Best Practices in Succession Planning

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In the following report, Hanover Research presents an overview of succession planning in K-12 school districts, addressing common problems with traditional practices and outlining avenues for future consideration. Hanover examines three school districts in Delaware, Florida, and North Carolina that have transformed their administrative practices to include succession planning.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

School administrators are facing a changing educational environment, where traditional policies are no longer able to prepare them sufficiently. With shifting demographics and inadequate training programs, reactive hiring practices are leaving principals, superintendents, and administrators ill-prepared for their roles. As school districts increase in "size, intricacy, and accountability, they must invest more in the human capital that drives almost all of the services they deliver. Accounting for over 80 percent of district operating budgets, human capital should be a district's number one management priority."[1]

A primary method to invest in human capital is to develop a succession plan, which simultaneously builds a list of qualified leadership candidates while anticipating district needs before they become urgent. In this report, Hanover Research addresses the shortcomings of current practices, reviews the literature on succession planning, and profiles three school districts that have been able to adopt effective succession strategies.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Succession planning requires an appraisal of anticipated district needs, a clearly outlined plan with measureable objectives, and a set of standardized evaluative criteria.** Current hiring practices often rely on "replacement filling," which entails waiting for a position to become vacant before searching for qualified candidates. This retroactive process leaves new appointees with little direction, and can exacerbate turnover. Succession planning, or "proactive filling," is used to build a supply of leaders by anticipating future needs and preparing for vacancies ahead of time. Succession plans use foresight to develop objectives and evaluative criteria in order to measure the success of the program and to continue to place qualified candidates in appropriate roles.

- **In order to deepen the candidate pool of qualified successors, districts can identify leadership candidates by providing incremental or smaller leadership opportunities for motivated individuals.** Even relatively smaller responsibilities, such as taking on difficult assignments, demonstrate a willingness to develop into a teacher leader, and to contribute to the pool of qualified succession candidates. The diffusion of leadership throughout a district or school not only identifies good leaders and administrators, but it also allows employees to take ownership of their roles. By encouraging career growth and development, succession plans are able to promote effective, motivated leaders.

- **Mentoring programs and coaching provide exceptional candidates with the on-the-job training that is essential for success in a new leadership role.** Mentoring has long lasting benefits for both district administration and individual wellbeing: it

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[1] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth." District Management Council, 2009. p.3. http://www.dmcouncil.org/publications_free/Using%20Succession%20Planning%20to%20Drive%20District%20Human%20Capital%20Growth.92.pdf

serves both to train future supervisors and to ease their transition to a new role. The most common shortcoming of current training and certification programs is that they do not focus enough on experiential learning. Administrators who have experience working alongside an acting leader become more confident in their eventual roles and remain in their positions for longer periods of time.

- **The most effective transition periods involve overlap in order to ensure agenda continuity and provide continued support for the new administrator.** An important step in succession planning is assuring that the transfer of leadership responsibilities is fluid because ineffective transitions halt initiatives and hinder progress. One way to ensure administrative stability is to adopt a "goals-based approach" during the drafting stages of a transition plan, which highlights managerial and organizational performance outcomes.

- **Annual updates are essential in order to plan for future needs.** Effective succession models evaluate their programs on a yearly basis to maintain up-to-date longitudinal data. Tracking information allows district leaders to more effectively anticipate future needs. By measuring the effects of a succession program year-to-year, administrators know how to improve the program to serve the needs of the district. Succession planning requires goal-setting to be matched with follow-up in order to assure that the plan is appropriate for the district's needs and that preparation programs are effective.

- **Effective succession plans are able to clearly define the assessment standards against which new and experienced administrators are measured.** These standards allow districts to continue identifying leadership candidates as needs evolve, thus sustaining the succession programs. Without clear criteria to regulate assessment and qualification standards, districts threaten to return to reactionary hiring practices.

SECTION I: CHANGING LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

In this section, Hanover Research (Hanover) provides an overview of the current landscape in administrative planning by examining the general characteristics of prototypical hiring strategies. Hanover provides an outline of the most frequent pitfalls in current hiring practices, and considers key areas where school districts can focus in order to ensure effective transitions in leadership through succession planning.

CHALLENGES TO FILLING VACANT POSITIONS

Succession planning, while systemic in for-profit business enterprises, is not yet as pervasive in K-12 education. Planning for future managerial and leadership needs is often subjugated to more pressing district demands and administrative necessities. In the current education climate, the focus is placed on finding and hiring effective teachers as opposed to building and grooming effective leaders. The Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), a research institute dedicated to improving public primary education, found that "[discussions] about human capital and school improvement typically center on teachers, not administrators, and that… [is] a mistake."[2] In fact, "when it comes to cultivating school leaders, current state-level practices are, at best, haphazard. In the worst cases, they actually may be keeping talented people out of the job."[3]

> *"Districts need to be fully invested in the development and support of school leaders to minimize discontinuity and upheaval, as well as frustration and burnout."*

The teacher-centric culture of most districts leaves administrators at a loss when it comes time to hire a new principal or superintendent, again emphasizing the need for carefully drafted succession planning. According to The Wallace Foundation, a premier education research and philanthropy organization, several studies in recent years have "confirmed that **leadership ranks second only to teacher quality among school influences on student learning**."[4] In other words, both qualified teachers and administrators are vital to academic success, yet many districts only focus on teacher quality. Because more than 80 percent of a district's operating budget is spent on human capital, developing competent managers and leaders needs to be a priority, particularly as districts are becoming larger and more complex.[5]

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[2] Campbell, C. & Gross, B. "Principal Concerns: Leadership Data and Strategies for States." Center on Reinventing Public Education, September 2012. p.45.
http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_principal_concerns_sept12.pdf
[3] Ibid.
[4] Emphasis added. Mendels, P. "Principals in the Pipeline: Districts Construct a Framework to Develop School Leadership." *Learning Forward*, 33:3, June 2012. p.49. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/district-policy-and-practice/Documents/Principals-in-the-Pipeline.pdf
[5] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.3.

The lack of strategy towards improving the leadership talent pool when replacing a superintendent, director, or principal costs districts time and money. Districts — especially large school districts — "need to be fully invested in the development and support of school leaders to minimize discontinuity and upheaval, as well as frustration and burnout."[6] Investment in administrative development is the ultimate goal of a succession plan, yet poor planning, badly managed transitions, and failure to treat systemic succession problems continue to plague districts.[7]

REACTIVE HIRING PRACTICES

School districts typically practice retroactive hiring methods, meaning that candidates for vacant positions are considered concurrently as the current administrator is leaving. This leads to expedited or abbreviated training and onboarding, oftentimes leaving new employees with little instruction or direction. This practice, referred to as "replacement planning,"[8] is a primary cause of rapid turnover in the sector. Succession planning, on the other hand, emphasizes the fact that "schools and districts benefit from thoughtful and deliberate planning for leadership changes as a means of avoiding organizational instability."[9] Instability pushes new employees out, creating a harmful cycle characterized by short tenures, which underlines the issues faced by many school districts today.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is comprised of over 13,000 educational leaders that aims to ensure the "highest quality public education for all students, and develops and supports school system leaders."[10] In 2013, the AASA conducted a survey of 2,369 superintendents and school administrators that detailed demographics, salary information, district composition, and other important variables. Figure 1.1 shows respondent answers according to the amount of time that they have held their current position.

