The Detroit Public School District:

A Case Study Into Superintendents' Leadership From 1975 to 2015

by

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Dedication

To my mother Shirley Mildred Ricks Baker, I thank you for keeping me encouraged. You taught me how to stay in prayer and how to work smarter in the face of adversity. Thank you for being such a great mother and mentor. I love you and miss you dearly.

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Mrs. Karen Ridgeway, you have a knack for navigating some of the most difficult professional experiences I have ever seen one woman handle. Thank you for sharing your story. You have set a foundation on which future leaders can build.

Preface

My passion for education is born out of my childhood–a story I keep nearby as a reminder of thousands of children my life's work will affect someday.

When I was 12 years old, my brother was shot and killed. My sister is a high school drop out with four kids by four different men. My oldest brother is a recovering crack-cocaine addict. Both of my parents are deceased. And right before my 39th birthday last year, my mother's second born son died at 55 years old. I flew back home to California for Thanksgiving and buried my precious brother who was autistic.

Upon learning about my recent loss, staff in the State School Reform Office (SRO) sent flowers to my house on the east side of Detroit. Dan LaDue, the Assistant Director of Data and Accountability, apologized in a soft tone while he stared at me searching for a reaction. "I'm sorry," he said. "I don't know what to say. I've never lost anyone in my life except for a grandparent."

As a state educational leader myself, and one who has glaucoma, I watched as Dan fought back tears before continuing.

"I know you took care of it" financially and organizationally. "My biggest fear is that you're going to burn out."

Dan has been in education for over a decade and has a master's degree from Michigan State University. He lives in a typical predominately White, upper middle-class suburban neighborhood with a beautiful wife and their two college-bound sons who both attend one of the highest-performing high schools in the state. People who grew up like me are relatively nonexistent in Dan's neighborhood. So besides me, Dan's never had a close relationship with anyone whose high threshold for pain and sacrifice was generated from poverty.

Today, I presume there are numerous people who remain amazed by the resilience and grit built inside of poor kids who grow into productive, middle-class adults. Many kids born into poverty learn to navigate sociopolitical systems long before they ever develop the ability to articulate how their interactions necessitate a double consciousness. Poor kids inadvertently navigate the Black world in which they were born and the White world into which they ascend once educated and on a high-wage earning career path. "Burn out" simply isn't an option because survival, flexibility, and focus have become second nature by the time some poor kids reach adulthood. And I'm strictly referring to those poor kids who manage not to allow the complexities of their environment reduce their productivity or shift their desired life outcomes. These are the warriors in the group, the diamonds in the rough, the ones who will defy the odds regardless of how many times standards are lowered and surrounding images reinforce stereotypes.

Burying my brother, Dennis Ray Sanders, was yet another life-bearing responsibility that comes with being the only warrior in my immediate family who used education to beat the odds to transition out of poverty into the middle class. However unfortunate it was, my childhood

provides me with the opportunity to serve with authenticity, fierce resolve, and unwavering focus. I also reflect on the parent that my brother and I shared and how she made sure that I had the education necessary to be who I am today.

My mother Shirley Mildred Ricks did the best she could as a single parent with a high school diploma earned in the Jim Crow south. Mama married her high school sweetheart in North Carolina, gave birth to three boys and later divorced herself from the abusive military man who fathered other children during their marriage. She later remarried when she met my sister's father, but he was also abusive and they too divorced. It wasn't until she was my age when she met an educated Jamaican man who himself had been divorced and father to three of his five current offspring. (I'm only counting *five* because this year we found another sibling on Facebook, and I think there is one more out there somewhere.) Nevertheless, Mama lived long enough to tell me the story at least a hundred times about how she wanted one more child. She said she prayed for me to come, so I grew up always believing that I have purpose.

My fondest memories with Mama are about school. At school there was always food at regular intervals of the day, and I felt like teachers nurtured my thinking around a life outside of what others had become in my neighborhood. Today, I now know that my transformation at school was not by happenstance. Mama intentionally selected all of the schools I attended. She was so concerned about my education that she transferred me from the neighborhood school to one in a community where the houses were much larger and the kids, much lighter.

One day when I was in elementary school, I asked her why I couldn't just go to the neighborhood school "down the street from the house." The other Black kids went to that school, and I was starting to have less in common with them. I felt different, and I started modifying my vocabulary during interactions until suddenly the way I was using language was associated with Whiteness. This is ironic considering that I am clearly among the darkest siblings in my family.

As children, we didn't understand that intelligence isn't contingent upon our congenital race or gender. We held on to stereotypes about those of us who were darker and therefore allegedly further away from physical attractiveness. No one had ever articulated to us that superficial beauty or academic intelligence does not depend on race, color, gender, or class. No one ever said to us that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder or that children who have access to quality education will learn.

When I was growing up, Mama never shared her rationale for sending me to different schools. I never learned what data she accessed to determine her assessment of school quality. Regardless of the information she used, however, one thing was for sure: Mama was highly motivated to get me enrolled in schools that met or exceeded her standards. And Mama's standards were high for a poor, single Black parent whose father could barely read.

Her boundless energy was impressive, too. I don't know where it came from. It took monumental effort for Mama to transport me to those schools *every day*, but the daily trek built my stamina, endurance, and determination to succeed in life. Looking back, it may have been that daily travel toward my future success that fuels me to today.

Mama laughed often along those journeys regardless of how hard things got for us, and she never quit. My most vivid memories include frequent moments of her selflessness and her ability to give to others and encourage them in meaningful ways. Most of the time Mama was working so hard to provide for me that I started seeing my own privilege in the most degrading circumstances imaginable–like using a dollar food stamp to purchase candy so I could, in turn, use the change to buy a roll of toilet paper.

My childhood reality each day grew into a lifelong passion for education. This was not only the ticket out of my situation but also the driving force of my work in schools. And it wasn't long before I started liking the new schools and feeling smarter anyway. I prayed to 'make it' and promised God (in my childhood prayers) that I would spend the rest of my life showing others how to get out once I made it. None of who I am would have been possible if my teachers had treated me differently because of my home life. But they didn't.

I am grateful for the adults who didn't make things easier for me because I was poor. I thank them for providing consequences for my failures and incentives for my successes. My teachers seemed to have the same expectations for me as they did for the White kids. I liked that, too. It was empowering to have teachers validate what I instinctively already knew: *my demography was not going to determine my destiny.* In fact, early in life, I grew to hate poverty more than the low expectations or excuses some adults perpetuated to reinforce inferiority complexes for poor people.

In the end, the new schools I attended were great. They were racially diverse so I improved my cultural competence. In addition, I presumed that others did the same simply through our daily interactions and our teachers' ability to diversify the context and lens through which material was taught. This was an invaluable experience for those students who lived in the school district's catchment area and for those of us who traveled to it daily.

My fourth grade teacher in this new neighborhood was Mr. Kniesel; he played the violin and spoke German. While I often complained about the workload in his class, I completed all my assignments and respected him even when he asked me to stop talking or wrote my name on the board–which admittedly was sometimes followed by check marks that led to another level of accountability if I failed to meet behavioral expectations!

By the time I was in ninth grade, we moved from Altadena to Azusa in the San Gabriel Valley–an hour from Los Angeles. Because my sister had done an exceptional job making a notorious name for herself, most teachers and Principal Webb knew who I was before I was even promoted to high school. But once again, the adults treated me fairly. I had the same opportunities to access quality courses that most of the middle class Asian and White students had. I'm often left believing someone advocated on my behalf because I landed a position on Mr. Kear's varsity basketball team freshman year and was among the few Blacks in Mr. Olsen's honors and advanced placement classes. These experiences firmly set my eyes on college.

While everyone knows that graduating from college does not guarantee a perfect life, it certainly can open doors and prepare many poor kids for a chance at improving their

socioeconomic status. In addition, it simply reduces the odds of poor kids retaining their multi-generational immobility.

Consider this: our communities and economy can be transformed if poor children are educated at a level where they can access high-wage paying employment. In our knowledge-based society, access to the middle class will remain difficult if the majority of poor kids graduate high school without the necessary skills to compete professionally with their middle class predominately Asian and White peers.

This reality should create a sense of urgency in all of us as well as the belief that (1) all children can learn regardless of where they come from, and (2) all children should have access to quality schools regardless of geography or transportation.

It is not acceptable for children, regardless of race, color, or socioeconomic status to be stuck in chronically failing schools for generations while adults slowly learn how to lead organizations, measure progress, and make midcourse corrections to turnaround school systems. If you question the value of educational attainment on future life outcomes, you are not alone and should turn to renowned researchers in the field. To learn more about the intersection between education and the economy or the impact of desegregation on future life outcomes, or integration on school quality and resources, read up on anything by trusted names like Harry Holzer, Eric Hanushek, and Rucker Johnson–scholars that have studied and documented the impact of educational opportunities on life outcomes for Blacks and poor people. They have studied the economy extensively and their writings speak to the ways in which quality education and educational attainment improve life outcomes.

I share this information because my core skill as a teacher tells me that it isn't enough for me to write my story or work in public education. Americans have to have the opportunity, on their own, to research issues raised in the national school reform debate about poor kids and access to quality schools. Plus, in the end, I recognize that I am not among the majority. Most adults, who grew up like me that I know, have turned to unhealthy lifestyles or struggled to support their own families.

Thanks to Mama's refusal to accept the status quo and to my teachers' unwillingness to hold me to substandard expectations or those modified to account for my childhood poverty, I developed the resilience and grit necessary to make it. Children–especially the poor ones who grew up like me–don't have time to wait on adults to make the hard (but necessary and right) decisions about how to access existing quality schools. The time is now–not five years from now after we have cycled through generations of poor kids. The day for change is today. If we do not recognize this urgency now, poor kids will miss the educational attainment opportunities while they wait for us to decide if they are worth the fight.

So a few years ago, I embarked on this journey of writing about school district leadership to learn about people who led school systems for kids who grew up like me. With a background in urban education, I will likely always work in communities where I can be engaged in one of the nation's lowest-performing schools. For me, the dissertation is a documented study of leaders who come before me; it is an effort to document the depth of the problem that Black and low-income children face when they are not well educated. In this study,

I describe how poorly education, low-income children face the risk of being professionally uncompetitive with their predominately Asian and White middle class peers. More importantly, the study depicts leaders' experiences and the challenges they faced when leading a fledgling school system and organization. I wanted to hear about the school district superintendents' perspectives–how they navigated what appeared to be insurmountable challenges. I wanted to understand how they led in a city of steady declines in population, academics, and finance.

I conducted this research and wrote this dissertation because Detroit can be successful if its future generation of school district leaders have access to the experiences of their predecessors and accurate information pertaining to operations, academics, finance, human resources, as well as state and federal policies and procedures. How different the leadership experience will be when future leaders in Detroit's school system can build on previous organizational successes while intentionally avoiding mistakes or reinventing protocols that have little value or limited effectiveness.

Engaging in a case study about Detroit's school district leadership provided a window into the system's complexities from folks who have actually led it. Looking through that lens has allowed for focus on the future from a solution-oriented standpoint. Because Detroit is sometimes portrayed as a travesty, I started the journey wanting to carve out how the leaders led under conditions with such huge roadblocks. I wanted to share their ideas about resolving the education problem in Detroit, which is arguably the nation's toughest educational landscape.

I am humbled by their thinking and passion for this very important work of educating America's children.

Natasha Baker
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Abstract

School district superintendents play several roles including teacher-scholar, instructional leader, organizational manager, business manager, democratic leader, stateswoman, and social scientist. In each unique role, superintendents are district leaders who use various leadership styles including authentic leadership, team leadership, system leadership, situational leadership theory, distributed leadership, leader-member exchange theory, and transformational leadership. This case study provides an analysis of interviews with four former Detroit Public Schools (DPS) superintendents and one chief executive officer. As a historical case study focused on former district leadership from 1975 to 2015, the research retells the leadership stories in a manner that provides insider information and shares institutional knowledge about leading Michigan's largest school district. The five district leaders interviewed for this study are Arthur Jefferson, Deborah McGriff, David Snead, David Adamany, and Karen Ridgeway. Implications for key findings are embedded across time-related themes: duration, momentum, futuring, transformation, and quality. Each leader interviewed discussed challenges relative to complex school systems including but not limited to mission, vision, values, goals, operations, finance, academics, student attendance, general accountability, policy, and politics. The dialogue and circumstances for school systems serving predominantly high poverty students and families warrants comparable discussions about public education in urban areas across the nation.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION – THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Poor students lack access to quality education. When compared with their wealthier counterparts, poor students are more likely to have inferior school options and therefore remain at an immediate disadvantage both professionally and socioeconomically. This occurs because low-income students generally leave secondary school without the basic skills necessary to earn a living wage in an entry level position or to advance in college without remediation (Holzer & Offner, 2004; Frankenber & Orfield, 2012). The Detroit Public School district (DPS) is a prime example of a school system in which such conditions exist. The district has employed fifteen different superintendents over the past twenty-seven years (Addonizio & Kearney, 2012). With every new appointment came different expectations and goals beset by incoming leaders. The high attrition rates among superintendents over the past forty years coupled with the longevity of irresolute geopolitical complexities have led to each new school district leader pursuing opportunities to rebuild, optimize, lead, and manage the district. Substantial antecedents that have been detrimental to the district's viability have contributed significantly to problems confronting the district. As a result, each school district leader has had to address challenges that their predecessors were unable to resolve.

The Past Eighty-Five Years

Politics have contributed to academic decline. In particular, Detroit's power struggles have been salient throughout the city for the past eighty-five years. In the 1930's, divisiveness

flowed into schools during an era when labor unions successfully lobbied for the Wagner Act calling for the U.S. Housing Act which created public housing programs. The intersection of these national and local sociopolitical infrastructures impacted Detroit. The Black population increased more rapidly than in any other large urban city including Chicago and Cleveland (Holzer, Farley, & Danziger, 2000; Pickren, 2011).

By 1952, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in the case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* which was subsequently decided in 1954 for the plaintiff. Although the federal ruling did not immediately desegregate schools, schools never successfully integrated. *Brown v. Board of Education* did, however, open the national dialogue around racial inequity during a time of civil unrest. Between 1950 and the 1960s, Detroit saw an increase in murders attributed, in part, to job loss due to automation, which had increased at General Motors, Chrysler, and American Motors (Farley, Danziger, & Holzer, 2000).

In the early 1960s, crime, joblessness, and racial tension locally and nationally intersected and informed President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty. As a former teacher, Johnson saw firsthand the impact of poverty on schooling and the reverse effects of schooling on students' lives. The thought of his students' experiences never left him from his teaching days in New Mexico; he carried the memories with him during and after his ascendency to the oval office. Today, low-income students are still served through policy birthed under the Johnson administration's enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which allocates funding and support for poor kids in public schools. The ESEA was the Johnson administration's attempt to close the skill gap in reading, writing, and math between students in low- and middle-income households.

However, despite national efforts to reduce academic deficits and financial inequities, achievement gaps continue to exist. This is not to suggest that neither policies nor judicial decisions had impact, but rather that there is no panacea for increasing access to quality public school options for poor kids. Instead, there have been persistent marked gaps in spite of the decades of intercession.

By 1967, President Johnson and Michigan's Governor George Romney were collaborating to protect citizens from race riots in Detroit. Urban blight and White flight had become outgrowths of the racial tension and violence in the city. With the rise of the crack cocaine epidemic came a significant increase in murders and other citywide crimes. Research shows that the arrival of crack cocaine led to increases in crime during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Grogger & Willis, 2000; Farley, Danziger, & Holzer, 2000). The danger around inner city drug markets drove up the incentive for more kids to arm themselves (Blumstein & Rosenfeld, 1998). For schools, rises in street drug commerce in their high poverty urban areas created a need for heightened security and strategies to keep learning environments safe.

Additionally, these social ails plagued cities like Detroit with birth rates of children from crack-addicted mothers and with increases in Black male homicides and incarceration (Fyer, Heaton, Levitt, & Murphy, 2006). As these societal problems made their way into public schools, federal policy or decrees such as Ronald Reagan's *A Nation at Risk* (1984) drew these challenges into national focus. Dialogue generated as a result of *A Nation at Risk* was intended to shift attention toward shared accountability and student achievement outcomes. The national dialogue was focused on students having the skills necessary to increase their professional capacity. However, failed policies during the 1980s and 1990s

only quelled the national debate about how to make American students competitive with their international counterparts.

The 1990s saw President Clinton add school improvement focused on standardization and standards to Johnson's ESEA, while many states had been outlining and implementing their own accountability systems to include federal stipulations. In 1994, Michigan voters passed Proposal A, which largely allowed property tax relief and school finance reform. Property taxes were no longer the primary source to fund schools, charter schools were allowed to open, and schools of choice allowed for students to attend schools outside of their residential catchment areas (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2002).

By the turn of the century, the national debate shifted to standards-based instruction and leadership effectiveness. The Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) published standards for superintendents developed by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (Wilmore, 2008). The seven standardization categories developed are guideposts for superintendent leadership and includes visioning, instructional capacity, management, families and community, integrity, political acuity, and credentialed expertise (Wilmore, 2008; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). School boards can use the ELCC's standards for improved district performance. The standards can be used to draft superintendent selection processes and to evaluate superintendents' progress. The standards are guidelines by which superintendents and other district leaders can form a baseline for effectiveness (Wilmore, 2008).

Research on superintendents portends that superintendent leadership in Detroit can increase the scholarship around the ELCC standards and school district leadership. In general, superintendents play multiple roles and get pulled in different directions because

school districts are social systems in an interconnected system where every person shapes the outcomes (Wheatley, 2006; Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). Therefore, district leaders play different roles requiring almost a natural proclivity for navigating sociopolitical systems.

Over the past 150 years, various role conceptualizations have emerged that best describe the superintendent's role: teacher-scholar, instructional leader, organizational manager, business manager, democratic leader, statesman, and social scientist (Kowalski, 2013; Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). Given the multidimensional role, Wheatley (2006) contends that leaders need to have the propensity to trust people to create solutions and to guide that thinking through shared visions, missions, values, and goals. According to Stephen Covey (2006), trust evolves through leaders' intentional capability to demonstrate integrity and results through their behaviors. Such behaviors include straight talk, respect, transparency, loyalty, clear expectations, practiced accountability, listening, and commitment (Covey, 2006). However, despite having these interpersonal leadership skills, superintendents' face challenges that oftentimes lead to non-retirement exits from the position.

