent's perceptions of the ways the mentoring program could be improved in terms of weaknesses and methods for improvement?

4: What are the ways and the degree to which the new superintendent's mentoring experience aligned with the standard formal mentoring process identified by Zachary (2009)?

## **Setting**

The racial diversity data trends have changed very little for almost a decade for school administrators despite the changing student demographics. The educator workforce pipeline and diversity trends have continued to even the next highest level. According to American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (retrieved from [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org) in December 2015), minorities composed about six percent of all superintendents nationally. But, the diversity data from the State of Alabama obtained from the SSA ([www.ssa.online.org](http://www.ssa.online.org)) revealed that African Americans composed approximately seventeen percent of all school superintendents in the State of Alabama.

However, most of this increase occurred in the last three years in Alabama. According to SSA (retrieved from [www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org) in December 2016), the number of African American superintendents increased by twelve percent. But from the same data source in 2016–2017, there were a total of twenty-seven new school superintendents with only four of the superintendents

hired being African American. There is a total of 138 superintendents; twenty-four are African American superintendents. This equates to seventeen percent of the total superintendents in the State of Alabama. These superintendents were identified in both city and county school districts. African American superintendents were in the following school districts for the 2016–2017 school year: *Conecuh County, Choctaw County, Colbert County, Dallas County, Lowndes County, Linden City, Perry County, Sumter County, Wilcox County, Barbour County, Selma City, Daleville City, Bullock County, Macon County, Montgomery County, Russell County, Bessemer City, Fairfield City, Midfield City, Anniston City, Talladega City, Greene County, Hale County, and Tuscumbia City*. Overall, in the last five years, there has been a seventy-eight percent turnover of all superintendents in the State of Alabama retrieved from [www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org) in December 2016,

While the number of African American superintendents hired in Alabama represented a significant increase, it still highlights a significant racial disparity in the educator workforce. Superintendents represent the highest ranking educational leaders in the nation and if one group is consistently underrepresented and isolated from reaching and maintaining jobs at the highest level due to a variety of factors, there is an evident problem.

### **Participants**

Based on ethnicity/racial data retrieved from [www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org) retrieved in December 2016, there are 138 total superintendents in Alabama with seventeen percent of the total school superintendents being African American. Based on that percentage, there are twenty-four total African American superintendents in the State, including only thirteen new African American superintendents hired during the designated two-year time, so the study has a relatively small sample size of new African American school superintendents in the participant pool.

The names and addresses of school superintendents for the superintendent participants were obtained from the Alabama State Department of Education Directory retrieved from [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) in June 2017. The State Department of Education's staffing information is updated annually and it is an on-line document that lists all school districts in alphabetical order by county. The names of the superintendents are given for each city or county school district. For the purposes of this study, only new African American superintendents were selected.

The names and ethnicity of these superintendents was verified by the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) for the two school years identified in this study. Among those in the two-year designated timeframe, the researcher identified fourteen "new" African American superintendents for interviews retrieved from [www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org) in June 2017 and an equal number of "experienced" superintendents for interviews. This data was verified by [www.alabamashoolboards.org](http://www.alabamashoolboards.org) in December 2017. In this study, an "experienced" superintendent was defined as an administrator with five years or more of experience in the State of Alabama. This list of experienced superintendents was identified by SSA. However, the list of experienced African American superintendents in Alabama meeting this criterion included only ten superintendents. Figures 4–7 shows these data.

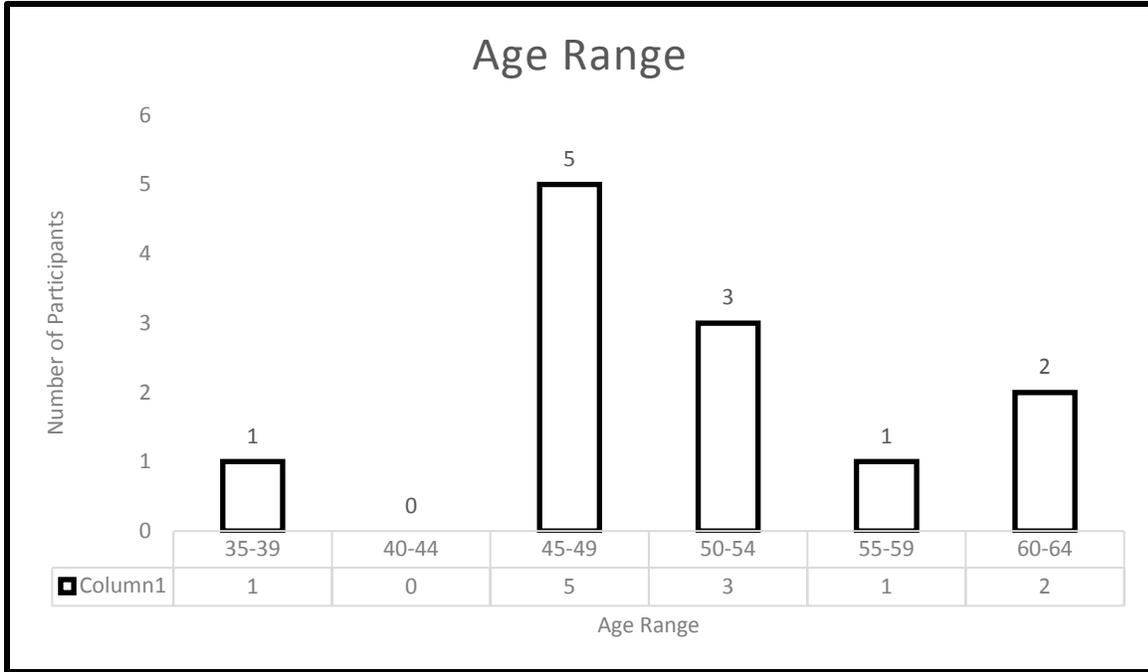


Figure 4. Age Range of Participants

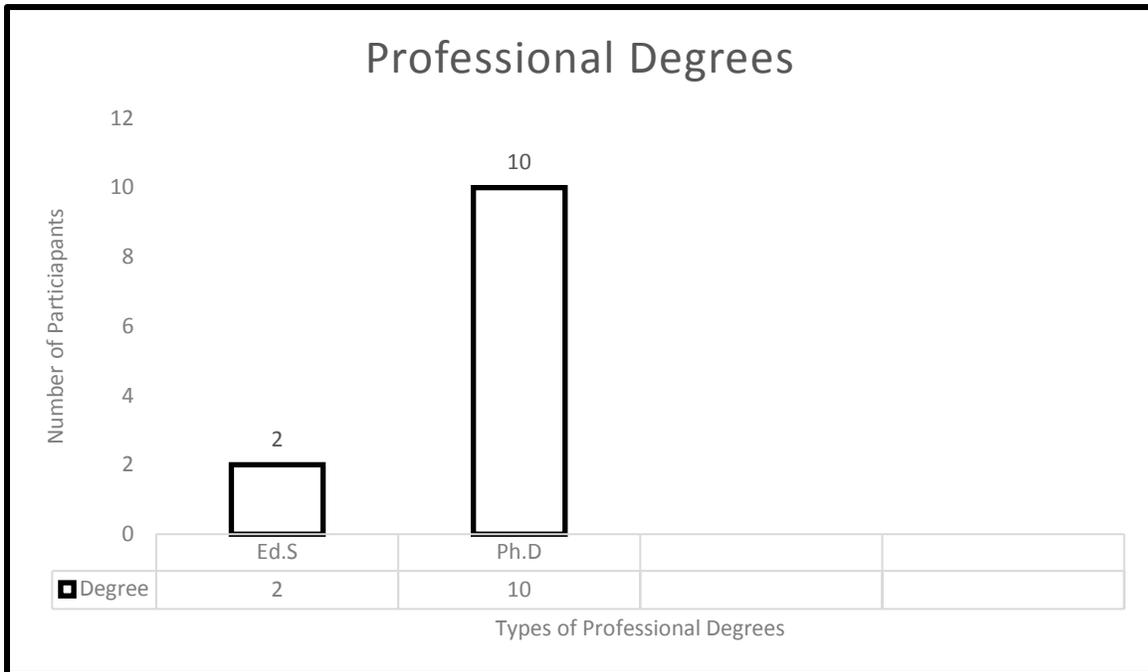


Figure 5. Participant Professional Certifications

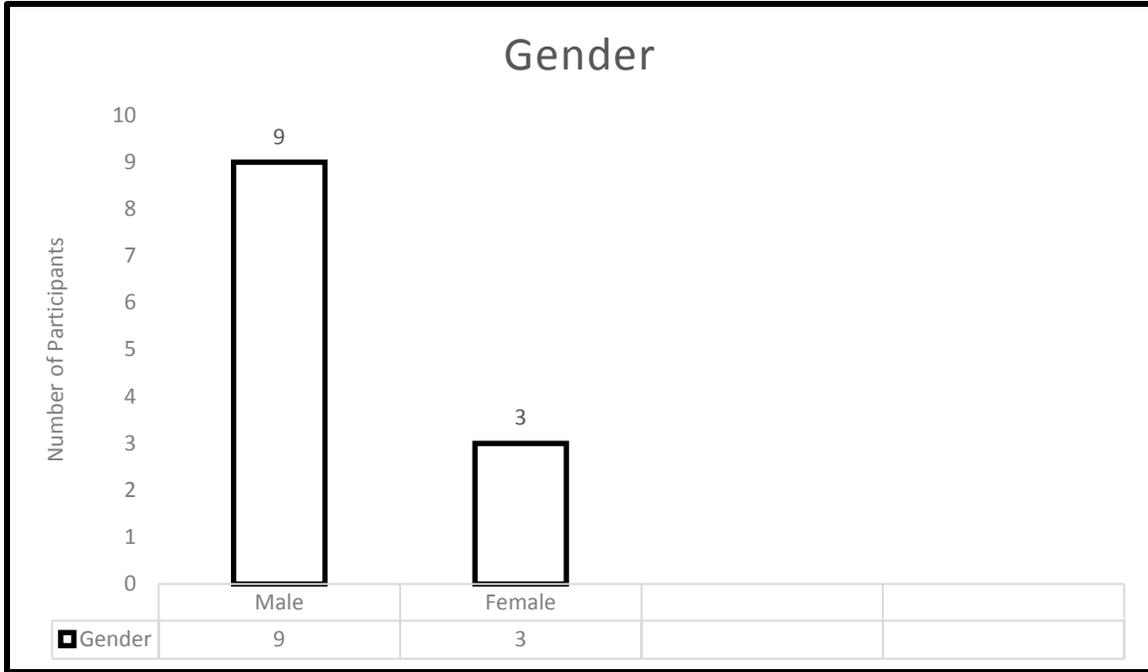


Figure 6. Gender of Participants

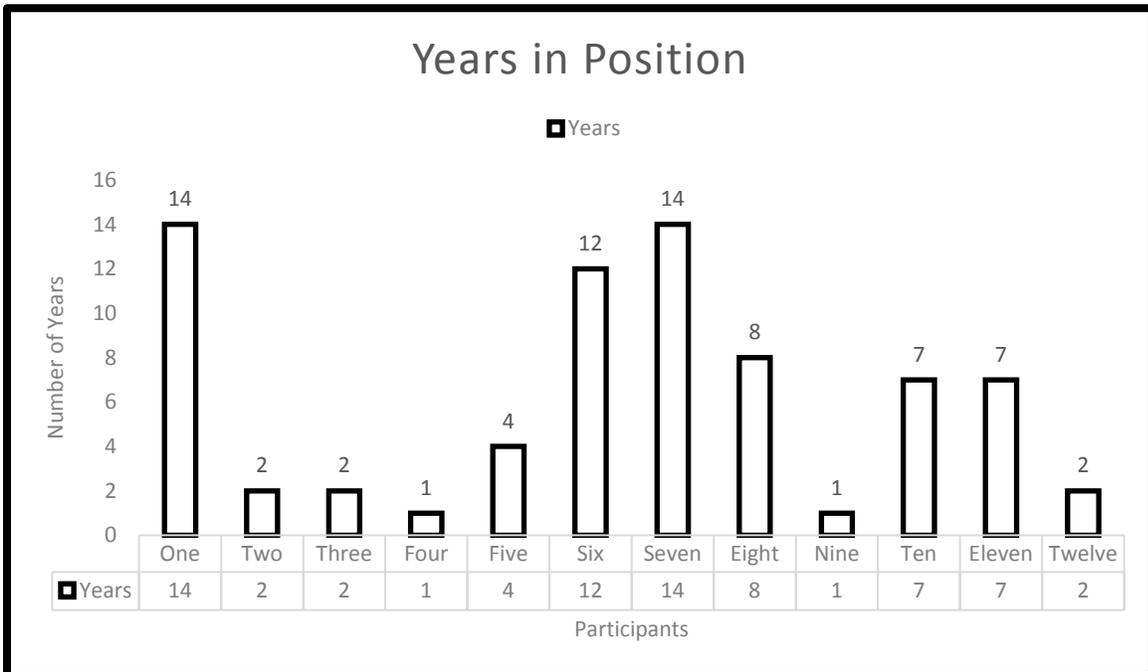


Figure 7. Years in Position

\*Superintendent five described as new in that school situation.

As indicated by Figure 7, six participants were assigned as new superintendents with two or less years of experience in that position and six were assigned as experienced with five or more years in the superintendent position based on the research criteria. The participants varied in age range from 39–64 years of age, with forty-one percent of the participants being in the 45–49 age range. Seventy-five percent of the participants were male and twenty-five percent were female. All participants had advanced graduate degrees; eighty-three percent had the highest terminal degree which was a Ph.D. degree. The mentoring program was administered and supervised by SSA using the Executive Coaching model. Eleven of the twelve participants were involved in a standard or formal mentoring program. One participant was hired prior to the implementation of the formal SSA mentoring program.

The interviews of the twelve participants were transcribed and analyzed for common patterns and themes for comparison purposes. Each participant was given fifteen interview questions that were open-ended and semi-structured at a location and time of their choice. The interviews ranged in time from 30 minutes to 85 minutes. In addition to the data collected from the participants, surveys were used to add to the depth of the study. These findings are coded and organized into the following sections: mentoring program structures, mentoring program outcomes and impacts and recommendations for mentoring program outcomes as perceived by the participants.

## **Findings**

Mentoring is an approach that supports novice school administrators and has been frequently proposed by researchers since its advent in the mid-1980s (Crow & Mathews, 1998; Daresh, 2004). According to McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007), a mentor helps another person

through an important transition such as a new job in career development and personal growth. A mentor is one who provides emotional and career support and can serve as a role model.

Research Question One dealt with the superintendent's perception of the degree to which the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership roles pertaining to general issues in the district. The findings indicated that the principals perceived that the mentoring program fostered the development of their leadership skills. There were three primary areas in which the superintendents perceived that the program assisted them in their leadership roles in: budgeting/financial management, instructional and curricular dimensions and communication skills. These are described in the section that follows.

### **Budgeting and Fiscal Management**

Overall, nine out of eleven participants or eighty-two percent of the participants identified budgeting and fiscal management as one of the more confusing and challenging areas they faced and they indicated that the mentoring program added to better leadership skills in budgeting and fiscal management. Prioritizing and supporting goals with a limited budget is always challenging for any school superintendent. However, another layer in this situation is the fact that most of these school districts with new school superintendents would be considered in the lower third per capital income in the State of Alabama (see Figure 12). This therefore, makes the administrator's leadership and decision-making skills even more critical and important in these improvised school districts.

Having someone to talk to and assist was very important. For example, S4 stated the following:

I would guess what would probably be the biggest issue that I have had to face, is probably our budgeting. So, having an experienced superintendent to talk to and show

figures to and talk to over, and see how he handled things in his district, of course, the district was almost a similar size, it was very beneficial. It was very non-threatening and I had a great experience.

Sometimes, the help came as part of the overall training process but was still a part of the mentoring experience. For example, S9 gave another example of professional growth in this area:

I remember one of the sessions, several of us had a lot of questions about finances and that was neat because they reached out to the state department folks. Had a whole bunch of reports for us, kind of put a spreadsheet together, some reports. Things we should look for. Things that we needed to sit down with our CFO with and even to explain to us, kinda like “Finance for Dummies” while you’re a superintendent.

S10 elaborated on how the combination of mentoring and being mentored to find the right people added to her ability to grow in understanding the budgeting process by stating,

In terms of the budget, the mentorship really helped me because I was able to talk to the right people at the State Department about budgets, and budget concerns, and grants. But I was able with a mentor’s help, to learn how to navigate some of the insides of the budget.

S12 made the following statement about leadership development with budgetary and fiscal management help:

When I came into the central office, of course the staff was already there, and there were some things that I thought were not appropriate among staff members to get job done and get the services to the schools. So, by talking with my mentor, he gave me some insights into, first understanding that these people are already here, however they still have a task

that they must get done and how I could add duties and things of nature and how it was okay for me to even get out into the schools so many times a week.

Within this feedback, there was also the realization that sometimes, you had to change your thinking and expand your horizons. For example, S3 expressed the perspective that you should change how you think about budgeting when she shared:

There are certain best practices and there are somethings that I would like to do as the Superintendent, but we have to keep the entire budget in mind and whether it is from the state, federal, local or donations. Those things have specifications on how you can use those. And a lot of it is simply following the law, number one.

S10 summarized her budgetary issues and professional leadership growth:

What I found out was although I knew Budgeting 101 from a preparations standpoint from my graduate programs and undergraduate programs. I didn't know the inner workings of the department. I didn't know who knew who and who could undo red tape to help me better fund my system. Having a mentor who knew those inner workings of how those budgetary processes could and could not occur, and who, I should be talking to and who I should avoid talking to, really gave me the insight to be able to gain some additional resources for my school system that I know I would not have known how to even get myself in the front door to do that.

### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by the school administrator. The term first appeared as result of research associated with The Effective Schools Movement in the 1980s which revealed that the key to running successful schools lies in the administrator's role. School leaders were challenged to provide

strategies and skills to achieve better teaching practices, professional development and assessment for school performance related to instruction and student success.