Figure 1.1: Length of Time in Current Administrative Role

GENDER	LONGEVITY IN PRESENT POSITION						
	1 YEAR OR LESS	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	16 YEARS OR MORE	OMITTED	TOTAL
Male	246	937	425	133	58	19	1,818
Female	98	288	113	24	7	5	535
Omitted	2	4	3	0	2	5	16
Total	346 (14.6%)	1,229 (51.9%)	541 (22.8%)	157 (6.6%)	67 (2.8%)	29 (1.2%)	2,369 (100%)

Source: AASA[11]

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[6] Peters, A.L. "(Un)Planned Failure: Unsuccessful Succession Planning in an Urban District." *The Journal of School Leadership*, 21, January 2011. p.78. http://eaq.sagepub.com/

[7] Hargreaves, A. "Leadership Succession and Sustainable Improvement." *The School Administrator*, 66:11, December 2009. http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=10134

[8] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.3.

[9] Peters, Op. cit., p.66.

[10] "About AASA." The American Association of School Administrators. http://www.aasa.org/About.aspx

[11] McCord, R.S. et al. "2013 Superintendents Salary & Benefits Study." The American Association of School Administrators, 2013. p.11. http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Salary_Survey_Public_2013.pdf

Well over half of the respondents (66.5 percent) had held their positions for less than five years, highlighting the instability caused, in part, by replacement planning. These data indicate that administrative positions are often filled by new hires. In a separate study performed by the District Management Council (DMC), the organization found that **only 46.5 percent of superintendents saw themselves still holding a superintendent position in five years**.[12] Combined, the AASA and DMC reports indicate that school administrators are not staying in office for extended durations, exacerbating the hiring problem. In order to keep school leaders in their jobs, districts need to reevaluate their *post hoc* hiring practices.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

The current demographics among school administrators and leaders add to the need to plan properly for successions in key district positions. At increasing rates, administrators are retiring, leaving a void in trained leadership. Many states are struggling to find qualified school leaders and administrators, and "some states will see the shortage grow with looming retirements: In Iowa, for example, almost half of the 1,200 principals will be eligible to retire in the next five years."[13] The Lower Hudson Valley, in New York, is another example of an area that is experiencing a rapidly changing administrative population, with nearly 80 percent of school districts hiring a new superintendent within the last five years.[14] Six more districts in the Valley are being led by interim superintendents and five more will retire at the end of the year.[15] This is indicative of the fact that the increasing pressures of the job, as well as an aging population, are encouraging more and more superintendents and other administrators to retire.

Figure 1.2: Superintendent Retirement and Rehiring Statistics

Q: Have you been rehired for your present position as superintendent after retiring in the state system?

	COUNT	PERCENT
Yes	188	7.9%
No	2,154	90.9%
Omitted	27	1.1%
Total Responses	2,369	100.0%

Source: AASA[16]

The AASA survey asked respondents about retirement and rehiring practices (Figure 1.2). According to their findings, almost one out of every 10 superintendents who responded indicated they had been rehired as a superintendent after retiring. This is a "marker of both an aging superintendent population and potentially narrowing pool of individuals interested in entering the superintendency."[17] **The confluence of an aging population with a**

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[12] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.4.

[13] Campbell, Op. cit., p.1.

[14] "Revolving door in education: School districts cope with retiring superintendents." The Journal News. http://www.lohud.com/article/20131228/NEWS/312280050/Revolving-door-education-School-districts-cope-retiring-superintendents

[15] Ibid.

[16] McCord et al, Op. cit., p.36.

[17] Ibid., p.3.

narrowing pool of qualified or interested candidates means that school administrators need to plan further and further in advance for potential vacancies. Knowing in advance when officials are leaving will allow districts to begin training potential candidates. This type of anticipation ensures districts avoid instability or heavy turnover.

FAILURE OF TRADITIONAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Candidates for leadership positions in a school district typically must complete a preparation program and receive a certification as a prerequisite for consideration. These programs are often taken through a university, which drafts the curriculum and provides the instructors. However, these programs are increasingly seen as ineffectual, often offering little more than a ceremonial certificate that allows the candidate to be hired legally by the state. Too many programs "lack rigor, focus too narrowly on management and administration competencies, and do not provide opportunities for authentic practice."[18] These practices lead to a pool of candidates that are legally qualified but often have no practical experience in administrative roles. Superintendents report that while there is no shortage of certified candidates, principals are not prepared upon taking the job. A survey of superintendents found that 41 percent believe principals should be better at their jobs, while only 33 percent believe that principals are better prepared now than they were in the past.[19]

As CRPE found,

> A 2005 report by Arthur Levine, former president of Teachers College at Columbia, summarized the results of a four-year study of principal preparation programs at the nation's 1,206 education schools. His findings were grim: The majority of the leadership preparation programs were marked by irrelevant curricula, low admissions and graduation standards, a weak faculty, inadequate clinical instruction, and poor research. Surveys he conducted of principals and superintendents were equally sobering, with almost all respondents claiming they were unprepared to cope with classroom realities and in-school politics.[20]

Again, Arthur Levine's findings point to the fact that traditional programs leave potential leaders unable to handle the actualities of the job. Most higher education programs that train or develop high level K-12 management personnel do not have incentives to change the curricula, the result of "oversight, funding, and accreditation [that] are tied to basic program-compliance procedures."[21] This hints at the need to supplement certification programs with anticipatory succession practices on a district level.

In another study, Rochester University researchers found that 69.3 percent of teachers that earned a certificate applied for administrative positions within two years of the completion

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[18] "Change Agents: How States Can Develop Effective School Leaders." New Leaders, July 2013. p.10.
http://www.newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/PreparationLicensureConceptPaper1.pdf
[19] Ibid., p.6.
[20] Campbell, Op. cit., p.4.
[21] Ibid.

of their program, yet only 36.2 percent went on to become administrators.[22] This further highlights **the disconnect between traditional training programs and current need**. There is a substantial gap between certificate earners and successful successions into administrative and leadership roles. Important pathways to effective succession training programs "include rigorous preparation with a coherent and relevant curriculum, opportunities for clinical practice, assessment of skill attainment, and ongoing support."[23] Currently, most programs do not meet these criteria.

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[22] DeAngelis, K.J. & O'Connor, N.K. "Examining the Pipeline Into Educational Administration: An Analysis of Applications and Job Offers." *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48:3, February 2012. p.486. http://eaq.sagepub.com/
[23] "Change Agents," Op. cit., p.7.

SECTION II: SUCCESSION PLANNING

In the following section, Hanover Research identifies key aspects of successful succession planning, and evaluates several fundamental features of developing a plan, including methodologies and best practices. Most of the literature pertaining to succession planning focuses on school-level transfers (e.g., principal succession), under the assumption that best practices and guidelines are transferable to district-level planning.

DEFINING A PLAN

A clear plan, developed using foresight and proactivity, is essential for the adoption of succession-based hiring practices. While "replacement planning focuses on filling vacancies on an organizational chart, succession planning focuses on grooming talent for the future."[24] A clearly defined plan characterizes the successful transition away from reactive hiring strategies and places it towards proactive succession planning. While there are numerous ways to develop successful succession models, a key component of any model is a plan outline. Figure 2.1 illustrates an example succession plan outline, beginning with drafting district goals and progressing all the way through training, succession transitions, and the redefinition of future objectives.