On average, superintendents in urban communities stay in position for three years (Rich, 2016). Each time a superintendent transition occurs, the new superintendent, staff, and students face shifting priorities in the curriculum, management, leadership, and performance expectations (Elmore, 2004; Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). Superintendents accepting such volatile leadership opportunities can increase their likelihood for success with the use of a variety of leadership styles including, but not limited to authentic, distributive, situational, servant, team, and transformational leadership (Elmore,

2004; Northouse, 2013). The lack of sustained leadership overtime makes it nearly impossible for newly hired superintendents to build on their predecessor's accomplishments. Subsequently, superintendents enter the position having to learn the district's weaknesses and strengths without access to institutional knowledge. The chief educational leader has to learn the organization without access to the historical understandings needed to transform the district at a pace necessary to improve academics, operations, and finances.

Purpose of the Study

The damning cycle of poverty and violence in Detroit is exacerbated by a low quality educational system and the revolving door of school district superintendents. The lack of continuity makes transformation difficult. Leaders who are systemic thinkers see their role as change agents. They are equipped to motivate followers to perform beyond their own expectations; in doing so, leaders and their subordinates norm and manage principles and practices toward effective decisions and actions, encourage participation, and focus teams on collective performance outcomes instead of individual results (Henry, 2012; Rosener, 1990; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004). There are no panaceas for transforming school systems; therefore, leaders should not be overly confident when accepting the position. In high poverty urban settings, superintendent leadership requires access to political capital and a toolbox of strategies.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to record the leadership experiences of former Detroit Public School (DPS) district superintendents and one chief executive officer as well as the time period in which they led: Arthur Jefferson (1975-1989), Deborah McGriff (1991-1993), David Snead (1993-1997), David Adamany (1999-2000), and Karen Ridgeway (2011-2015). The research study is designed to explore the leadership attributes and behaviors

used when they each led the district. The topic is relevant because processes leading to high-performing school systems for low-income students or the practices that inhibit success can be both complex and contentious. A case study about former DPS district leaders' decisions reveal specific aspects about school district leadership and their attempts to optimize the organization.

Research Questions

Superintendents have various beliefs and make numerous decisions daily. During interviews, participants were asked about their decisions, values, strategies, beliefs, and behaviors. The inductive process included identifying and interpreting their leadership experiences. The purpose of the study is to better understand their experiences as former DPS district leaders, the barriers they faced, and the contributions they made to advance the district. The research questions for this study are listed below:

1. What leadership behaviors of former DPS superintendents do the superintendents perceive to have had the greatest impact?
2. What leadership decisions of former DPS superintendents do the superintendents perceive to have had the greatest impact?

Definitions and Terms

Many of the terms elaborated below explain common understandings and connect definitions with leadership concepts related to the study. A common thread between all of these terms involves their linkage to leaders' mission, vision, values, and goals. The terms are commonly associated with leadership, education, and organizational development. Studies about urban school districts have often cited these terms as essential components about leadership, particularly in urban cities such as Detroit.

Authentic leadership was born out of transformational leadership research (Northouse, 2013). Authentic leaders are visionaries commonly described as a type of leadership in which the leader demonstrates (in all practices and beliefs) a sense of purpose, values, strong relationships, self-discipline, heart, courage, trustworthiness, honesty, transparency, and internalized moral and balanced processing when making decisions (Azanza, Moriano, Molero, & Mangin, 2015; Gunderman & Maas, 2014; Northouse, 2013; Terry, 1993; Champy, 2009). These qualities are said to be developed over a lifetime; they are imperative in work and in life (Gunderman & Maas, 2014). Authentic leaders essentially know who they are, where they are going, and what the right thing is to do (George, 2007; Northouse, 2013). Generally, authentic leaders believe in development, not administrative climbing; they care about demonstrating who they really are and helping others to do the same (Gunderman & Maas, 2014). Through the self-development process, they are able to build themselves and their followers--focusing everyone on a shared mission and vision. Through the inductive process information from DPS' former superintendents may reveal the degree to which they focused on a vision and traits of authenticity.

Case studies in qualitative research include history or observation of an organization over time (Merriam, 2009). Case studies allow for the understanding or the study of a systems approach to investigate contextualized phenomenon within a particular boundary (Hatch, 2002). According to Edson (1988), "Historical inquiry seeks to interpret and explain the significance of past experiences, not merely to document them" (p. 48). The purpose for using a case study approach is to demonstrate how different superintendents have envisioned and experienced leading the DPS district.

Historical inquiry provides institutional knowledge not otherwise accessible.

Distributed leadership can increase team performance when there is a clear vision set by the leader and the vision is connected with action steps and milestones (Bolden, 2011; Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006; Northouse, 2013). In a distributive leadership model, focus is on a shared vision and team performance outcomes (Bolden, 2011; Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006). Success occurs when upward communication or decision making is promoted at lower levels on the team (Northouse, 2013). When lower ranking employees in a traditionally structured organization are given the necessary leverage to promote their ideas and opinions, the organization is likely to have greater access to better decision making, innovation, and creativity (Northouse, 2013). However, simply implementing distributed leadership will not influence student learning or performance outcomes (Bolden, 2011). Leaders have to share influence through a transparent vision and process that is both coordinated, focused, and mission-aligned so that team effectiveness equates to optimal service (Northouse, 2013). Performance outcomes are never guaranteed and are contingent upon the context and leader-member exchange which is centered on the interactions between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2013; Vecchio, Bullis, & Brazil, 2006). As a DPS-focused study, distributed leadership is imperative because there are multiple responsibilities associated with large urban districts. Superintendents have to delegate and share responsibility and accountability to do the job well.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory is centered on the actions of leaders and their followers (Northouse, 2013), positing that leaders develop special relationships with

certain employees (the in-group) who share the mission, vision, values and goals. Under those conditions, lower quality relationships emerge with the out-group, which affect employee commitment, the perception of equity in leader-follower relationship, and feelings of relative deprivation (Bolino & Turnley, 2009; Jain, Srivastava, & Owens, 2012; Northouse, 2013). On one hand, many studies speak to the positive relationship and performance outcomes of the in-group that emerges in LMX due to the connection with employee behavior via the relationship with the immediate supervisors and the perceived organizational support groups (Islam, Khan, Ahmad & Ahmed, 2013; Settoon & Bennett, 1996). On the other hand, low-quality exchanges with employees in the out-group can increase relative deprivation unless there is more self-efficacy, fewer lower-quality exchanges, and friends with high-quality exchanges (Bolino & Turnley, 2009). The case study about DPS' former superintendents will allow for understanding about the relationships between superintendents and their subordinates.

Phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon or how people experience what they experience via the appearances of things, the meanings things have in their experiences, and the structure of various types of experiences ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and awareness (Smith, 2013). The philosophy originated during the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher who believed parts of reality consisted of objects and events as they were perceived and understood in human consciousness (Smith, 2013). Phenomenological approaches can be separated into two approaches: descriptive (eidetic) and interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie,

2014). Qualitative phenomenology research studies use interpretive phenomenological approaches to develop a greater understanding of individuals' experiences through their consciousness in these experiences (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). The DPS case about the district's superintendents allows for philosophical analysis and interpretations of their experiences in a complex political and racially charged city and state. This is important because it allows for a depth of analysis rather than a superficial interpretation of former DPS' district leaders.

Situational leadership theory is a practice oriented framework about perceived effectiveness based on situational context (Kerns, 2015). Northouse (2013) and Vecchio, Bullis, & Brazil (2006) contend that leader effectiveness (measured by group performance) is not limited to leader behavior or focus on vision. Interviews in the case study will reveal how former DPS superintendents used various leadership styles during their tenure. Situational leadership is about how different situations demand different kinds of leadership (Northouse, 2013). The theory holds that there is no one leadership style because leaders adapt to their situational context by using different types of power as components of their leadership styles: coercive, connection, reward, legitimate, referent, informational, and expert power (Heresey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979). Situational leadership theory includes two situational contexts for leaders: consideration (*i.e.* warmth and social interaction) and structuring (*i.e.* leaders' directness or monitoring) (Vecchio, Bullis, & Brazil, 2006). Criticisms of the theory include previous researchers' exclusion of several characteristics (subordinates'

demographics, etc.). The theory lacks empirical evidence (Vecchio, Bullis, & Brazil, 2006). However, it does suggest that leader effectiveness is contingent upon how well a leader is able to adapt to his or her situational context. (Northouse, 2013; Vecchio, Bullis, & Brazil, 2006).

System leadership is collective and adaptive leadership that includes leaders who (1) visualize the system and communicate their vision, (2) foster reflection and generative conversation, and (3) co-create the future with stakeholders (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015). These types of leaders are focused on short- and long-term affects of interventions, system dynamics, and collective progress (Forrester, 1989; Ackoff, 1998; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015). During discussions with former DPS superintendents, leaders revealed the crux of how infrastructure and political systems affected district progress and leadership from their perspective. It became important to note the importance of systems thinking or types of interactions that reinforce or amplify, balance, or stabilize goal-oriented behavior (Senge, 2006; Ackoff, 1998). Because system leaders recognize they are a part of the larger system that they seek to change, these leaders engage in the process and seek to create the conditions necessary for a seismic shift in conditions. System leaders create and facilitate transparent dialogue so people most impacted by the situation can think more deeply about what is really happening, explore opportunities, and look beyond popular thinking in search of high leverage solutions (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015). The DPS case study is linked to systems leadership because a common theme includes the ways in which decisions

and decision makers had to use information from multiple informants as they thought about action that would impact several parts of the organization.

Team Leadership posits that groups in organizations have shared goals, and the leadership focus in not only on the task accomplishments but also the leaders' shared vision and team function maintenance (Hill, 2013). Given the disruptive educational context in which students are educated in Detroit, interviews with former DPS superintendents will allow for exploration about how they led and managed their teams. According to Zacarro, Rittman, & Marks (2001), team leadership occurs in the leader-team dynamics through functional leadership, which maintains effective team performance occurring when successful integration of individual actions take place among members who share the same vision (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). Research about team leadership speaks to group effectiveness and the leader's intervention. Types of intervention, what to target, and how leadership impacts team outcomes are components of this leadership style (Hill, 2013). Since leadership has influences on team performance and group dynamics, it has dyadic effects (*i.e.* leader-member exchanges and team-member exchanges) and results in whether or not team members come to consensus (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). For effective team performance or team-level outcomes, team leadership involves clear and elevating goals, results-driven structures, competent team members, unified commitments, collaborative climates, and norms and standards for excellence (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Hill, 2013; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001).

Transformational Leadership includes the ability to influence enough people to change systems, mindsets, cultures, beliefs, values, ethics, behaviors, and standards to

achieve long-term goals (Bass, 1985; Hacker & Roberts, 2004; Northouse, 2013). Transformational leadership emerged in Burns' seminal text *Leadership* (1978). Burns attributed transformational leadership to leaders who skillfully capture the hearts and souls of people over many years--winning the confidences of powerful and dissatisfied groups interested in systemic change (Burns, 1978). The practice is difficult to develop, identify, share, and understand. Generally, transformational leaders are visionaries who shift dormant followers into active change agents over time; they are leaders willing to engage in the creation of the necessary conditions for revolutionary movement. These leaders enlist mass memberships, assemble and train recruits, motivate, and move followers to perform beyond expectations (Burns, 1978; Henry, 2012). Transformational leadership is about generative processes that include collective influence and systemic change that broadens and elevates the interests of stakeholders advocating for a specific cause (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). On average, DPS' superintendents served for only two years in the position between 1975 and 2015 (Addonizio & Kearney, 2012), making the potential for transformational leadership fleeting since the former DPS district leaders interviewed were not, on average, in position long enough for systemic change to take root. Still, transformational leadership remains important because future leaders can build on the historical knowledge of the leaders serving in the position before them.

Transactional leadership concentrates on the notion of transactions between leaders and employees. The relationships--which can be financial, psychological, or political--are in exchange for productivity, praise, loyalty, or promises and may not last longer than the exchange itself (Tafvelin, 2013). In the case study, DPS' superintendents under

emergency management and those with contentious relationships with the board or their staff may have a stronger proclivity for this management style because operations require command, control, efficiency, and compliance. Therefore, success is obtained when personnel exchanges are known as contingent reinforcement and management by exception. Management by exception comes in two forms: active and passive (Bass, 1990). The difference between the two is time. Transactional leaders intervene actively by exception when they see deviations and respond accordingly versus waiting for failure and responding retroactively or passively (Bass, 1990). "This differs from transformational leadership, as transactional leaders do not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their personal development" (Northouse, 2013, p. 195). Bass (1990) contends that transactional leadership involves the leader's use of specific strategies to arrive at advancements in employee performance (Bass, 1990).

The aforementioned terms and definitions allow for clarity around the concepts surrounding how the study adds value to current scholarship. As discussed, DPS is a large complex urban organization led by many former superintendents whose tenure in the position ended before systemic change occurred. Theoretically, leaders seeking to transform large systems require not only the opportunity to do the job well but also access to accurate assessments of the weaknesses and strengths of the leaders and the system that existed before them. DPS' future district leaders can gain institutional knowledge from reading about the district's former leaders and from understanding the theory behind their actions.

Theoretical Perspective

Systems theory and phenomenological inquiry are the theoretical frameworks used in

this qualitative case study to discuss the research about transformational leadership as it relates to superintendents' behaviors and decisions while they led DPS. Systems are wholes made up of parts resulting from dynamic interaction in an open system (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Everything alive exists in an open system and exchanges energy with other variables in its environment. As a result, information fluctuates between the equilibrium, where there is nothing else to change; equivocality, where there is ambiguity; and dis-equilibrium, where there exists imbalance in energy exchanges (Wheatley, 2006; Weick, 2015). In this regard, observing the context of the school district system studied (*i.e.* DPS) through the phenomenological lens enables interpretation of DPS former superintendents' awareness of how context, time, and perception alter or impact their leadership experiences. Doing so enables synthesis of experiences the superintendents had while leading the district.

Theoretically, school districts do not function in isolation. Open systems and sociotechnical systems are two components of the theory. Socio technical systems are about the importance of optimizing social and technical aspects of organizations for superior productivity (French & Bell, 1999). This is relevant regarding DPS because each newly hired leader has attempted to rebuild components of the district that had been either lost in the leadership transition or dysfunctional. Interpretations addressing open systems theory revealed strategies about how district leaders may have encountered and interacted with external stakeholders, prepared for the future, and developed action plans (French & Bell, 1999). Simply put, complex change involves more dynamics than simply getting the right people on the right bus in the right seats, which Collins (2001) suggests in his text about the impact of talent management on team and organizational performance. This is relevant because district leaders looking to turn around the school system must be systems leaders

who have the skill to recruit, hire, and retain high capacity personnel long enough to execute deliverables that lead to goal attainment.

All public school districts and schools are influenced by their environments. Thus, as open systems, they have repeated cycles of input, transformation, output, and renewed input which comprise their organizational patterns influenced by individuals' mindfulness (Kowalski, 2013; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Weick, 2015; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). As a result, the dynamics are in constant flux--making leadership increasingly difficult to lead. Therefore, superintendents should be systems leaders with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions or attitudes necessary to understand the influences at play (Wilmore, 2008). Interviewing former DPS district leaders allowed for exploration of Detroit's former leaders and their work.

Delimitations

The study will be restricted to four former DPS superintendents and one chief executive officer. Given the small number of participants, I will be unable to use my findings and interpretations are not generalizable. The sample used in this study is neither random nor adequate in size to generalize or make assumptions about other school districts.

Limitations

The five former district leaders interviewed recalled their experiences. Recalling information is the greatest limitation in the study because participants have all served in several other positions since their tenure in Detroit. It was important to focus on their broader experiences and key leadership takeaways related to the school district as a whole system.

Significance of the Study

The study is needed because little is known about DPS' former district leaders.

Research about the district is generally limited to governance, power, and politics. Some stakeholders believe that state government is to blame for DPS' decline while others blame local leadership. In this historical case study focused on former district leadership, knowing leaders' stories adds value to the scholarship around what it takes to lead the DPS district. Unlike other studies about the school system, this case is about the leadership of the superintendents who are generally responsible for the academic, operational, and fiscal components of the school district.

As organizational leaders, superintendents have a broad responsibility to ensure student success. The task is increasingly difficult in nontraditional districts like Detroit, where the state has taken control for a decade, and organizational structure prior to state intervention was still unstable and inconsistent. Even under mayoral control during the late 1990s under Coleman Young, former DPS superintendents found themselves in politically charged environments with fluctuating fund balances, deficits, declining enrollment, academic achievement, increasing scrutiny, and reductions in leadership authority.

A historical case study about former DPS superintendents will document their lived experiences, which are imperative to understanding what those who held a sense of civil responsibility felt it took to lead Detroit's educational system. These narratives do not currently sit in one analysis anywhere. Furthermore, the research is necessary for understanding current realities as well as the district's complexities. Leaders' experiences are captured and analyzed with the intention of giving others opportunities to learn from the city's former school system leaders.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into sections and presents a rationale for conducting intensive research on the experiences of five former DPS district leaders. The first section presents research on educational politics, leadership, and organizational change. The second section is an overview of research studies that have used the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure superintendents' transformational leadership. The third section outlines case studies about superintendents' leadership.

Politics in Education

A national phenomenon and an important trend particular to educational governance and administration are the assumptions surrounding political power, the tenure of urban superintendents, and the state's conflicts with local control in dysfunctional urban school districts. Popular culture assumes that Black superintendents will better serve and can only serve children in predominately Black school districts (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999); however, leadership and service quality are not limited or characterized by race, color, class or any other social construction. Leadership and service transcend restrictive parameters, but urban leaders selected for the superintendent position oftentimes struggle to implement school reform plans because they are not in the position long enough to implement and sustain plans with fidelity (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999). For instance, between 1989 and today DPS has had several district leaders serving in the superintendent's capacity (Addonizio & Kearney, 2012). Without consistent leadership urban school systems reintroduced short-lived reform

strategies lasting only as long as they were retained in the position.

What is interesting is that the 2009 state control through emergency management is oftentimes blamed for DPS' academic and fiscal declines and deficits when, in fact, the district has for several decades been on a downward spiral (Bosman & Davey, 2016). Detroiters, who are predominately Black, feel democracy has been taken away if they are not allowed to operate their own school system. However, it is important to note the superintendents' challenges upon accepting the position in DPS and, in some cases, these challenges that contribute to the district's decline are sometimes overlooked in the research about governance, power, politics, and control. What has made the DPS' superintendency particularly difficult is not only the fight over control but also the Black and White flight out of the city altogether.