These challenges and growth in the leadership area fostered through mentoring were expressed by participants in a variety of ways. According to Hallinger (2009), the accountability movement of the 21st century brought the emphasis on instructional leadership since its paradigm has an emphasis on the learning outcomes for students. That instructional focus remains in place for new leaders. Nine of the eleven participants or eighty-two percent shared instructional leadership growth experiences which added to their leadership skills as a school superintendent. For example, S5 shared the importance of his mentor sharing strategies when he said:

On the instructional side I would consider my mentor to have been very engaged and very strong in the instructional realm. And so yes, my mentor was very helpful in sharing how he approached engaging the staff to further engage students and to close the learning gaps.

S9 also had a mentor that share specific strategies but his mentor also recommended networking through professional organizations when he said that he:

Sharpened some instructional skills and got some great ideas and strategies from that also he told he encouraged me to be part of those professional organizations. Even though, you may have someone in your department that is doing that, and they're greatest person on their level doing that, you still can go and get the ideas, the goals and visions.

Analyzing data seemed to be an important part of the mentoring process. It appears that the mentors not only shared strategies they used to handle instruction, but they also encouraged the

mentees to develop the ability to analyze data to match instructional strategies which might be of value. Of this, S10 shared,

I think when we talked about instruction, we were mainly looking at it from an analytical point. When I say analytical, I mean from the analysis of data, and how we could better analyze data.

S1 indicated similar support and talked about receiving mentor help with setting up his data monitoring framework when he shared:

One of the things that my mentor had encouraged was setting benchmarks. Not waiting till the end of the year when we get our test results to see where our kids are. One of things ... he's an instructional leader in that ... by that, making sure that we had some type of assessment tools, monitoring the data and choosing what type of data to monitor.

S3 suggested that the mentor sharing of best practices was critical:

He said this has worked for us or for another school district. I wanted to share this information with you. And that was phenomenal. I have too learned, in curriculum, that you can always call the State Department. Finding new ideas doesn't necessarily mean that you have to pay for it.

## **Communication**

Effective communication is about more than just exchanging information. School administrators must be able to convey a message clearly and meaningful to a variety of stakeholders and different audiences. Learning how to develop these messages is often a process fraught with administrator missteps and mistakes which can result in unnecessary problems. Seventy-three percent of the participants cited the mentoring program as having aided their

communication skills. Below are examples of the professional growth experiences in communication:

S4 shared how mentoring aided his strategic communication throughout the school year:

Okay, I would say it benefited me most, and probably in the area of communication. My mentor shared with me what he called a “tickler file”. I don’t know why it was a tickler file. But he shared that with me. Basically, it was a month-to-month calendar of all the things that he has learned over the years that are due. All of the things that he actually does that month.

S1 expressed how his mentor’s guidance impacted his communication perspectives:

Because often communication is a two-way street. Sometimes three. In that just because you’re in a leadership position, you can tell someone or direct someone, but you must be very clear in making sure that you’re not talking at them or that you are in communication.

S6 described how his mentor felt he should communicate goals:

Communication did assist me in the leadership spectrum and what I mean by that is, a lot of times it’s difficult for a new superintendent to convey his or her goals to the Board and to colleagues or to subordinates better yet, so he did provide me some assistance in that, he said, “Now look here, when you go in there, keep in mind that you are the new sheriff in town”.

S10 stated how shared technology aided her and her mentor’s communication skills:

I would probably say that my mentor and I had more of a symbiotic relationship in that area because he was not really a technologically-focused person and I was. Learning Facebook and learning Twitter, those became shared learning situations where I could

say to him, “Hey, I’m putting this out on Facebook.” He’s like, “You’re putting it where? What’s that all about?” (p. 5)

S3 revealed new routines and communication strategies for her staff:

As a matter of fact, my mentor has information, well he did have information that he shared with his staff weekly. I follow that idea and I have Friday thoughts. Friday, I give praises, I give WOWs, I also identify wonders and we send that out to all 400 employees every Friday.

S10 shared how the mentor advised her to be cognizant of different audiences:

It was bi-directional, mutual, shared learning kind of a relationship too. I think that as much as he helped me with learning who the audiences are, which is where my growth in communication occurred, it’s, “Who are you talking to? Who are you trying to get this message to? Okay, when you put this message to your Board, who else is listening?”

It takes time and effort to develop good communication skills. These participants indicated that the skills they acquired because of the mentoring program were new, saved time, or improved the leadership skills

### **Effective Elements of the Mentoring Program**

The job of being a superintendent can be extremely demanding and challenging from a variety of external and internal sources. Time management can become an issue and most administrators are seeking the most effective ways to successfully handle their jobs. Question two dealt with the superintendent’s perception of the most effective elements of the mentoring program. While their mentoring stories varied, they were consistent regarding professional leadership growth and in identifying the most effective elements of the mentoring program.

The participant's statements were coded based on the frequency found in the total transcribed content of the participant responses. For example, several of the effective elements mentioned are interconnected in many ways and represent typical interpersonal interaction dynamics and outcomes. The participants identified the most effective elements in the mentoring program as: the mentor relationships, mentor selection/matching, networking and mentor affirmation/check-ins.

While these elements are presented separately for purposes of this study, there is a definite interwoven and logical overlap between these elements. For example, networking is an umbrella which includes availability to resources, and access to immediate help and may be part of the relationship formed between mentor and mentee, and a part of networking. Similarly, mentor affirmation and check-ins all are predicated and built upon mentor relationships. Likewise, the selection process may have a definite influence upon the mentoring relationship formed,

### **Mentor/Mentee Relationship**

Mentor/mentee relationships was identified ninety-one percent by participants as being one of the primary and effective contributing elements in helping to develop administrative leadership skills and roles. During the year-long mentoring program, participants shared relationship building experiences, insights and perspectives. The participants gave numerous examples demonstrating how the importance of mentor relationship was one of the most effective elements in the mentoring program.

S3 indicated the following open-door relationship in her mentor experience:

I certainly think that the relationship still has doors that swing open, both ways, and I think that there's opportunity to also talk to the executive coach who was over all the

mentors and linked teams. As a matter of fact, I have done just that with her. I do feel fortunate that my mentor is now Head of Class, and that's an organization for administrators, so not only do I've have that experience with him, now he's an advocate for all the administrators. And that in my opinion, gives me an extra feather in the cap, that I have access to him, not only on the professional level, but also on a personal level.

(p. 2)

Mentor relationships were built around the ability to ask all types of questions. This example was given below:

S9 stated this feeling with his mentor relationship:

And so, it's just neat of them to allow us the opportunity to have dialogue saying, "Hey what do you need to know? Oh, you don't know this?" "No." "Okay, you need, duh-duh, here's a list of all the things you need to ask. And so, that was just a great relationship. And so, that was very, very helpful for me. (p. 3)

Trust was an important factor in any relationship. And that was indicated as an important factor for a good mentoring relationship.

S6 expressed his feelings about trust:

Trust is really, really important if someone is going to serve as a mentor for a mentee.

Now there has to be some trust there. We had this understanding that what was said was going to be between the two of us.

S9 also shared the importance of having trust in his mentoring relationship:

Have a person that you can call at any time to let you know, "calm down, relax, don't call the police, you're okay, this is how you do it". And then walk you through what you

need to do. Because you trust this person and the work that they've done. Man, that's comforting. There's a comfort level there.

S10 gave another example of her guidance in a mentoring relationship:

It was a matter of picking up the phone saying, "Hey, I've got this going on. Have you heard of this situation before? I need some guidance." From very formal interactions, to informal, to casual interactions, our conversations and talk that ran that gamut. It was a very positive relationship. I don't know that all mentorships are like that, but the one that I had with him was very, very positive and very effective and continues to this day.

S8 described a problem-solving opportunity that was critical part in building his mentoring relationship:

It gave us plenty of opportunity to get our feet wet, and then come back to the table with some pieces that we should have been able to individually lay on the table and say, "How would you manage this issue here?" And "How would you manage this one?"

Another factor impacting relationships was the ability of the mentor to "be real and open" about their expertise and experiences. This perspective was expressed in the following statement.

S4 expressed the expertise factor in his mentor relationship:

I think the key to it is basically finding that great match. In working with my mentor, I didn't find him to be at all abrasive or anything like that. I didn't find him ... He was very "Relatable". He shared with me that he was not the expert, but he was just sharing his experiences, so he shared the good, bad, and the ugly. (p. 4)

According to Zachary (2013), "There is no magic wand that you can wave to build a mentoring relationship. It takes time to get to know one another and so it develops over time."

(p. 31). It appears that in this program time was given and these relationships were strong and effective.

### **Mentor Selection, Match and Qualities**

Mentor matching was cited by ninety-one percent of the participants as being an effective element in the mentoring program. All SSA mentors were either former or current veteran school superintendents chosen and matched by SSA with new superintendents. The SSA superintendent mentors had been trained using the Executive Coaching model from CU prior to being assigned to new superintendents.

S4 stated his opinion about the importance of the mentoring match and selection process:

I think that, in order, for it to work, it has to be a good match, because the mentee has to be willing to share their vulnerabilities and to share their weaknesses, for the mentor to be able to assist. For the mentee to be able to do that, they have to feel comfortable with the person. (p. 4)

S10 added the following information about her mentor match:

I was paired as a novice with a veteran who had had several years under his belt in the field and that had many experiences. I think being paired with a veteran superintendent who had several years of experience in itself had value for me. Because when I called him, he could draw on some of the things that he had experienced and he had dealt with in my professional development. (p. 3)

S5 shared his similar mentor selection and veteran match process:

Once I became superintendent, we do have an organization, School Superintendents of Alabama. I am a member. We would have trainings. They did assign me a mentor that met with me maybe four times during my first year.

S3 shared her earlier mentoring selection experience as an elected superintendent:

Immediately after I was elected into office by my school board, which was nearly six months prior to my actual start date. I was paired with my mentor by the executive coach and she is with SAA.

Overall, the participants chose to identify and describe mentor qualities as opposed to the mentor matching techniques and strategies for the mentoring program. Most of the participant's comments centered on the mentor qualities of trust, being open, the ability to make personal connections, having a willingness to share expertise and being role models for the mentees. Overall, the participants identified a variety of mentor qualities and factors that impact the successful mentor selection and match process.

Examples of those mentor qualities cited by participants include:

S3 shared her feelings about mentor qualities:

My (mentor) was very patient, very kind, he was open and he allowed for me to ask my most sophisticated to my most low-level questions. The interaction was certainly unconditional and it was purposeful and meaningful. (p. 2)

Being able to reassure and comfort a mentee was another mentor quality that was important.

S9 gave the following example of his experience with mentor support and reassurance:

If you're in a present state of mind, you're panicking, but to have this senior veteran telling you, "Calm down, this is how we're gonna walk through it." And then give you 5 points that you understand, clearly, and you can hang up and execute it with confidence and poise. Because you trust this person and the work that they've done. Man, that's comforting. There's a comfort level there. (p. 6)

S4 expressed similar feelings about his mentoring relationship:

We spoke about issues and problems on as-needed basis. I would call him a couple of times a month to get his advice on different situations, or issues that we were having in the district. It was a very good coaching program that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Being comfortable and supported were important mentor qualities which were continually mentioned by participants. Another mentor quality was identified as being a role model and participants had a great appreciation for the mentor modeling leadership behavior:

S1 gave an example of his mentor modeling leadership behavior:

In that my mentor was sort of like a father figure in that he was gonna make sure I wasn't gonna fail. Because he was proud to say that this is my mentee. And he's always endorsed me, even as a principal, he would often take me to state meetings and so forth to the legislators, to the state house, to ... I learned how to lobby from him, with legislators.

(p. 9)

Some participants expanded that mentor quality to one of being an inspirational role model.

S6 described this inspirational quality in his mentor:

I have a lot of admiration for anyone who goes into superintendency, because listening to him and listening to some of things that he's faced over the years, for someone to go through all those things and to love his job the way he did ... does rather, because he's still working, I think that says a lot. (p. 4)

Some mentors went beyond their SSA executive coaching training to try to make personal connections with the mentees. This was a critical factor and an important mentor quality as shared in the statement below:

S10 was surprised by her mentor's extra personal connection efforts:

But I was very impressed with the fact that I could have a positive relationship where I felt comfortable and confidential talking to my mentor. I think the way that came about was that we could find some connection points. In fact, he knew my high school principal. He had followed my husband's basketball career and knew about things that I just didn't expect him to be aware of. We made some connections that really allowed us to become friends as well as colleagues. (pp. 3–4)

### **Networking (Access and Availability)**

Networking has been defined as a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest. The position of a superintendent can be a lonely job without the guidance and help from other professionals. In this study, for greater clarification, networking was described using the attributes of access and availability. The value of access and availability in the mentoring process was indicated by participants as another effective element in the mentoring program. Eighty-one percent of the participants ranked networking which included accessibility and availability as an important and effective element in the mentoring program. This was best summarized by the following statements by participants: S11 described the value of accessibility in her mentoring program:

I think having someone that you could always pick the phone up when you got into a situation or felt that you needed some type of support, I think that was very, very important for me because this person was accessible to me always. Not just this individual that was assigned to me, but also the association. I think that was very, very significant for me. (p. 3)

S9 gave an example of his feelings about immediate mentor availability:

If you call me with a 911 or text with a 911 during the day, I'm gonna stop what I'm doing and take your call. So, whenever I texted mentor, I always texted him, he would immediately step out of meetings. And even though, a pretty good, top fifteen school district, large high school, pretty good money, successful, he would walk out of what he was doing, and he would call me immediately. Was on one-hundred percent on stand-by to help me with anything that would go on. (p. 3)

S5 described the advantage of having his available seasoned professional mentor:

One is it allowed me to have direct contact with someone who was seasoned. Someone who has experience. And so, having that direct access was key. The other was just again having someone, a colleague, to check in on me.

S1 stated the importance of his available mentor expertise:

Having a point of contact that understood the superintendency. I had someone that I could go to, and it made me realize that it's so important to have ... it's critical to have a mentor. I don't care what your profession is. Everybody needs a mentor or coach. But it was just very helpful to know that I could call that person up and run things by them. And draw from his experience and success. (p. 7)

S2 expressed the advantage of not just accessibility but knowledge of available resources:

It gave me more resources that I could use if I needed help. It's good to be able to know who to call when you have an unexpected issue or concern and need immediate help.

S10 further explained how her mentor's expertise helped to develop leadership options:

All of the resources that are available to use that may not be tapped, that may be underused, simply because we don't know they exist and so putting those on the table.

As a leader, you are often managing systems with limited resources while making difficult personnel and organizational decisions that can have huge consequences impacting many lives. Participants recognized and identified networking as one of the ways to be able to utilize all the known and unknown resources (human or fiscal) at their disposal.

### **Affirmation (Check-Ins)**

Affirmation has been defined as providing encouragement, emotional support or motivation and in many cases affirming a decision being made in a new positions) include a citation. The third highest factor mentioned as an effective element in the mentoring program was affirmation. Forty-five percent of the participants cited affirmation and mentor check-ins. The participants had a variety of experiences to share regarding why this element was considered an effective factor in the mentoring program and added to their leadership skills and roles.

S10 expressed her feelings about emotional support from mentor affirmation:

Alright, well, the first way it impacted me is to let me know that I was not on the brink of insanity, and that the problems that we experience are largely universal.

S12 gave the following example regarding one of his administrative decisions:

There is another example where we wanted to do a construction project and I knew that we didn't have one month's reserve. So, I prioritized somethings and I corrected restrooms first and some other things, and science labs and media center versus the parking lot. And I ran that by my mentor also.... He somewhat confirmed that...he thought what I did was appropriate. And not just spending because we already were in a hole.

S7 continued with the importance to administrative decisions with his example:

I would say having someone to bounce things off before you decide or commit to doing anything. Especially, when you have a decision that was controversial, a decision that really required a lot of thought, then you have someone to kind of bounce that off that was in the position. Then they will not share that information.

S4 shared having someone to check-in on his routine work relationships:

Just basically, making sure that I was practicing good human relations skills, regarding going to work with staff members. That I was showing them how much I appreciated them, as well as following up on things that I needed to do. I can be a very task-oriented and a very impatient person when I felt as though staff didn't have the same tenacity that I have or the sense of urgency.

Affirmations were maintained during regular and routine mentor check-in schedules for mentee updates, questions and progress reports.

S11 described this routine in her mentor check-ins:

We had a very good bonding relationship. We would occasionally still talk with each other. She would call me to see how things were going. She was very comfortable with me venturing out on my own, but she still would follow up. (p. 3)

Sometimes it was a matter of being affirmed by the mentor that you can survive and thrive in the job.

S5 also reflected on being told about job security and survival by his mentor:

And I guess the other thing would be just having a relationship with a superintendent who had been successful. Survived and been there for quite some time. And so, as a new superintendent coming in you know that the average tenure is two and a half years. Someone who has been in position beyond that two and a half years, it was a real-life example that your tenure doesn't necessarily have to be here only two years or less. (p. 4)

S9 summarized his thoughts about affirmation in the mist of job uncertainty:

Yeah, because you know that first year, you don't even know that you don't know. So, you can't ask any questions. So, you don't even know you don't know.

Having an affirmation from an experienced and successful colleague was critical by participants in a new position. The uncertainty of the job, the challenges and the decisions that impact so many lives can be daunting. No two school districts are exactly alike; there are "best practices" but there is no set plan that will work in every school district. So, the careers of new school superintendents can be fraught with self-doubt and full of ambiguity. Forty-five percent of the participants indicated affirmation that typically happened during mentor check-ins was one of the important and effective elements in the mentoring program. Affirmation and its usage has spread into most American colloquialism and comes out typically as just saying O.K., but that assertion from a mentor that something exists or is true was indicated by participants as a good learning tool in the development of leadership skills for new administrators.