Figure 2.1: The District Management Council's Suggested Succession Model

STEP	DESCRIPTION
1. Set the Stage	In beginning a succession planning process, it is worth "overinvesting" in setting the stage internally to avoid later roadblocks. Contemplate the purpose, goals, and expectations of the succession planning process. Recognize the expansive reach of succession planning – the avoidance of leadership crises, the potential cost savings in hiring new leaders, and the cultivation of a leadership culture. Use this information to write a mission statement that captures the urgency of succession planning for your district.
2. Plan for the Future	Districts should use succession planning as a process for reflecting on the district's future. In this step, districts should take into account both endogenous factors (organizational changes, board priorities, curricular approaches, decentralization, etc.) and exogenous factors (demographics, economy, state and federal legislature, etc.) to identify future needs for an evolving organization.
3. Assess Current Landscape Requirements	Having charted a vision for the district's future, examine the role of leadership in realizing the vision. Assess the characteristics necessary for leadership in the district. Build a "leadership code" that explains leadership characteristics and behaviors that drive success in the district.
4. Conduct Effective Evaluations	Perhaps the single most significant factor underlying effective leadership development is open and honest feedback about an emerging leader's performance. Without honest discourse about an individual's strengths and weaknesses, proactive development opportunities cannot be deliberately pursued. A district should evaluate its current and emerging leaders against its leadership code through development and use of a formal evaluation rubric.

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[24] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.4.

STEP	DESCRIPTION
5. Assess Leaders' Mobility	Once the pool of leadership talent has been identified against the leadership code rubrics, further analysis is needed to evaluate the district's "bench strength" and leadership mobility within the organization. Districts should force themselves to complete a deep bench strength analysis, which yields measures concerning the depth of leadership talent within the organization.
6. Develop Leaders to Fill the Gaps	Those potential successors ranked in an organization's bench strength must be further cultivated through on-the-job learning and formal training. Districts may be forced to answer, "How can we get someone ready more quickly?" or even, "Do we have anyone that's ready now?" Each participant in leadership training programs should be the subject of an individualized development plan (an "IDP"). The plan should ask such questions as: For what key position should this person be prepared? What kinds of competencies should be developed? What are the individual's career objectives?
7. Create Individual Transition Plans	As districts devote greater resources to identifying and preparing leaders, assuring the transfer of leadership responsibilities in succession is increasingly crucial. When transitions suffer, initiatives get put on hold and progress slows, often never to regain momentum. Ideally, the replacement of leaders should involve substantive overlap allowing for on-the-job training and a smooth handoff of responsibility. However, this may often not be feasible due to sudden departures, budgetary constraints or other mitigating circumstances.
8. (Re)Assess Your Program	Succession planning is a fluid and continual process, and requires regular assessment and adjustment. Evaluation should include an assessment of bench strength by measuring the number of well-qualified internal candidates for each key position, the record of promotions, and the retention of high performers. At the same time, evaluation should also capture more subjective human capital metrics, including the perceptions of fairness, transparency, morale, confidence, and competence.

Source: DMC "8-Step Succession Planning Process"[25]

Although the DMC's model is merely an example, it addresses several essential features of a succession plan. Ultimately, the goal of succession planning is to ensure administrative transitions do not cost the district resources and that is does not negatively affect the students. By encouraging district leaders to make a plan, succession planning provides an opportunity to closely study a district's needs before developing a cadre of leaders who can execute them.[26]

The main tenants of formulating a succession plan all involve critically examining a district's needs, and the first step is to evaluate current resources and human capital. This "simultaneously focuses on forecasting the organization's future leadership needs, sustaining those school leaders who are already in place… and planning for future leadership succession within the organization."[27] The synthesis of **forecasting, sustaining, and planning** forms the basis of developing or redeveloping a district's hiring and transition practices. These three cornerstones can be equated to Steps 1, 2, and 3 in the DMC model ("Set the stage," "Plan for the future," and "Assess current leadership requirements"),

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Peters, Op. cit., p.65.

where the repeated emphasis is on outlining current resources, both in terms of time and leadership potential, and developing a plan to transform present capital into future assets.

Depending on where there is the most urgent need, planning can focus on different levels of the district's organizational chart, typically divided into three categories: individual, school, and district.

1. *Individual*: actively enhancing individuals' career potential;
2. *School*: adding value to schools' improvement agendas and building capacity to meet those demands;
3. *District*: nurturing a pool of talented leaders for the future able to apply for leadership roles within their own or other schools or districts.[28]

The most successful succession models will concurrently address all three tiers in order to develop a cohesive plan that works to address systemic replacement problems rather than case-by-case issues.

ANTICIPATING DISTRICT NEEDS

In order to develop a succession plan, districts must first anticipate potential future needs. By proactively preparing a pool of candidates, if and when a position becomes available, the district can efficiently initiate the transition. In the Lower Hudson Valley, for example, officials could have saved time and money by studying the demographics and anticipating the numerous retirements. Instead, they are dealing with five interim and six retiring superintendents, for which they are not prepared to replace. Succession planning helps administrators avoid surprises such as the one faced by Lower Hudson Valley. The situation in the Lower Hudson Valley underscores the

> ...need to plan in advance to fill positions when they open. Think of the resources that are exhausted in filling a vacancy with a candidate who is either inadequately prepared or lacking the dispositions necessary to be successful. A coordinated plan for succession is a smart investment by districts to both identify and train aspiring school leaders who are well-equipped to lead schools.[29]

Figure 2.2 illustrates the inconsistencies in employment contract terms among superintendents. Using data such as these can help administrators develop appropriate timelines for their succession plans. The vast majority of contracts (83 percent) have terms that are three years or less, meaning there is a high potential for turnover. This further underlines the importance of having a prepared pool of candidates. The fluctuations in contract terms, in addition to retirement planning, are crucial considerations for leaders that want to draft a succession plan.

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[28] Barnes, I. "Identify and grow your own leaders: Succession planning." National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2009. p.25-26. http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=21826&filename=identify-and-grow-your-own-leaders.pdf

[29] Wilson, J.O. "Administrator Succession Planning." *The School Administrator*, 66:11, December 2009. http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=10146&terms=succession

Figure 2.2: Terms of Superintendent Employment Contracts, 2013-14

TERM OF 2013-14 CONTRACT	GENDER			
	MALE	FEMALE	OMIT	TOTAL
Less than 1-Year	60	26	0	86 (4%)
1 Year	298	81	1	380 (16%)
2 Years	431	136	5	572 (24%)
3 Years	715	194	3	912 (39%)
4 Years	149	44	0	193 (8%)
5 Years	141	47	1	189 (8%)
6 Years	2	0	0	2 (0%)
7 Years	0	0	0	0 (0%)
8 Years	1	0	0	1 (0%)
9 Years	0	0	0	0 (0%)
10+ Years	1	1	0	2 (0%)
Omit	20	6	6	32 (1%)
Total	1,818	535	16	2,369

Source: AASA[30]

Effective anticipation allows districts to begin priming potential leaders, so that in the case of an unexpected or emergent situation, there is a pool of candidates from which to select. This benefits both the administration and the students. Another important advantage that stems from proper anticipation is the possibility of interaction between seasoned leaders and rising candidates. Districts stand to benefit from "engaging key staff, such as principal supervisors, in their leadership development strategies… This early engagement helps to familiarize principal supervisors with future principals and enables them to identify the best-suited candidates for various positions as they become available."[31] The avenues for interaction extend beyond principal-supervisor relationships, and can influence all levels of succession plans. Hands-on experience is continuously cited as the most effective means of job preparation. By anticipating upcoming or possible departures, districts can connect top candidates with experienced administrators to ensure the pool is competent and prepared.