Between 1970 and today, DPS' student enrollment declined steadily from over 200,000 students to an estimated 46,000 (Zaniewski & Gray, 2016; Addonizio & Kearney, 2012). In 1989 when Superintendent John Porter took on the role, he later became Michigan's first African American state superintendent and the nation's youngest state chief educational leader. He entered the district when it had a 50% dropout rate, academic achievement below the national averages, and a $160 million deficit (Kider, 1989). These challenges influenced the Michigan legislature to pass the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act (PA 72) (State of Michigan, 1990). These are relevant points to retell because those angry over state control should recognize that the problems persisted under local control. For example, the DPS deficit, which existed before Porter and had fluctuated under various leaders after he left the position, was not created by emergency management despite worsening under mayoral and state control. More specifically, in 2007, despite fund balances between 1990 to 1993 when the elected HOPE team was in place, there were declines in the fund balances. When the district saw another $140

million deficit at the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the district was under the leadership of board-appointed Superintendent Connie Calloway (Addonizio & Kearney, 2012). Yet these urban challenges are not limited to Detroit.

In general, urban superintendent complexities are a national phenomenon. In Newark, Cami Anderson's four-year opportunity ended prematurely amidst community outrage and a resignation influenced by Governor Chris Christie after Mark Zuckerberg's $100 million was invested in the troubled New Jersey school district (Russakoff, 2015). In Memphis, Chris Barbic voluntarily exited the superintendent position at Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD) after four years and a heart attack (Garrison, 2014). Upon exit, he admitted to differences between starting an organization and transforming an existing one (Barbic, 2015). In Los Angeles, John Deasy resigned under pressure after a $1.3-billion iPad curriculum purchase, leaving some feeling as if it had failed because Deasy's strategy lacked teacher investment (Torres & Blume, 2015). In Chicago, Barbara Byrd-Bennett took personal leave after three years as Mayor Rahm Emmanuel's appointed chief executive officer of the Chicago Public Schools; her quick departure was due to federal investigations related to her involvement in a $20 million no-bid contract for professional development (Bosman, 2015).

The former District of Columbia's Michelle Rhee once worked for New York City's Education Chancellor Joel Klein, an appointee of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Rhee, a former Teach For America teacher and founder of The New Teacher Project became a controversial phenom in school reform between 2007 and 2010. Under mayoral control, the Washington, D.C. public school system saw several aggressive changes. Rhee's decisions included 241 teacher terminations, 737 minimally effective teacher ratings, a weakened teacher tenure contract, the opening of new charter schools, and an influx of private dollars from the

Walton Foundation (Urbina, 2010). During the winter of 2010 after several of these decisions, Fenty lost re-election to former city council president Vincent Gray, and Rhee resigned after nearly three years in the position. Collectively, Detroit, Newark, Memphis, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. serve more than one million children in high crime areas with low student achievement. In all cases, when the leaders left their positions, academic initiatives shifted significantly and the system they relished and created changed due to a loss in leadership continuity.

Educational Leadership Matters

Due to the political complexities in Detroit, the case study about former DPS' superintendents' leadership behaviors and decisions are more important than is recognized or studied. In urban school districts, when poor leadership is in place—whether locally elected or state appointed—shared missions, visions, values, and goals may be ambiguous. Furthermore, when goals are ambiguous, organizational operations and opportunities are misaligned and inaccurate. The most vulnerable populations then remain underserved as is the case in DPS, where the majority of students graduate without the skills necessary to enter the job market or college without remediation. For these reasons, fiscal and operational inaccuracies remain salient in DPS. The superintendent, as district and organizational leader, needs a proclivity to make academic success a priority by first admitting the real state of achievement; and second, by determining how to use various leadership styles to navigate the political, operational, fiscal, and academic contexts in order to transform the district.

According to the literature on leadership, there are several types of leaders. Transformational leaders are visionaries focused on systemic or collective impact. They believe in large-scale change and engage with their followers in ways that reduce individual motives in

exchange for collective movement for systemic change. There is no one characteristic that determines whether or not a leader is transformational. Instead, transformational leadership is marked by a change in the organizational system (Hacker & Roberts, 2004). It encompasses several other leadership types including but not limited to authentic leadership, team leadership, leader-member theory, and situational leadership.

Authentic leaders, or purpose-driven leaders, are driven by values, ethical boundaries, principles, and authenticity (Northouse, 2013; Gunderman & Maas, 2014), which allows for authentic leaders to be seen as who they really are, in turn increasing how much they are trusted. When followers can trust their leaders, they are more connected to those leaders. Early researchers of authentic leadership contended that it is important for transformational leaders to be self-aware, accept who they are, and integrate their 'true north' throughout their whole lives (George, 2007). Doing so allows for leaders' authenticity to reinforce transparency and increase employee engagement in their work (Champy, 2009; Azanz, Moriano, Molero, & Mangin, 2015). When transformational leaders use authentic leadership, they make a stronger contribution to their purpose by getting their followers engaged in their shared mission, vision, values, and goals.

Team leaders are supposed to require transformational leaders to focus on ways to influence group dynamics, team-level outcomes, and actions more adaptively when coordinating and defining goals (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). Additionally, transformational leaders may use team leadership to increase positive team conflict, communication, positive team conflict management, and general team performance (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004). Thus, there is increasing acceptance of

leadership when they empower their teams to implement the necessary tasks to achieve the shared vision.

The leader-member theory is relevant to both team leadership and transformational leadership because it includes the exchange of responsibilities between leaders and certain team members. When team members are included in tasks delegated by the leader, followers are not only empowered but also elevated in the social rankings due to the proximity of their working relationship to the leader (Settoon & Bennett, 1996). Transformational leaders must be aware of both the positive and negative impact of this type of leader-member relationship. Followers who engage regularly with the leader are considered the in-group, whereas those performing too poorly to receive opportunities for such engagement are considered the out-group (Jain, Srivastava, & Owens, 2012). Transformational leaders can develop special relationships with certain employees but need to have high-quality exchanges so all employees continue to feel valued (Bolino & Turnley, 2009). When followers feel valued, employee behavior and organizational culture are improved; therefore, transformational leaders must know that their success depends on supportive relationships with immediate supervisors, as well as having a developmental orientation (Settoon & Bennett, 1996; Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Leader-member exchanges may be high- or low-quality interactions between leaders and their followers. However, when interacting with followers, a transformational leader must know when, where, and how to adapt leadership approaches to each unique situation. Situational leadership is about understanding the impact of context on leadership styles that are likely to be more effective in a particular context (Northouse, 2013). Awareness contextualism is a universal concept codified by physicists who denote the “interdependency between how things appear and the environment which causes them to appear” (Wheatley, 2004, p. 63). According to Vecchio,

Bullis, and Brazil (2006), for transformational leaders, flexibility in how they approach each decision in each context allows for the necessary adaptations to successfully appear and be fulfilled according to the unique needs in each particular situation. In this regard, situational leadership contends that leader effectiveness is a joint function of the leader's behavior and the situational requirements.

As previously discussed, according to Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1979), leadership is not limited to one style. Authentic leadership, team leadership, situational leadership, and the leader-member exchange theory are all components of transformational leadership, which is connected to organizational change. Research about organizational change suggests that sustainable change cannot occur without a clearly articulated vision, an understanding of specific organizational change processes, knowledge of failures, and buy-in from stakeholders (Boone, 2014; Kotter, 2007; Washington & Hacker, 2004). The link between this understanding and organizational change is leadership—a moral imperative and fundamental component of transformational change (Fullan, 1993; Boone, 2014). Even with ample resources, school systems can fail without the right leadership because there is no one prescribed way to create a high-performing school system or organization; therefore, a leader who has the knowledge and skills to create a shared vision and to execute an aligned action plan in a culture of learning, may be key to transforming dysfunctional and low-performing urban school systems (Fullan, 1998; Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006).

Fullan, Hill, and Crevola (2006) suggest organizational change efforts in school systems must be personalized, precise, and include professional learning in order to create systemic, sustainable change. They write about the ways in which change is not limited to quick wins, although quick wins are important to systemic change. Generally, according to the authors,

system change requires customized data used to diagnose challenges in the system, to focus efforts precisely, and to outline the professional learning experience that may add the most value.

More specifically, Kotter (2007) suggests organizations can fail by not following eight essential steps: establishing a sense of urgency, forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating a vision with strategies to anchor it, communicating a vision, empowering others to act on the vision, planning for and creating short-term wins, consolidating improvements that produce more change, and institutionalizing new approaches to develop leaders for the succession plan. Some researchers believe organizations failing to undertake these steps about visioning are more apt to encounter system failure. Tied to Kotter's seventh step is Washington and Hacker's (2004) examination of the relationship between managers' understanding of a specific organizational change process and managers' attitudes towards implementing change. Washington and Hacker's (2004) findings suggest managers that understand change efforts are more likely to be less resistant to change. In this regard, resistance to change might be more about an individual issue—not necessarily about managerial or leadership skill development. Hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision; and reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents can be leveraged to change organizations (Kotter, 2007). Through both the method of visioning and institutionalizing these new approaches, organizational leaders can use transformational leadership to transform school systems.

Transformational leaders interested in rapid school turnaround must establish, sustain, and manage the necessary actions to make their vision come true (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass, 1985; Tafvelin, 2013). Transformational leaders are visionaries focused on the systemic impact of their efforts and the cultural shift necessary to have their visions realized. They drive themselves and others forward from a core purpose and believe in what they do at a deeper level

as they use their core beliefs to mobilize their followers and win over their detractors through authentic leadership. Transformational leaders demonstrated developmental leadership paths over a lifetime (Tafvelin, 2013; Burns, 1978). They engage in a series of life-long experiences leading to their ability to encourage, influence, manage, lead, change, and transform whole organizations or societies, in some cases. Such leadership is considered transformational because the style of guidance changes and transforms people's mindsets, beliefs, behaviors, and lives (Northouse, 2013).

Further explorations of transformational leadership include the advancement of collective purposes. Transformational leadership is characterized by how purpose transcends individuals' needs and single ambitions. When this occurs, individuals begin to experience mutual actualization as the transformational leader shifts to controller of access and influence (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders have a propensity for these skills and for changing people's mindsets. These leaders transform the dormant into the active follower, the bored and apathetic into the political participant, and the politically isolated into the motivated (Burns, 1978).

Understanding Leadership

Transformational leaders create a culture of collectivism and active engagement in tasks; they see the larger system and foster reflection and generative conversation to achieve the larger mission and vision (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015). Many studies use the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (5X short) (MLQ) to measure transformational leadership. Various forms of the MLQ have been used across sectors and in over thirty countries (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The MLQ is a forty-five item questionnaire that identifies and measures key leadership and effectiveness behaviors proven to be strongly linked with both individual and organizational success (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The major leadership constructs include

transformational leader, transactional leadership and passive/avoidant leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass, 2000). Advantages to using the instrument include assessing perceptions of leadership effectiveness of team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives across cultures and in cases where more effective leadership development is needed (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

The MLQ is the most widely used research tool for understanding transformational leadership. There are four key aspects that the MLQ identifies as transformational leadership attributes and behaviors. The first is the idealized influence, which has both attributes and behavioral components. Idealized attributes are characterized by going beyond self-interest for the collective good and building others' respect for the leader. This attribute displays a sense of power and confidence. Idealized behaviors include leaders' ability to consider morals, ethics, and consequences of decisions to increase investment in a shared purpose. The second component is the degree to which the leader engages in inspirational motivation or talk and articulation about the vision for the future. The third component is intellectual stimulation, or the leader's creative thought and process to drive innovation or new ways of tackling old problems. The fourth component is individual consideration, or the leader's differentiated approach to support followers based on the individual needs of each person. The four components are significant because they speak to characteristics of transformational leadership and how followers perceive their leaders' behaviors and decisions.

Bass (1985) contrasts these characteristics of transformational leadership with transactional leadership. According to Bass, the differences between transactional and transformational leadership include contingent reward and management-by-exception (active). These are transactional leadership behaviors, whereas sharing missions, visions, values, and goals are defined as transformational leadership behaviors. In addition to measuring

transformational leadership attributes and behaviors, the MLQ also measures contingent reward and management-by-exception (active), which are transactional leadership styles. Passive/avoidant behaviors such as management-by-exception (passive) and laissez faire are also measured by the MLQ.

Researchers define contingent reward as an exchange of rewards between leaders and employees in exchange for employee effort (Bass, 1990; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Management-by-exception is either characterized by activity or passivity. Active management-by-exception includes leaders who anticipate problems and take corrective actions before a behavior creates serious difficulty; passive management-by- exception is defined as a leader who waits until a behavior has created problems before taking action (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The only difference between active and passive management-by-exception is the timing of the leader's response: before or after a behavior escalates. As previously stated, depending on the context of the situation, leaders may find a multitude of leadership styles useful. The MLQ simply measures leaders' propensity for transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership as perceived to be demonstrated by attributes or behaviors.

Transactional and transformational leadership can be considered polarizing. On the one hand, transactional leadership is mechanical and about exchanges of power for specified outcomes. It is associated with constructive and corrective transactions that lead to outcomes or consequences determined by what is lacking or accomplished (Avolio & Bass, 2004). On the other hand, transformational leaders seek a paradigm shift and spend time manicuring small pieces of the vision. On the other hand, Bass has argued that transformational and transactional leadership are different dimensions where a leader can do both to different degrees (Tafvelin,

2013). With over 100 studies about school leadership that have used the MLQ to understand transformational leadership, the next section outlines these studies about superintendents.

Transformational Leadership and Common Findings

Common themes in literature about superintendents and transformational leadership include studies about student achievement, emotional intelligence, instructional leadership and team performance. Some perception studies concluded that school leadership behaviors identified as transformational had little impact on student achievement and team performance (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Atwater & Spangler, 2003). Marks and Printy (2003) found transformational leadership to be an insufficient condition for instructional leadership—meaning transformational leadership had little impact on the ability of a leader to lead instructional programs well. Harms and Crede (2010) determined trait measures of emotional intelligence were important factor of transformational leadership and had higher validity than ability-based emotional intelligence.

Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) used the MLQ to determine the impact of transformational leadership on 317 followers. They measured the leader-member exchange and were able to link LMX with transformational leadership. Their findings suggested that high quality leader-follower relationships are positively associated with higher follower performance when the leader is in close versus distant situations with followers. In turn, these types of close proximity relationships are positively associated with transformational leadership behaviors. Additional findings in this same study revealed that LMX positively affected follower performance irrespective of physical distance in cases where the leader-follower relationship was positive—which made leading from a distance both possible and effective (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999).

Kirby, Paradise, and King (1992) set out to understand the impact of transformational leadership on organizations from the standpoint of educational leaders. They used the MLQ with 103 practicing educators from six different school districts. Most participants were principals. Findings indicated followers' preferences for leaders who engaged in transformational leadership behaviors associated with intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. There was also a preference for one transactional leadership behavior: contingent reward, which may have suggested that participants were willing to engage in work-related actions when a reward followed their action. The research addressed leader commitment and follower devotion and commitment. Preferred leaders who were more likely to get others to look at problems from different angles (intellectual stimulation), spend time coaching (individual consideration), and/or make their expectations clear about achieving targets (contingent reward).

Berson, Da'as, and Waldman (2015) used the MLQ to determine how leaders and their teams bring about organizational learning and outcomes. By looking at sixty-nine schools and including parents and superintendents over a one- and three-year period, the researchers attempted to determine the role of leadership in predicting organizational outcomes in schools. They found that trust within the team was linked to leadership style and a learning climate. In addition to researchers using the MLQ to determine the link between transformational leadership and organizational outcomes, several dissertations explore transformational leadership and school district superintendents.

In general, transformational school leadership was found to have low impact on student achievement. McCord (2014) reviewed the relationship between self-perceived transformational leadership behavior of sixty-seven randomly selected Texas superintendents and their school districts' high school graduation rates. Findings revealed no statistically significant relationship

existed. Similarly, Vaughn (2002) wrote about superintendents in Texas. In the study, the researcher discussed path-goal theory, a leadership theory that emphasizes the relationship between the leaders' styles, the characteristics of the subordinates, and the work setting (Northouse, 2013). "The underlying assumption of path-goal theory is derived from expectancy theory, which suggests that subordinates will be motivated if they think they are capable of performing their work, if they believe their efforts will result in a certain outcome, and if they believe that the payoffs for doing their work are worthwhile" (Northouse, 2013, p. 137). Vaughn (2002) measured the correlation between leadership behaviors and student performance. Vaughn found that superintendents rated themselves higher in transformational leadership than transactional leadership and that there was no correlation between transformational leadership and student performance.

Burgess (2002) identified the degree to which superintendents and school board presidents had preferences for certain styles leadership. The researcher explored the degree to which there was agreement and disagreement between these groups regarding the desirability of transformational and transactional leadership styles. There were 617 public school districts in Ohio at the time of the study. Burgess received responses from 174 matched pairs of superintendents and board presidents. Findings revealed board members gave higher ratings to contingent reward (a transactional leadership component) than individual consideration (a transformational leadership component providing mentorship and sharing), which received higher ratings from superintendents in the study. Board members are likely to value contingent reward over individual consideration because their role is one of governance as a policy making body; therefore, they may have a stronger proclivity for outcomes based on accomplishment and target goals rather than the superintendent's professional development.

Tafvelin (2013) reviewed 127 studies that examined transformational leadership. Common themes include performance, satisfaction, commitment and creativity or innovation. Followers' perceptions about emotions, attitudes, their team, leader, job and working conditions are also often studied (Tafvelin, 2013). Tafvelin found that transformational leadership affected these elements and leader continuity. He pointed out the importance of developing a well-planned strategy to sustain change efforts and to reduce the impact of bureaucracy. Tafvelin (2013) also suggested contextual or situational influences surrounding transformational leadership ultimately impact whether or not transformational leadership will exist and impact intended outcomes such as student performance and leader continuity. Leaders' continuity moderated the effect of transformational leadership on employee commitment (Tafvelin, 2013). However, transformational leadership did not increase the wellbeing of employees, and continuous change was an organizational antecedent of transformational leadership (Tafvelin, 2013).