### **Weaknesses and Methods to Improve the Mentoring Program**

The third research questions dealt specifically with the superintendent's perceptions about the program weaknesses and methods to improve the program. Over eighty-two percent of the participants indicated that the structured mentoring program had been helpful in adding to their leadership skills. However, despite the positive statements, there were a few areas that were mentioned by participants as having gaps, being a little weak and/or "in-need" of improvements. Those areas were mentor selection and matching, more training, and transitions/next steps for career pathways.

## **Weaknesses**

The area indicated by participants with the highest frequency of weakness was for additional training beyond the mentoring relationship and/or within it. Seventy-three percent of the participants indicated this was a significant area of weakness in the mentoring program. The request for additional training had many different components and areas of concern. The areas of weakness suggested for additional training were: school/board relationships, board boundaries, board meeting structure, superintendent's contracts, and use of technology, along with additional training in public relations, personnel management, and continued cohort training.

The highest area of weakness that was identified by sixty-four percent of the participants dealt specifically with School Board and superintendent relationships and the need for additional training/mentoring in that area.

S5 made the following statement regarding his board/superintendent relationships:

Managing difficult relationships with your board members, if they exist. How do you navigate that? Those kinds of things, which can be very delicate, those are the kind of things that you can really benefit from.

S6 highlighted his continued concerns about board relationship training:

Board Relationships. Absolutely. It's the biggest concern. I serve as a mentor for new superintendents. It's always the top issue on the list. Historically up there as it was for me as a mentee.

S10 shared her board member boundary issue:

But definitely navigating, dealing with a challenging board member or two. Having positive relationships to get your work done or dealing with those issues that you deal

with where board members are acting outside of what they should be doing when they want to.

S1 identified his board meeting structure as being problematic:

That was one thing I think should be a module or a required review between the mentor and the superintendent is, “Are your board meeting effective and how can we make them more effective?” Because that’s mainly handled by AASB. It really needs to come over to our side because we’re the secretaries of the board meetings. That would benefit us.

S10 elaborated on her board meeting structure and the need for updated technology:

One would be having sample board meeting agendas and best practices available for new superintendents. The process by which we had been doing board meetings was just antiquated. It was cumbersome. It was time consuming. It was not effective. We moved to eBoards, something everyone should try.

Another related category identified as a weakness between the superintendent and board relationships falls under the area of superintendent contract negotiation.

S10 indicated a gap and a need for a model contract:

I think SSA should try to help with a contract, but I really wish we already had some go-to samples that new superintendents and mentors could just pull down and say, “Here are four of the best contracts that have been reviewed and authorized by some of our legal affiliates. Just look and compare what you’re doing.” I think that would help new superintendents because I think the strength of the contract is important to a superintendent’s longevity, your separation agreement. That’s really important.

The umbrella of training requests by participants included a variety of different trainings to fill in gaps based on their experiences. For example, a majority of the 138 school districts in

Alabama are relatively poor, small and tend to be more rural than urban (See Per Capital Income List in Appendix). Most school districts do not have the resources to have a permanent public relations person. That job typically falls to the school superintendent. Thus, the second area in which the respondents believed they needed additional support was navigating with the media, communicating clearly to stakeholders and in general the community at large.

S10 made her suggestion for more public relations training:

Suggest public relations solutions for those systems that may not have a public relations officer or manager. If mentors could be trained, or mentors could have a way of just sharing some of those things to help new superintendents keep themselves out of a fire, from getting consumed by the first incident that occurs. I think that would help. If this is a whole area, you need some more examples.

Another area identified as needing additional training and support was personnel management. S9 suggested more in-depth human relations and personnel training:

If you live by the rule by which they always tell you that the majority of your time is going to be spent with people, the majority of your budget is going to spend on the salaries of other people. You can't lose sight of the fact that this is a people related business. You're dealing with their livelihood and position and their jobs and how you handle them.... You cannot have enough training on that.

S8 thought an alternative superintendent orientation training was important:

I would suggest that new superintendents automatically be granted an opportunity to go into the Superintendent's Academy if they haven't been through it. Because that's a more robust experience. SSA might as well just drop their new superintendent

orientation. Just quit reinventing the wheel and let the Superintendent's Academy do the work.

S10 expressed her desire for training as cohorts using different formats:

I put book study down. I don't know that anybody has time to pick up another book and read another book, but I think that some type of small book study for all new superintendents, each cohort would be a good thing. It could be done in such a way that it's not a chore for new superintendents.

S10 continued with more specific reading ideas:

I have a book, and I can't remember the author, by the title of it. "Now you're Superintendent, So What?" It was a pretty good read. It had a lot of insightful information. It wasn't theoretical in nature. It was just pragmatic in its development and composition, but it was more a real commonsense type of book.

The weakness of the mentoring program given by participants were interwoven and often merged with methods for program improvements.

### **Methods for Improvement**

After covering the weaknesses of the mentoring program, to better delineate the methods for improvement, they have been arranged into larger chunks of related themes and suggestions. The largest category for improvement after the training category was transitions and next steps in the superintendent's career pathway. Forty-five percent of the participants referred to this issue and concern.

### **Transitions/Next Steps**

S11 added steps that she thought would be helpful with transitioning issues:

I think the mentoring person who had already gone this route and knew these people could have said, “I think that these are the ones that I think can help you build these relationships with that you can pick up the phone because they are in those positions”. I think that would have given me a little bit more support than me trying to branch out on my own trying to find which one that I felt comfortable with, that I wanted to follow in their shoes.

S12 summed up his transition issue:

How can I possibly prepare myself professionally along the way that would enable me to possibly get another superintendency?

S10 also supported this transition issue:

Life after superintendency, helping you to make transitions and connections from one superintendent position to another.

Being involved in professional organization was another method for improvement that could be helpful as a stepping stone for future advancement. Twenty-seven percent of the participants referred to the importance of being involved in professional organizations and conferences as being useful.

S9 gave his rationale for organizational involvement:

By encouraging me to be active in these other parts ... I don't hold any offices. But I tend to work jobs that. Classes since ... asked me to do some training, my communication piece. But just the encouragement of being a part of the organization, I got some valuable insights.

S3 shared her beliefs about professional organizational growth:

I also would say that because of the conferences that are being held by different organizations today, school superintendents, school boards and others, my mentor has encouraged me to be a part of those, not just attend but to be an integral part in learning what's going on, what are the next steps and how I can use those ideas... even if I must tweak them to make them fit for us.

The areas listed below were mentioned by participants were grouped together with the participants mentioning them often as single items. This list accounts for twenty-eight percent of the participant suggestions for methods to improve the mentoring program:

- Creating system of checks and balances
- Evaluating mentor's superintendent performance
- Increasing mentor shadowing opportunities
- Realistic class simulations on poverty and cultural training
- Providing a standard tickler file
- Providing more opportunities to communicate on-line
- Increasing the length of the mentoring program
- Better program closure procedures

While this list does not represent the dominant ideas or methods for improvement suggested by most of the participants; it does still provide some helpful insights that could be possibly put on the list for further consideration in an exemplary program. New superintendents and experienced superintendents do agree on some perceptions of each of the factors of the study with some slight difference in the percent of the responses for each of the groups. Table 1 provides a description of the percentages of each group for each category and theme.

Table 1

*New and Experienced Superintendent Responses Comparison Chart*

<b>Mentoring Program Impact</b>	<b>New Superintendents</b>	<b>Experienced Superintendents</b>
Budgeting Impact	83%	67%
Instructional Impact	83%	67%
Communication Impact	67%	67%
<b>Effective Mentoring Elements</b>		
Mentor relationships	83%	83%
Mentor selection and matching	100%	67%
Access to help	67%	83%
Availability to resources	50%	100%
Affirmation and check-ins	50%	33%
<b>Weakness of the Program</b>		
Additional training needed in School Bd., PR, Contracts, HR	67%	50%
<b>Methods for Improvement</b>		
Transition/Next Steps	50%	33%
Prof. Organization membership	50%	0%
Other improvement suggestions (program length, tickler file, closure procedures, poverty and cultural sensitivity, and mentor shadowing)	33%	83%

The chart below compares the percentages of the answers from new and experienced superintendents.

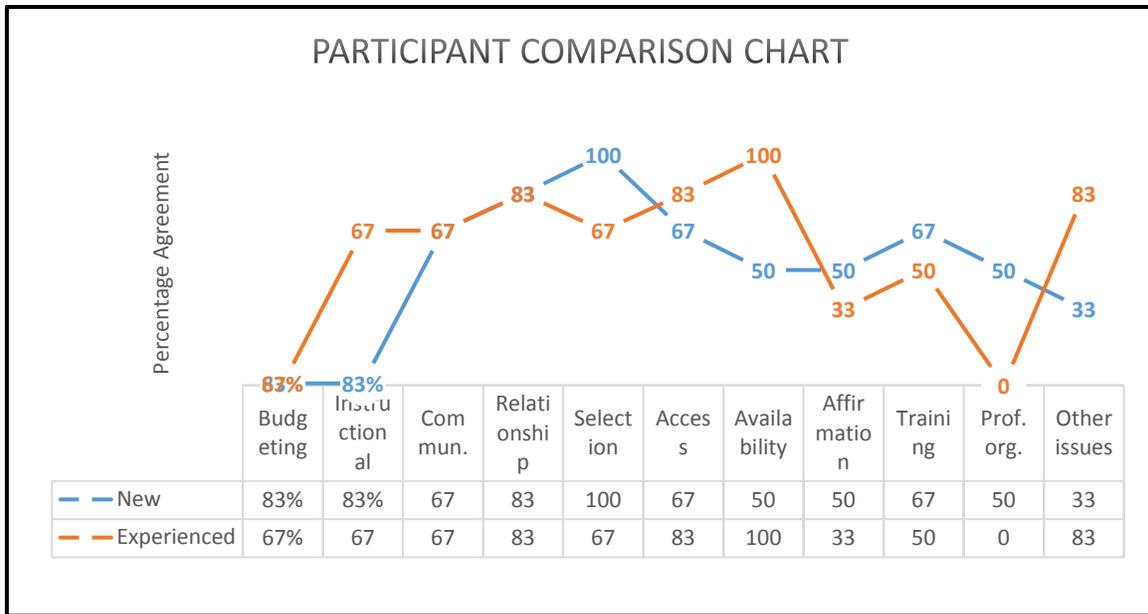


Figure 8. Participant Comparison Chart

As noted, new and experienced superintendents agree about the categories and themes related to mentoring program benefits, impacts, program weaknesses and hindering factors and methods for program improvement. However, there were some significant differences in the percent of new and experienced administrators who identified some of these factors. For example, in terms of the mentoring program impacts, experienced superintendents felt the largest mentoring program impact was in budgeting at 83% percent while new superintendents indicated 83% percent felt the most impact from the mentoring program was in the instructional area.

In terms of the most effective program elements there was some variance between the groups. Both groups felt mentor relationships was one of the major effective program element at 83% percent. Whereas the new superintendents felt the selection and matching process was the most effective element at 100% but by contrast the experienced superintendents identified availability to resources at 100% percent as the most effective program element.

The data from both groups identified the need for additional mentor training as one of the primary methods for program improvement. But the type of training varied greatly between the two groups. The highest recommended category for improvement by experienced superintendents was in the “other” category which includes the grouped training factors listed last. The other category included a list of individual suggestions for the mentoring program improvements at 83% percent. The new superintendents identified additional training at 67% as their highest category for improvement with training with board/superintendent relationships being their highest category for improvement. The possible reasons for these differences are unknown. However, possible reasons for these differences and the different types of training recommendations for them are discussed in Chapter 5.

### **Alignment with the Conceptual Model**

The last question investigated the degree to which the new superintendent’s mentoring experience aligned with the standard mentoring process identified by Zachary (2009).

According to Zachary (2009),

The model presented by the *Mentor’s Guide* sets out four phases of the mentoring relationship: 1) *preparing* (getting ready), 2) *negotiating* (establishing agreements), 3) *enabling* (doing the work) and 4) *coming to closure* (integrating the learning and moving forward). The phases build on one another to form a predictable developmental sequence that varies in length from one relationship to another. (p. 7)

The fifteen interview questions were aligned to this model using the four phases as demonstrated in the matrix below.

Table 2

*Participant Interview Questions Aligned to the Model*

Interview Questions	Preparing	Negotiating	Enabling	Closure	Other
One					X
Two	X				
Three	X				
Four	X				
Five		X			
Six		X			
Seven			X		
Eight			X		
Nine			X		
Ten			X		
Eleven				X	
Twelve				X	
Thirteen				X	
Fourteen	X				
Fifteen				X	

The interview questions were placed in categories based on specific information and details listed and described by Zachary (2009). This data is summarized by percentages of questions in each phase and shown in Figure 9.

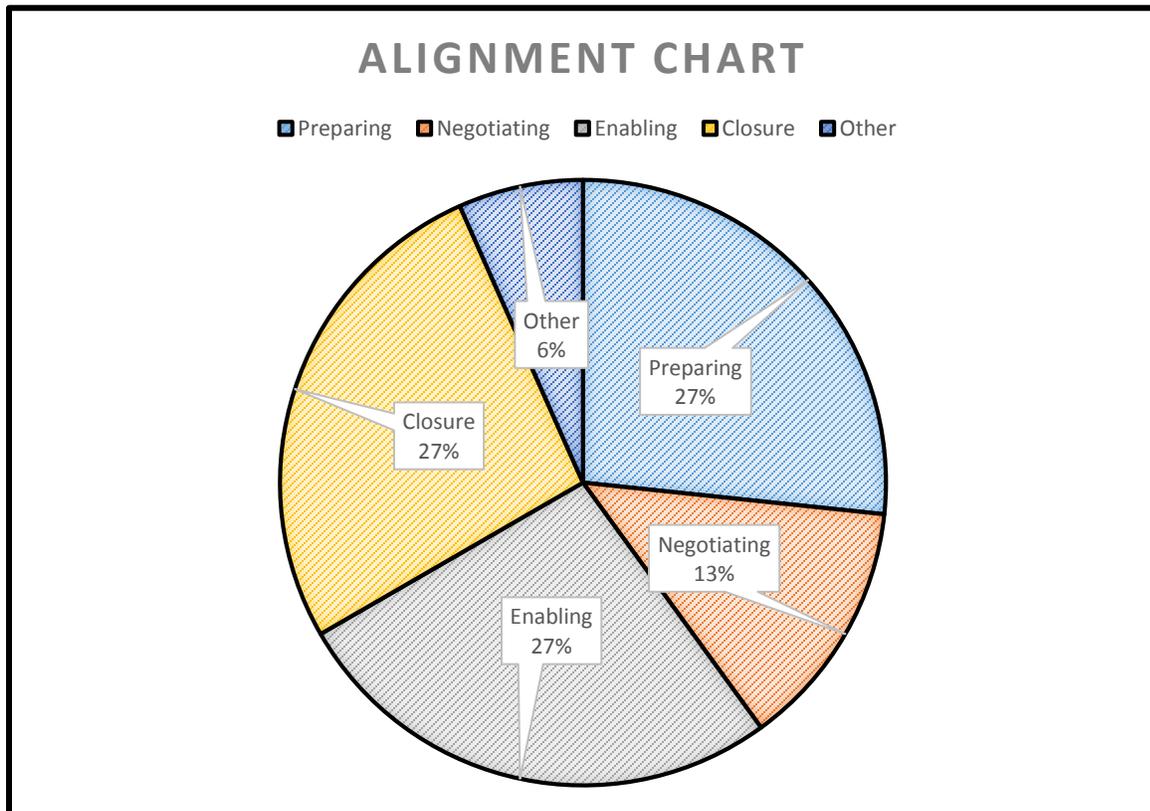


Figure 9. Conceptual Model Alignment Chart

The interview questions in each phase were delineated by percentages. Three phases of the model, preparing, negotiating and enabling, each have 27% percent of the questions while the negotiating phase had 13% percent. The other category is demographic data which was 6% percent. The conceptual model phases were also supplemented by documented information from the archived SAA surveys which included administrative goals required by Standard Seven from ALSDE.

## **Preparing**

In Zachary's (2009) model, preparing is the first phase that starts with the participant wanting to learn and analyzing their own needs, motivations, learning styles and vision for the job. It involves self-reflection of oneself and the expectations of the mentoring process. According to one participant, this involves starting with meeting the new group of superintendents.

S2 stated his reflections about the new superintendent group:

Just to see the faces of the other new superintendents in our first gathering and listen to their stories was wonderful. So, you know you are not facing this alone; you are facing some of the same issues.

This meeting is followed up with a meeting of the assigned SSA mentor.

S9 described his mentor selection process:

And then of course SSA pairs you with a person in the District to be your mentor. Someone with past, with experience, came and met with me. We went through the protocol, we sat down and talked. That's the best part of it.

S10 elaborated on her beginning mentoring phase:

I was paired as a novice with a veteran who had several years under his belt in the field and that many experiences. I think being paired with a veteran superintendent who had several years of experience in itself had value for me. Because when I called on him he could draw on some of the things that he had experienced and he had dealt with in his professional development.

Included in this phase is another goal setting step required by SSA. New superintendents are required by SSA to fill out an additional documentation in a survey tool. This survey

documents the development and progress of goals set with the mentor and mentee. Part I asks the new superintendent to explain how their participation in the mentoring program impacted issues involving the instructional program and the way it was beneficial to student achievement in the system. Part II of the survey dealt with goals for the upcoming year working with your board, your central office, administrators, and your principals and to describe how their work to implement them was based on their mentor training. All new superintendents upon satisfactory completion of the survey were awarded professional credits by ALSDE. These credits are used for the renewal of administrative certification licensures.

### **Negotiating**

Negotiating is the phase that also lays the foundation, ground rules, boundaries, and overall meeting logistics. The requirements of this phase were described in detail in the SSA brochure (see attached brochure) and was supported by numerous participants.