IDENTIFYING QUALIFIED CANDIDATES

The next pivotal consideration that administrators must make is identifying qualified candidates that can begin to absorb information and form the basis of the candidate pool. This would generally align with Steps 4 and 5 ("Conduct effective evaluations" and "Assess leaders' mobility") of the DMC model. The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services identifies several characteristics of high leadership potential on which it evaluates potential leaders, including:[32]

- Seeks opportunities to learn
- Is insightful

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[30] McCord et al, Op. cit., p.41.
[31] Corcoran, A. et al. "Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors." The Wallace Foundation, October 2013. p.48. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/district-policy-and-practice/Documents/Rethinking-Leadership-The-Changing-Role-of-Principal-Supervisors.pdf
[32] Barnes, Op. cit., p.4.

- Acts with integrity
- Adapts to cultural differences
- Is committed to making a difference
- Seeks broad business knowledge
- Brings out the best in people

- Has the courage to take risks
- Seeks and uses feedback
- Learns from mistakes
- Is open to criticism

The state of Georgia uses a matrix to determine which employees are potential leaders, quantifying candidates along two scales: "doing the right thing," a reflection of leadership potential, and "getting the right results," a reflection of management potential. As "state employees hone their technical prowess and their functional leadership, they can ideally reach the level of 'consistent star,' someone who is fully developed in the current assignment and merits more responsibility."[33]

Figure 2.3: Example Method of Evaluating Potential Candidates

DOING THE RIGHT THINGS >>>>>		
Diamond in the Rough • Loose Cannon? • Problem Child?	*Future All Around Star*	*Consistent Star* • Fully developed • Excellent in role • Needs more responsibility
Future Utility Player	*Utility Player* • Solid citizen • Adequate in role	*Utility Pro* • Fully competent in role • Still developing • Nearly ready for more responsibility
Take Action Now • Not developing • Not competent • In wrong job	*Future Pro* • Still developing • Has potential to improve • Monitor development	*Technical Pro* • Fully competent in role • Reached their potential
GETTING THE RIGHT RESULTS >>>>>		

Source: DMC[34]

Georgia values both doing the right things (a measurement of leadership potential) and getting the right results (a measurement of management potential), and uses its "talent matrix" to identify which people will become candidates for succession training. Although

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[33] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.10.
[34] Ibid.

Georgia's example is not all-encompassing, it highlights an important factor in the identification of potentially qualified candidates for training – **the need to consider management abilities as well as leadership potential**.

The Wallace Foundation conducted a survey of administrative training practices in K-12 school districts, and found that:

> …97 percent of principal supervisors had at least two years of experience as a principal, while 42 percent had over two years of experience as a principal coach or mentor and 95 percent had over two years of experience as a teacher. Few had experience as either a human resources administrator, an operations administrator, or a central office instructional administrator.[35]

The findings highlight the fact that traditional educational career trajectories develop along leadership lines, but sometimes lack administrative support as well. A key aspect to succession planning, and the selection of qualified candidates, involves bolstering administrative training. Particularly for superintendents and assistant superintendents, administrative logistics are as central to the job as leadership and teaching experience. The entire district benefits when candidates are appropriately trained, because succession planning emphasizes growing leadership that is interconnected throughout the system, not simply isolating the right person for a specific role on a case-by-case basis.[36] Using foresight, succession planners make succession a systemic practice that displaces typical replacement hiring models.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The single most effective way to identify potential candidates for succession training is by pinpointing the people who have sought leadership responsibilities that exceed their primary job descriptions. Districts can reduce the scope of the search by targeting teachers or other educators who have already demonstrated strong leadership skills. This sort of proactive searching will ensure that the pool of available candidates is both adequately motivated and sufficiently capable.[37]

It is important to encourage career growth by "identifying opportunities for emergent leaders to lead key priorities, sending out the message that the school is a place where staff can develop their careers."[38] The administration is not always able to select candidates, so by assuming leadership roles in schools or district offices, teachers and administrators demonstrate their willingness to engage in the succession planning. These candidates – sometimes called "teacher leaders" – go on to fill the pool of candidates. In fact, "successful planning requires providing support to schools to engage teacher leaders to become keepers of the vision and to allow them to continue implementing their vision after

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[35] Corcoran et al, Op. cit., p.26.
[36] Hargreaves, Op. cit.
[37] Burkhauser, S. et al. "Laying the Foundation for Successful School Leadership." RAND Education, May 2014. p.3. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR419/RAND_RR419.pdf
[38] Barnes, Op. cit., p.26.

leadership changes."[39] By giving candidates leadership positions, administrators ensure continuity during transitions, thus facilitating the process in terms of cost, time, and ease.

The point of providing leadership opportunities to teacher or administrative leaders is so that qualified or motivated candidates can begin to acquire hands-on experience that will be directly translatable to possible future roles. This practice can help supplement traditional training programs, which often fail to include practical, experiential learning in the curriculum. In many cases, "the most productive level for leadership development is on-the-job opportunities that widen the scope, increase the depth, and vary the routine of responsibilities."[40] The DMC gives some examples of assignments that can illustrate leadership potential, including:[41]

- Re-launching or revamping a failing service
- Launching a new service
- Managing a turnaround situation
- Handling a rapidly expanding service

- Preparing a strategic proposal for top management
- Taking on a difficult assignment
- Leading an unpopular change
- Chairing a multi-functional team

Even relatively smaller leadership responsibilities, such as taking on difficult assignments, demonstrate a willingness to develop into a teacher leader, and to contribute to the pool of qualified succession candidates. The diffusion of leadership throughout a district or school not only identifies good leaders and administrators, but it also allows employees to take ownership of their roles: "when organization leaders distribute ownership, they not only deliver results, they build other leaders at all levels."[42] This, in turn, creates a healthy symbiosis between the district administration and the pool of candidates. Districts benefit by targeting strong school leaders as early as possible in their careers. This allows the administration to strategically engage the teacher leaders in the instructional work of the district in order to equip them with hands-on experience that will serve them in the future.[43] Succession planning is cyclical and self-sustaining because of this early strategic engagement that encourages leaders to emerge.

There are many different styles of leadership, but one style that lends itself to succession planning is the "investor-leader" (in opposition with the "micromanager"). An investor-leader is "a leader who engages people through delegating and extending assignments that stretch capability. They grow the people around them, which grows their school's ability to tackle the next major challenge, creating a virtuous cycle of success."[44] In other words, the best way for a district to succeed is to have administrators distribute leadership

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[39] Peters, Op. cit., p.81.
[40] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.12.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Foster, E.C. & Wiseman, L. "The Logic of Multiplication in Management." *The School Administrator*, 71:7, August 2014. http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=34310
[43] Corcoran et al, Op. cit., p.48.
[44] Foster & Wiseman, Op. cit.

responsibilities across the system, thus investing in the district's future and tacitly preparing the next generation of leaders.