Case Studies on Superintendent Leadership

Case study is a common qualitative method used to investigate the leadership experiences of public school district superintendents. Lehman (2015) used the case study method to explore the servant leadership of six superintendents in Pennsylvania. He wanted to know their common leadership attributes and found attributes associated with the servant leadership style: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, and conceptualization. His rationale for exploration included information about superintendents and their decisions to use servant leadership. Lehman's examination of superintendents was completed through a semi-structured interview process. He concluded that modeling servant leadership behaviors demonstrated acute personal awareness of ones impact on others. That is, servant leaders are so in tune with their own sense

of being that they fundamentally, intuitively and intentionally empathize with others so they can provide whatever is necessary to meet the person's needs. In doing so, servant leaders, according to Lehman (2015), demonstrate a connection between their personal lived experiences in the professional role and level five leadership as it is discussed by Collins (2000) in the national best seller *Good to Great.*

Shook (2000) used the case study methodology to examine how superintendents raise staff to higher levels professionally. In the narratives outlined in her dissertation, Shook (2000) looked at leadership as a phenomenon commonly experienced. She then triangulated data from multiple sources to examine the single phenomenon from more than one perspective. Her findings outlined the importance of vision, accountability, and decision making for the superintendent. In fact, vision, trust, and self-awareness are a part of the leadership paradigm associated with competency, principle-centered actions, quality, and restructuring to change and improve. Shook's (2000) purpose was to discover what specific experiences people have had with specific leaders. In addition to outlining different leadership theories (*i.e.* trait leadership, behavior leadership, situational leadership, charismatic leadership, and transformational leadership), Shook (2000) found that the superintendent's role involves leaders evolving over time, politicization of the role, and high expectations related to values and vision.

Like Lehman (2015) and Shook (2000), Reimer (2010) wrote about superintendent leadership in a case study format. Her comparative study included just two superintendents and findings addressed organizational processes, academic achievement and low performance districts. Reimer examined the leadership behaviors, actions, traits and organizational frames used by two veteran superintendents in California. Four conceptual frameworks—human resources, symbolism, and politics—were used to examine behaviors and organizational frames

of the superintendents to classify their instructional and transformational leadership styles. She used interview questions and the Leadership Questionnaire Survey as tools to unpack her data.

In their case studies, Bang-Knudsen (2009) and Miller (2007) contended that effective superintendents established a collaborative instructional focus, effective anticipation of challenges, and maintained a vision of the system. Bang-Knudson (2009) used surveys, interviews, and document reviews to unpack how superintendents create and sustain system-wide coherence. They found that Miller (2007) had three different themes not limited to the instructional learning environment. Through the method of observation and interviews with stakeholders, a superintendent, and subordinates, Miller (2007) wanted to explain how one superintendent worked with stakeholders in a continuous process of improvement during economic hardship. This Michigan-based study concluded that superintendents effectively lead when they are proactive, forward-thinking, communicators centered around shared missions, visions, values and goals relative to higher academic standards and a balanced budget.

Deficiencies in Past Literature

A notice observation regarding the literature about DPS is that there are very few studies about the district superintendents' leadership. Much of the research is about governance, policy, and fiscal deficits. For these reasons, it remains difficult to determine what leadership behaviors and decisions increased the likelihood of outcomes superintendents most desired or how to they lead the district. This is relevant because readers cannot learn from previous superintendents if their lived experiences are not captured and understood. Leadership is not covered in detail or relative to leadership styles studied in contexts outside of public education. The lack of leadership studies on the district leaves researchers with public perceptions and subjective opinions about the district that are not altogether always factual.

One salient criticism about the research on leadership in education is that there has not been much evidence about whether leadership styles improve student achievement. Schools are venues of socializing youth, preparing them for citizenship, and training future actors for the economy (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999); however, leadership about superintendents (particularly those in DPS) does not reveal that any of this important. Perhaps such findings speak to the ways in which superintendents generally use multiple leadership styles that, in turn, impact the broader organization, which few researchers have decided to identify as a relevant topic when studying the district. As school system leaders, superintendents' organizational decisions directly and indirectly intercede with student learning and ultimately student outcomes. However, the literature also lacks transformational leadership studies about superintendents in large urban districts.

With the typical tenure of superintendents being merely three years, a stronger body of research about their transformational leadership decisions, attributes, and behaviors could lead to a clearer understanding about leadership in large urban school districts. Having these types of studies on record could also lead to a clearer understanding of the needs of superintendents as well as clarity around how leaders define effectiveness, about what leads to such effectiveness, and the extent to what leads to voluntary non-retirement resignations. This qualitative study allows for the beginning of that body of scholarship. Studying superintendents' leadership in Detroit's largest school district after years of state management, will lead to clarity around what works and what hindered student progress from superintendents' perspectives. The outcomes of the study will contribute answers to what is widely unknown: according to former superintendents, what leadership decisions, attributes, and behaviors led to desired outcomes in the Detroit Public School district.

The study differs from other recent dissertations written on the districts governance and political structures. In 2015, Leanne Kang, for instance, completed her dissertation at the University of Michigan. Her topic was about DPS from 1980 to 2014. Inspired by her co-chair Jeffrey Mirel, Kang's dissertation is modeled after Mirel's 1993 seminal work about the city's public school system and the sociopolitical factors that have impacted the district over past decades. Mirel's *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-1981* is an extensive history of the public school system; Kang's dissertation is an extension of Mirel's analysis. Her dissertation outlines how five school reforms contributed to the dismantling of DPS: Proposal A, mayoral control, emergency management, Michigan's charter school movement, and the Education Achievement Authority (EAA).

In 2016, Shaun Black wrote his dissertation when completing the Ph.D. program in educational leadership and policy studies at Wayne State University. *An Examination of Urban School Governance Reform in Detroit Public Schools, 1999-2014* (Black, 2016) is about the impact of sociopolitical ecosystems on DPS. Black connected DPS' larger problem with governance, leadership, and policy reforms; he wanted to better understand how school governance reforms have impacted institutional progress from 1999-2014 in DPS (Black, 2016). He concludes that a lack of institutional progress at the district is due to a lack of educational leadership, to superintendent turnover, to lack of vision, and to incompetence by those promoted to leadership positions at the central office and school building levels. According to Black (2016), the district will be reformed when the narrative changes, there's an academic vision, services are decentralized so individual schools can access what they need, and when superintendents selected are qualified to lead.

In general, research about the district tends to revolve around the issues addressed by Kang (2015) and Black (2016): governance, power, policy, and reform. Without making assumptions about what it will take to transform the school system in Detroit—which now encompasses more than fifty chronically failing schools across DPS, the EAA, and the city's charter schools—my study examines how leaders led an organization in a climate stained by political uncertainty, instability, and systemic operational dysfunction. Kang and Black speak to what occurred in and around the district. My study targets the leadership perspective from the district's former chief educators who were charged with steering the organization, which is mired in the turmoil addressed by both Kang (2015) and Black (2016).

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

A case study is a qualitative research method whereby researchers search for meaning through inductive investigative processes (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of the case study process is to analyze the lived experiences of the researchers in a bounded school system. The bound system in this case is defined or specified as a unit of analysis somewhat limited to programs, people, processes, and events, as experienced by the interviewed subjects (Hatch, 2002). Their lived experiences interpreted in the context of the system are the starting and ending points of the research, which transforms the experiences into textual expression (van Manen, 1990). The transformation is made possible through the interview protocol. In this regard, qualitative research is exploratory—as its expressions include rationale, opinions, and motivations. The five interviewees recalled their experiences and within their recollections came perspectives that add value to Detroit's current and future school system leaders.

Recalling the two research questions allows for discussion about the rationale for picking the five former district leaders with the ultimate goal of generating information that could serve as a foundation for new ideas that add value to the literature about how to create a high-performing school system in Detroit. The following two research questions are discussed in chapter one: What leadership behaviors of former DPS superintendents do the superintendents perceive to have had the greatest impact on outcomes? What leadership decisions of former DPS

superintendents do the superintendents perceive to have had the greatest impact? All five of the former leaders are credentialed. The qualifications and accomplishments of the five leaders interviewed for the study suggest that the school system has a dynamic that is not easily navigated by the most talented leaders.

The premise for connecting with the selected five former leaders entailed their work histories and accomplishments before, during, and after having served in the position. Arthur Jefferson is significant to Detroit's history because he is the first Black man to ever serve in the role for the district and the longest-serving superintendent since then. Jefferson led during a nationally historic moment of school desegregation and court-mandated busing when the nation was desegregating schools under court orders following years of race riots and lynching's. Jefferson was often in court and worked closely with John Porter who was one of the nation's first Black state superintendents. Dialogue with Jefferson was significant because there is no detailed literature about him or his experiences as the district leader. His story details how he navigated what was then one of the nation's largest school districts during the nation's compulsory measures to quell segregation.

Porter, who is now deceased, succeeded Jefferson. After having been the state's first Black employee at the Michigan Department of Education, Porter also became president of Eastern Michigan University following his short stint as the district's superintendent. The community saw the board make valuable selections of qualified leaders, and Deborah McGriff was no exception. Therefore, the implicit question is stated as thus: Why is it difficult to retain a superintendent, and how might responses to the research questions generate a response? McGriff's interview was significant because she helped outline the political engagements significant to her tenure, with such details allowing for clarity as to why talented leaders have

strayed away from the position with the district. The dialogue outlined the importance of school board governance and how the relationship between superintendents and governing bodies must be a healthy one. In the absence of a strong and supportive relationship, anything adversarial with the district will ultimately lead to either a forced or voluntary exit from the job prematurely.

No other interview made true on this statement than what was learned from David Snead's experience. He succeeded McGriff and was the board's attempt at returning power to a native Detroit leader. Discussions with Snead about his district leadership experience allowed for an insider perspective about political complexity. While he was well known district-wide and had retained residency in Detroit since childhood, Snead served less than five years as superintendent. His tenure and ability to get a bond passed were not enough to retain board support. In the end, Snead lost support, as the circumstances warranted a premature exit from the role. Despite his subsequent transition into a second superintendency in Connecticut, which lasted for ten years, the detailed stories about Snead's relationship with the school board led to his demise in the Detroit-based leadership role.

Unlike Snead, David Adamany was a leader who had no intention of moving forward with a career in K-12 education. As a former university professor and president with a background in law, Adamany admitted to having been convinced by former Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and Michigan Governor John Engler to serve a one-year stint as the state appointed chief executive officer. Concerned about what could be accomplished in one year, Adamany soon realized why so many had tuned down the leadership opportunity. His interview spoke about the impact of a deteriorating infrastructure of a large organization. Additionally, at the time of his acceptance, Adamany became the first White person to lead the district in over a decade. He also raised the concern about a shortage of capable Black leaders who were willing

to do the job. Having had no Blacks accept the leadership offer, Adamany believed he was approached as a viable option. Adamany's narrative spoke about the importance of Black leadership, which became an additional core human capital issue for the district that continues to loom large today. Adamany's interview revealed the ways in which district problems have for decades gone unresolved during longstanding fights about power, control, and performance.

After Adamany, Karen Ridgeway was an important interviewee because she is the only participant in the study to have either attended schools or worked in the district under the leadership of every leader interviewed. Having learned about her concerns connected all stories, Ridgeway's extensive experience connected all stories, as unstable district leadership led to operations and academic programming that were not sustained. In these ways, Ridgeway's interview revealed concerns about institutional knowledge at the leadership level while she shared her experiences pertaining to today's leadership challenges in the district. She not only answered questions about her leadership but also shared historical insight that allowed for the validation of other participants' narratives. Furthermore, even though Ridgeway was deeply moved by the opportunity to lead the district, she was still willing to share concerns about the district's future. Like the other leaders, Ridgeway wanted to foreshadow possibilities for the district, while shaping the historical perspective for future district leaders.

During the interview process, broad and open-ended questions allowed for essential responses from the study's participants. Generally, the precise wording of questions allows qualitative case study researchers to probe with follow-up investigative inquiries (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Case study methodology then provides opportunities to learn more about participants' experiences. Researchers using the qualitative case study include the perceived

realities of participants. The study revolves around the lived experiences of DPS' superintendents who have not yet been fully studied.

The goal was to interpret the leadership experiences in the district over time. Imperative to any organization's future is the ability to stand on historical successes. From a historical perspective, the perceptions reveal district dynamics across the larger organization. Generally, historical case studies allow for a clearer understanding of change over time in particular contexts (Williamson-Lott & Beadie, 2016). The essence of their experiences will be captured. The historical case study methodology allows for exploration that is inductive–interpreting the impact the leaders had on the system and how they engaged before and after successful and unsuccessful decision-making actions.

Case Study Design

Generally, historical case studies are designed to narrate the existence of a phenomenon over time and in a particular boundary. The DPS district is identified as the bound system analyzed through a historical lens. Participating superintendents led the district between 1975 and 2015. During this timeframe, there were local and national shifts in social policies that impacted urban cities and school systems. Each superintendent interviewed led the district during a shift in local, state, or nationwide philosophical or policy shifts. As a result, they each were charged with leading philosophical shifts while implementing new regulations and, in some cases, leading on executing new procedures to implement new judicial rulings. To this end, the Detroit superintendency is a unique leadership role. Dynamically, the Detroit superintendency is an amalgamation of promises that no one superintendent has lasted long enough to fulfill over the past decades.

The absence of a longstanding superintendent has left the Detroit school system on the precipice of operational implosion. The study points to the ways in which the Detroit superintendency is a leadership role that has always required the long-term retention of a skilled leader whose personal and professional expectations extend beyond a regular superintendent working in an environment where there is consistency, stability, and credibility. From the interviews, the Detroit superintendent will have to be intentionally consistent, create stability, and maintain credibility. Retention and success for the Detroit superintendent will be amassed in the relationship with the governing board, though both remain challenges because no leader has lasted long enough to resolve the many longstanding district-wide challenges.

The interview questions revealed both leadership behaviors and decisions former district leaders engaged in during serving in the educational capacity in Detroit. Interviewees reflected on their experiences in manners allowing for future and current leaders to envision the type of decisions made and the many ramifications and backlash that would come from multiple directions as a result of any one decision. Over the years, because the district fluctuated between local, municipal, and state control with numerous governance structures, each leader interviewed was obligated to address only mere aspects of the organization's academic, fiscal, or operational functions because of their relatively short tenures. During the interviews, participants addressed these complexities as well as those nuances native to their specific experiences, which led to dialogue about the salience of similar issues in the Detroit school system today.

Participant interviews allowed for leadership perspectives and experiences as related to the Detroit superintendency to be captured and analyzed. The historical inquiry in the study supports interpretations and explanations regarding the significance of past experiences (Sherman & Webb, 1988). For instance, leadership is studied as a phenomenon influenced by the school system

coupled with external factors (i.e. politics, community and business stakeholders, policy, etc.). Participants' leadership behaviors and decisions are examined as concepts relative to historical timing, while reflections on those same topics remain germane in topical discussion about how to create and sustain a high-performing school system in Detroit today.

On the surface, Detroit is not unlike other public urban school systems. Similar to Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Memphis, the city of Detroit has a school system that serves a large proportion of low-income Black children from single, female-headed households largely led by women. In all of these cities, there are current political reforms implemented with the intention of improving academic outcomes for students who attend schools in these districts. Outcomes in this regard are not limited to students' annual assessment scores. While each public school system in the nation is required to use statewide tests to measure student achievement in core content areas (mainly reading, math, science, and social studies), high-performing school systems have achievements far outstripping yearly snapshots.

Across the nation, there are pockets of public urban school system success. Students who are born in less educated families are promoted to the next grade without the necessary skills to graduate with postsecondary opportunities that could lead to a good life. When students have options after high school, they are more likely to also have access to quality housing, healthcare, and self-care options. Low-income students who later become middle-class adults equipped with employable skills can also become stronger caretakers of their own families. Detroit is a large geographic region that has continuously graduated several thousand students each year who are ill equipped for the type of postsecondary options that lead to high wage employment. The city and its former school district leaders are therefore a

solid case for what is happening nationally in our urban centers.

For Detroit, a historical case study of former DPS superintendents' leadership behaviors and decisions revealed opportunities and potential strategies pivotal to the district's future success. The lived experiences and narratives of former superintendents in the city allow for a clear understanding of the experiences participants had prior to and subsequently after state control. They led when the district experienced fiscal balances and deficits, emergency management, decentralization, and re-centralization. The gamut of leadership stories informs how to align policy and practice to not only build the school system but also the city's economy with well-educated residents.

Participants

The five participants selected for the study held the formal title of superintendent or chief executive officer. Their responses revealed key findings relative to various leadership styles, theories, and practices that have led to the assumptions about the lived realities and experiences of Detroit's superintendent role, as well as the operational capacity and infrastructure of the school district today. Emergency Managers were not selected for interviews because they were not accountable for student academic outcomes. Participants' leadership narratives are now a part of the district's history. Their stories filled a gap in knowledge between what is known about the district's leadership over time. While interview interpretations provide context for the district's future leaders, their perceptions were recalled, captured, and overlaid with the time. In turn, their experiences became conduits for making sense of the perceived history of the school district and what the district leaders' remembered.

Interviewing five of the former DPS superintendents was suitable for the case

because participants led the district during a political shift that shaped the district into what it is today. Jefferson led for fourteen years during seminal court cases about racial discrimination; McGriff led during a shift toward site-based management for school leaders. Snead successfully acquired a bond to rehabilitate school buildings. Adamany is known for being the first chief executive appointed by the state to its largest school system. Ridgeway served under all but one emergency manager.

In this regard, the five participants interviewed essentially worked in the district during times of organizational shifts. Their stories allow for a clearer understanding about other leaders who may have struggled. Participants trusted me enough to share their challenges. If they had not held confidence in our dialogue, the conversations would not have been as transparent, and it would have been difficult to identify themes based on a more closed dialogue. Participants in qualitative research must trust the researcher because the participants are likely to divulge more intimate details not typically shared publicly if they believe the shared information will add value (Hatch, 2002).

Informants who guard their impositions infringe on researchers abilities to identify themes or patterns. When interactions between the study's participants and the researchers are strained, little depth is gleaned from the study's findings because discussions are relegated to superficial responses. This was not the situation when speaking with the five superintendents for this case study. Participants spoke with confidence and assuredness. They were adamant about their perspectives as they each recalled stories unique to their leadership in Detroit. Included in their personal narratives were clarifying questions and follow up information that seemingly substantiated their responses and justified their leadership decisions and behaviors given particular circumstances. Participants added

anecdotes that supported how they were thinking about their rationale for certain perceptions. Their anecdotes added value to the dialogue and clarified the themes selected for the study.