S2 described his mentoring structure:

We met the required number of times. I believe that was around eight times and the meetings covered the areas the mentor needed to document covering.

S5 confirmed his mentor meeting structure with additional flexibility as needed:

And so, we would meet not every month, maybe every other month. Just talk and I spent a lot of time just listening. And so, he would call, frequently check in on me. See how things were going.

SAA requires the participation of all new school superintendents in their mentoring program.

### **Enabling**

Enabling is the phase in which the real work begins; this involves developing those relationships, networking, trust, time management and overall making substantial progress

towards goals. As participants worked towards completing goals, there were many examples of the professional learning and growth.

S6 described an example of his professional general growth:

I also feel another benefit of that mentoring is just learning about the field in general.

The different areas. The operations, finance, federal programs, curriculum. The content knowledge that's acquired by talking to someone goes a long way in helping me become a better superintendent.

S10 learned resources were connected to her professional relationships:

The resources are all about relationships, and being connected, and knowing who's who, and having a positive relationship. Being able to get some money on a historic site that I had to do some renovations, that was both a facilities resource and a fiscal resource. All of that came about as a result of my mentorship.

S12 shared another perspective on his professional financial growth:

Based on finance. So, I guess the long story short, he helped me to prioritize the needs versus wants.

S5 gave another example of this real work with his instructional growth:

And so just being able to go down, look at his data and things that he implemented. They were very helpful. Because his and my students that we have come from similar backgrounds. Struggle with the same kind of learning challenges and display the same kinds of deficits that many of his students in his district had.

S3 shared her time management learning perspective:

You're not necessarily going to be able to do your direct supervision but it may not be your "everyday" direct thing. There are a lot of other management things you must do as

far as your school, your construction projects and all the other things. He said as I managed, just ensure that I don't neglect the academic program,

S6 summarized a benefit from his leaning experience with his mentor:

I didn't want to sound dumb and stupid. So, by sharing again, some of the information from my mentor prior to that particular point, I had, the foundation of the basis of having a decent conversation with my colleagues, so that I would be able to truly get information I was trying to get.

This phase of professional benefits and growth also extended to the personnel and human relations area according to this participant.

S1 stated his experience with the hiring process:

I think that the mentoring program did improve my skills in terms of hiring, the hiring process. Or one of the things I learned from my mentor, he also talked about when hiring people for key positions, taking them out to lunch, and seeing how they react, how does this person treat the waitress or the hostess. That gives you an indication of how that person may treat a secretary, or may treat the janitor, or may even treat the children.

## **Closure**

Zachary (2012) describes closure as the, "integration and moving forward phase" (p. 8). Closure represents a time to celebrate successes and evaluate one's progress towards achieving goals. Good closure should move you forward. SSA's mentoring program officially ends after the first year in the superintendent's position. The participants indicated this was an important area where continued support may be needed as demonstrated by participant comments.

S10 shared her personal perspective on the length of mentorship program:

Superintendents in their first year are in the mix and for the most part are saying, “Gee, we need more than a year.” Because they are feeling the next year is different, so they still need support. If they can get into a mentorship where their mentor will stay with them and become a lifelong coach, it really helps. I was fortunate to have that, but I also know that's not realistic for all mentorships. What some of them are discovering is their lifeline has been cut off, which they really appreciated, but it's cut off. (p. 9)

S6 explained his experience with continued mentoring support:

The mentorship was intended to last for one year. I was paired with a (mentor), who was and still is the superintendent of (blank) County. We still speak on a regular basis, I want to say regularly, probably once every month and he would check in with me, ask how I was doing and so forth, and he always left the door open for me to contact him. (p. 1)

S12 shared another example of his continued mentoring:

SSA contacted me and said, “You're now ending your mentor process with him.” And I got the little certificate and everything. But we actually never stopped communicating. Well, we had a meeting that was the “quote-unquote” final meeting. But the mentoring has never stopped.

S9 affirmed another experience with his continued mentor support:

Even to this day, my mentor, because, they do that for a year. Even to this day, what happens is, I'll call him, and he'll say, “You're having a problem with this Board member doing this?” And I'll say, “Yes, sir” and everything. He would say, “This is what you need to do. You need to go ahead and generate this document or generate this email or talk to this person or have your technical support person come do this or do that.” (p. 5)

S1 summarized his feelings about the mentoring program and the closure experience:

I had access to superintendents from all over the state. By attending the conferences, mentor meetings, building relationships, that are gonna last a lifetime.

S3 expressed feelings about the closure of her mentoring program:

No one said, hey, good job. You're going to be okay. I guess there was no confirmation, is what I am saying. I felt the umbilical cord was cut way too fast. But it was good, it was really good. (p. 4)

The SSA's Executive Coaching model has the same consistent structure, framework and includes the four phases in the conceptual model. There are some slight differences, with components that need strengthening along with additional training areas in the SSA's mentoring program indicated by the participants. These components, training and improvement areas will be discussed in Chapter 5.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented new and experienced African American superintendents' perceptions about the effective program elements that added to the overall success of the mentoring program as well as weaknesses and recommendations for program improvements. Chapter V presents a summary of these findings, their relationship to previous research, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research involved an investigation of the new African American superintendents' perceptions of the degree to which a structured mentoring program assisted in the development of leadership skills. The study also examined the superintendents' perceptions about the ways the mentoring program could be improved in terms of weaknesses and methods for improvement. Finally, the study looked at the degree to which the mentoring program met exemplary standards.

As school districts scramble to find qualified administrators, one approach to developing and nurturing leadership talent within systems has been mentoring. Mentoring and coaching relationships are important in any profession (Bjork & Brunner, 2000) and according to Watkins (2003), mentoring in the early phase of an employee's career can make a huge difference. School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) has made a continuous effort to provide mentoring for all new school superintendents in its structured mentoring program. According to SSA's brochure, "their executive coaching model is a professional alliance between a new superintendent and a successful veteran superintendent. SSA has a cadre of trained coaches available for systems as part of their SSA membership. All coaches have been trained in the Corporate Coach U (CCU) model to effectively work with superintendents during the first year". CCU is a leading global provider of customized corporate coach and mentor training and corporate coaching services. SSA has more than twenty veteran superintendents trained to serve as executive coaches. SSA holds new superintendent planning meetings in conjunction with the

summer, fall and legislative conferences. Coaches are paired by county districts, i.e., in the same district if possible; being in the same district or region leads to greater ease of interaction.

Coaches concentrate on current issues and help the new superintendents to utilize and implement appropriate actions. There are officially eight required contacts during the year, of which at least four contacts are personal.

In this study, the researcher used qualitative methods to help identify the perceptions about how the mentoring program provided by the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) added to and assisted in the attainment of district goals, career goals, and the personal growth and professional development goals of new African American superintendents in Alabama. Qualitative research was chosen because this type of research deals with the how, what, and why in situations calling for more in-depth exploration to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of perceptions and behaviors as it relates to specific topics or issues.

This research involved a case study with a selected group of administrators in a structured mentoring program. Creswell (2005) defines case study as “a variation of ethnography in that the researcher provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an event, a process, or an individual) based on extensive data collection (p. 439). According to Creswell (2013),

A hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that presents an in-depth understanding of the case. In order to accomplish this, the researcher collects many forms of qualitative data, ranging from interviews, to observations to documents to, to audiovisual materials. Relying on one source of data is typically not enough to develop this in-depth understanding. (p. 98)

Two research tools were used in this study. The data research instruments were: 1) School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) archived surveys; and 2) face-to-face interviews. The first research instrument, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with superintendents, contained questions on the perceived ways that the mentoring program assisted in their leadership skills and abilities and general competencies of new superintendents in terms of helping to attain district goals. The interview questions will focus on these components. The next data instrument in this study was the archived surveys. Survey research is appropriate when the goal is to collect participants' opinions or perception on some issue (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). SSA ([www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org)) has been compiling questionnaire and survey data on their mentoring programs since the 2006–2007 school year.

The first research instrument, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with superintendents, will contain questions on the perceived ways that the mentoring program assisted in the career, professional and personal growth and general competencies of new superintendents in terms of helping to attain district goals. The interview questions will focus on these components. This formal mentoring process was developed and outlined in the work of Lois Zachary (2009). The mentoring processes, according to Zachary (2009) includes four distinct stages: 1) Preparing, 2) Negotiating, 3) Enabling, and 4) Coming to Closure.

The next data instrument in this study was the archived surveys. Survey research is appropriate when the goal is to collect participants' opinions or perception on some issue (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA; [www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org)) has been compiling questionnaire/survey data on their mentoring programs since the 2006–2007 school year. The second survey instrument was developed based on ALSDE's Standard Seven of the administrative code. The mentoring survey is based on the

superintendent's experiences in terms of their goals, general issues and support provided by SSA's mentoring programs. The information from both data sources, the transcribed surveys and superintendent interviews were hand coded. Coding helps researchers uncover and methodically analyze multifaceted events in unstructured data. Coding is a tool that lets the researcher locate and explain findings in primary data material, to weight and assess their importance, and to envision the often-complex connections between them.

The study was conducted with new African American superintendents in a structured mentoring program. The following four research questions guided the study.

**Question 1:** What are new African American superintendents' perceptions of the degree to which the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership and management roles?

**Question 2:** What are new African American superintendents' perceptions of the most effective elements of the mentoring program?

**Question 3:** What are the superintendents' perceptions of their mentoring experiences alignment to the standard formal mentoring process identified by Zachary (2009)?

**Question 4:** What are the superintendents' perceptions of the ways the mentoring program could be improved in terms of weaknesses and methods for improvement?

### **Discussion of Findings**

This chapter discusses and summarizes the findings for each of the research questions along with their importance for new African American superintendents. Each section examines the findings for one of the research questions, along with implications for practice.

The first research questions asked, "What are new African American superintendent's perceptions of the degree to which the mentoring program added to their emerging leadership

and management roles?” The structured mentoring program was perceived as adding to the overall success and development of leadership and management roles. There were three primary areas in which the superintendents perceived that the program assisted them in their leadership roles in: budgeting/financial management, instructional and curricular dimensions and communication skills.

### **Budgeting and Financial Management**

The data indicated participants viewed budgeting and financial management as one of the more challenging and difficult areas to manage as a superintendent. One of the key challenges was having the financial acumen to be able to support district-wide goals, particularly with limited resources which required having to prioritize district fiscal resources based on documented facts and information. As Bernhardt (2002) stated, “the budget is developed in conjunction with the action plan, will determine the financial feasibility of the actions for the year” (p. 122). The old slogan of “follow the money” is true in most school districts. The availability of resources often is a factor in determining district goals, the priorities, and program design and action steps. While budgeting seems like a straight forward and logical process, it is often impacted by other factors. Participants cited instances of being influenced by stakeholders to make emotional fiscal decisions. In such cases, the mentors could listen to and advise them so that they could make better decisions in terms of legitimate district needs and goal expectations. Fiscal decisions were particularly critical and important in school districts with high poverty levels. One indicator of district need and/or the poverty level used by the Alabama State Department of Education is the level of free/reduced percentages. This information is also used to determine the amount of federal funding. This data was retrieved from [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) in November 2017) for the school districts with new superintendents.

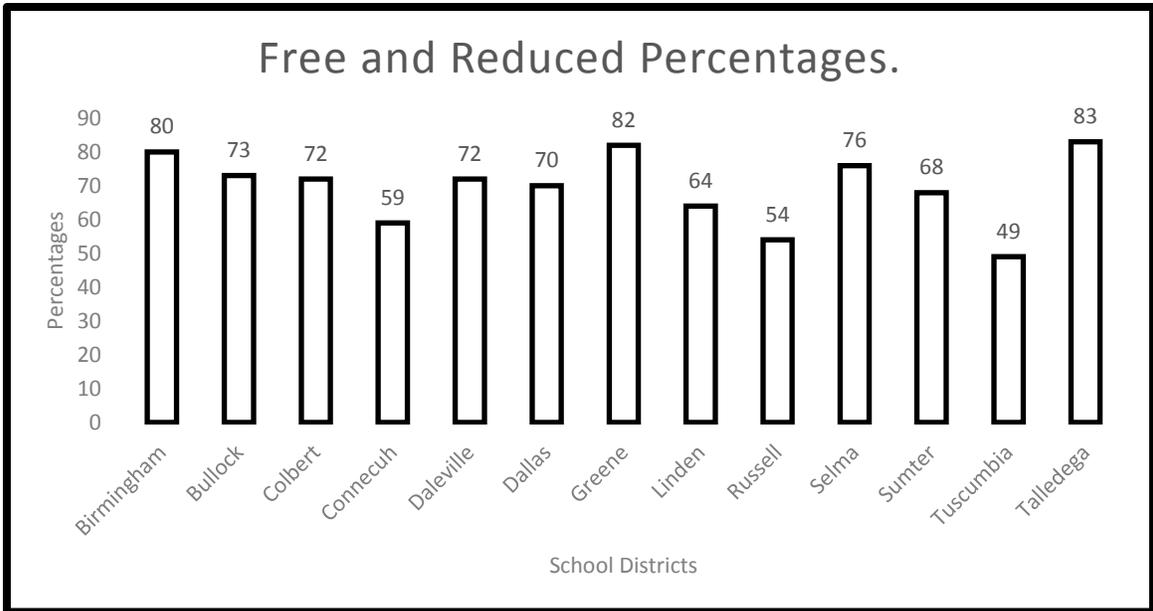


Figure 10. Free and Reduced Percentages by School District. (Please note two school districts are included in Colbert)

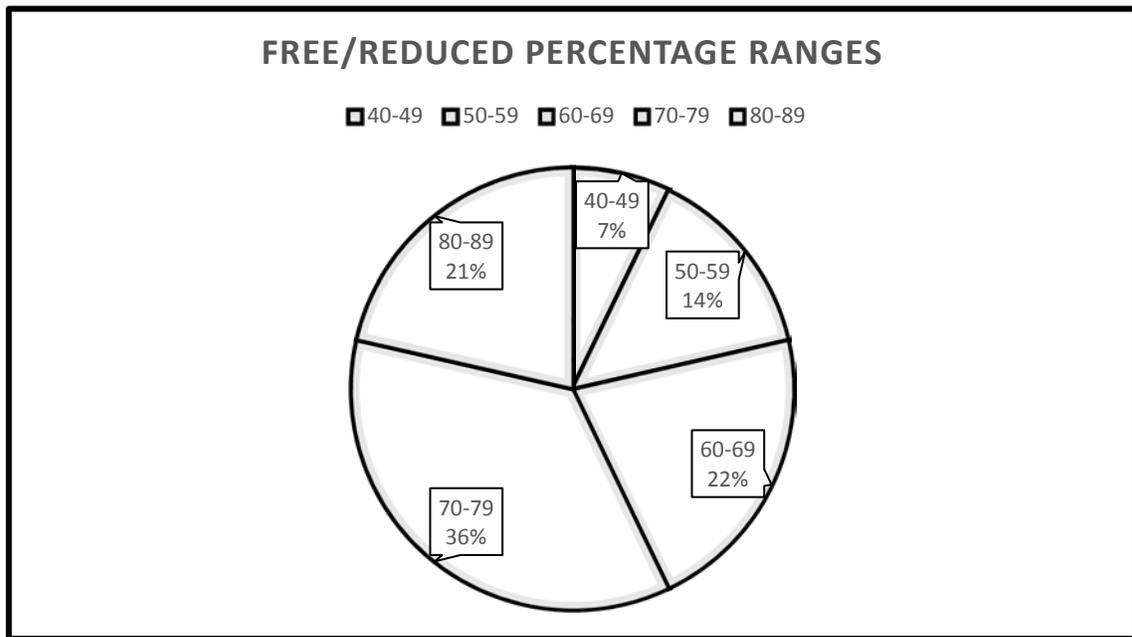


Figure 11. Free and Reduced Percentage Ranges

Based on this data, over seventy-nine percent of the new superintendents are in school districts with sixty percent or higher free and reduced lunches. If you consider districts with fifty

percent or more free and reduced lunch percentages then ninety-three percent of the new superintendents are in districts with students and families living in high levels of poverty on a routine basis.

Using the per capita income data for 2016 ([www.deptofnumbers.com/income/alabama](http://www.deptofnumbers.com/income/alabama)), the median income in Alabama is \$24,769 while the median for the United States is \$29,979. Alabama falls below the national per capita income average and all the school districts which have new African American superintendents fall significantly below the state average with a wide range from Colbert County with the highest of \$22,546 to the lowest of Greene County with \$13,611. Figure 10 also substantiates this data with the resulting free and reduced school data.

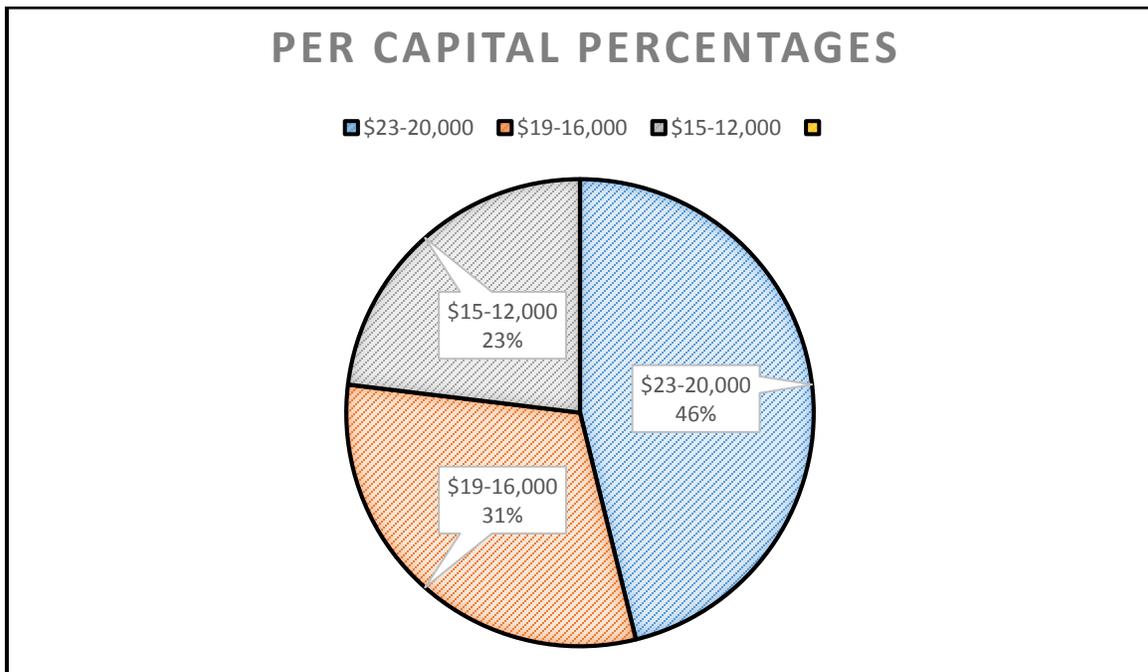


Figure 12. Per Capital Percentages for School Districts

Given the poverty status documented in all their school districts, one can easily understand why participants ranked budgeting and financial management as an important area impacted by the mentoring program. Mentoring in budgeting and financial management was not only provided one-on-one but additional training in small group formats as needed for new superintendents. Participants cited the importance of mentor expertise, but more importantly knowing who could do what and who would help to undo red tape; in other words, the inner budgetary processes of the ALSDE system.