EXPANDING THE SUPPLY OF QUALIFIED ADMINISTRATORS

As discussed earlier, one of the best ways to detect potential succession candidates is by identifying the individuals that take on leadership responsibilities beyond what is required by their job. The next step in the succession planning process is to train these candidates so that the district has a reliable supply of qualified administrators. This could correspond to Step 6 of the DMC model ("Develop leaders to fill the gaps"). The primary way for districts to expand the supply of qualified administrators is by **targeting promising individuals for mentor training**. By connecting potential administrators with experienced administrators, districts facilitate the diffusion of professional learning. Mentoring programs are often successful because "mentoring develops leaders through role socialization, reduced feelings of isolation, professional learning, increased job satisfaction, improved management skills, and an overall increase in individual leadership capacity."[45] Mentoring is training by doing, and has long lasting benefits for both district administration and individual wellbeing.

Mentoring or coaching programs serve both to train future supervisors and to ease the transition to a new role. Due to the rapidly changing demographics in education leadership, more and more principals and superintendents are first-time leaders. Succession events are "emotionally stressful for everyone, but they are especially challenging for newcomers. A good coach can help newcomers through this."[46] In fact, "studies point to the positive influence of endorsements or sponsorship by professional colleagues on individual's intentions or decisions to seek administrative positions."[47] Thus, a type of program like this could help close the gap between certifications and practicing administrators.[48] Furthermore, "findings suggest that more job-specific training opportunities and greater support and encouragement throughout the transition process would stem some of the loss of prospective administrators."[49] School residencies or other types of internship/mentoring opportunities provide the hands-on experiences that are essential for preparing future leaders to effectively function in increasingly diverse, bureaucratic, and demanding school settings.[50]

ENSURING CONTINUITY BETWEEN TENURES

Districts and students benefit from smooth administrative transitions, yet continuity is often subjugated to other priorities. Corresponding to Step 7 of the DMC succession plan ("Create individual transition plans"), districts should be looking at ways to ensure there is continuity between administrators' tenures. According to Step 7, "As districts devote greater resources to identifying and preparing leaders, assuring the transfer of leadership responsibilities in

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[45] Peters, Op. cit., p.69.

[46] Hargreaves, Op. cit.

[47] DeAngelis & O'Connor, Op. cit., p.479.

[48] Ibid, p.486.

[49] Ibid, p.469.

[50] Corcoran et al, Op. cit., p.48.

succession is increasingly crucial. When transitions suffer, initiatives get put on hold and progress slows, often never to regain momentum."[51] In order to promote stability, particularly in districts undergoing reform, change must be supported, along with any gains made by the previous leader. Districts have to help schools maintain agenda continuity by providing necessary resources in the absence of, or with the transition of, a new leader.[52]

One way to ensure administrative stability is to adopt a **"goals-based approach"** during the drafting stages of a transition plan. This type of plan stresses goal-setting and yields a "result-oriented plan around specific desired outcomes in managerial and organizational performance and district accomplishment."[53] The purpose of a goal-based approach (as opposed to an "'activities-based approach,' [which] focuses on what the new leader will do, but does little to focus the leader on why they are doing it"[54]) is to allow stakeholders to understand what a new leader is doing, and why, as well as to provide clear guidance moving forward. An example of a goals-based objective could be:

- "Develop a plan to decentralize the organizational structure in order to be more responsive to the needs of principals, schools, and the public"[55]

Statements such as the above example provide new leaders with an aspirational goal and a clear reasoning for wanting to reach it. It is useful to develop transition plans jointly with both the outgoing and incoming administrator in order to ensure continuity while allowing the new leader to insert his or her own vision.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDIZED EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Developing a succession plan, due to the nature of the process, requires continued evaluation in order prove effective. This can be accomplished by setting clear expectations and creating standardized evaluative criteria against which administrators can be assessed in alignment with Step 8 of the DMC model plan ("(Re)Assess your program"). The AASA study found that this aspect of district-level evaluation was largely missing.

Figure 2.4: Performance Evaluations among Superintendents

Q: Does your employment contract specify the process, measures, and indicators to be used for your formal performance evaluation?

	COUNT	PERCENT
Yes	1,192	50.1%
No	1,165	49.0%
Omitted	21	0.9%
Total Responses	2,378	100.0%

Source: AASA[56]

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[51] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.13.
[52] Peters, Op. cit., p.69.
[53] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.13.
[54] Ibid.
[55] "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.13. Taken from a DMC member's actual transition plan, drafted by the district's superintendent.

Figure 2.5: Performance Evaluations and Objectives among Superintendents

Q: Is your formal performance evaluation linked to objectives or directions specified in the previous year's performance?

	COUNT	PERCENT
Yes	1,385	58.2%
No	969	40.7%
Omitted	24	1.0%
Total Responses	2,378	100.0%

Source: AASA[57]

Almost half (49 percent) of the superintendents' contracts did not specify the evaluative criteria that officials used, and many (40.7 percent) did not expand on the previous year's report. Succession planning requires goal-setting to be matched with follow-up in order to assure that the plan is appropriate for the district's needs and that preparation programs are proving effective. Evaluation systems are useful for "clarifying expectations for practices in which principals should engage, providing formative feedback to help principals improve their practice, promoting state or district goals, [and] supporting decisions about hiring, placement, dismissal, and compensation."[58] The evaluations underline district expectations for the role while offering constructive criticism that allows administrators to more effectively and confidently transition into their new position. *The School Administrator*, a monthly AASA publication, addressed the importance of clearly-defined goals and evaluation expectations:

> School districts that had difficulty in sustaining their succession programs failed to clearly define roles and accountabilities for all key stakeholders, starting with the most senior leaders involved in the initiative, superintendents, and school board members. Sometimes, plans fell short because the assigned staff member did not have the skills for effective execution. And probably the most challenging task for districts was the alignment of processes. A school district might have had a good plan for selecting and training future leaders but then would fail to follow up with feedback, recognition, and advancement opportunities for the participants.[59]

The Wallace Foundation divided succession planning into four broad key elements: administrative standards, high-quality training, selective hiring, and a combination of solid on-the-job support and performance evaluation. Two of the four essential facets that the Wallace Foundation identified involved setting expectations and evaluating new hires:[60]

- **Administrative standards:** Districts create clear, rigorous job requirements detailing what principals [and administrators] must know and do

- **On-the-Job Performance Evaluation and Support:** Districts regularly assess the performance of newly hired principals and provide them with the professional

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[56] McCord et al, Op. cit., p.27.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Burkhauser et al, Op. cit., p.3.
[59] Wilson, Op. cit.
[60] Mendels, Op. cit., p.49.

development and mentoring they need to blossom and overcome weaknesses pinpointed in evaluations

Based on the AASA data, it is clear that performance evaluations and year-to-year reassessments of leadership expectations are missing, despite their importance. Succession planning is "a fluid and continual process, and requires regular assessment and adjustment."[61] By developing a consistent series of metrics, districts can ensure effective administrators remain on the job and continue to improve both their individual and district performance.