Interview Process and Data Collection

Given the larger population of leaders that have served in the superintendency, interviewing five of the districts former leaders introduced opportunities for them to address core issues that have strained the district over time. As a large organization, the district is an open system influenced by multiple variables inside and outside of the schools and community it serves. Participants selected for the study are unique in that they each led during national, state and local political shifts that shaped the public school system we see today. Studying the five superintendents who led between historic time periods made sense. Speaking with them against historical backdrops helped synthesize experiences and detect themes across all participants. The specific method used to locate themes included listening to interview recordings and organizing the discussions by broad concepts addressed. Compartmentalizing the information by commonalities that emerged indicated areas where information could be synthesized. While there are likely more themes than the concept of time, additional components associated with time include duration, momentum, futuring, transformation, and quality. During each interview, participants addressed time and components of time in a broader context.

When discussing concepts of change, positioning, governance, and infrastructure, the concept of time and duration loomed large. Participants' experiences lend themselves to the ways in which change remains difficult in the absence of stability, and mission-driven leaders focused on the entire school system. Governance changes in particular were connected with shifts pertaining to goals, plans, and progress or the absence of sustained forward movement.

Among the more interesting processes to glean dialogue about the themes were the leadership stories shared by each participant. When answering interview questions, leadership stories increased opportunities to segment participants' perspectives by reoccurring themes. Recent studies about DPS system have not included interviews with former superintendents. Unlike those studies, the research in this case study format provides first-hand experiential perspectives about leading the school district during politically charged eras.

There are at least two known and relevant dissertations written on the Detroit public school system in the past two years. First, there is University of Michigan's Leanne Kang's topic, which followed governance and political structures impacting Detroit and greater Michigan from 1980 to 2014. Kang's study was a continuation of her dissertation chairperson's seminal work *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 7907-1981* (Mirel, 1993). Second, Wayne State University's Shaun Black also wrote about governance but from the perspective of the school board and other leadership structures impacted by governance. In both cases, neither of the two researchers interviewed the five former district leaders in this case study.

The scholarship presented and the methodology used to answer the research questions have both added to the research on Detroit's public school system and increased awareness about the system's former leaders' behaviors and decisions. While Kang's research adds value by providing a historical perspective about the political structures impacting Detroit's schools over the past few decades, Black writes about the internal structures impacted by internal and external governance. In many ways, my case study builds on Kang's and Black's research, as it provides professional insight from leaders who have lived and worked in the sociopolitical governance structures discussed by Kang and by Black.

Participant interviews were conducted in June 2016. Data collected reflects the most recent perspectives of former leaders. Initial outreach was made via email followed by a phone call to explain the research study and to engage in the interview. Once consent was obtained to conduct the interview, each participant in the study was asked to respond to the following statements and interview questions:

1. Describe your experiences as a superintendent (i.e. CEO for David Adamany) at DPS.
2. What are some things you are proud of from your experiences as a superintendent at DPS?
3. Describe some of your challenges.
4. If you were in the position today, what would you do?

The open-ended statements and questions created a conversational atmosphere in which dialogues were more conversational while responses evoked deeper learning opportunities pertaining to participants' experiences (Merriam, 2009; Hatch, 2002). For credibility purposes, I also shared background on both my professional and academic careers. Doing so allowed for more flexibility during the conversation, as participants knew that I had been engaged in urban education at multiple levels and was seeking to understand their specific behaviors and decisions when they each served as Detroit's chief educational leader.

During the interview process, participants remained open to sharing their authentic perspectives without withholding self-reflections and general opinions. Speaking with them and asking questions that allowed for further investigation provided first-hand knowledge of the leadership roles about which Kang (2015) and Black (2016) could only speculate. My case study is an opportunity to learn and grow from leaders who have actually held the superintendent position in Detroit. Their perspectives are unfiltered no other research has captured the five

former leaders' perspectives all together. Since there is no other known research on the same topic using the same participants or others who have led the Detroit school system, the case study presented here is unique and invaluable.

Reliability and Validity

Validity speaks to whether or not research approaches provide understanding of what is intended; reliability is about consistency. In qualitative research, key terms used to describe reliability and validity include consistency, dependability, credibility, applicability, and transferability (Golafshani, 2003). More specifically, triangulation is used to establish validity in qualitative research and is defined as the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Information from participants indicated by one source as having occurred was confirmed by experiences located in other sources. Information collected by each participant was triangulated across other participants with the incorporation of dialogue about time and leadership.

Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) suggests triangulation involves careful reviewing of data collected through different methods to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results. This method of validating qualitative data and determining whether or not it is valid differs from the quantitative methods for determining reliability and validity, which is discussed in the following sections. Some researchers argue that trustworthiness is a more appropriate term to determine validity in qualitative research, and triangulation is the methodology generally used in qualitative research to determine trustworthiness and credibility of the data used (Golasfshani, 2003; Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006). In this case study, the only way to validate a

said experience was to have others (who held the same position) validate their truth as it related to the same phenomenon.

Advantages and Limitations

The advantages of qualitative research methods have been widely recorded (Creswell, 2003; Harwell, 2013; Lodico, Spaulding, Voegtle, 2010; Shalev, 2007; Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2011). Qualitative case study research allows for analysis of human experience as individuals have experienced it. Case study as a methodological research practice includes broader opportunities to synthesize observations and triangulate interview data. The participant-researcher relationship is, therefore, rich because the question and answer process allows for a sharing of intimated details pertaining to the experience being investigated.

There are additional advantages to using the case study methodology to study Detroit's former superintendents' behaviors and decisions. As the city's former school system leaders, participants have stayed abreast of current trends relative to Detroit's educational landscape. They each provide an advantage over tertiary subjects on education matters because they have access to historical, present, and future challenges in the district. Discussions about operational functionality and infrastructure were fundamental to their dialogues. They each also made references to other school system components including the following: academic capacity, fiscal stability, human capital, community involvement, teacher and school leaders preparation, as well as data, assessments and urban school policy.

Research Permission and Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted the research permissions and provided the protocol for the research submission process. The study's informants consented to

participation in the case study for the intended purpose, and the research will not be used outside of the parameters without their consent. Once consent was granted, participants engaged in phone interviews and agreed to be recorded. Recording the discussions allowd for opportunities to replay the discussions in cases where my written notes did not provide enough clarity on particular topics. Following each interview, participants' responses were reviewed several times and organized by themes. The theme identification process included reviewing audio of each interview and hearing stories related to various aspects of time. The next step included organizing participants' quotes according to their association with those aspects of time, which included momentum, duration, transformation, and futuring. The purpose in organizing interview data in thematic findings was to allow for further exploration around key leadership topics as pertaining to the former leaders' behaviors and decisions, which were key to the two research questions.

The process differs from previous studies on the district because understanding how former DPS superintendents led is instrumental to learning what works as opposed to what produces undesirable results. In other words, most studies have focused on policy, finance, and governance; therefore, a study on leadership brings together clarity around how one has led in the past and how one might lead for future success. Without at least the historical perspectives of former superintendents, addressing organizational quagmires such as student achievement, infrastructure, and organizational functionality or school facilities, future district leaders are left adrift and at risk of making mistakes that could otherwise be averted.

Leaders relatively new to the superintendency or those new to the position in the Detroit school system can avoid making unnecessary mistakes by knowing the school

system's current operational procedures. They must be actively refining roles and responsibilities of central office staff as well as fostering a sustained organizational climate where staff, students, families, and community stakeholders are mission aligned with a clear focus on student achievement, accountability, system development, and progress management. In doing so, superintendents in the district will incentivize staff and community stakeholders while engaging in district-wide change necessary for systemic transformation.

CHAPTER 4:

THEMATIC FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This qualitative case study provides a perspective on the Detroit Public School (DPS) district's history that bears with it a unique opportunity for audiences to acquire institutional knowledge not otherwise available without understandings of the district-level leadership experiences in Detroit. Relevant information about how superintendents led the district during the financial, academic, and operational downturn provides the district's future superintendents with stronger context. Without this context, the district's future leaders may be left with information from tertiary sources, under-skilled personnel, and editorialized media outlets.

Approaching five of the district's former leaders was a challenge because the request was for participants to serve as informants who revisited sensitive topics following years of leaving a a public school system nationally associated with academic, operational, and financial failure. When in the leadership position, the five former superintendents endured criticisms about problems they inherited. Nevertheless, the position called for each case study participant to face the district's dysfunction. The case study codifies their stories across time, as the one theme that includes duration, momentum, perpetuity, time management, and transformational leadership. Time is also used to synthesize the interpretations of participants' stories as well as elements of their missions, visions, values, goals, perceived behaviors, decisions, and action steps.

Time and Duration

Time is constant, consistent, and objective. Though it can be used in particular ways, it does not stop or change. When participants shared their stories regarding the four main themes associated with time, the stories were categorized by the following four motifs associated with time: duration, momentum, tradition, and futuring. Despite leaders' desires, time moves forward while each component of time induces another. During the study, dialogues addressed topics such as school quality, politics, governance, and achievement. However, the duration of participants' experiences either reduced or increased momentum. In some situations, traditions–or the presence of past rituals–influence the length of time transformation takes to operationalize.

Furthermore, it can be said that time exacerbates outcomes when laissez-faire management is in place. Such a management style significantly expedites action with authentic leadership types, particularly in team, situational, system, and distributed leadership styles. In this case, time management can either discourage or encourage change and extend traditional or new practices into perpetuity. In all cases, time is impactful, and change–for better or worse–is inevitable. For the purposes of this discussion, time involves duration, momentum, time management, perpetuity, tradition, and transformation. Table 1 is a list of the school district leaders who participated in the case study and the time periods in which they served in the school district leadership position specified.

Table 1. *List of case study participants and years of service in the district leadership position specified*

DPS Leader Name, Credential, and Title	Years Served in Specified School District Leadership Position
Arthur Jefferson, Ed.D., Superintendent	1975 -1989
Deborah McGriff, Ph.D., Superintendent	1991-1993
David Snead, Ph.D., Superintendent	1993-1997
David Adamany, Ph.D., J.D., Interim CEO	1999-2000
Karen Ridgeway, Superintendent	2011-2015

During interviews, the informants shared vivid memories and self-reflections about the Detroit school system. Embedded in their quotes are longstanding values and educational philosophies. Collectively, the un-resolved challenges and topics addressed in leaders' quotes shape a roadmap for what leaders must do to support children in the system today. While each participant spoke passionately about children, school systems, leadership, trust, and student achievement, few would argue that problems to which they spoke of continue to be in existence today.

Table 2. *Data pertaining to time and duration in school systems*

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining to Time and Duration
Arthur Jefferson	[Superintendents] "have to build trust. Public schools play a very important public role. Keep in mind that kids can rise above the challenges they face."
Deborah McGriff	"When I was recruited, the district was at a point where they could then begin to work on academics. All the things around poverty were unimportant because low-income kids can learn if people are held accountable."
David Snead	"Get good advice from a lot of sources because there were a lot of landmines you can step in as a superintendent. You have to improve principals, too. Help them learn how to supervise instruction–how to evaluate instruction."
David Adamany	"There was something fundamentally wrong at the core of the district. The real victims (casualties) were the school children. The failures and faults in the district were really blighting their futures. They weren't ready to go to college. The lack of parent concern was troubling to me. The district had created a class system (two tiered system)—Cass, Renaissance (children of middle class parents had pushed them. Children had pretty good schools.) As for the rest, there was an abandonment of children in the district."
Karen Ridgeway	"Principals' meetings were about data, related to successful instruction: What does that look like? How do you disaggregate data, group kids, [develop] individual learning plans for every single student?"

In Table 2, the themes addressed–trust, poverty, parenting, school facilities, professional development, and general operations, and infrastructure–each depicts the dysfunctional school

system we see today. Taken altogether, interpretations of both time periodization and durations of time espouse how historical, political, and cultural norms have impacted communities, school districts, and whole cities. In Detroit, time periodization and duration of time in leadership provide invaluable context as they relate to the sociopolitical climate and the experiences of district leaders between 1975 and 2015. Specifically, a closer look at time periodization is warranted as it relates to the study of Detroit's superintendents and district leaders. Overall, the duration of time in the district's chief leadership role has not been long enough for leaders to transform the district into a high-performing organization.

With every new appointment came a new vision, as well as values, goals, and organizational direction. For the study, the five participants who lead the district and served as the academic and operational leaders did not include emergency managers (EM) because, in all cases, EMs had an academic leader who led decision-making for the larger academic and operational parts of the district. Leaders selected for the study led during major policy and political shifts in the school district. Though the primary responsibilities varied, they were nonetheless designed for system change. For instance, Arthur Jefferson led during the Milliken cases and was charged with desegregating the schools. Deborah McGriff was selected by the HOPE team to implement their vision for Empowered Schools, a type of site-based management system allowing for more school building autonomy for principals. David Snead is known for getting a billion dollar bond passed. David Adamany, a former Wayne State University President, was the school system's first chief executive officer under Public Act 10. Karen Ridgeway is the only former superintendent to attend schools in the district under every leader interviewed, as well as all emergency managers except for Steven Rhodes.

The dialogues remain so potent that they each beg the question: Where would Detroit's school system be today had each leader been given the opportunity to resolve the systemic complexity to which they speak? No one person can resolve all problems alone, but conflict resolution over a more significant period of time can increase the chances for building a high-performing school system for the city's at-risk children. For instance, Arthur Jefferson's quote is about the impact of public education and how important it is for superintendents to build trust. Depending on circumstances and relationships between leaders and followers, it may take time for followers to fully invest in a shared vision articulated by their leader.

McGriff spoke passionately about how all children can learn and the intersection between learning and staff accountability. Snead's comments infer that superintendents are more likely to be successful if they diversify their sources of information and develop school building principals. Adamany acknowledged how the systemic operational dysfunction of DPS' school system led to a significant reduction in college ready graduates writ large–a direct outgrowth of long-standing breakdowns in multiple district-wide systems that undergird its current programs where some kids are educated and others are not. Ridgeway noted her ability to use evidence-based practices to develop and sustain a data-driven system by closing adults' knowledge gap related to student data.

In all cases, each leader shares an emphatic priority that, perhaps, would have put the district on track to become more effectual had the system's leaders lasted long enough to do the work. More specifically, Jefferson's vision was to expand opportunities for students. He believes in maintaining high expectations and sending the message that all students can achieve and be successful regardless of their demographic. While he is most proud of having the opportunity to expand vocational education in the district, he admits that no superintendent can

lead successfully alone. To Jefferson, parents, the community, staff, politics, and citywide efforts are all vital for success. Jefferson's vision for the district and motivation to lead were driven by his history.

From his birth in Montgomery, Alabama to his transition to Detroit during the Great Migration, Jefferson's upbringing occurred across historical time periods that shaped American history. Black leaders led Montgomery's bus boycott, and their sacrifices leveraged the national debate around racial injustice. In the 1950s, the historic political event and cultural movements demonstrated how likeminded citizens who desired inclusivity could unite and rattle an entire southern economy. While millions were already migrating to the nation's mid-western and northern most metropolises, the Montgomery boycott had occurred during a time when Jefferson was a student in DPS. His personal experiences shaped his outlook on life and influenced him to engage in system leadership.

After attending Campbell Elementary and Griswald Junior High School, Jefferson graduated from Northeastern High School[1] in 1956. Subsequently, he earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Wayne State University. During the 1960s, Jefferson taught social studies in Detroit and became the second Black faculty member at Henry Ford High School. While never a school principal, Jefferson did serve as director of special projects impacting Pershing, Mumford, and McKenzie High Schools. He was on several committees and earned a series of promotions including regional superintendent in region three over McKenzie, Cody, and their feeder schools. By 1975, Jefferson had been named the interim general superintendent. In November of that same year, at thirty-six years old, Jefferson became the fourteenth general superintendent of DPS–and the first Black to ever serve in the position. Since Jefferson left the position, no other superintendent in the Detroit school system has held the position as long.

[1] Arthur Jefferson closed Northeast High School when he became superintendent.

Throughout the Jefferson administration, technical educational programs were expanded in the district and provided students with opportunities to complete pre-college engineering programs. From his perspective, he continued to let the community know–regardless of poverty or disabilities–that students could overcome their challenges. Even when immersed in the most extreme circumstances, children in high poverty conditions can succeed; therefore, they should never be treated as if condemned by their circumstances. Some school system leaders believe that poor children should be held to different (oftentimes lower) standards. This deficit muindset infiltrates educational philosophies and manifest into low expectations and mediocrity.

Participants in the study all believed children can learn and must have the opportunity to develop their professional and interpersonal skills to excel in settings extending beyond their racially homogenous, low-income communities. In addition to motivating the community to believe that all things were possible for children in Detroit, Jefferson communicated that the largest unit for change to take place was at the school building level. He established local school plans and student body organizations. The purpose was to establish connections with students and families. It was important to the informants to have effective relationships between the individual schools and local community. For students to succeed, schools district-wide implemented reading programs. Nevertheless, the time period in which Jefferson led was mired with racial tension that impacted how he used his time.

The Pace of Progress

In Table 3, participants' quotes are about the impact of policies and politics on the pace of progress. When policies are misunderstood and political relationships complex, the pace of progress is slow. Subsequently, events seemingly shifted stakeholders' focus internally and externally away from student achievement altogether and toward specific politically-charged

events. Data in the form of participants' direct quotes from interviews substantiates this claim. Essentially, in every case, participants faced opposition relevant to political interests, landing the district's governance and leadership foci in stark contrast with what was necessary to meet student achievement goals. Quotes in Table 3 speak to the ways in which a lack of problem solving at the governance level cascaded and permeated the organization. Over time, the infrastructure deteriorated, and much of the dysfunction that emerged remains unresolved today.