These findings suggest that it is imperative that mentors have extensive experience in fiscal management and that they clearly understand the fiscal constraints and expectations for these new superintendents. Although not directly related to mentoring, the findings here raise a question, why so many new African American superintendents are being hired in such improvised school districts with such fiscal constraints. It may be that more seasoned leaders choose not to place themselves in these school settings. However, even more seasoned veteran superintendents would be challenged with difficult fiscal decisions in these school districts, not to mention “new” superintendents. Given the realities of the situation, SSA may want to add additional fiscal management training to their mentoring programs and may want to consider emphasizing this issue when training mentors.

### **Instructional Leadership**

The instructional and curricular dimensions focus continue to be a critical area of focus for many new superintendents; not only because of the 21<sup>st</sup> century accountability movement, but because it has become a visual yard stick to measure successful school districts. This was emphasized by Hesse and Kelly (2005), who suggested that in this “new accountability era school improvement rested to an unprecedented degree on the quality of school leadership” (p.

245). The participants indicated numerous ways the mentoring program fostered their leadership skills in instructional and curricular dimensions.

Participants cited the importance of the mentor sharing new ideas and strategies used to handle instruction. The mentors also encouraged the mentees to develop the ability to determine what data was needed to match and monitor instructional strategies which might be the most effective. Mentors shared information that had worked in other school districts that were similar in size and demographics. This was cited by new superintendents as an effective attribute of the mentoring program, especially for those new superintendents who needed to “hit the ground running” with proven and effective instructional strategies and programs.

The findings of instructional importance reported by participants was substantiated by Eisner and Jackson (1983) who claimed, nothing counts more than curriculum in the field of education. These findings were corroborated by researchers writing for the Wallace Foundation (2006). These researchers found a connection between instructional leadership and, high quality teaching and student learning. The researchers stated, “behind excellent teaching and excellent schools is excellent leadership—the kind that ensures that effective teaching practices do not remain isolated and unshared in a single classroom” (p. 3). The findings of this research support a definite need for new school administrators to be able to provide instructional leadership and providing opportunities to strengthen these skills in a variety of formats.

These findings indicate that it is important that mentors have a broad understanding of instructional and evaluative processes and can share them with their mentees. These findings also point to the need for educational leadership programs and those responsible for providing professional development experiences for new superintendents to assure that they are providing comprehensive educational and practical opportunities for these individuals to develop their

instructional leadership skills. It also suggests that this focus should be an integral part of any SSA training provided to mentors and/or mentees.

## **Communication**

Good communication skills can be taught and developed as needed and appropriate for a position and job responsibilities. Communication is an important job skill, but is equally important in the mentoring relationship. This is based on information from Zachary (2000), who asserted that effective communication is also important to successful mentoring, just as it would be in any other relationship. According to the participants, the mentoring program aided their communication skills in a variety of ways. This included insights from a tickler file which helped to establish an overview of the types of communication expected throughout the school year, examples of written reports, a timeline with prompts and reminders. New school superintendents are often unaware of and caught off caught with the time required for state reports, audits and routine operational deadlines from ALSDE. Some participants cited the mentor examples of weekly communication with staff and parents as immediately useful in terms of ways to engage staff and recognize positive staff/student accomplishments in the district. Communication was based on effective listening, supportiveness, and trust.

Embedded in the mentor and mentee communication was some time for reflection. Reflective questioning, according to Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995), instead of authoritarian advising, “puts mentors where they need to be, out of the action, looking on, encouraging, rather than taking over and doing the work of the learner” (p. 25). The importance of reflection was confirmed by Zachary (2009) who stated that, “reflection is an instrumental part of the mentoring process” (p. 19). Zachary (2009) defined “reflections in the context of mentoring as the ability to

critically examine your current or past practices, behaviors, actions, and thoughts in order to more consciously and purposefully develop yourself personally and professionally” (p. 18).

Participants mentioned that they received continual reminders from the mentors about “how” to communicate with people and that it was important that you are not talking at them. They also received critical insights about how to communicate with the School Board, to colleagues or to subordinates. The use of technology from Facebook, twitter and Instagram has changed the communication world, particularly the timeliness and overall vulnerability to immediate public analysis and scrutiny. In many cases, new superintendents did not have the opportunity or time for a do-over for communication missteps. Thus, it seems logical that any help one can receive in avoiding miscommunication errors is critical. As Benjamin Franklin said, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” That is certainly true for new superintendents, since the communication skills of superintendents are evaluated in the public arena from a variety of audiences. The participants indicated that the communication skills they acquired because of the mentoring program were new, saved time or improved their leadership skills.

While fiscal management and budgeting and instructional leadership and assessment tend to be specifically integrated into instructional leadership and professional development programs, communication might be an area that is overlooked in these contexts. The changing context of leadership, particularly the entry of online communication, appear to make it imperative that this area be examined and discussed with new superintendents. It might be wise to emphasize this area when preparing mentors. It might also be valuable to caution new superintendents about this issue and encourage them to strive to enhance these skills through the mentoring process.

## **Effective Elements of the Mentoring Program**

The participants identified the most effective elements in the mentoring program as: the mentor relationships, mentor selection/matching, networking and mentor affirmation/check-ins. While these elements are presented separately for purposes of this study, there is a definite and logical overlap between these elements, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The mentor/mentee relationship was identified as one of the most effective elements in the mentoring program. The participants cited personal mentor characteristics and qualities that made for a positive mentor/mentee relationship such as an open-door policy, trust, problem-solving abilities, flexibility, being real and relatable, and open to sharing successes and failures. Trust was a foundation quality and the most dominant quality indicated by participants for a good relationship. According to Kram (1985), the mentoring relationship between a mentor and a mentee goes beyond the role of supervisor and subordinate. These findings are in keeping with research by those investigating mentoring. This view was expanded by Berg, Berg, Mortimer, Walton-Moss and Yeo (2005) who found that the mentor-mentee relationship was a personal relationship that should move the mentee forward by offering support, gaining knowledge, and fostering professional development based on the mentor's previous experience.

Mentoring is a vital administrative training process with groundwork that has been connected to successful results based studies from Warren (2005), and Gardiner, Tiggerman, Keams and Marshall (2007). Other research findings from Kay, Hagen and Parker (2009) claimed that "The road to success is often paved by a good mentor". The participants also suggested that without trust the other qualities would be more difficult to develop even with time. Walker and Stott (1994) found that trust and respect were found to be critical qualities. For example, Walker and Stott (1994) found that successful mentoring was reliant on developing

trust, communicating expectations, developing mentors, growing a relationship beyond the school environment, and nurturing facilitator participation and flexibility. Trust was the most essential element in a mentor-mentee relationship because it sanctions both the mentor and protégé to identify, agree to, communicate, and consequently work to improve ineffective practices (Porter, 1998). It appears that SSA is integrating this need for trust into their training program. This finding suggests that it is imperative that they do so. This trust may also be closely related to the next finding dealing with mentor selection and matching.

### **Mentor Selection, Match and Qualities**

All the mentors in this structured mentoring program were selected by SSA for new school superintendents. Structure in this study refers to the arrangement and organization of the mentoring elements which may include the mentoring program, the components and other pertinent patterns found in those mentor relationships. The SSA superintendent mentors were trained using the Executive Coaching prior to being assigned to new superintendents. The participants had very strong feelings about the importance of a good match. According to Haug and Lynch (1995), “It is the dance between two willing and consenting partners, a dance of giving and receiving each other’s gift” (p. 5). Many researchers suggested that a solid mentoring relationship may go through several phases of formation (Bouguignon, Sosik, & Lee, 2005; Hayes, 2005; Zachary, 2000). These four mentoring phases from Zachary (2009) include:

- Preparing and developing trust
- Negotiating roles
- Enabling, implementing and maintaining the relationship
- Coming to closure (pp. 7-8)

Most of the participants gave examples of experiences that supported and demonstrated their navigation through all four of these phases.

While the participants were aware of the mentoring program structure and phases; it was not their primary focus in terms of assisting their professional development and growth. They attributed more of their professional growth and development to the qualities found in the mentors. The participants chose to emphasize the benefits gained by working with mentors possessing certain mentor qualities. Participants pointed out the importance of having mentors who were inspirational role models that demonstrated good leadership skills and behavior as well as long-term survival strategies and skills. According to Bandura (1997) the role modeling function is based on social learning theory. Bandura states that mentees absorb information by watching the actions of the mentor. While a role model could be a mentor that is not always the case. But many of the mentors in this study were perceived to be role models.

One of the more unique mentor qualities mentioned by participants was the extra effort made by mentors to find personal connections beyond the work world such as common hobbies, sports and even people in common. This belief was expanded by Lee et al. (2006) who suggested that an effective listener is one who can listen and learn about others interest, needs, and goals. Other qualities such as patience, being kind, and being good listeners were critical, but helping to support with expertise, to calm and comfort a new superintendent in crisis was repeatedly indicated as important in creating a good mentor/mentee match.

Being comfortable and supported by the mentor were consistently mentioned qualities. New superintendents ranked this as the most effective program element. The participants expressed the value of having someone who understood and had experienced their issues but at the same time more importantly someone compatible to work with in their new position.

Zachary (2012) found that “each mentor brings their own experience to the relationship increasing shared meaning and resulting in something greater emerging from this process” (p. 3). This category and the relationship category were inter-related and closely interwoven because what the participants were really talking about was what makes a good relationship not the mentor selection or assignment process.

### **Networking (Access and Accountability)**

Participants ranked networking which included accessibility and availability as an important and effective element in the mentoring program. They expressed consistent examples of the advantage of having a seasoned professional mentor was key in terms of drawing from their experiences and successes. It was particularly useful regarding resources. New superintendents often do not know the resources that are available to use that could be applied for, underutilized or even know where to find them. Adding to that information, Mullen (2000) suggested that “when professional support networks use a collaborative mentoring model, new possibilities become available for relationship and intuitional change” (p. 1). Experienced superintendents ranked this as the most important effective program element. This is not surprising given they have a better understanding and actual experience managing the limited resources and challenges associated with the supervision of an improvised school district. This mentoring component was found to be mutually beneficial for the mentees and the mentor and will probably continue to expand in the future and may be the most appealing for many new school leaders. Kochan and Pascarelli (2012), label this type of mentoring as transformative. They suggest that the roles continually change and the purpose of such mentoring often involves transforming the cultural context within which those involved are operating (Kochan & Pascarelli, 2012). Furthermore, the participants recognized and identified networking as a

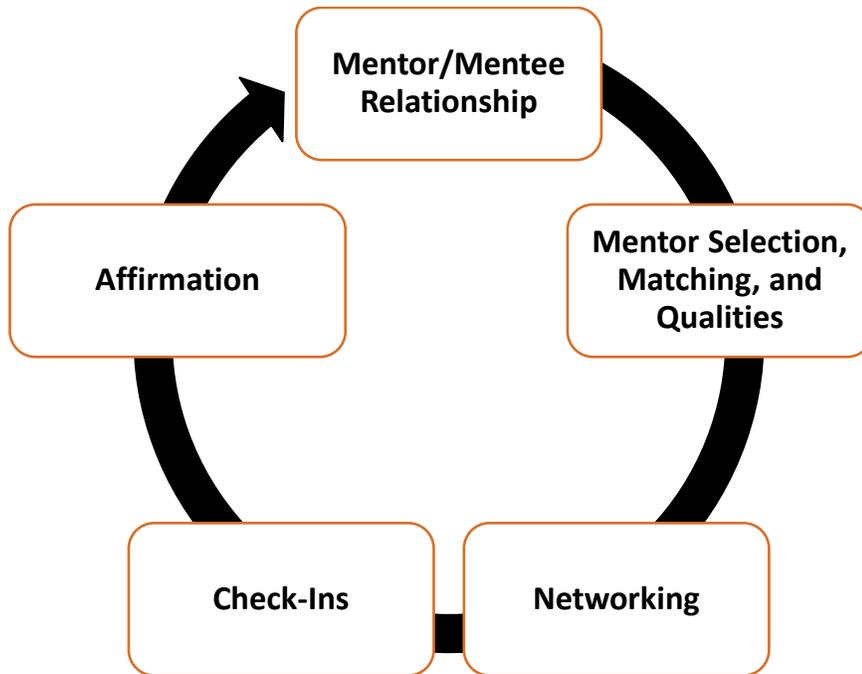
benefit from the mentoring program that helped them to better utilize all known and unknown resources (human or fiscal) at their disposal.

### **Affirmation/Check-Ins**

Another effective element cited by participants was affirmation and mentor check-ins. The rationale for this perspective was documented with examples by participants identifying the difficulty of making critical and controversial decisions in a new position. Zachary (2012) suggested that, “a mentor can offer support simply by checking in with the mentee between meetings to give the mentee friendly reminders and help them stay on track” (p. 87). This was demonstrated by mentors who played an important role in checking in and making sure new superintendents were making decisions based on facts and were not being unduly influenced by external and internal factors. Also, the mentor played an important role in sharing similar situations, providing guidance and needed reassurance. The participants identified mentors as being someone they could share confidential information without fear it would be shared with the public. Mentor affirmations were given during regularly scheduled meetings and routine check-ins for the mentee updates, questions and phone calls. In terms of processing information, a study by Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) stressed that most adults learn best when they apply newly acquired knowledge in authentic settings and follow it by engaging in critical self-reflection (Brandt, 1990). This finding supports the concept of affirmation and the resulting reflection about what worked and what didn't work and is exactly the basis or premise for the mentoring relationship.

Having an affirmation from experienced and successful colleagues was perceived by participants as a critical element in the development of leadership skills for new administrators.

Figure 13 is a concept map of the effective mentoring program elements based on the findings which were discussed above from the study.



*Figure 13. Effective Mentoring Elements*

As discussed earlier, these elements were perceived as interconnected based on the perceptions from the participants. The mentee and mentor relationship was the most important of all the mentoring elements or the umbrella which made the other elements possible with the key ingredient being trust. The findings indicated that networking and mentor selection, matching and qualities were deemed the next most important but all four of the remaining elements were identified as necessary for an exemplary mentoring program. Further research needs to be done to verify this perception by other participants in similar positions.

## **Weaknesses and Methods to Improve the Mentoring Program**

Despite the many positive perceptions from the participants about the mentoring program, the findings indicated there were a few areas identified by the participants which needed improvement in the future. These areas were additional training, mentor selection and matching, and transitions/next steps for career pathways. While some of these areas were identified as strengths in the mentoring program; the participants also recognized weaknesses within these areas that were in-need of improvements.

### **Additional Training**

The findings indicated the highest area of weakness in the mentoring program was the need for additional training and mentoring. And as aptly summarized by Orr (2011), “Leadership preparation has become one of this decade’s primary approaches to educational reform and improvement of student achievement” (p. 115). There were several areas needing more support, but the highest need identified was school board/superintendent training which included: school board/superintendent relationships, school board boundaries, school board meeting structure, and use of technology and superintendent contracts. The other areas identified for additional training were in the areas of public relations, personnel management and continued cohort training. These demands have made it necessary for school superintendents to develop the ability to work with a broader group of stakeholders and to have a strong acumen for politics (Bjork et al., 2014).

Navigating and managing difficult board relationships, which included all the above-mentioned board facets was the top training issue. For example, maintaining a good relationship with the Board while dealing with board members acting outside of their boundaries often put new superintendents in direct conflict with their Board members while simply trying to fulfill

their job expectations and responsibilities. Embedded in this board training, the findings indicated the need to have more training on how to have effective board meetings, better agendas and meeting structure and the use of technology.

Most new superintendents deal directly with the board and its legal team when negotiating their contracts. Participants reported that their contracts were already signed prior to the SSA mentor assignment, so there was very little guidance provided but there was a definite need for additional training regarding samples of the “best” contracts. The high turnover rate for superintendents in Alabama was mentioned by new superintendents, and longevity in the position was an issue.

Board meetings are not typically well-attended by the public unless there is a critical issue as the topic. Superintendents are often in a quandary about how to keep stakeholders informed and involved in the happenings of the school district on a continuous basis. Therefore, the use of technology was a tool that could aide and update information from board meetings such as eBoards. However, the findings indicated very little has been done to support or orientate new superintendents about these technology options or other innovative technology methods of communication. Findings supported a need for the implementation and use of technology in board meetings and throughout the district to better communicate with stakeholders.

Findings also indicated a gap in the skills of new superintendents in public relations. Mentors providing support with navigating the media clearly in written and oral formats appeared to be more of a “hit or miss” component based on the mentor’s skills and experiences. New superintendents reported numerous challenges and struggles in trying to correct statements and misinformation once it is the public and available for immediate viewing and analysis. This

was supported by Grogan (2000), who asserted that the need for increased skills and knowledge is critical to help superintendents handle the vast amounts of information in their new position.