As the DMC concludes, "**Ultimately, a successful succession planning program will be a tailored, systematic, and clear process that enjoys dedicated organizational support and that emphasizes long-term leadership development.**"[62]

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[61] Emphasis added. "Using Succession Planning to Drive District Human Capital Growth," Op. cit., p.13.
[62] Ibid.

Section III: Administrative Succession Practices in School Districts

In the following section, Hanover Research looks at examples of school districts that have actively addressed hiring pitfalls and reevaluated their practices. Hanover assesses succession plans, practices, and guidelines in the three states that have implemented successful models.

Successful Succession Planning Models

Delaware, Florida, and North Carolina have all experienced radical shifts in education leadership succession planning in the past 10 years. Below, the key aspects of their policy transformations are outlined, providing guidelines for future succession planning models.

State Action for Education Leadership Project, Delaware

As part of a country-wide initiative, in 2001 the Wallace Foundation introduced a three-year grant program called the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP). The Wallace Foundation selected Delaware to participate in the program, and has been distributing funds to the state since 2001 ($8.9 million in 2001 as SAELP I and $3.6 million in 2004 as SAELP II).[63] The goal of SAELP in Delaware has been to "improve student achievement by strengthening the preparation and performance of education leaders and by promoting policies and practices that improve the conditions for their success at all levels: school, district, and state."[64] Delaware's Department of Education (DOE) supplemented SAELP funding with its own plan to strengthen school- and district-level leadership.

As part of Delaware's Distributed Leadership program, the state completely revamped its succession planning structure. Before 2004, succession training in Delaware had mostly fallen to university preparation programs or motivated employees who individually pursued administrative licensure. This practice resulted in a candidate pool that was often limited or empty of highly qualified people.[65] Broadly, Delaware drafted policies to:[66]

- Deepen the overall pool of leadership in the state

- Craft mechanisms to guarantee continual replenishment of the candidate pool

- Increase minority representation in the formal leadership ranks

- Transfer responsibility for leader development to school districts, in cooperation with the state and its university training institutions

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[63] "SAELP Program." The Wallace Foundation. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/Learn-About-Wallace/GrantsPrograms/Our-Initiatives/Past-Initiatives/Pages/Saelp-Program.aspx
[64] "Delaware's Cohesive Leadership System." State Action for Leadership Project. http://saelp.doe.k12.de.us/
[65] "Succession Planning." State Action for Leadership Project. http://saelp.doe.k12.de.us/projects/sp/sp.html
[66] Ibid.

Delaware's SAELP programs, in conjunction with the DOE's initiatives, represent a good example of an area that was able to overhaul its succession plans. In 2005, after the DOE formally adopted the policies, one-day workshops were held to train school and district leaders. Representative teams from each of Delaware's 19 districts attended the consortium, comprised of "the superintendent, a member of the board of education, a teacher, a principal, and a member of the community with experience in career development."[67] At the conference, the teams examined succession planning in general, and began developing benchmarking programs, drafting criteria for building successful succession plans, and studying the changing state-level policies. After this initial meeting, two more sessions were held. The second session provided districts with implementation strategies, and the third provided training on other district models.[68] At the end of the three sessions, each district was able to apply for a $10,000 grant to develop a succession plan, implement the program, and craft the policies and administrative regulations at the district level to shape and direct the implementation of the leadership succession program.[69]

At the end of the three sessions in 2004, the DOE and SAELP released a five year plan, outlining the implementation goals of the succession planning.

Figure 3.1: Delaware's Yearly Goals for Succession Plan Implementation

YEAR	GOAL
Year 1	Each participating district will have developed a quality leadership succession plan, including needed changes in district policies and administrative regulations.
Year 3	The first cohort of carefully selected participants will have completed their programs (anticipated total state cohort of about 100 at the end of year 3).
Year 5	Expect to see 200 additional leaders in the pool from which school administrators could be selected, yielding a total pool after year 5 that will be roughly half the size of the total of all school administrative positions in the state. One quarter of this pool of 300 will be educators of color. SAELP will have created approximately 150 mentors from the existing cadre of school administrators (2 per district in each year 2-5).

Source: Delaware SAELP[70]

The origins of Delaware's succession planning are important to emphasize the coordination that was required to revamp the system's standard practices. State and district officials devoted time and resources to overhaul the program, and it took the districts five years to develop complete succession plans.

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[67] Ibid.

[68] "A World-Class Education for Every Child: Delaware's Plan to Strengthen Our Schools." Delaware Department of Education. p.7. http://saelp.doe.k12.de.us/projects/sp/pdfs/new_proposal.pdf

[69] Ibid.

[70] "Succession Planning," Op. cit.

Figure 3.2: Delaware's Teacher Quality and Succession Planning Goals

PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS	
- Encourage districts to use teacher leaders within their schools to provide day-to-day feedback and support to other teachers - Assist districts in implementing a new collaborative leadership model that will allow principals to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time supporting educators - Continue to develop a pipeline for strong school principals by establishing regional leadership preparation programs - Implement performance incentives for schools that show school-wide student growth	- Assist districts in providing more collaborative time for their teachers by surveying current practices and providing technical assistance - Implement a parent education and awareness campaign to promote parental involvement - Utilize the assessment system to ensure teachers receive real-time feedback on student achievement and can use that data to inform their planning - Provide training on current data systems to assist teachers in identifying areas needed focus in their classroom and using the data proactively
ENHANCE EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND SELECTION	
- Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in our colleges and universities by using data systems - Work with the institutions of higher education to establish teacher residency programs - Evaluate and support the Teach for America program - Provide a statewide teacher application and website dedicated to recruitment of all education personnel	- Work collaboratively to develop a statewide marketing strategy for promoting Delaware educator positions - Work with school districts on evaluating reforms that would help them hire the most qualified teachers out of college earlier in the process - Work with stakeholders to develop a robust program of alternative routes to certification for school administrators
IMPROVE EDUCATOR ASSESSMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
- Adopt a robust rating system, for both teachers and administrators, that will strengthen the link between student growth and evaluations of educator performance - Require schools to provide a mentor to teachers who do not receive an "Effective" rating as part of their improvement plan - Work with stakeholders to identify appropriate student growth measurements - Add to the evaluation system a new "Highly Effective" rating for outstanding educators	- Require novice teachers to show appropriate levels of student growth among their students prior to offering continuing licenses and tenure protections - Provide school leaders with additional training on performing teacher assessments - Implement certification program for professional development courses - Require that professional development courses taken by educators be related to areas of improvement identified by the educator's latest assessment

Source: Delaware DOE[71]

In 2009, after eight years of SAELP funding and DOE initiatives, the state released the "Plan to Strengthen Delaware's Schools." The plan focused on four key areas: improving student readiness, ensuring teacher quality, effectively using longitudinal data systems, and turning around persistently low-performing schools.[72] The plan targeted all aspects of the education

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[71] "State Releases Comprehensive 'Plan to Strengthen Delaware's Schools'." State of Delaware: The Official Website of the First State." http://governor.delaware.gov/news/2009/12december/20091201-schools.shtml
[72] Ibid.

system in Delaware, but its emphasis on ensuring teacher quality was most closely related to the succession planning the DOE had started in 2005.