Table 3. *Data pertaining to the pace of progress due to educational policies ad politics*

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining to the Pace of Progress Due to Policies and Politics
Arthur Jefferson	"[Some of the challenges with trying to implement the desegregation plan before 1977 included the fact that the] state was a reluctant partner. After the 1977 decision, we became partners with the state. […] John Porter was a friend. We would meet regularly in Howell to discuss various items. […] DPS was decentralized into eight regions. We were a decentralized system until 1981. When I became superintendent, I had 45 board members. [There was a central board.] Each region had a regional superintendent that reported to a regional board. So sometimes, I didn't have the direct line of authority over those superintendents. That changed in 1981 when Detroit decided to get rid of regional boards, and for the rest of my tenure, I only had one board."
Deborah McGriff	"[You have to] talk about the superintendent in the context of the school board they have. Without the school board, you cannot implement. […] The union didn't honor the agreement and decided they weren't going to do [Empowered Schools] anymore. The agreement was negotiated before I came. I came expecting to implement [it]. It was consistent with my philosophy about how to improve [student achievement]. There was nothing else to say about Empowered Schools two years into it [when] a new board [came in with a different philosophy about] how to run an effective school district. [New board members] made doing the work more challenging rather than the board that brought me to the district."
David Snead	"I had the facilities manager [conduct a] review to determine what it would take to repair and keep up the maintenance, [so] we could spend more on education. At the cabinet meeting, when he gave me a $900,000 estimate, I told him to go back and do a real survey and to get me a real number. He went back and came back with $3B; I told cabinet, 'Let's go for it!' The executive team thought I was crazy. John Engler and Dennis Archer got involved and convinced the board that it was too much money. So against my better judgment, I dropped it down to $1.5B. When no one wanted to support it, I brought them down to show

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining to the Pace of Progress Due to Policies and Politics
	them the deterioration of the school building. [Once the bond passed], lots was going on to influence votes for the folks that were to be hired [to do the facilities work]. Half the board wanted certain people to be contract managers and half of the board wanted others. The bond was the best thing I ever did, but it led to my demise."
David Adamany	"The teacher contract expired in July because of the uncertainty about governance. Negotiations hadn't gotten off of the ground. There were sixteen unions. The one that was critical [included my meeting] with the leadership of the teachers union–the president. [Everyone] knew we were operating behind schedule with late negotiations. We should have started in April, but we were in June. The first meeting when we laid out objectives, some were acceptable, some were not. The meeting was good, and everyone was open. We were making some progress. It was clear we were going to finish by the deadline–the start of school. [We] wanted to extend the contract to finish the work, but you can't extend the contract without the members voting. What I didn't know was there was division in the union. There was a two-week strike. Everyone knew kids weren't getting a good education. By 2:00 p.m. the picket line was gone, I'd go down and stand in the lobby and talk to the media."
Karen Ridgeway	"Getting emergency managers, who were not educators, to trust that I knew what I was doing [was challenging]. For them to make academic decisions, they needed to understand that I was the professional academic here. None of them came from K-12 or higher education. It was easy to make cuts as an EM for the city, but schools are different because of the way they are funded. Those decisions have domino affects. I've been there through all emergency managers except Judge Rhodes. [I tried to balance] their objectives with the needs of the district. [Things didn't always work] cross purposes most of the time. One example is freezing teachers' salaries when they had already taken 10% cuts and were disgruntled. They have families too. The snowball started to run downhill because you can't be that disconnected from teachers in schools. You have to be interconnected–have to empathize and do everything you can so they are [invested] in what you need them to do.

Each of the quotes in Table 3 demonstrates how politics slow the pace of progress and stall focus on student achievement. Once focus is taken off of student achievement, and attacks from the governing board are clearly targeted at the superintendent, political interests are not only made public but also fettered from various areas inside and outside the organization. Ultimately, the incongruence leads to a collective lack of focus that shatters any preexisting vision while limiting the time needed to establish an infrastructure that will propel student

achievement forward. Over short time periods, stakeholders begin further influencing popular opinions allowing for self-deprecating belief systems to permeate the organization. Subsequently, such beliefs manifest into low-investment behaviors that lead to a waning student achievement culture, which slows progress. When the pace of school system change is reduced, the pace of progress is evident in the relationship between school district leadership and boards.

For instance, senior-level leadership and the governing body of the district fall victim to a fledgling school system propagated because of their relationship gap. In her quote, McGriff addresses the relationship gap and how the shift in governance priorities–once new board members were elected–changed and prevented what she was able to accomplish once new members were elected. Newly elected board members had a vision for the district that vastly differed from what McGriff's original school board hired her to do. In general, shifts in governance impact leadership behaviors, decisions, and the time it takes for successful forward movement. Other participants' quotes speak to this point.

From Snead to Ridgeway we learn how governance interactions presented challenges they were both constantly working to overcome. While Snead is convinced that Engler and Archer influenced board members to reduce the original bond amount, Ridgeway recalled having to oscillate between garnering credibility from emergency managers and convincing them to make academically viable decisions. Adamany espouses how union leadership and teacher strikes resulted in reduced capacity to meet deadlines and establish the necessary infrastructure for an effectual school district. In all cases, each district leader admitted how specific political experiences became the conduit through which progress waned.

Jefferson's quotes about his tenure address additional political hardships engrained in the Detroit superintendency. Jefferson led the development of the school district's court-ordered

desegregation implementation plan, as Detroit had been under a court order to desegregate its schools–an outgrowth of *Bradley et. al. v. Milliken* (1974) and *Bradley v. Milliken* (1977) [2]. While the nation was embattled with racial discrimination across statewide housing systems, employment opportunities, and schools, Michigan's state education department and its largest school district leaders were Black men. John Porter, who was the first Black to work at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), became the State Superintendent of Public Instruction at the MDE while Jefferson served in his position in Detroit.

These professional appointments were signs of a shifting landscape at local and state levels in Michigan. Jefferson's entire professional career coalesced around a consciousness relative to the changing societal and geopolitical climates that surrounded him throughout his professional career. During the interview for the case study, Jefferson addressed his tenure as well as the revolving door of superintendents at DPS. The limited time superintendents spend in the role continues to reduce Detroit's school system progress.

According to Jefferson, "You cannot have a superintendent for one or two years and make progress." His perception in this statement is about time and the impact of leadership attrition rates on progress in organizations. According to Jefferson, superintendents need to be given an opportunity to do the job well. However, "politics may not afford the opportunity." If a district is changing superintendents every few years, it is impossible as a leader to execute planning efforts or to yield results. History dictates that the district board or governance powers will impact superintendents' longevity in the role; Jefferson continued with inferences about the importance of prioritization. It becomes increasingly imperative for the superintendent to manage time well at the onset of accepting the position; doing so includes knowing what to do

[2] These court cases are known as *Milliken I* and *Milliken II.*

first and fast versus what to do simultaneously or in sequential order over longer durations of time.

Jefferson proclaimed that a person's success in the superintendency is contingent upon all business leaders, parents, labor unions, and key stakeholders: that is, a "person's success is contingent upon all communities–not just Detroit." Superintendents do not have "control over all factors." However, they can get support from others to increase the likelihood of success. School districts cannot turn around or perform well when the organization's top leader frequently. It is improbable that the DPS district as an organization could have thrived in an environment where there remained extremely high leadership attrition rates. We see in Jefferson's statements the grave impact on school districts and children when high capacity superintendents are not retained over time.

Momentum

During McGriff's interview, she recalled her experiences dating back twenty-five years ago when she became the first Black woman selected to lead the district. Jefferson's long-held belief about the impact of superintendent attrition was personified in McGriff's tenure as she gained but ultimately lost momentum. In 1991 when McGriff was recruited to Detroit, DPS' enrollment was over 200,000 students, making it one of the nation's largest public school districts. McGriff succeeded John Porter at a time when he had "right sized" the district around finances and developed plans for academic achievement. Porter's work was innovative, and he was able to stop the state takeover of the district.

McGriff built her district leadership strategy after carefully studying what Porter had already put in place. During the interview for the case study, she recalled initially receiving tremendous support for her plans: "[I] took a look at John Porter's work and determined what I

could do in three years. I came because of the HOPE team. Without the school board, you can not implement," McGriff continued. Initially, McGriff took Porter's work and set goals based on the HOPE team's vision. She built her academic and operational programming on her predecessor's previous work in the district because she believed coming in as a new superintendent and changing everything that was working well would have been catastrophic for the district. Therefore, McGriff focused on key components from Porter's administration to ensure the academic, fiscal, and operational longevity of the larger organization would become viable over time. From McGriff's perspective, she celebrated what was working instead of coming to Detroit and saying what was wrong. On one hand, she believed her role was to allow schools that were excellent or high achieving to continue without interference. On the other hand, some personnel needed more direction on how to better educate students. McGriff identified goals for the next three years to allow for continuity. She provided a vision for the district's future, which included school choice and Empowered Schools.

In Table 4, quotes from interviews are examples of events that increases momentum in the district. Different aspects of the district are given to justify rationale for why the district saw momentum including but not limited to programmatic expansion, increased fund balances, and personnel development. Jefferson's tone and message are about hope and possibility. Snead spoke about growth and choice. Adamany and Ridgeway's comments largely addressed infrastructure and operational needs from the business side of the organization and the community.

Beyond the fiscal surplus identified in her quote, McGriff also described the Empowered Schools movement as an initiative that allowed "autonomy for principals if they were willing to be held accountable." The concept is analogous to nationally recognized high-performing

charter schools, which included control over budget and programming with decision-making authority for increased accountability. Once principals were convinced that Empowered Schools were an opportunity to lead the work at the school building level, becoming an Empowered School meant that principals had to encourage teachers to vote for the concept. The principals could not make

Table 4. *Data pertaining to momentum*

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining to Momentum
Arthur Jefferson	"We were able to expand the educational opportunities for Detroit's students [by expanding] technical education—five vocational centers, pre-college engineering programs. [We] continued to try to let the community know, regardless of poverty or disabilities that they could overcome those barriers, overcome extreme circumstance—not due to themselves but due to their circumstances."
Deborah McGriff	"When I left, there was $5M in reserve. The budget was balanced every year I was there. The district had money to continue when I left. Many approach district [leadership] without managing the budget if it's not central to what they want to do. [But you] can't do the job without managing the budget."
David Snead	"We had to grow the school system via schools of choice. There were so many kids leaving and coming in, but we had lots of spirit and got everyone motivated. The key to success [to reduce] incompetency [is to train teachers] – teach them to get better …focused PD training [for] teachers in content areas so they can do a better job."
David Adamany	"One thing became clear right away: [There] were contracts with the district [where contractors were] not providing the services or the goods. Many providers didn't have the capacity. This practice was over. We went through contracts and terminated contracts; a lot of money was being wasted."
Karen Ridgeway	"I was able to get students, parents, and children to understand the data around their success."

the decision unilaterally; those that did good work were invested in the process. Unfortunately, the union eventually was not going to support the Empowered School concept. "Two years into it [Empowered Schools] there was a new board. The union didn't honor the agreement and decided they weren't going to do Empowered Schools anymore." In the aforementioned

statement, McGriff recalled not being superintendent long enough to see the process through and believes Empowered Schools were not in place long enough for anyone to determine if it worked or not. No one knows the impact of holding those principals accountable who led Empowered Schools because the initiative did not last long enough to see or measure progress.

McGriff's experience is an example of how frequent changes in superintendents can leave programs hanging in the balance without any measureable evidence of their impact on achievement. In doing so, the district's schools involved in the process would struggle to reconfigure and reorient themselves to fall under more traditional governance structures. Furthermore, the impingement upon change agents undermined the district's optimization efforts because leaders were unable to remain focused on priorities. Ultimately, dysfunction cascaded in the wake of leadership turnover. Any quality programs that do exist are disrupted and achievement is impacted while any academic, financial, and operational norms established by the outgoing superintendent dissipate during transition only to be reestablished anew under incoming leadership.

In the end, programmatic functionality is reduced while the incoming superintendent must quickly establish a shared vision, mission, values, and goals so the district does not lose momentum with the teacher workforce, community, and students. This is a moment in the transition process where the incoming leader must also create and operationalize strategies that maintain those viable functions in the district that add value to the larger organization's health. After two years in Detroit, McGriff left the position and did not seek another superintendency. Despite her 1993 resignation, McGriff's professional record is a long history of Black American firsts: in Boston, she was the first Black principal; in Cambridge, the first Black deputy superintendent; in Milwaukee, the first female to become deputy superintendent. After

graduating from Virginia's legally segregated, K-12 public school system, McGriff became a first generation college graduate while being raised in a low-income family. McGriff earned a bachelor's degree in education with a specialization in reading pedagogy from Queens College, and a doctorate in administration, policy, and urban education from Fordham University (Schorr & McGriff, 2011). According to McGriff, she student taught in Connecticut because they wanted students to see people enrolled in the community and was later recruited by the African American Teachers Association in New York City to teach in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood.

During her interview for the case study, McGriff attributed her ambition to her third grade reading of Mary McCloud Bethune after which McGriff decided to become a leader in education. McGriff's vision evolved with a focus on low-income students. She believes that low-income students should have access to quality academic programming that will increase their likelihood for success. Today, McGriff is a Managing Partner at New Schools Venture Fund, a nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that supports entrepreneurial innovation to improve public education for low-income children throughout the country (Schorr & McGriff, 2011). McGriff's goals include supporting effective programs and strategies to help students achieve success.

Time is particularly unique to all five former chief district leaders in Detroit from 1975 to 2015 because they each led the DPS school district for relatively short periods of time. Governing structures varied each year and statewide policy shifts impacted their authority. As the longest serving superintendent in the past forty-years, Jefferson acknowledges today's difficulty in leading the district when the chief leader is not consistent over time. He believes that change takes time in certain instances and the instability of leadership only exacerbates

challenges while reducing the likelihood of success for key initiatives. In this regard, the theme is about the pace of change and what it takes to accomplish certain goals.

Tradition and Futuring

In Table 5, Detroit's former district leaders address futuring, which is a concept about future-orientation and planning or thought work about the future. The participants in the study shared aspects of what was experienced versus what was needed for the future. Jefferson and McGriff spoke to the system and context in which leaders lead. While Adamany and Ridgeway addressed competency skills and institutional knowledge, Snead stressed the importance of strategic planning. Because Snead was unable to change the core traditional fabric of the school board and educational system, the future state of the district saw significant market share loss, reductions in operational credibility, and continuous internal infighting over resources, influence, control, and power.

In instances where dialogue addressed the future, the context insinuated that change was needed immediately to secure an educated workforce and a viable organization to meet future market demands. Such future-focused leadership entails deep strategic thinking and organized preparation. However, the largest impediment to this work is Detroit's focus on traditional modus operandi and an unwillingness to accept change or different ways of operating. For leaders wanting to transition the district's culture and focus the organization on a new vision for a viable future, the city's traditional way of operating is a constant hindrance. Whereas modern times are focused on advancement or globalization, tradition is stoic and stationed around the transmission of common practices, beliefs, values, and behaviors. When transferred, traditional ways of life and belief systems manifest into what can appear to be standard practice. On one hand traditions or norms can produce desirable experiences. On the other hand, they can

stagnate improvement or enhancements if change is warranted but not embraced. This occurs because traditions are habitual behaviors, mindsets, and rituals. Long-held values are reflected in traditions, and when such values intersect with the cultural fabric of the people engaged, change is difficult.

Table 5. *Data pertaining to tradition and futuring*

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining to Tradition and Futuring
Arthur Jefferson	"When I was going through the system, you could get a pretty good job in the factories. By the time I was superintendent, […] changes had occurred."
Deborah McGriff	"The Detroit today is not the Detroit of my superintendency. How you set the right context for each superintendent is a critical component."
David Snead	"First, start out by doing a long-range, five-year strategic plan. Know the vision for the community. Develop a mission. Develop goals. Tie into everyone's contract – everybody's – cooks, bus drivers, etc. Everyone has to be focused."
David Adamany	"In my undergraduate classes, writing skills (finding of information) habits about taking notes, these are all [necessary skills]. Most o my undergraduate students are underachievers in those areas. What should we do in our K-12 system to train youngsters to use their talents better?"
Karen Ridgeway	"Some things I see are fundamentally askew. [There's] no institutional knowledge. People are making mistakes about how to run summer school, how to communicate with people in schools."

Snead was a superintendent whose vision could have impacted the district more positively over time. When Snead became the DPS superintendent in 1993, he had long since been known as a native Detroiter. By definition, a native of the city is either someone who is born and raised in Detroit or someone who has lived in the city long enough to name the DPS high school from which she or he graduated. Snead was born in Tennessee but graduated from Detroit's Cass Technical High School in 1961. After three years in the U.S. Army and having earned an undergraduate degree at Tuskegee University in 1968, Snead enrolled at the University of Michigan where he earned a masters' degree in 1970 and a doctorate in 1984. Snead's second principalship in the DPS district was at his alma mater Cass Tech. Yet with all of these

honorable badges of belonging in Detroit, Snead eventually found Detroit's traditional school district governance, culture, and political routines intractable.

Jefferson's hurdles were exacerbated by the crack-cocaine epidemic in the mid-1980s forcing the school system to address entrenched safety concerns. He was trying to help people without judgment, but doing so required building relationships with parents and the community in the schools. He tried several strategies, but the crack era was a challenging time. During his interview, he recalled trying to provide adequate services for children addicted to crack-cocaine while dealing with the neighborhood's violence that filtered into the schools. He tried to expand preschool education so parents could view and understand that regardless of the child's circumstances, the children could overcome social, ecological, and congenital learning barriers. One of the largest challenges was getting parents to believe their children would be safe in school.

By the time McGriff was leading the district, safety remained a priority, yet she felt well positioned to focus on academics, school choice, and Empowered Schools. Her challenges came when unions withdrew support, and Larry Patrick was the only HOPE team member left on the school board. As a result of these two events, the board had split decisions on several programmatic issues. The new board wanted a traditional district, and eventually hired Snead– an internal superintendent candidate who described himself as solution oriented. Unlike the board, Snead believed it was in the best interest of the school district to advance its practices in the educational market rather than to maintain all traditional forms of schooling and course offerings.

Over time, his vision to transition the city's school district to meet future market demands and his slow pace at spending the bond ultimately led to his demise as Detroit's superintendent.

As he recalled, “The bond being the best thing I ever did; it passed overwhelmingly.” However, due to the politics, “all of a sudden they [the politicians] wanted their political contributions to their campaign funds, and a lot was going on to try to influence votes for the folks that were hired [to manage the bond]. I was so slow and methodical in that process that the public started getting frustrated–started expressing their frustration.” They “wanted to spend the money right away.” But “I was determined to make sure that money was spent right. It took time to hire the right people (*i.e.* architects, attorneys, folks to handle/sell bonds).”