One of the most important roles of any administrator is hiring highly qualified staff. School districts are responsible for educating students, but one cannot forget school districts are operationally like a business. Personnel issues appear to be a constant source of concern. The process of hiring, evaluating, developing talent and firing employees is a critical component to the success of any school district. Participants identified this process as critical to the district's success and recognized it as an area of weakness. Findings supported the need for more training in human relations and personnel skills. This complexity may be one of the reasons that Bennis (1999) stated that "Effective leadership requires training and that the most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born—that there is a genetic factor to leadership. In fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born" (p. 163). These types of training might be incorporated into mentor training but might also be something provided as professional development for new superintendents.

### **Transitions and Next Steps**

Another area needing improvement identified by participants in the mentoring program was transitions and next steps. Some participants expressed the desire to consider life after the superintendency; how to make connections for other types of educational positions such as leadership roles in professional organizations or at the university level. This was supported by research. Hayes (2005) suggested that mentoring can help to develop the new administrator's career, professional and personal development. Overall, findings supported the need for more specific steps and experiences leading to career pathways to help in transitioning to different levels of the superintendency and/or other types of education positions. Another gap identified

by participants was the pathway to obtain the initial position of superintendent. Creating these types of career pathways, supported by research from Browne-Ferrigno (2014), the University Council for Educational Administration supported that educational agencies and states should set up programs for novice leaders to develop leadership skills and beliefs that are necessary to support the needed changes in school systems and with an emphasis on good instruction. More work needs to be done to develop clear guidelines and pathways for novice administrators seeking positions, retention and upward mobility in the field.

### **Mentor Selection and Matching**

Mentor selection and matching was an area needing improvement and was important by participants. According to Wasden (1988, as cited in Villani, 2006), a mentor is described as “a master at providing opportunities for the growth of others, by identifying situations and events which contribute knowledge and experience for life of the steward” (p. 17). And Villani (2006) defined mentors as those who “need to be effective and experienced colleagues who are trained and continually coached to help new administrators to reach heightened job performance and self-reflection” (p. 17).

Daresh (2004) stated, “that most formal mentoring programs are formed in compliance with state mandates; and relationships are developed as marriages of convenience rather than naturally developed ones” (p. 503). And that was certainly the case with the SSA mentoring program which assigns veteran superintendents to novice or new superintendents. While some of the participants were a little confused about the mentor assignment process; they were largely happy to have a mentor. The mentor matching issue was primarily based on the mentor’s expertise and prior professional experiences. Participants identified a need for the mentors to have expertise or additional training resulting in a better understanding and sensitivity towards

cultural and poverty factors impacting their school districts. The school districts of the new superintendents in some cases were very different from their mentor's leadership experiences. Ehrich et al. (2004) found that professional expertise and/or personality mismatch was one of the most commonly cited issues with mentoring partnerships. Participants only identified a few personality and learning style differences between the mentor and mentee. Leslie, Lingard, and Whyte (2005) found that mentors should be a good match in terms of practice, vision and personality. A good mentor should be able to provide a broad perspective.

Another consideration based on research comes from Michael and Young (2006) who studied how to gather guidance and understanding from experienced school leaders on how to develop and help the next cohort of educational leaders using staff development and mentoring. Their study further clarified the need to link theory with real life experiences in the course work with the real work. To help to alleviate the mismatch between mentor and mentee, participants identified a need for e-mentoring or virtual mentoring which would allow new superintendent access to a broader group of mentors with different kinds of expertise. Due to the widespread availability of the world-wide web and the internet, it has become possible to use virtual mentoring (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Mullen, 2004). Bierema and Merriam (2002) characterized e-mentoring as the use of computerized email and face-to-face conferencing systems to support a mentoring relationship when a one-to-one interaction is not possible. And in terms of costs, this is an effective mentoring program format. Muller (2004) praised e-mentoring as cost effective and efficient because a large group of mentors and mentees can be matched and coached continuously using blogs, conference calls, skype, face time, and email.

### **Additional Implications for Practice**

Consistent with research findings, mentoring was found to have a positive impact on the assistance and development of the new African American superintendents' leadership skills. The findings reinforce those results. The superintendents were aware of the program, the selection/matching process, the resources and their needs for professional development.

Since mentors are so vital to the success of this program. It is critical that SSA is careful in the selection and matching of mentors/mentees. According to Zachary (2009), "Mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship between the mentee and the mentor. To be effective, the relationship needs the following elements: reciprocity, learning, and relationship" (pp. 2–3).

In addition to the training provided to all mentors, some additional training options for mentors would be beneficial. The highest area of need would be more training dealing with the awareness and sensitivity to poverty, its impact and effective strategies for student achievement, since the data indicates that most of these superintendents are in high poverty communities. The professional development offerings may include sessions that focus on public relations, the media and transitions. However, another format to consider implementing may include mentee professional learning communities for new superintendent cohorts focused on topics such as school/board relationships, personnel issues, and communication strategies. Suggested strategies for these learning communities would include real life simulations and role-playing to ensure the attainment of not only knowledge but viable applied skills.

Book studies and discussion groups may also be helpful to keep new superintendents knowledgeable and abreast of new research-based instructional strategies that could be used in highly improvised school districts. The new African American superintendents share this challenge because they are all located in school districts that are below the average per-capita

income for the State of Alabama. Furthermore, as the school district leader, they will be held accountable for maintaining and improving student learning environments and achievement.

These findings also support the importance of new superintendents having a clear vision and understanding of their job roles, expectations and the ability to fulfill them. In many cases, this involved the necessity to collaborate with and learn from others as demonstrated by the identification of the networking component in the mentoring program. Networking provided a multitude of various people in diverse setting, along with the resources, and the opportunities to share vital professional information appeared to be a critical component in fostering their ability to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

Findings supported the importance of on-going professional development for new school leaders. Mentoring provides on-going professional support as indicated during the check-ins and affirmations given by participants. This included regularly scheduled meetings between the mentor and mentee which helped to ensure that new superintendents were provided opportunities to share ideas, receive information and obtain constructive feedback. Participants pointed out the importance of being able to obtain help with budgeting, instructional strategies and data analysis. Mentors also helped mentees to better understand “insider” state resource systems, and effective ways to better communicate with the staff and the public. Mentors shared examples of instructional strategies and techniques that had worked in similar school districts as well as ones that were not as effective. Professional development obtained from the mentoring program provided the development of skills that were new, saved time and more aligned towards specific goals and student populations.

Mentors that work with new school superintendents should be able to provide support and training on specific needs identified by the individual. If not, this should be shared with

SSA so they can provide additional training options and support in either book studies, focus groups or professional learning communities. These opportunities may foster collegial opportunities for some much-needed reflective dialogue. According to Bruce Barnett in his 2004 book, *Reflective Practice: Cornerstone for School Improvement*, “the meaning of reflection and its value are rarely made explicit in our personal and professional lives” (p. 6). Barnett, O’Mahony and Mathews (2004) point out that when you combine hindsight, insight, and foresight you can make the most of your reflective powers. Professional development continues throughout their career, reflection helps new school leaders to assess which skills are weak and target them as they can continue to grow after the end of the mentoring process. Reflection could be particularly beneficial and important if the closure phase is reexamined to expand face-to-face discussions between the mentor and mentee.

Additionally, some consideration should be given to the current practice and length of the mentoring program. Many professions have longer internships, apprenticeships and residencies for new career professionals. In education, new teachers are considered probationary for the first two to three years by most school districts. And as such, teachers are given specific staff development and evaluated on an annual basis to ensure their professional growth and development continues throughout the probationary period. New superintendents are typically given two-year contracts. Should the mentoring program offer support and training throughout that entire contractual period? Some would say there are professional state organizations and conferences that are offered and available for new leaders. However, findings continue to support the perceived critical importance of mentoring. If so, perhaps we are leaving new superintendents unsupported at a critical point in their careers when they still need guidance and support to develop good leadership skills. But given the high administrator turnover rates and

the reluctance of many highly qualified teachers to enter the field of administration, there is a need for proven effective professional development strategies. Additional support systems such as mentoring need to be re-evaluated to attract and meet the needs of future administrators.

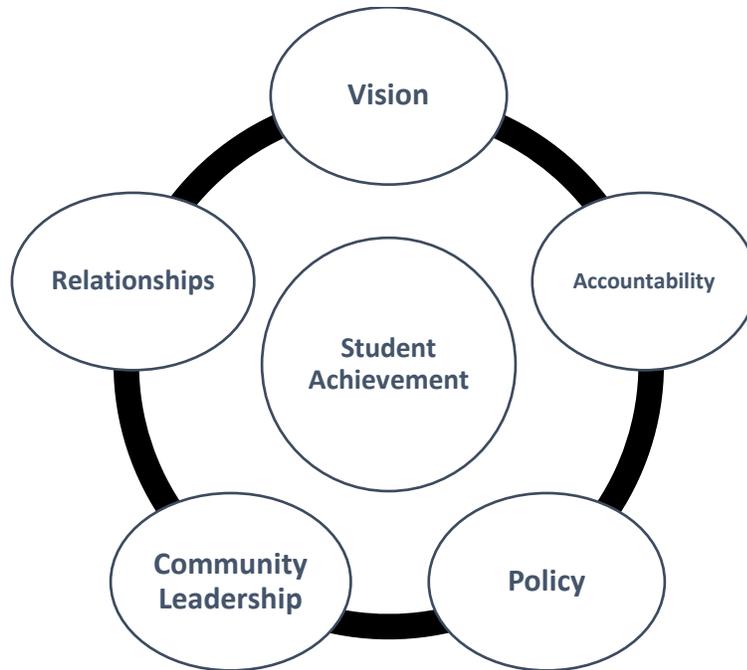
### **Hindrances**

Participants identified three major factors that were perceived as impediments to creating the optimal mentoring program. Those areas were mentor selection and matching, more training and transitions and next steps for career pathways. Findings found the need for additional training to be the greatest impediment in the following areas: school/board relationships, board boundaries, board meeting structure, superintendent contracts, the use of technology along with identified needs in public relations, personnel management and cohort training.

### **Training**

These mentoring elements while positive and helpful they were not perceived by participants as fostering or assisting in the development of the skills necessary for new superintendents to fully function at an optimal level. This trend is supported by the research. Though leadership is a key factor in school success, there are many other factors and difficulties that impact leaders and their ability to lead. This complexity may be one of the reasons that Bennis (1999) stated that “effective leadership requires training and that the most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born—that there is a genetic factor to leadership. In fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born” (p. 163). Kowalski (2013) notes that problems these leaders have are related to a complex mix of contextual, societal and institutional variables.

Findings indicated that one of the issues perceived by the participants was the school board/superintendent relationships. It was cited as a primary concern for new superintendents. And as an area that needed a more systematic support with specific training in the mentoring program. First and foremost, this relationship has often been considered a critical factor in the success of a school district meeting its goals. Participants identified elements that speak to the lack of a “mutual” understanding of school board and superintendent roles and responsibilities. These roles and responsibilities have been clearly outlined as an issue for several years by many different groups. And it has resulted in numerous school board/superintendent studies. The National School Boards Association (<http://www.nsba.org/services/school-board-leadership-services/key-work>) described the key work of school boards and identified the core skills that effective school boards should have to ensure student achievement at the highest level. These core skills formed a framework that is displayed in Figure 14.



*Figure 14.* School Board Functions

### **The Key Work of School Boards**

Findings from participants indicated that school board members often worked outside of the key work and boundaries identified by the National School Board Association (NSBA; [www.advanc-edu.org/source/school-board-local-leadership-and-responsibility-future](http://www.advanc-edu.org/source/school-board-local-leadership-and-responsibility-future)). The researchers at NSBA supported the fact that the board’s relationship with the superintendent was very important and gave suggestions for effective board behavior. According to the information obtained from the Center for NSBA (2010), the most effective board members do not micromanage or delve into administrative issues but focus on policy and setting the course for the school district. They create a trusting, collaborative relationship with the superintendent and other key administrators.

However, participants reported the school board and superintendent relationship as a significant impediment in their ability to fully meet the job requirements and expectations. This

was perceived by participants as creating a serious dilemma; how to collaborate, manage and survive an elected political entity, the board, that hires, supervises and evaluates your position on an annual basis without support?

Findings also indicated several additional areas of training or program gaps while not mentioned by most of the participants, they still may provide some insights to support the mentee's growth and development by creating a more exemplary mentoring program. These suggestions were: 1) the establishment of a standard tickler file; 2) mentor/mentee shadowing experiences, particularly at successful board meetings; 3) encouraging more on-line discussions around "hot topics" with all superintendents, not just new superintendents; 4) more substantial and consistent mentor program closure procedures and feedback; and 5) e-mentoring or virtual mentoring.

### **Selection and Matching of Mentor Qualities**

Findings indicated that the mentor selection and matching of mentor qualities was one of the most effective elements in the mentoring program. Villani (2006) defined mentors as those who "need to be effective and experienced colleagues who are trained and continually coached to help new administrators to reach heightened job performance and self-reflection" (p. 17). However, the findings did identify some areas of hindrances within this area.

All new superintendents were assigned veteran school superintendents by SSA. The mentor qualities were paramount such as trust and being comforted as necessary for laying a solid foundation and relationship. The findings did reveal some minor confusion about mentor selection process. And the desire for the matching process to more inclusive in terms of the mentor's expertise, sensitivity and understanding of cultural and poverty related factors. Participants also noted some matching issues which were more related to personality and

learning style differences between the mentor and mentee. According to Zachary (2000), a person's learning style influences mentoring in several ways: how you work with your mentor, how you learn, and how you handle situations. Findings revealed less issues with the selection process and matching assignment but more emphasis on the importance of desirable mentor qualities such as trust, having expertise, being a role model, being open about sharing vulnerabilities and weakness; in other words, just being "real". Mentor qualities of flexibility, being supportive and having a calming effect in crisis situations were key positive mentor qualities.

### **Transitions and Next Steps**

Findings indicated that transitions and next steps were a hindrance in the mentoring program. Barnett (1995) further suggested that the objective of mentoring is for mentors to facilitate the transition of their mentees from the stage of dependency and inexperience in terms of problem solving to one of autonomy and expertise. And this letting go process, moving to independence, may be the most difficult for the mentee and mentor. Participants reported not knowing or having a firm understanding of what happens next after the closure of the mentoring program. Even though they filled out the SSA survey which documented specific results at the end of the program, they wanted a "follow-up status" report and directions from their mentor. Perhaps even a list of next steps or a prescribed plan which could be considered next, in terms of things they should continue doing to keep them on the track professionally.

All the new African American superintendents were in school districts far below Alabama's average state per capita income (See Figure 13) with most students of color and classified as improvised school districts with limited resources. Many of the superintendents expressed a desire to transition to other school districts. However, findings indicated there was

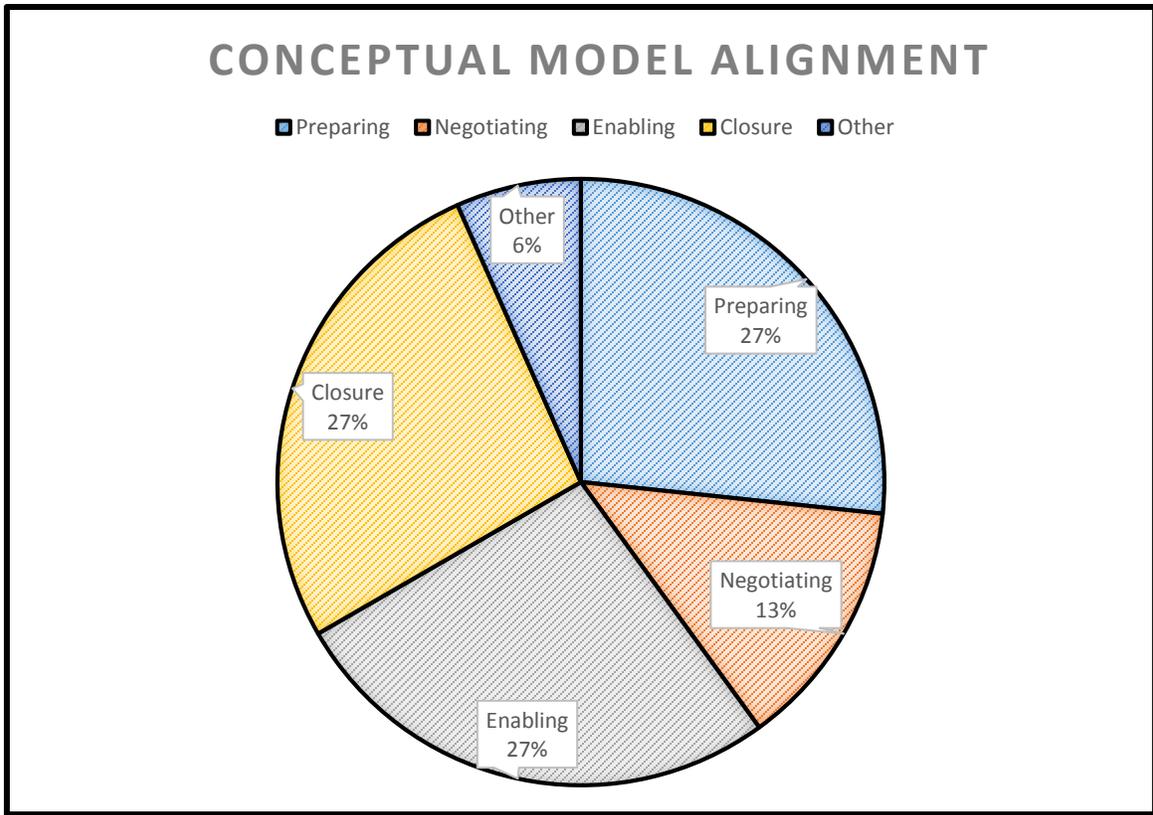
no clear pathway for upward mobility. Nor did participants identify clearly outlined or consistently recommended organizations and professional activities that would be helpful in the attainment of administrative positions in larger and perhaps more affluent school districts. Findings indicated networking was deemed as important element within the transition process; however, networking appeared to be used more for finding resources than utilizing contacts for better administrative or educational positions.