Another key component of Delaware's and SAELP's goals was to be able to deliver measureable results to the DOE. One of the state's four core initiatives was to more effectively use longitudinal data systems in order to "build capacity in the Department of Education to use the data…for programmatic evaluation, to identify elements – such as scheduling and instructional changes – that have led to increased student performance."[73] Part of SAELP's emphasis on measureable results and longitudinal data was supported by the DOE in order to further bolster Delaware's succession plans. The DOE spotlighted the "importance of measureable results and sustainability by consciously identifying and emphasizing the changes in the structure of district policies and administrative regulations to lock succession planning initiatives into place."[74] Annual studies, starting in 2006, record the number of school leaders who left the profession by district, gender, age, and race, along with the reason for their departure (e.g., retirement, transfer, death, or other causes). Districts are also surveyed on hiring practices and the quality of the applicant pool.[75] Together, the data is allowing Delaware to study trends and assess the impact of SAELP funding and the DOE's succession initiatives.

Delaware's commitment to implementing a proactive succession plan for its school districts, through its participation in the Wallace Foundation's SAELP initiative, represents a thoughtful restructuring of its K-12 policies. **Delaware's DOE worked at the state-level to incentivize districts, through grants and training, to draft a succession model. By setting yearly goals and visibly defining the program's objectives, Delaware laid out a clear direction for its districts to follow.** SAELP funding allowed the DOE to hold statewide training, which was supplemented by annual data collection and survey analyses. Delaware's model for its implementation of succession planning characterizes a broad overhaul of state policies with the goal of assessing hiring practices and subsequently transforming them.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, FLORIDA

In 2007, the School Board of Highlands County (SBHC) developed a Leadership Effectiveness, Assessment, and Development (L.E.A.D.) Management Program in order to "support the goals of the district focusing on the skills necessary to promote student growth and achievement and effectively facilitate the administrative screening, selection, development, and appraisal process."[76] The L.E.A.D. Management Program was accompanied by a statement of commitment from the superintendent and the SBHC ensuring the allocation of funding for all program initiatives. The program's objectives included:[77]

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[73] Ibid.

[74] "Succession Planning," Op. cit.

[75] "A World Class Education for Every Child," Op. cit., p.10.

[76] "Administrative Management Plan for Leadership Effectiveness, Assessment, and Development L.E.A.D. Program." The School Board of Highlands County, 2007. p.4. http://www.highlands.k12.fl.us/sbhc/hrrpd/lead_program/lead_program_revised_sept_2010.pdf

[77] Bullets adapted from: Ibid.

- Using an online administrative advertisement, application, and screening system for potential district and school-based administrators

- Developing ongoing leadership capacity and a succession management plan

- Providing relevant, appropriate levels of professional development and training to principals, assistant principals, and aspiring administrators to assist them in becoming "high-performing instructional leaders"

- Providing relevant, appropriate levels of professional development and training to district-based administrative staff to enhance the level of leadership/managerial skills and competencies required for job success

- Providing opportunities for leadership growth and development through on-the-job training, reflective practices, and assigned field experiences to apply program knowledge and demonstrate leadership competencies

- Including annual administrative performance appraisals based on established criteria for assessment linking rewards to levels of student achievement, individual performance and goal accomplishment, and successful outcomes of programs, processes, and procedures

- Promoting a continuous improvement model for program assessment and revision using mid-year and end-of-year reviews and surveys to determine satisfaction with program's/principal's level of preparedness

The SBHC's comprehensive plan (346 pages) outlines in detail how candidates for vacancies will be screened, selected, and trained, as well as Highlands County's succession management strategy. The L.E.A.D. Management Program addresses all levels of the administration, from principals to district-level administrators, clearly outlining its plans to evaluate current employees and establish a succession model. For example, the SBHC uses a Leadership Experiences Assessment Tool to assess all administrative applicants.

Figure 3.3: SBHC Administrative Assessment Standards

LEADERSHIP STANDARDS	DESCRIPTION
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP	
Instructional Leadership	High Performing Leaders promote a positive learning culture, provide an effective instructional program, and apply best practices to student learning, especially in the area of reading and other foundational skills.
Managing the Learning Environment	High Performing Leaders manage the organization, operations, facilities and resources in ways that maximize the use of resources in an instructional organization and promote a safe, efficient, legal, and effective learning environment.
Learning, Accountability, and Assessment	High Performing Leaders monitor the success of all students in the learning environment, align the curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes to promote effective student performance, and use a variety of benchmarks, learning expectations, and feedback measures to ensure accountability for all participants engaged in the education process.
OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP	
Decision Making Strategies	High Performing Leaders plan effectively, use critical thinking and problem solving techniques, and collect and analyze data for continuous school improvement.
Technology	High Performing Leaders plan and implement the integration of technological and electronic tools in teaching, learning, management, research, and communication responsibilities.
Human Resource Development	High Performing Leaders recruit, select, nurture and, where appropriate, retain effective personnel, develop mentor and partnership programs, and design and implement comprehensive professional growth plans for all staff-paid and volunteer.
Ethical Leadership	High Performing Leaders act with integrity, fairness, and honesty in an ethical manner.
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Vision	High Performing Leaders have a personal vision for their school and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop, articulate, and implement a shared vision that is supported by the larger organization and the school community.
Community and Stakeholder Partnership	High Performing Leaders collaborate with families, business, and community members, respond to diverse community interests and needs, work effectively within the larger organization, and mobilize community resources.
Diversity	High Performing Leaders understand, respond to, and influence the personal, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural relationships in the classroom, the school, and the local community.

Source: L.E.A.D. Management Program[78]

Therefore, the SBHC has a mechanism in place to identify qualified candidates and a clearly delineated set of criteria against which to measure them. The L.E.A.D. Management Program uses a Succession Management Strategy to supplement the assessment tools in order to ensure that the districts always have a substantial pool of candidates. Annually, the SBHC reviews and assess:[79]

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[78] Ibid, p.94.
[79] Ibid, p.102.

1. The DROP/retirement report for administrators to project potential administrative vacancies and predict shortages at various school levels.

    o Examples include: "Currently in the DROP," "Plans to work 5 to 10 more years," "Not eligible for retirement," and/or "Not longer than 5 years"

2. All district/school accountability and assessment data to include Professional Development requirements, school grades, AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by "No Child Left Behind"], and student learning gains, to track administrative performance and correlate to leadership competency levels for leadership program review/assessment, retention purposes, and determination of performance-based pay.

3. The list of aspiring administrators to provide a gap analysis of future vacancies based on the DROP/retirement report and the number of potential administrators who meet Educational Leadership requirements.

In addition, the SBHC recognizes several key indicators of readiness for a managerial or supervisory role in the annual report, including:[80]

- Pursuit of a degree related to the position area

- Membership in a professional organization related to the position area

- Service on organization or community committees that affect or impact position area

- Participate in professional development opportunities to stay current in field of expertise or position area

- Volunteer to assist with various responsibilities to enhance job knowledge and skills in position area

- Request to shadow managers in existing position area of interest

The annual reports are intended to prioritize both foresight and accountability. Superintendents and other administrators are alerted ahead of time (anywhere between three and five years) of upcoming vacancies, and thus can begin the succession process. The official L.E.A.D. language states that:

> The Director of HRRPD [Human Resources, Recruitment, and Professional Development] shall assess projected administrative needs and prepare an annual report of potential administrative vacancies anticipated for the next three to five years. The district's planning process shall consider the impact these personnel changes will have on district programs and reflect adjustments as necessary. The report will be submitted to the Superintendent for review and/or discussion and the Superintendent will update the School Board Members.[81]

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[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid, p.119.