Snead went on to describe the politics as including “the Dennis Archer machine” and Edward McNamara, the former Wayne County Executive, as having “folks who supported them on my board. Four board members were employees of Wayne County. They were orchestrating a partnership with DPS.” While Snead’s future orientation about cornering the charter market went ignored, outside agencies began flooding Detroit’s educational landscape, which ultimately proved his original premise: parents want choices. Today, in contrast to circumstances when Snead led the district, charter schools now make up half of the educational institutions serving children in Detroit. The district has lost significant enrollment market share because parents are choosing from a larger variety of conceivably different school options not offered in the district.

Moreover, instead of innovating or supporting new methods for educating the city’s children, the school board opted for a less aggressive pathway to in-district chartering. Their educational strategy slowed organizational progress, and today DPS is among the smallest charter school authorizers in Michigan. DPS’ charter school office has little influence, continues to be unsupported by the school district and board, and has the type of reputation that fostered limitations in authority per the recent passage of state policy. That is, as of July 1, 2016, the

DPS charter school office is no longer allowed to authorize new charter schools because the DPS charter office is not accredited.[3]

Nearly ten years has passed since Snead fell out of political alignment with his Detroit school board, his assessment of the future came true. The district has officially lost its opportunity to create and manage the largest, most diverse portfolio of charter schools in the city. Snead's experience as the chief leader in the district from 1993 to 1997 epitomizes the rationale for superintendents having a shared vision process that is both developed and supported by others. Leaders need to articulate the vision publicly and privately with extraordinary effort to gain collective input from stakeholders who are both allies and antagonists. By offering a variety of school options, Snead sought to accomplish what he envisioned was the future state of the city's school system. Snead's vision for Detroit was to expand in-district school options for parents; he sought to diversify both school and programmatic choices. In doing so, students and families would have additional options of conceivably stronger quality. While Snead did not successfully commission the school board to support his vision, he was accurate in his assessment of the education market: the landscape changed significantly regardless of DPS' participation. The school board would have been at an immediate advantage had they cornered the charter school market themselves. Today the district competes for enrollment because parents are no longer limited to attending schools led by DPS.

Since the school board was slow to support in-district schools of choice models, the district lost the opportunity to other authorizers. Snead tried to convince his board and stakeholders to be proactive participants in the changing landscape and market of education. He believed enrollment increased because the district offered more thematic schools. Parents wanted choices, and he saw chartering as something that "the district could really embrace."

[3] See Public Act 192, Section 502(9)(a)

From Snead's perspective, DPS could have capitalized on the market in Detroit by having the district authorize more new charter schools. Then, if parents selected other school options (charter, traditional, or thematic schools of either type), there would be greater likelihood that parents would select in-district options. However, Snead found it difficult to get others invested in his vision; chartering was seen as warring against the traditional cultural fabric writ large. Snead was left battling fixed mindsets focused on tradition rather than new, innovative, autonomous school options for children, families, and the district's professional workforce.

Subsequently, DPS was left behind in what is now a free market for school choice. Nearly any authorizer could open a school in Detroit, and DPS had a leader who was urging the board to move quickly to do it first. The pace lacked urgency, and momentum was apathetic. Without a regular pace in how quickly improvement occurred and the necessary momentum to keep stakeholders focused, unintended consequences included low-quality instruction and deteriorating facilities as well as an aging talent pool. Unfortunately, in the absence of the school board following Snead's lead on the school choice issue and the ability to respond to the changing educational landscape, various authorizers began opening schools in Detroit. Subsequently, the district saw half of the students in its catchment area enrolling in out-of-district charter schools.

While Snead attributes the mistake to the board's shortsightedness, the larger mistake was the school board's miscalculation and delayed response to market demand. He characterized the board as people who maintain traditions that are outdated and ineffective. They normalized behaviors that did not allow for innovation. The governance bodies in Detroit preferred not to diversify their sources of information, so they were always left with insular, native Detroit voices that may not have always had the skills to match their passion for the city, as prudent innovation

left children behind in what is now an underdeveloped school system that utilizes archaic operational, instructional, and human resource practices while failing to advance student achievement.

Snead recalled staff members who were initially "allies" (the chief financial officer and general council) being convinced to incriminate him regarding programmatic spending and warehouse inventory value. Snead unsuccessfully tried to "go to the board on the night they were going to approve his contract extension." His attempts to speak with the board in a back room failed following a private encounter gone wrong with one member who shared political space with McNamara and Archer. Snead wanted to be "honest and explain the chief financial officer and general council's" assessments as well as "share a plan" of how to get the "work done in less than a year" (*i.e.* how to pull out of a newly identified twenty million dollar deficit). However, Snead perceived the board as lacking the ability to embrace future possibilities.

Time Management

Today, Detroit's educational landscape is one large, unregulated school portfolio where more than half of the city's students in DPS' catchment area attend out-of-district schools. Had Snead and his school board been proactively collaborative, future oriented, and cohesive in their approach to school district design, governance, and leadership, DPS may own a larger part of the student enrollment market share today. Nevertheless, to be successful, Snead would have needed the support from stakeholders and the board to build on the momentum he developed to initiate and eventually secure the bond. The district has failed academically and financially without ever deeply exploring how to offer a wide assortment of academically competitive school and programmatic options that are attractive to parents from a multitude of socioeconomic backgrounds.

To improve the organization's functionality, the district may consider norming their behaviors to demonstrate alignment with their mission, vision, values, and goals. The Detroit school district has both lost more than half of its market share of students to charter schools because the district does not authorize enough charters themselves and has had authorization rights redacted in state policy. The political context alone marks the school district as inherently non-competitive with organizations (mainly universities) that have the right to open new schools in DPS' catchment area where they can no longer authorize new schools themselves. The city's relationships among key thought leaders in and outside of the city have resulted in an unusual loss in rights to fully govern their own schools.

The relationship between the board and superintendent has also hindered progress toward organizational develop and school quality. Until the city supports a productive relationship between its superintendent and school board, schools in Detroit will languish with inferior management and shortsighted action plans that do not provide forward movement in the areas of general operations, academics, and finance. For school system excellence, the school board and superintendent must not only have the skills and knowledge necessary for productivity but also collaboratively engage with deliberate practices and cultural norms that focus on organizationally sound and reputable content goals. Since Snead had been given the time and space to realize his vision for the future, which entailed the expansion of DPS-authorized charter and traditional thematic schools, the district was not well-positioned to implement innovative educational programming without interference. Of course this assumes and would require students who were positioned to become academically successful, staff to be operationally competent and credible, and the district to be fiscally sustainable. Superintendents' vision must

involve their perspective about the future and about how to be better prepared for it. Participants in the study spoke vividly about futuring pertaining to school quality.

In Table 6, the former Detroit leaders address elements of school quality. Jefferson explains the impact of safety concerns on student enrollment and resident district families' transition to charter schools. McGriff believes in parents having the right to choose where to send their children to school. Ridgeway expressed both her concerns and educational philosophy related to shared accountability. She wanted a more objective evaluation system where leaders could be honest and transparent about teacher quality. Adamany announces a stark reality in his quote, which reveals a hole in a school system that has failed to resolve truancy issues for students who have missed more than 100 days of school. Students who enter into adulthood with mediocre reading and math competency skills are likely to struggle in the labor market. Students with low reading and math skills are also likely to experience incarceration, poor healthcare, and financial dependence. In other words, in the absence of educating Detroit's students well, the district is leaving generations of high-poverty students without access into the middle class.

Adamany's take on the district and its future leadership revolved around the African American community: "How can we have figures who are strong enough to resist the [political] pressures so they can do the right thing? How can we inspire the right leaders to get in these positions? There has got to be a structure and people who can be supported so they can withstand the political pressures." Adamany, who was a chief executive officer appointed by Governor John Engler, was committed to working for the district for one year in 1999. He believed the district needed to create a foundation for a school system that could be led without fear.

Table 6. *Data pertaining to school quality*

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining School Quality
Arthur Jefferson	"The reason a lot of people send their kids to charters is not because they think the education is that great. It's because they feel their children are going to be safer because of the student population. One of the challenges of any superintendent is to ensure that people understand that their child is going to be safe."
Deborah McGriff	"Parents should have choice. Schools that don't educate kids should be closed. [Less than 10% of college graduates] are low-income Blacks. Something is wrong. We have to look at new models–judge models whether or not they are improving academic performance."
David Snead	"You have to improve instruction – not just firing somebody but by giving them some real good training in the content area. [It's] hard to convince the public to stay the course."
David Adamany	"[We] needed to find out about absenteeism. In those days, there was a law against your child being truant; parents were responsible. Weeks later [after having reported students to Wayne County, they] were still working on the parents whose kids had been absent 100 days. A parent who doesn't know if kids are in school or not doesn't care."
Karen Ridgeway	"[The] most difficult thing in DPS (although we like each other) [is accountability]. I bought the teacher evaluation system. [We] needed to get principals to be objective and not allow their emotion to drive how they evaluate."

Adamany spoke about the traditional engagements of the school board and the governing body's inability to focus on the more modern operations necessary to keep up with advancements in the labor market and the field of education. However, unlike other district leaders, Adamany did not report to a school board. As a gubernatorial appointee with support from Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, Adamany–who recalled having no ambition to stay in the role past his one-year commitment–was prone to making hard decisions. To Adamany, the relationship between the school district and school board remained disorganized; governance of the district was an unresolved calamity. As CEO, Adamany did not remember the school board ever initiating work toward reasonable upgrades in academia or operations. "The condition of the schools was quite bad. [Only] some contractors [hired by the district] were doing repairs. Money was sitting

there, and the district didn't have effective inventory of buildings and didn't go about spending the money effectively."

Unlike McGriff who was able to build on Porter's legacy, Adamany's predecessor had not been successful at improving relationships with the school board. Therefore, Adamany endured a governance structure in which board members (albeit stripped of their governance power) remained unfocused on outcomes and disinclined to resolve district-wide problems. Adamany had an untraditional school district leadership opportunity. He knew that addressing the school board may have stirred up problems with stakeholders who would then raise or create larger challenges if he had been a traditional superintendent. There was "so much pressure from angry constituencies. In order to do things right, you are constantly disappointing people who have legitimate concerns." In this remark Adamany speaks to the ways in which traditional superintendents in DPS (under board control) remained at risk of losing their job if they decided to make decisions with which the board disagreed.

Adamany further expounded on the superintendents' dispositions when asked about the district's future. He assumed the elected board was politically motivated in a way that superintendents could not be. Traditional superintendents may feel in constant jeopardy of losing their position if they were to do what was in the best interest of the district or children as a whole, if the decision falls outside of political alignment with stakeholders. Adamany found himself not overly concerned about the school board because he was appointed by the state and did not report to them. However, the different governance structures did not remove the dissonance in the district. Leaders in the district will never be aligned with the many stakeholders who all have varying degrees of involvement, knowledge, and opinions about how to lead the district.

In addition to managing board relationships and politics, among the more horrific findings in the study were the condition of facilities and the prevalence of student truancy. Adamany described school buildings in 1999 as falling apart without having been adequately maintained for several years. A few years earlier when Snead had successfully gotten the bond passed to upgrade schools, he was criticized. Snead had recalled it being nearly impossible to convince the public and the board that academic progress and facilities planning took time. Once the bond passed, concerns grew quickly about political contributions. As the school year progressed and elections were fast approaching, there were influencers everywhere concerned about who to vote for and who to hire. Snead regrettably acknowledges that he was too slow and methodical in the spending process. He worked so hard to get the bond passed that he wanted to be thoughtful about how the money was spent. But his process frustrated people, and they started expressing concerns because they wanted to spend the money immediately. While Snead was determined to make sure the money was spent right by hiring the right people–architects, attorneys, a bond manager, etc.–governance played a role in his inability to deliver in a manner that pleased the public and the board. Both Snead and Adamany appeared to identify conditions warranting change but remained ill-equipped with the necessary power and support to achieve adequate transformation on which future superintendents could build.

Half of the school board wanted certain contractors, while the other half wanted others. These experiences preceded Adamany; however, during his interview for this case study, he too discussed how some contractors were not repairing facilities at the rate required while money was expended and the district did not have an effective inventory of school buildings. By the time he was in place, the district still had not spent the money effectively. Adamany's recount of experiences with contractors was indicative of Snead's initial concerns about quality facilities.

"Schools were so old that resources were being spent on maintenance and complaints around buildings and their functions were related to brokenness, cleanliness, and toilet paper, " he proclaimed. Unfortunately, Snead's compromise to balance contractors supported by board members' led to what he dubbed his demise. That is, he regrets not remaining steadfast in his original thinking to put the proposal together with his own suggestions and letting the school board vote accordingly.

In the end, Snead's decision dissatisfied the board. He recalled how some became displeased with him while others in the city's leadership turned on him because board members were tied to the Archer administration. Edward McNamara was the Wayne County Executive who was a political force, and both Archer and McNamara had forces on the school board who supported their ideas. Four board members were employees of Wayne County and orchestrated a partnership with DPS. According to Snead, the city could not keep the lights on, pick up trash on time, or shovel snow. Therefore, he did not have confidence that they could operate a school system. Eventually, a former deputy was hired to be in charge of spending the money. After Snead's resignation, the money was allegedly spent to satisfy public outcry. It was not done thoughtfully, and a few years later, Adamany saw firsthand the internal catastrophe that emerged.

Secondly, even if school building principals were successful with getting students back in school and alleviating attendance barriers, the students were so far behind academically (once they returned) that they had no chance of legitimately being promoted. As a result, chronic absenteeism yielded atrocious academic results–a result of hundreds of children receiving no instruction because they were not in class. There was no clear pathway or system to support truant students. There were no successful systems at the county, city, or school district level to support student attendance or to reduce truancy in the DPS district. In the absence of shared

accountability from the community to the courts or simply infrastructure to follow up with families, the entire system remained flawed. According to Adamany, student attendance in Detroit's public schools had not initially been well established and implemented consistently over time.

When Ridgeway was selected to serve as DPS superintendent, she worked to rebuild the district. Although she led as chief academic leader years after Adamany, attendance challenges seemingly remained a district-wide problem. From her viewpoint, emergency managers were balancing budgets by cutting entire support systems out of schools. One cut included attendance agents; as a result of the budgetary cut, the district had no staff solely focused on attendance at each school. Without staffing to support attendance, the district could not hold students and families accountable. Similar to Adamany, Ridgeway began restoring whole systems that had initially been a part of deficit elimination plans submitted under emergency management governance structures.

Transformation

When Jefferson was superintendent, the governance structure did not initially allow for him to have a direct line of authority over regional superintendents. At the time, DPS had eight regions in the district and services were decentralized. Each region had a regional board, so Jefferson managed school board members including five members for each region plus one central board. Although he eventually only had one central board to which he reported, Jefferson was always trying to balance between what the central office district wanted to do and what the regions wanted. Sometimes there were conflicts, as each region had a regional superintendent that reported to their regional board. In 1980 when Detroit decided to eliminate regional boards, Jefferson had one board for the rest of his tenure from 1980 to 1989.

Governance impacts superintendents' abilities to lead effectively and to accomplish their goals because autonomy is needed for superintendents to make informed decisions. While they are charged to lead the district, superintendents who do not have governance support or political capital face increased resistance. Such resistance usually results in either voluntary resignations or politically influenced terminations. McGriff found it difficult to lead after term limits or elections required board members, who initially hired her, to leave the board and when the union retreated from supporting the school choice initiatives. Snead admitted that he was unable to manage the board's focus well enough to maintain enough sociopolitical capital to stay in position.

Table 7. *Data pertaining to school system leadership*

DPS Leaders	Data Pertaining to School System Leadership
Arthur Jefferson	"You can not have a superintendent for one or two years and make progress."
Deborah McGriff	"I didn't want to go on and be another superintendent somewhere. [I] wanted to create excellent schools for low-income Black children – identify, design, execute educational models [and] not waste time on distractions."
David Snead	"[There were] many storms. [My] favorite saying [is] don't tell me about the storm. [Let's] steer the ship through the storm. […] Schools were so old; [we] spent so much on maintenance. Most of the complaints were constant–centered around buildings and their functions relative to brokenness, things not working, cleanliness, toilet paper."
David Adamany	"When leadership (newly appointed board and mayor) couldn't persuade a leader in the African American community to take the job […], they came to me. I wasn't anybody's first choice. The circumstances were strange."
Karen Ridgeway	"What I did well was make sure I attended the [teacher/leadership] meetings to let them know the vision. It's another thing to hear it from the superintendent. My mission is to make sure that I am as useful as I can be."

In Table 7, each leader reiterated perspectives reflecting their philosophical beliefs about school system leadership, which were ultimately impacted by their governing body. While Jefferson addressed longevity, McGriff spoke to educational models and students' capacity to

excel regardless of their demographics. Snead emphasized operational infrastructure and maintenance. Adamany and Ridgeway discussed leadership, vision, and mission. Adamany originally accepted the CEO position in 1999, following Public Act 10. He was influenced by Governor Engler and Mayor Archer to become CEO of DPS after Adamany had retired from the presidency at Wayne State University. As a matter of fact, he was not the first choice but was approached after the African-American list had been exhausted. According to Adamany, none of the qualified Blacks wanted the job of CEO for fear of it ruining their professional reputations. Since he believed the governor and mayor were coming from a genuine place, he decided to serve in the position while they searched for a permanent replacement leader. Once at the helm at DPS, Adamany found an organization in complete disarray. As discussed earlier, contractors who were receiving payments were not completing jobs and the human resources department was filled with former teachers who (a) did not want to teach anymore, and (b) had no background in human resources.

Nevertheless, because Adamany had no intentions of staying in position beyond his initial commitment, he also had no qualms about making decisions and connecting with stakeholders to move the district forward in the space and time with the authority he had. For instance, he connected with business owners to support strategies around the reconstitution of some of the organizational efforts (i.e. hired staff from corporate organizations to support human resources). Furthermore, without the obligation of a long-term commitment to the district, Adamany was empowered to lead without fear of having his employment terminated. However, when he began serving in the role, he found more problems than he had anticipated. Where he had assumed basic functionalities were in place, Adamany found that he and his team were faced with insurmountable challenges. For instance, he may have thought that to improve instruction,

teachers needed more training. But what he found was an inept human resource department responsible for districtwide hiring. The experience reiterated systemic operational complexities extending beyond teacher training.