### **Conceptual Framework Comparison and Development**

This section discusses the initial conceptual framework and its alignment based upon the findings of this study. According to Zachary (2009),

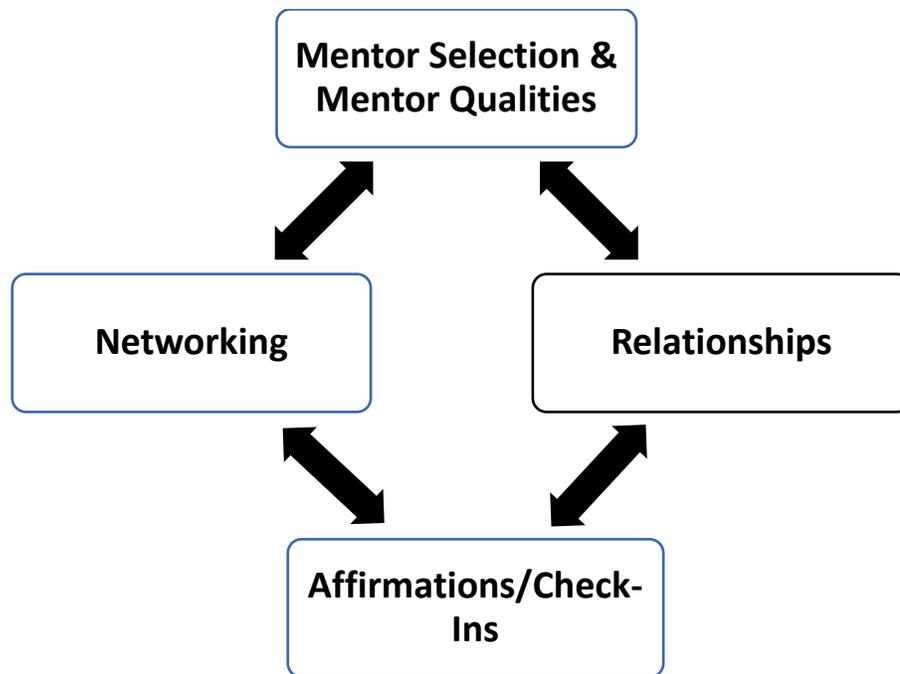
The model presented by the *Mentor's Guide* sets out four phases of the mentoring relationship: 1) *preparing* (getting ready), 2) *negotiating* (establishing agreements), 3) *enabling* (doing the work), and 4) *coming to closure* (integrating the learning and moving forward). The phases build on one another to form a predictable developmental sequence that varies in length from one relationship to another. (p. 7)

The fifteen interview questions were aligned to this model using the four phases as demonstrated in Figure 15.



*Figure 15. Conceptual Model Alignment Chart*

Based on the findings, SSA’s Executive Coaching model has a consistent alignment with the conceptual model with the same structure, framework and includes the four phases identified in the conceptual model. Another component in this study was the identification of the most effective elements perceived by new superintendents in the mentoring program. The findings outlined in Figure 16 document the most effective mentoring components.



*Figure 16. Effective Mentoring Elements*

These findings that are deemed effective are also found embedded within the four phases of the conceptual model by Zachary (2012) discussed in chapter two of this research study.

### **Components Needing Strengthening**

However, there were also findings that identified components in the Executive Coaching model that needed strengthening to become an exemplary mentoring program. Those components are listed below.

## Mentoring Elements in Need of Strengthening



*Figure 17.* Elements Needing Strengthening

These components are listed in the order of highest need as identified by the participants with additional training having the most extensive lists of training needs. The range of training needs is quite extensive as reported earlier from training in how to better handle board/superintendent relationships to media and public relations needs. These additional findings were perceived as necessary based on the participant's evolving job challenges. These needs also appeared to be reflective of the daily job roles and expectations required to in being a school superintendent.

### **Discussion**

In general, the components and elements identified in this research are closely related to the elements used in the conceptual model for this study. However, there were some differences. This study reinforced the perceived positive benefits of a formal or standard mentoring program for new African American superintendents. However, a factor identified in this research, which does appear to be as strongly expressed in previous research was the importance of additional

mentor/mentee training. This training goes beyond the Executive Coaching model and is more applicable and aligned to the evolving challenges of the job.

One of the areas of greatest need for training was with school board and superintendent relationships, its management and handling of difficult board members. Also, due to the ease and use of technology, participants wanted different ways to share community information and change the structure of board meetings. The findings went further by indicating a need for “model” samples of routine work products such as effective board agendas, good superintendent contracts, standard tickler files and proven communication strategies and memos that could be shared with all new superintendents. Exemplary mentoring programs must be responsive to the evolving needs of the participants, especially those starting their administrative careers.

Another slight difference, which was cited as a hindrance, was in the selection and matching of mentor qualities. Findings indicated some minor concerns with mentor matching in terms of expertise. There were some findings of the selected mentor not being as familiar with or having experience with the district’s demographic profiles of the new school superintendent’s school districts. The demographics are rapidly changing in Alabama as reported in Chapter One, so more research and training needs to be studied regarding the most effective and best strategies and techniques that can improve sensitivity and increase awareness of poverty and cultural needs. This was particularly pertinent to these school district administrators. While new superintendents identified this area as one of the most effective program elements, they also identified gaps in the mentor’s expertise that could make the mentoring experience more effective.

While resources were not directly mentioned as a negative factor, it appears it could be the rationale for experienced superintendents citing networking (availability and accessibility to

resources) as the most effective element in the mentoring program. Their insights and reflections seemed to be based more on actual work experiences than the immediate impact or outcome of the mentoring program.

Even though the mentoring program improved leadership skills, the structured mentoring program was only a year-long process. The conceptual model highlighted the importance of closure in the mentoring program. Muse (1992) found the mentoring relationship to be more valuable if the practicum placement was longer and the mentors were experienced administrators. Barnett (1995) further suggested that the objective of mentoring is for mentors to facilitate the transition of their mentees and this letting go process, moving to independence, may be the most difficult for the mentee and mentor. Findings also indicated a need to reconsider the length or duration of the support provided by the mentoring program. Most of the experienced superintendents reported an extended relationship and support from their mentors beyond the end of the program. This continued support was reported as being beneficial and helpful in terms of their success and longevity. This program aspect regarding the closure, the length of the program and what type of continued mentoring support is necessary bears further study and examination.

Closure is the fourth phase in the conceptual model. During the closure phase, findings indicated that transitioning and next steps lacked consistent guidance or a framework. Findings also indicated that some additional attention should be given to developing more consistent closure phase which includes the process and procedures, thus creating that finality for the mentees. This area needs to be enhanced with clearly defined career pathways, steps and reflective experiences such as job shadowing and on-line communication opportunities with all mentors.

Next steps for upward mobility or movement between school districts in the state and other educational organizations while desirable was more of a mystery than a guided career pathway for participants. While SSA was noted as providing good professional development in a variety of areas, the identified topics and discussions were reported as limited and needed more development and professional learning opportunities for mentees.

### **Future Research**

The focus of this study was to take an in-depth look at the impact of the mentoring program as perceived by new African American superintendents. It would be beneficial to replicate this same study for all new school superintendents in the state of Alabama to make a comparison between the different ethnic groups. It may be beneficial to design an instrument from the findings and do a wider study of the entire state. Future research could explore the role of gender in the different mentoring models and in terms of the mentoring relationships. There are multiple mentoring programs comparing the value people put on these mentoring elements or issues on a scale of 1-5 might be useful. This study also looked specifically at the perceptions from the mentee perspective, it might be interesting to interview the mentors for their insights and perspectives on the mentoring program. Longitudinal research designs that follow a cohort and explore where formal mentoring is linked to outcomes such as career advancement and retention are also needed (George & Neale, 2006).

Since the demographics are changing in Alabama, it might be useful to review the effectiveness of the “best” strategies and techniques that administrators could implement in improvised school districts. One of the key areas of concern identified by new superintendents was school board and superintendent relationships which are different in each school district however reviewing effective training strategies might be beneficial for all new superintendents.

Finally, this study sought to investigate the most effective elements found in the mentoring program for new African American superintendents. Based on this list, to have a more complete understanding of the impact of these program components, additional research would be beneficial.

### **Summary**

Findings from the study indicate that the SSA structured mentoring program appears to be beneficial for new African American superintendents. Participants indicated that they have seen positive changes in the development of their leadership skills, better understand their roles and available resources and that they are more equipped to handle the demands of the position.

This study verifies the importance of providing a mentoring program for new school administrators. There are areas that need further development, but the program appears to support the clear majority of the needs identified by new administrators. And changes or updates to the program in the future will only result in helping to promote an even more positive professional development outcome.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated and identified the factors, hindrances and benefits that are beneficial in a structured mentoring program for new school administrators. This research was conducted with the collaboration of SSA using the Executive's Coaching model and appears to be one of the few studies specifically focused on underrepresented group at this administrative level. SSA has had a mentoring program for new school superintendents for over ten years. The research verified findings from previous research on the topic, but it also uncovered some additional and insightful information. Although the findings cannot be generalized to other

settings, it is hoped that the study will be helpful in creating exemplary mentoring programs for all new school superintendents.

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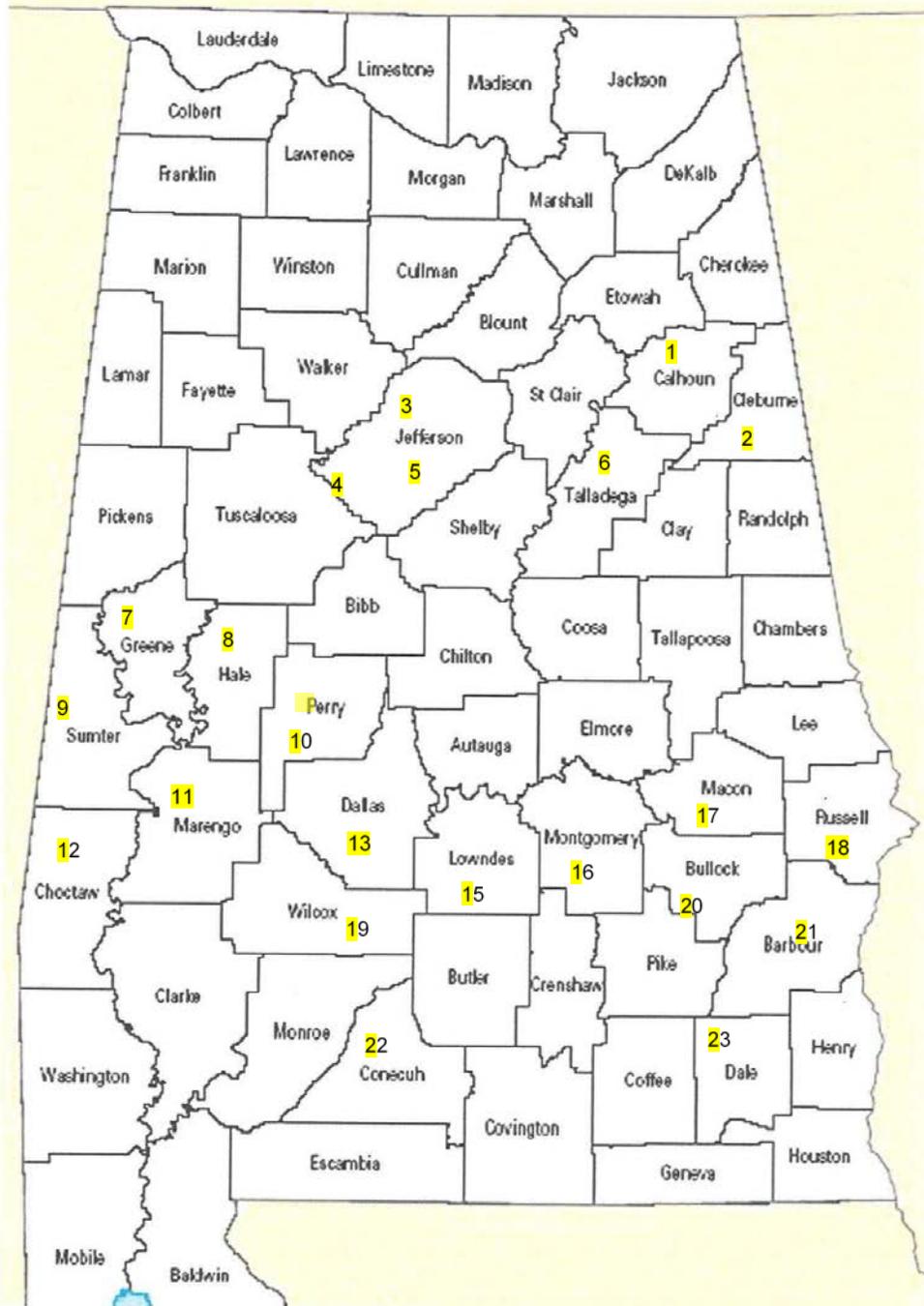
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APPENDIX A

Alabama School District Map of

School Districts led by African American Superintendents

2016–2017



[http://www.washingtonstatesearch.com/United\\_States\\_maps/Alabama/maps/Alabama\\_coun...](http://www.washingtonstatesearch.com/United_States_maps/Alabama/maps/Alabama_coun...) 4/8/2017

APPENDIX B

Protocol for Interview

## Interview Protocols and Questions

I would have the following protocols in place for the superintendent interviews:

- Set time, date and a location which is convenient and quiet
- Create a relaxing atmosphere
- Provide reassurances about confidentiality
- Familiarity with the interview questions
- Remain neutral to interview answers and questions (Non-Judgmental)
- Avoid paraphrasing and summarizing participant statements
- Record responses to maintain the continuous flow of the session

I would start the interview with a structured statement clarifying terminology and the use of the information from the superintendent interviews. This would also provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions. The interview questions asked of the superintendents are based on the conceptual model from Zachary's (2009) work on mentoring which includes four stages, 1) Preparing; 2) Negotiating; 3) Enabling and 4) Coming to closure. At the end, I would ask participants if they have any further questions and thank them for their time and participation.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

## Mentoring Questions for Superintendents

### **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in answering these questions. The main purpose of this research study is to examine professional training and development that supports and assists new superintendents to become successful leaders. I value your feedback and your opinions. I am going to ask you to remember as best and honestly as you can what you thought, felt and experienced as you participated in the superintendent's mentoring program.

Mentoring is a term generally used to describe a relationship between a less experienced individual, called a mentee, and a more experienced individual known as a mentor. And the term administrator in this survey refers to a Superintendent of a K-12 School System. Any questions?

First, I'd like to hear the story of your professional transition from teacher to school superintendent.

## Questions

Q1. *Tell me about the training and the professional career path that led you to the position of school superintendent.*

- Did anyone encourage you to go into administration? If so, who and what capacity did they serve in?
- Did you have any role models you were watching to learn from?

Q2. *Describe the mentor selection process. Did you have any input in the selection process?*

Q3. *Describe the professional background and training for your mentor.*

- Describe your working relationship with your mentor.

*Q4 Explain the mentoring structure, the duration and frequency of mentoring meetings.*

- Was the mentor available outside of the regularly scheduled times?

*Q5 Describe how the goals were developed in the mentoring relationship. List your professional career and personal growth expectations of the mentoring program.*

*Q6. Describe how the boundaries and guidelines were established in your mentoring relationship?*

- Were there areas that were off-limits for mentoring discussions?
- Confidentiality?

*7. Leadership and management skills are an important part of any school administrator's role. Did the mentoring program improve your skills in those areas? If so explain why or why not? Examples.*

Q8. *Because of the mentoring program, did you improve your professional skills, abilities and knowledge in the areas of communication? Budgetary/financing? If so please explain why or why not? Examples*

Q9. *Because of the mentoring program, have your skills, abilities and knowledge as an instructional leader improved? If so please explain why or why not. Examples.*

Q10. *During your mentoring program, were there opportunities provided for networking with other colleagues? If so, please describe.*

- Did you develop a list of professional contacts that you can call if necessary?

Q11. *What criteria was used to determine progress and if professional career goals and personal growth goals were met?*

- Did the criteria for success change with different audiences?

Q12. *The closure of the mentoring relationships often varies, please describe the closure experience with the mentoring process.*

- Do you still have a relationship with your mentor?

Q13 *List the three most significant ways the mentoring program impacted you as a new administrator.*

Q14. *Describe the ways your district supported the mentoring program.*

- Was the completion of the mentoring program a part of your evaluation?

Q15 *Do you have any recommendations or suggestions that might improve the mentoring program for new superintendents?*

## APPENDIX D

### SSA Executive Coaching Brochure

- Program Overview
- SSA's End of the Year Survey Questions



# Executive Coaching *for* *New Superintendents*



Phone: 334.262.0014  
Fax: 334.262.0344  
Toll Free: 1.877.269.0014

400 S. Union Street, Suite 495  
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

[www.ssaonline.org](http://www.ssaonline.org)

## Leadership Matters...

SSA is committed to the success of new superintendents and the school systems they serve!

# Executive Coaching for New Superintendents has Proven to be a Valuable Free Benefit of Membership in SSA.

## SSA's Executive Coaching

SSA Executive Coaching is a FREE training experience for new superintendents serving in member school systems. This program ensures a positive start for each Alabama superintendent by offering a coach during the first year of the superintendency. The executive coaches make a minimum of eight contacts during that first year.