Taken together, the Administrative Assessment Standards, annual assessments, and indicators of readiness help the SBHC develop a comprehensive plan to identify and prepare potential leaders in the districts. This formulaic approach has allowed Highlands County to anticipate future needs and vacancies and to adopt a proactive approach that has ultimately saved resources.

The L.E.A.D. Management Program is further subdivided in order to promote specialized succession training, including programs like Developing Teacher Leaders, Aspiring Administrators, Preparing New Principals, and training existing administrators to become "effective high-performing leaders of learning."[82] All programs under the L.E.A.D. umbrella follow the same guidelines, ensuring consistency between administrative levels. The leadership programs are all designed to:[83]

- Meet the requirements of the State of Florida's Department of Education

- Direct focus on student growth and achievement

- Facilitate continuous improvement of the individual and organization

- Align with roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the organization

- Maintain a consistent, on-going program that is relevant to the goals and career path of the individual

- Provide orientation and support to new administrative staff as well as existing administrators

Highlands County's Succession Management Strategy represents a methodical approach to succession planning. In the L.E.A.D. report, the SBHC outlines clear goals and establishes organizational procedures to reach those goals. Highlands County relies on proactive data collection to forecast future needs, and maintains yearly records of employee retirement statuses and encroaching vacancies. Having highlighted potential employment holes, Highlands County begins identifying and training teachers and administrators that have expressed interest in leadership vis-à-vis the SBHC's pre-established criteria. Succession training programs include hands-on learning and mentoring opportunities, gradual transitory periods, and continual support for new administrators. At the end of each academic year, all employees are again evaluated, and the county is able to sustain its proactive, anticipatory hiring strategy.

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT, NORTH CAROLINA

In 2010, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) released a new strategic plan ("Strategic Plan 2014: Teaching Our Way to the Top") to address the shifting nature of costs and policies in K-12 education. The plan set two main goals for CMS: improve teaching and manage

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

performance.[84] As subsets of the main goals, CMS identified six areas of focus that the district would devote the majority of its resources:

- Effective teaching and leadership
- Performance management
- Increasing the graduation rate
- Teaching and learning through technology
- Environmental stewardship
- Parent and community connections

CMS's Strategic Plan emphasized promoting effective leadership and measuring performance, two key tenants to succession planning. The district's plan specified, "We will no longer measure effectiveness by credentials or years of experience. Instead, we will monitor year-over-year student progress in a variety of ways… So the 2014 plan seeks to establish new benchmarks in measuring teacher performance."[85] This redefinition of teacher success was then applied to school and district leadership to ensure quality leaders were appropriately recognized. The next important step after exemplary candidates had been selected was to introduce performance management metrics that were consistent across CMS, with the intended goal "to strengthen employee performance at all levels of the district by helping each individual understand how his or her effectiveness affects all of CMS."[86]

By broadly pivoting institutional goals, CMS was able to begin implementing a succession management plan, which included:[87]

- Talent identification
- Leadership development
- Performance management
- Recruitment
- Data management
- Systems support

In crafting its specific succession plan, CMS asked, "Who will be the next generation of principals, administrators, and superintendents, and how will they be chosen and trained?"[88] This fundamental question, which took the district from retroactive hiring to proactive planning, formed the basis of the Strategic Plan 2014's succession section. Looking at district projections, CMS found that 21 percent of all principals in the district would retire by 2014, uncovering a future hole in school leadership.[89] In response, the district reached out to national and local organization to draft succession plans. **CMS's succession plan is**

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[84] "Strategic Plan 2014." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, p.1.
  http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/strategicplan2014/areasOfFocus/Documents/Strategic%20Plan%202010%20document.pdf
[85] Ibid, p.2.
[86] Ibid.
[87] "Regular Meeting of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, October 12, 2010. p.8. http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/boe/Board%20Meeting%20Docs/Minutes-10-12-2010.pdf
[88] "Succession Planning." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, p.1.
  http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/Documents/Succession%20Planning.pdf
[89] Ibid.

unique in that the district actively searched out partnerships to co-develop programs to strengthen its candidate pool.

Figure 3.4: Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District Succession Planning Partnerships

PROGRAM	REGION	ASSESSMENT CYCLE	DESCRIPTION
New Leaders for New Schools	National	5 years	New Leaders for New Schools will recruit and train 50 new principals for high-need schools in CMS through 2014. Applicants chosen for the training program will participate in intensive summer training, followed by a one-year, full-time paid residency in a leadership position with a strong mentor principal. Each New Leader is expected to make a long-term commitment to serve CMS.
Leaders for Tomorrow	Local	3 years	The Leaders for Tomorrow advanced-degree program was created at Winthrop University in collaboration with CMS administrators. Candidates learn through a mix of face-to-face and job-embedded instruction. Courses are scheduled in eight-week blocks so that candidates can focus on one area at a time. Key components of the program include a rigorous nomination and selection process. Each participant is also required to complete three internships in different schools with a variety of demographic profiles.

Source: CMS[90]

Both New Leaders for New Schools and Leaders for Tomorrow serve as foundations of CMS's succession planning. Participants, both school- and district-level administrators, are nominated based on leadership skills, instructional expertise, and the ability to manage schools. At the zone-level (CMS is subdivided into seven "learning communities," each of which is overseen by a zone superintendent[91]), zone superintendents receive ongoing support and professional development by attending weekly meetings. In alignment with the Strategic Plan 2014, superintendents and administrators are measured on graduation rates, growth, student proficiency on state tests, attendance, suspension rates, and other related measures.[92]

In addition to the preparatory measures used to deepen the candidate pool, CMS's Strategic Plan 2014 looked to use and track data in order to more effectively anticipate future needs. Every year, CMS schools are required to submit three items: School Improvement Plan, School Progress Report, and School Quality Review.[93]

- **School Improvement Plan:** Identifies strengths and weaknesses and sets out strategies for improvement. Plans are created by the school's leadership team, reviewed by the Office of Accountability, and updated each year.

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Corcoran et al, Op. cit., p.12.
[92] Ibid, p.22.
[93] "The Road to Reform." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, p.3.
   http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/Documents/The%20Road%20to%20Reform.PDF

- **School Progress Report:** Summarizes the previous school year, providing school demographics, test results, parental involvement, facilities, the quality of teaching staff, and a letter from the principal.

- **School Quality Review:** Captures the progress being made in each school that may not fit into testing or other measures. Reviewers spend two days in the school, interviewing staff and observing classrooms.

Together, the training programs and data tracking formed the base of CMS's new succession model. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Strategic Plan 2014 represents a proactive restructuring in response to education trends that allowed the district to redirect and reallocate resources in order to better address the educational shortfalls in the state. This foresight included the creation of a succession plan that identified key school and district leaders and enrolled them in newly formed programs. By clearly defining objectives and expectations, CMS was able to develop a program with a clear focus that responded to anticipated needs.

PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

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