Adamany's own work ethic can be traced back to his Lebanese culture. His father came to the United States and opened small shops, worked hard, and sent Admany and his siblings to college. As the youngest of seven, Adamany's father went to Jamesville, Wisconsin and only spoke Arabic and French, so the school turned him away. After working with his siblings, Adamany's father soon learned English and was admitted to school. Culturally, Adamany's own professional interests are primarily in law, political science, and higher education. With undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard College, Harvard Law, and the University of Wisconsin, (until his death) Adamany is Chancellor and Laura Carnell Professor of Law and Political Science at Temple University after having served as the university's president from 2000 to 2006. However, Temple University was Adamany's second university presidency. Between 1982 and 1997, Adamany's presidency at Wayne State University led to the creation of three new colleges at the university. Other university positions in Adamany's career have included university fellowships, professorships, and leadership positions at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Wesleyan; California State University, Long Beach; and University of Maryland.

His suggestion for today's leaders and for the wider Black community is to find leaders who can withstand the political pressures long enough to do the work needed. DPS needs a model of governance that allows for superintendents to put organizational systems in place upon accepting the position. There need to be people in place to deal with the broken school system. There is no easy conduit for school system repair. Adamany's vision was to provide the

leadership necessary to increase systemic functions in the district, which included human resources, general operations, facilities, and governance. He felt he succeeded at getting some of the leadership out in time for the next leader. Today's leaders have to have people who can muster enough political defense to remain resolute while leading the district. While resilient leaders exist, the city and the district will have to inspire the right leaders to accept the position. No leader since Jefferson knows this better than Ridgeway.

Ridgeway led the district forty years after Jefferson first stepped into the position; however, she was either a student or employed in Detroit from the time each of the participants in the case study led the district. After graduating from Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Detroit, she received a merit scholarship to Wayne State University where she earned a degree in special education. After college, Ridgeway taught and served in leadership positions for eighteen years at McKinsey High School in DPS. Her successes led to various leadership opportunities in DPS' central office where she eventually became the Executive Director and Assistant Superintendent of research and evaluation. By the time Ridgeway was offered the superintendency, local and national political conditions in urban education had changed significantly. The district had received its second emergency manager Roy Roberts, who had asked Ridgeway to be the district's superintendent of academics.

Ridgeway's retelling of her experiences depicts a story that appears both rewarding and challenging. While Roberts was charged with getting the district out of financial deficit, Ridgeway was expected to raise student achievement as demonstrated by scores on high-stakes state assessments. Between the 2011-12 and 2013-14 school years, proficiency in third and eighth grade math and reading across the district rose modestly along with graduation rates

(Baker, 2016). By the end of her superintendency, Ridgeway had served the district for thirty-five years.

Insightful takeaways from Ridgeway's case study interview were conveyed in her dialogue about institutional knowledge in today's DPS district and the impact of inadequate resource allocation on the larger organization. From "one-administrator school buildings" overwhelming school leaders to deep "budget cuts," and the reduced district-wide "math supports," Ridgeway shared how she worked to help emergency managers spend money in ways to build the academic program while dealing with the harsh realities that were counterproductive. From her perspective, the lack of institutional knowledge about the district's operations then and today draw grave concerns. Ridgeway embraces the notion that to lead, superintendents need the skill set to optimize logistics that support academic programming.

Each time there is new district administration, that group of leaders must learn how to operate the district's key functions so services are optimized in each school. In light of these transitions, children, families, and staff are often re-injured by mistakes that might have been averted if the administration had more experience and institutional knowledge. As more of a traditional superintendent, Ridgeway understood the hierarchy and followed protocol. Like Snead, she wanted stakeholders to know that her actions were intended to be in the best interest of children. Similar to McGriff and Adamany, positioning the district to move forward in its entirety is among the initiatives Ridgeway also sought to initialize and sustain. Unfortunately, no leader has been able to build upon their predecessors work long enough to successfully transform the district. Superintendents in Detroit are either not in place long enough or they eventually lose too much political capital to stay in place due to character attacks by political constituents.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSIONS

Recent reports demonstrate that Michigan is among the lowest-performing states in education, and students in Detroit are among the lowest performing in the nation across all subject content areas—math science, reading, writing, and social studies. While this phenomenon is not new, it is unfortunate that this desperately lagging school performance is not unique to Detroit but is instead characteristic of many of the nation's major urban cities that are predominately educating low-income and Black students. Namely, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Newark, Pittsburgh, Oakland, the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, Memphis, and New Orleans comprise a few major U.S. cities confronted with circumstances of educational challenge. With school reform strategies in place, these cities' goals include raising student achievement–not just test scores. Although imperfect, reformers in these cities are attempting to improve school quality, equity, and life-long outcomes for their low-income students who oftentimes come from racial minorities and uneducated, single-female households.

The impact of low performance leads to a relatively under-skilled workforce without the capacity to engage successfully in postsecondary opportunities after high school—and that is, if they actually graduate. Each year, most students who graduate are relatively ill equipped for success after high school. Without the academic competitiveness of their middle-class, predominantly White counterparts in surrounding suburbs, the majority of Detroit's predominately Black and low-income students are more likely to struggle with access to college or high-wage employment opportunities. Said another way, without access to quality education,

low-income Black students in Detroit will not be as competitive with their middle-class peers for postsecondary and professional opportunities. For these reasons, students in Detroit must gain access to more advanced coursework options and instructional rigor that will prepare them for a productive life after high school.

Access to high performing educational experiences can be the equalizer for low-income kids to transition into the middle class as adults. Yet, while equity is about low-income students' access to existing school systems whose students graduate and transition into postsecondary options allowing for sustainable engagement in earning a good living wage, many low-income students today continue to receive a poor education. Subsequently, they remain more equipped for low-quality lifestyles with little or no healthcare or home ownership options. According to Hanushek, Peterson, and Woessmann (2014), educational attainment is correlated with wage earnings, healthcare, criminal history, and access to housing options. There are also strong linkages between educational performance to labor-market outcomes and cross-country variations (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010). Porter (2006) wrote that identifying school success was once a function of screening, sorting, and selecting the better students for college from the poorer students who were programmed for blue-collar jobs. Given the advancements, even in blue-collar work, Detroit's children will struggle if they do not have the basic literacy and math content knowledge to compete for employment. Also, of particular concern are Detroit's academic trends: if they do not dramatically improve soon, Detroit will continue to foster a workforce too low in skill set for future residents to meet citywide market demands. Moreover, there will be no other pathway to growing or sustaining a healthy economy or safe, healthy neighborhoods if tomorrow's adults cannot read, write, compute, and use technology well enough to advance in a knowledge-based society.

Educational Leadership

With a working knowledge of what former DPS superintendents experienced, how they behaved, and the decisions they made, future district leaders and superintendents can better access processes germane to operational, academic, and fiscal failure, and success as well as obtain the district-wide components necessary to maintain stability. Future leaders can use existing research to build a solid foundation and the necessary organizational infrastructure in lieu of starting from the beginning with little district knowledge. On one hand, when leaders lead without historical knowledge of the organization, they are prone to making the same mistakes as their predecessors. On the other hand, when leaders have a solid grasp of the preexisting conditions that include challenges and successes of the entire organization, they are better equipped to lead the school system.

What is needed most in urban areas like Detroit is focused educational leadership at the superintendent level. Turning around the public school system in Detroit is a local priority–as the city has a narrowing opportunity to build and sustain a higher skilled resident population. In the absence of a strong school system, most high-wage positions will be offered to non-resident educated persons leaving native Detroiters underemployed and unemployed. For Detroit to create a highly-skilled workforce for the nation's future economy, the educational leaders must remain focused on transformation, effective systems, authenticity, team leadership, mission, vision, values, and goals.

While it is important for superintendents to understand and be able to access multiple leadership approaches, transformational leadership is somewhat all encompassing. Transformative leaders focus on shifting mindsets by addressing the core complexities and belief systems that ultimately manifest into behaviors and decisions. These are leaders who

are authentic in their approach to team leadership, and they know that teams prosper when there are clear expectations, shared mission, visions, and values. Transformational leaders lead by example, as they are able to delegate responsibility while holding themselves and their followers accountable for their actions.

For school districts to transform, transformational leaders will likely need to first acknowledge that the school system is riddled with deep-rooted complexities. The leader has to take ownership for the current state of the school district. Such leaders must be afforded an opportunity to hire, develop, and transition staff while sustaining an achievement-oriented organizational culture that puts kids first. In doing so, Detroit has a chance to become one of the highest performing urban centers in the nation. In the absence of accomplishing the goal of finding an educational leader who will lead the city's largest school system effectively, the public education system will implode and current state policies will be decimated.

Selecting and retaining a strong education leader will require competent school board members who work together publicly and privately to engage in value-added activities with an emphatic and consistent focus on systemic and sustainable change focused on strong academic, operational, or fiscal outcomes. If a superintendent is selected but not supported, the plan will result in little or no change in performance outcomes. Therefore, accomplishing the school board's goals must include a supported leader. The selected superintendent must, in turn, have the skill, stamina, and intestinal fortitude to both optimize the district and execute a plan while accurately measuring and effectively addressing successes and failures across the organization. It is not enough for a Detroit school district superintendent to focus on organizational systems in isolation. As the leader, the superintendent must be a generalist with aspects of what

Kolowski (2013) identified as five characteristics of superintendents: instructional leader, business manager, political acumen, personnel staff, and community liaison.

When discussing concerns about the lack of "institutional knowledge" now leading the Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD), Karen Ridgeway asserted that superintendents need access to the district's history. She meant that it is important to know how the organization functions academically, financially, and operationally. When superintendents are equipped with the historical knowledge of the organization, a new Detroit public school superintendent can optimize organizational systems while reducing those that add little or no value to schools, students, families, and staff. In an effort to accomplish this, Deborah McGriff studied Porter's school system designs. Porter had preceded her in the position and had led the Michigan Department of Education prior to accepting the superintendency at DPS and, later, the presidency at Eastern Michigan University.

Porter's school system designs have never fully been realized in Detroit and may have been ahead of their time. While other school systems utilize the Porter roadmap, no superintendent has ever been in Detroit long enough to design and fully implement a school system model or to assess and measure the system's outcomes over a period of time extending beyond five years. David Adamany, a one-year CEO, described the ways in which superintendent attrition rates were too high in Detroit for the school system to fully recover. For Adamany, the impact of high leadership turnover includes, but is not limited to, massive dysfunction across the organization and in each of the school buildings. The school system is dysfunctional largely due to inferior human resource practices, astronomical student truancy rates, substandard facility conditions, and politicized interference with the administration of the district. Porter's performance-based, results-driven whole-school reform model is essentially a

performance-based talent management system for everyone employed by or volunteering in the organization, including the superintendent and school board.

Today, most schools in Detroit are chronically failing. They have been identified by state and national standards over multiple decades as being among the lowest performing—not only on academic tests—but also in terms of attendance, graduation rates, and readiness for college and career opportunities. Built over several decades by numerous people of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and professional affiliations, the Detroit public school system has failed, in part, due to magnified complexity in transforming the organization and the transient executive leadership teams. Just as these summary of challenges suggest, recommendations outlined in the following section are designed to build a high-performance school district in Detroit that will effectively educate students while building a qualified human capital pipeline of professionals who are treated and developed as such.

Recommendations

When discussing the Detroit school system it may be tempting to limit dialogue to the superficial components indicative of longstanding, more complex, unresolved, dysfunctional district-wide characteristics. For instance, student performance outcomes are indicative of low quality instruction–a result of longstanding, low-quality practices not only in the academic department but also across three major functions in any organization: operations, human resources, and finance. In a school system, inferior instructional practices are the result of cumulative breakdowns in the larger organization. In the case of academic performance as the standing example, building a robust instructional program designed for student access to competitive college and career opportunities requires system-wide change and focus. In the absence of clearly identified goals across the district's operations, academic, human resources,

and finance departments, decision makers in Michigan's largest school system remain ill-prepared and misinformed about systemic challenges. Future superintendents in Detroit must address the root cause of the city's chronic academic failure. Otherwise, the many challenges they face will persist. In the absence of said focus, the larger, more complex and convoluted student achievement problem will also be exacerbated.

The school board and superintendent will need to have one main objective for the first ninety days: organizing for internal effectiveness and credibility. With the majority of board members not having served on the board in previous years, there is an unprecedented knowledge gap between what newly elected board members know about the true state of the school district and accurate assessments of current local, state, and federal policies and procedures. A ninety-day plan allows for the board to focus on specific tasks: growing board members' access to and knowledge about accurate and reliable information needed for well-informed governance decisions; and organizing effectively and efficiently for strong organizational performance and stakeholder support.

Nevertheless, following a ninety-day plan will not guarantee success; there are no panaceas for creating a viable public school district. Setting the stage early to accomplish clearly defined objectives and to achieve measurable tasks, however, will lead toward organizing for internal effectiveness and establishing credibility. Internal effectiveness is imperative; it adds a foundation on which the incoming superintendent can build a sustainable school system focused on student achievement. If the board does not establish a clear direction forward and monitor its own progress, effectiveness and cost-efficiency will falter. Stakeholders will draw similarities between the newly elected board and former school governance regimes and associate it with failure in previous years. Reducing this probability requires the school board to first define the

measurable expectations for internal organizational effectiveness in key areas: governance, operations, academics, finance, and human resources.

Credibility hinges on the ability to lead well at the onset of functioning as a newly elected school governance board. Deepening the pressure of meeting professional expectations and making solid professional impressions are the residual effects of missing professional targets. Success requires input, focus, and support from internal stakeholders who remain motivated to stay engaged in the process, regardless of how intensive the challenges become. As long as internal stakeholders can believe in the system and its leaders are open to feedback as well as sharing the progress, challenges, necessary changes, and the vision for the organization, internal stakeholders will be focused. They will see their time and effort positively impacting measured outcomes as the board continues to prioritize closing their knowledge gap while providing opportunities to set the stage for effectiveness, credibility, and publicly sharing measurable progress and challenges pertaining to articulated and measurable goals.

The board must reduce the superintendent's barriers to success and include a strategy that entails frequent, consistent, measurable, and accurate updates pertaining to goals for academics, operations, and finances. Doing so allows for the board to attack its largest challenges. Alternatively, the city's already decimated school system will be further aggravated by the absence of the board's expedient transition into governance and commitment to sustainable progress and change. The ninety-day plan allows for early, focused attention on laying an effective foundation on which boards and superintendents can build. The first objective should include tasks drafted for the board. Tasks are not all encompassing but can keep the governance board focused on specific action steps necessary to achieve the mission and vision. With the

knowledge gap around data, policy, and processes, a new board must learn quickly so they are equipped to make well-informed decisions based on accurate information.

One way to operationalize a ninety-day plan is to juxtapose tasks by due dates and color-coded status cells to indicate progress monitoring status updates, which can be used by the board to inform dialogue about key next steps and midcourse corrections. Red is indicative of incomplete tasks; yellow demonstrates tasks are in progress, and green constitutes absolute (not partial) completion. Some of the board's tasks include hiring a competent and organized project manager in lieu of using a standard board secretary. The idea here is that the person tasked with managing board relations has the skills necessary to do everything from organizing coherent, professional materials that connect the board with power-brokering experiences. It is advised that a newly-elected board hire a chief-of-staff level individual to help organize them as a high functioning, well-informed governance body.

Essential responsibilities include hiring a successful executive search firm to find the right fit for the superintendent, as well as organizing and scheduling small and separate meetings with key state and federal agencies including but not limited to the following: the Michigan Treasury Department, the district's state-appointed Financial Review Commission, the Michigan Department of Education, the State School Reform/Redesign Office, and the Michigan Association of School Boards. A high-functioning project manager hired by the board can organize the meetings with structured agendas and hardcopies of all materials, so the board can learn which policies govern the educational systems as well as understand expectations, processes, procedures, compliance protocols, deadlines, available supports, incentives and consequences.

High organizational performance requires a healthy organizational culture. While not likely to be achieved in ninety days, changing the organizational culture is in the realm of possibilities if the school board begins with action-oriented tasks aligned with their mission, vision, and goals while allowing the superintendent to lead without interference or mission creep. However, changing the organizational culture is complex. Cultural shifts–or how persons in the organization conduct themselves, what they believe, the rituals they engage in and hold true to their existence–reflect their values. Focus will lead to effective redesigning, measuring, and managing district-wide processes that significantly increase student attendance as well as increase behavior, graduation, career technical education, and college matriculation. Values that support staff and student performance, professionalism, rewards, incentives, and consequences can lead to the retention of and continued investment in the highest skilled staff and the development and transition of lower skilled and less reliable under-skilled personnel. Detroit's newly elected school board would do well to have a superintendent focused on their efforts to build the larger organization.

The superintendent must be well planned and prepared. Given the gravity of board members' knowledge gap and future workload, the superintendent will need to establish credibility and engage in consistent and polished organizing. Part of the problem is that board members conflate or confuse administrative duties with governance. When the board's governance work is inappropriately engaged with day-to-day operations and decisions, superintendents will struggle to lead effectively. Superintendents who focus on operations, academics, finance, human resources, legal, culture, communities, and stakeholders are better positioned to lead school system transformation. Similar to the school board components in the plan, there is a sample outline of opportunities for the superintendent. In ninety days or less, the

newly hired superintendent should meet with staff at all levels during one-on-ones and small group meetings to learn about their roles, responsibilities, challenges, and interests. Doing so allows for the superintendent to close his or her own knowledge gap, and subsequently, she or he will have the capacity to optimize operations, share progress, monitor processes and important deadlines, deliver on processes consistently and accurately, as well as align all work to the school board's mission, vision, values, and goals.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for participating in this interview. I would like to inform you that I will be taking notes throughout the interview so that I can maintain an accurate record of your responses. Are you comfortable with and agree to me taking notes during this interview? You have the right to refuse to answer any questions if you feel that something is too personal or inappropriate. And, you have the right to end this interview at any time. There are no consequences to you if you do decline a question or decide to end the session. Do you have any questions before we get started? Describe the organizational structure and function of your community resource center, including how personnel are utilized.

1. Describe your experiences as a superintendent at DPS.
2. What are some things you are proud of from your experiences as a superintendent at DPS?
3. Describe some of your challenges.
4. If you were in the position today, what would you do?
5. May I follow up with additional questions as I continue with my analysis?

Conclusion: Thank you for participating in this interview.