### The SSA Executive Coach will Help the New Superintendent:

- ❖ Understand Alabama's rules and regulations
- ❖ Access statewide resources
- ❖ Recognize organizational opportunities
- ❖ Establish focused goals
- ❖ Explore possibilities
- ❖ Manage expectations
- ❖ Craft strategies
- ❖ Maintain integrity
- ❖ Follow through after planning

### WHO are SSA's Coaches?

SSA's coaching model is a professional alliance between a new superintendent and a successful veteran superintendent. SSA has a cadre of trained coaches available for systems as part of their SSA membership. All coaches have been trained in the Corporate Coach U (CCU) model to effectively work

with superintendents during the first year. CCU is a leading global provider of customized corporate coach training and corporate coaching services. SSA has more than 20 veteran superintendents trained to serve as executive coaches.

### WHAT Kind of Training is Provided During a Typical Planning Meeting?

- ❖ New superintendents are provided an overview of how to tackle upcoming tasks such as budget development, instructional planning, and personnel action.
- ❖ New superintendents organize and discuss State Department of Education information before returning to their districts.
- ❖ Veteran superintendents, SDE officials, and outside experts work with new superintendents to grow executive leadership skills.
- ❖ New superintendents network with others on solutions for handling the issues and problems of leading the district.
- ❖ New superintendents leave with a "game plan" on how to accomplish the tasks at hand.

•

## SSA End of the Year Survey Questions



SSA Executive Coaching for New Superintendents  
Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization

**Part 1 - Issues**

Describe 3-5 issues you dealt with in your school system this past year and explain for each issue how your participation in the New Superintendent Program helped you to handle it. (One of these issues must involve the instructional program and you must describe how your training impacted the issue in a manner that was beneficial to student achievement in your system.)

Issue 1:

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(Continue on another sheet if needed)

Issue 2:

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(Continue on another sheet if needed)

Issue 3:

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(Continue on another sheet if needed)



SSA Executive Coaching for New Superintendents  
Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization

**Part 2 - Goals**

Develop 3-5 goals for the upcoming year in working with your board, your central office administrators, and your principals and describe how you will work to implement them based on your training.

Goal 1:

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(Continue on another sheet if needed)

Goal 2:

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(Continue on another sheet if needed)

Goal 3:

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(Continue on another sheet if needed)

**Submitted by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
School System

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX E

Auburn University Review Board (IRB) Approval

## RESEARCH PROTOCOL REVIEW FORM FULL BOARD or EXPEDITED

For Information or help contact **THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE (ORC)**, 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University  
**Phone:** 334-844-5966 **e-mail:** IRBAdmin@auburn.edu **Web Address:** <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/index.htm>

Revised 2.1.2014 **Submit completed form to [IRBsubmit@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBsubmit@auburn.edu) or 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University 36849.**

*Form must be populated using Adobe Acrobat / Pro 8 or greater standalone program (do not fill out in browser). Hand written forms will not be accepted.*

**1. PROPOSED START DATE of STUDY:** May 12, 2017

**PROPOSED REVIEW CATEGORY (Check one):**  FULL BOARD  EXPEDITED

**SUBMISSION STATUS (Check one):**  NEW  REVISIONS (to address IRB Review Comments)

**2. PROJECT TITLE:** The Impact of a Structured Mentoring Program on New African American School Superintendents in Alabama

<u>Barbara W. Thompson</u>	<u>Ph.D Candidate</u>	<u>EFLT-College of ED</u>	<u>bwt0008@auburn.edu</u>
<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DEPT</b>	<b>AU E-MAIL</b>
<u>7705 Camberwell Street, Montgomery, Al 36116</u>	<u>334-850-1467</u>	<u>bwthompson32@gmail.com</u>	
<b>MAILING ADDRESS</b>	<b>PHONE</b>	<b>ALTERNATE E-MAIL</b>	

**4. FUNDING SUPPORT:**  N/A  Internal  External Agency: \_\_\_\_\_  Pending  Received

For federal funding, list agency and grant number (if available). \_\_\_\_\_

**5a. List any contractors, sub-contractors, other entities associated with this project:**

None

**b. List any other IRBs associated with this project (including Reviewed, Deferred, Determination, etc.):**

None

### PROTOCOL PACKET CHECKLIST

All protocols must include the following items:

- Research Protocol Review Form** (All signatures included and all sections completed)  
(Examples of appended documents are found on the OHSR website: <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/sample.htm>)
- CITI Training Certificates** for all Key Personnel.
- Consent Form or Information Letter** and any Releases (audio, video or photo) that the participant will sign.
- Appendix A, "Reference List"**
- Appendix B** if e-mails, flyers, advertisements, generalized announcements or scripts, etc., are used to recruit participants.
- Appendix C** if data collection sheets, surveys, tests, other recording instruments, interview scripts, etc. will be used for data collection. Be sure to attach them in the order in which they are listed in # 13c.
- Appendix D** if you will be using a debriefing form or include emergency plans/procedures and medical referral lists (A referral list may be attached to the consent document).
- Appendix E** if research is being conducted at sites other than Auburn University or in cooperation with other entities. A permission letter from the site / program director must be included indicating their cooperation or involvement in the project.  
NOTE: If the proposed research is a multi-site project, involving investigators or participants at other academic institutions, hospitals or private research organizations, a letter of IRB approval from each entity is required prior to initiating the project.
- Appendix F** - Written evidence of acceptance by the host country if research is conducted outside the United States.

#### FOR ORC OFFICE USE ONLY

DATE RECEIVED IN ORC:	_____ by _____	PROTOCOL # _____
DATE OF IRB REVIEW:	_____ by _____	APPROVAL C _____
DATE OF IRB APPROVAL:	_____ by _____	INTERVAL FC _____
COMMENTS:	_____	

The Auburn University Institutional  
 Review Board has approved this  
 Document for use from  
05/25/2017 to 05/24/2018  
 Protocol # 17-225 EP 1705

**6. GENERAL RESEARCH PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS**

**6A. Research Methodology**

Please check all descriptors that best apply to the research methodology.

Data Source(s):  New Data  Existing Data

Will recorded data directly or indirectly identify participants?  
 Yes  No

Data collection will involve the use of:

- |                                                                                              |                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational Tests (cognitive diagnostic, aptitude, etc.) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet / Electronic |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interview                                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observation                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Video                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location or Tracking Measures                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photos                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical / Physiological Measures or Specimens (see Section 6E.)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Digital images                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Surveys / Questionnaires                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Private records or files         |
| Other: _____                                                                                 |                                                           |

**6B. Participant Information**

Please check all descriptors that apply to the target population.

Males  Females  AU students

Vulnerable Populations

Pregnant Women/Fetuses  Prisoners  Institutionalized  
 Children and/or Adolescents (under age 19 in AL)

Persons with:

- Economic Disadvantages  Physical Disabilities  
 Educational Disadvantages  Intellectual Disabilities

Do you plan to compensate your participants?  Yes  No

**6C. Risks to Participants**

Please identify all risks that participants might encounter in this research.

- Breach of Confidentiality\*  Coercion  
 Deception  Physical  
 Psychological  Social  
 None  
 Other:

\*Note that if the investigator is using or accessing confidential or identifiable data, breach of confidentiality is always a risk.

**6D. Corresponding Approval/Oversight**

- Do you need IBC Approval for this study?  
 Yes  No

If yes, BUA # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

- Do you need IACUC Approval for this study?  
 Yes  No

If yes, PRN # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

- Does this study involve the Auburn University MRI Center?  
 Yes  No

Which MRI(s) will be used for this project? (Check all that apply)  
 3T  7T

Does any portion of this project require review by the MRI Safety Advisory Council?  
 Yes  No

Signature of MRI Center Representative: \_\_\_\_\_  
Required for all projects involving the AU MRI Center

Appropriate MRI Center Representatives:  
 Dr. Thomas S. Denney, Director AU MRI Center  
 Dr. Ron Beyers, MR Safety Officer

7. PROJECT ASSURANCES The Impact of a Structured Mentoring Program on New African American School Superintendents in Alabama

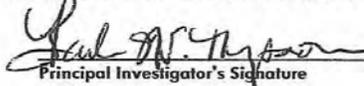
**A. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S ASSURANCES**

1. I certify that all information provided in this application is complete and correct.
2. I understand that, as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of this study, the ethical performance this project, the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, and strict adherence to any stipulations imposed by the Auburn University IRB.
3. I certify that all individuals involved with the conduct of this project are qualified to carry out their specified roles and responsibilities and are in compliance with Auburn University policies regarding the collection and analysis of the research data.
4. I agree to comply with all Auburn policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects, including, but not limited to the following:
  - a. Conducting the project by qualified personnel according to the approved protocol
  - b. Implementing no changes in the approved protocol or consent form without prior approval from the Office of Research Compliance
  - c. Obtaining the legally effective informed consent from each participant or their legally responsible representative prior to their participation in this project using only the currently approved, stamped consent form
  - d. Promptly reporting significant adverse events and/or effects to the Office of Research Compliance in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.
5. If I will be unavailable to direct this research personally, I will arrange for a co-investigator to assume direct responsibility in my absence. This person has been named as co-investigator in this application, or I will advise ORC, by letter, in advance of such arrangements.
6. I agree to conduct this study only during the period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
7. I will prepare and submit a renewal request and supply all supporting documents to the Office of Research Compliance before the approval period has expired if it is necessary to continue the research project beyond the time period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
8. I will prepare and submit a final report upon completion of this research project.

My signature indicates that I have read, understand and agree to conduct this research project in accordance with the assurances listed above.

Barbara W. Thompson

Printed name of Principal Investigator

  
Principal Investigator's Signature

April 27, 2017

Date

**B. FACULTY ADVISOR/SPONSOR'S ASSURANCES**

1. I have read the protocol submitted for this project for content, clarity, and methodology.
2. By my signature as faculty advisor/sponsor on this research application, I certify that the student or guest investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol.
3. I agree to meet with the investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress. Should problems arise during the course of the study, I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the investigator in solving them.
4. I assure that the investigator will promptly report significant incidents and/or adverse events and/or effects to the ORC in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.
5. If I will be unavailable, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence, and I will advise the ORC by letter of such arrangements. If the investigator is unable to fulfill requirements for submission of renewals, modifications or the final report, I will assume that responsibility.

Linda Searby

Printed name of Faculty Advisor / Sponsor

  
Faculty Advisor's Signature

5/5/17

Date

**C. DEPARTMENT HEAD'S ASSURANCE**

By my signature as department head, I certify that I will cooperate with the administration in the application and enforcement of all Auburn University policies and procedures, as well as all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection and ethical treatment of human participants by researchers in my department.

Sherida Downer

Printed name of Department Head

Sherida Downer

Department Head's Signature

Digitally signed by Sherida Downer  
Date: 2017.05.22 09:51:38 -0500

5/22/2017

Date

**8. PROJECT OVERVIEW: Prepare an abstract that includes:**  
(350 word maximum, in language understandable to someone who is not familiar with your area of study):

- a) A summary of relevant research findings leading to this research proposal:**  
(Cite sources; include a "Reference List" as Appendix A.)
- b) A brief description of the methodology, including design, population, and variables of interest**

a) Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2016 found the elementary and secondary educator workforce is overwhelmingly homogeneous with with eighty-two percent being white in public schools but students of color are expected to make up fifty-six percent of the student population by 2024. This projected data aligns with the current racial educator workforce disparity trends in Alabama. Diversity in the Educator Workforce (2016) outlined the benefits of having a diverse educator workforce. Patton and Harper (2003) upheld that, mentoring has been considered one of the most salient factors in the academic and career success of leaders. Alsbury and Hackman (2006) noted limited research has been done on the effectiveness of mentoring programs for superintendents. This study accesses the perceived impact of a structured mentoring program for new African-American superintendents in Alabama. The research questions were: a) How did the mentoring program assist or not assist new African-American superintendents in their emerging leaders; b) How did the mentoring program assist or not assist new African-American superintendents with their leadership of the instructional program in the district? c)How did the superintendent's structured mentoring experiences and perceptions align with the formal mentoring process in the conceptual framework?

b) I will use qualitative research that consists of face-to-face interviews and surveys. Notes and observations will be made during the interviews. I will send emails to African-American Superintendents inviting them to participate in the study. Written consent will be obtained from each superintendents to participate prior to the interview and is strictly voluntary. The interviews will be one-on-one interviews and will be done at a date/location convenient for the participant. Interview protocol will be provided ahead of time. A confidentiality waiver and pseudonyms will be given to each participant. Each interview will last approximately an hour and will be audio taped. All interview participants work in the State of Alabama. The participant population of this study included African-American school superintendents currently employed in the State of Alabama with less than two years of experience. In this study, purposeful sampling will be utilized because years of experience in their role, ethnicity and the level at which the participants work are factors in this study. The School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) surveys were based on ALSDE's Standard 7-covering management. Permission given to analyze this survey data from SSA.

**9. PURPOSE.**

- a. Clearly state the purpose of this project and all research questions, or aims.**

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the perceptions from a structured mentoring program for African-American superintendents and the alignment of this structured mentoring program with the formal mentoring process in the conceptual framework.

The research questions were:

- a) How did the mentoring program assist or not assist new African-American superintendents in their emerging leadership roles pertaining to general issues in the district?  
b) How did the mentoring program assist or not assist new African-American superintendents with their leadership of the instructional program in the district?  
c) How did the superintendent's structured mentoring experiences and perceptions align with the formal mentoring process in the conceptual framework? (Zachary, 2009 & Hansford & Tennant, 2004)

- b. How will the results of this project be used? (e.g., Presentation? Publication? Thesis? Dissertation?)**

The findings from this study will be used primarily for a dissertation; however it could be used later for presentations at professional conferences and publication in professional journals.

APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Letter



**AUBURN UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**For a Research Study entitled:**

**“The Impact of a Structured Mentoring Program on African-American School Superintendents”**

**You are invited to participate in a research study** to describe the impact of a structured mentoring program on new African-American superintendents in Alabama. In order to determine if their mentoring experiences have assisted and supported them in their emerging leadership roles. This study is under the direction of Barbara Thompson, PhD candidate in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a new African-American superintendent in a K-12 school system with less than two years of experience.

**What will be involved if you participate?** If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview which will be digitally recorded during a convenient time and location in your region. The digital recordings are for transcription purposes only and the recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the defense of the dissertation. Your total time commitment for the interview will about sixty minutes.

**Are there any risks or discomforts?** The risks associated with this study are that you will digitally recorded as you are interviewed by Barbara Thompson. What you choose to share is totally voluntary, and you will not be forced to answer any questions if you choose not to do so. No one but Barbara and her dissertation chair, Dr. Linda Searby, will hear your responses, and your name will not be associated with your responses at any time. If you are quoted in an article or presentation later on, a pseudonym will be given to your responses.

**Are there any benefits to you?** If you participate in this research study, you will be given a list of mentoring program characteristics that may be helpful in setting up a mentoring programs for other new administrators in your school district.

**Will you receive compensation for participating?** No, there will be no monetary compensation for participating in the study. However, you may receive a copy of the results of the study, if requested.

4036 Halcy Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

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**Are there any costs to participate?** The only cost to participate is the cost of your personal transportation to the interview site.

**Participants Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**If you change your mind about participating.** You can withdraw at any time during the study, even after being interviewed. Again, your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the College of Education, or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology.

**Your privacy will be protected.** Due to the small number of interviewees it may be possible to recognize individuals by connecting various pieces of information. Therefore, in the transcription quotes and reporting of the findings, pseudonyms for both individuals and their current or former school district employers will be used. Any responses in the interviews that would give any hint as to the identification of the individual being interviewed will be replaced with (xxx) in the transcriptions to further assure that the participant cannot be recognized.

Information obtained through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, or presented at a professional meeting.

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Barbara Thompson by email at [bwthompson32@gmail.com](mailto:bwthompson32@gmail.com) or by phone at 334-850-1467. You may also contact Dr. Linda Searby by email at [ljs0007@auburn.edu](mailto:ljs0007@auburn.edu) or by phone at 334-844-7784. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or email at [IRBadmin@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator obtaining consent      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

APPENDIX G

Information Letter

**INFORMATION LETTER for the Impact of a Structured Mentoring Program on  
New African American School Superintendents in Alabama**

My name is Barbara W. Thompson, and I am a PhD student at Auburn University under the direction of Dr. Linda Searby in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You are invited to participate in a study involving formal mentoring programs for African-American school superintendents. This study will help to identify different ways mentoring programs assist and help new African-American superintendents with their emerging leadership roles. You are invited to participate because you are an African-American school superintendent in a K-12 school system in the State of Alabama.

If you decide to participate in this study, simply respond back to the email. The option to participate will remain open for 30 days. Your response will not be identified with your name or school district's name when the data is compiled and analyzed. All measures will be taken to protect the confidentiality of participants. There are no known risks, costs or compensation associated with participation in this study.

Your participation would involve a private interview, which would be recorded. The interview will last about **sixty minutes**. The results of the study may be used by SSA in determining whether formal mentoring programs are a viable strategy for professional development and growth for African-American administrators. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not jeopardize your relations with Auburn University or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Training. Having read this information provided, you must decide if you want to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, your response to this email will serve as your agreement to do so and you will be contacted for an interview. You will be given a formal written consent requiring your signature before the interview. Please note you can withdraw from the study at any point. Please feel free to print a copy of this letter for your records. .

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [bwt0008@auburn.edu](mailto:bwt0008@auburn.edu) or (334) 850-1467. You may also contact Dr. Linda Searby at [lsearby@auburn.edu](mailto:lsearby@auburn.edu) at 334-844-4000.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or email at [IRBadmin@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

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You can respond to the following email:

[bwt0008@auburn.edu](mailto:bwt0008@auburn.edu) or [bwthompson32@gamil.com](mailto:bwthompson32@gamil.com)

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Date \_\_\_\_\_, Protocol # \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Barbara W. Thompson  
Doctoral Student  
Auburn University  
College of Education  
Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology

The Auburn University Institutional  
Review Board has approved this  
Document for use from  
05/25/2017 to 05/24/2018  
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