

Report on the Virginia Superintendents' Professional Development Survey

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Preface

This research was conducted to provide information to a Joint Legislative Commission and Task Force on Educational Leadership that has been established to examine current challenges of educational administration and to recommend changes in the preparation and on-going professional development of school leaders. The study was funded through the Virginia Department of Education as part of a grant from Wallace/Reader's Digest Funds to the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) to strengthen school leadership of principals and superintendents. This project, the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP), has participated in the development and administration of the survey. Technical resources to complete the survey were provided by the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC). Additional assistance has been provided by Michael DiPaola and Megan Tschannen-Moran of the College of William and Mary, who had developed and administered a survey of principals, and Anne Meek, who provided very helpful reviews of drafts of the survey and report.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes findings from a survey of 258 Virginia superintendents, deputy superintendents, associate superintendents, and assistant superintendents. The primary purposes of the survey were to identify changes in the nature of the superintendency, job satisfaction, the significance of current issues and problems, and professional development needs. A high response rate (77%) was obtained, with approximately equal distributions across the four superintendent positions.

Demographic information included the following characteristics of the sample:

- 80% of superintendents were male
- 79% of superintendents were between ages 50-59
- 58% of assistant superintendents were male
- 60% of the sample holds the doctorate; 81% of the degrees were earned in Virginia
- 89% of the sample had been teachers
- 75% of the sample had been principals

Ninety-five percent of the sample indicated that they work at least 50 hours per week; 55% of superintendents indicated that they work at least 60 hours a week.

It is likely that there will be a significant turnover in personnel at this level in the near future. According to these self-reports, 50% indicated that they will retire or be in a new position within 3-5 years, and 22% plan to retire or leave the field of education within three years.

Job satisfaction was high, with very high percentages indicating "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with most job activities. This indicates that the respondents are generally satisfied with most of what they do, though there is room for further improvement in satisfaction. Respondents were least satisfied with working conditions, including the amount of time devoted to the job, and salary.

The respondents indicated that there was a number of issues/problems that they viewed as highly significant. Most of these were concerned with planning and instructional leadership (e.g., student achievement on SOL tests, effective use of instructional time, curriculum improvement), with less significance given to issues/problems in organizational management (with some exceptions, notably the need to build an effective administrative team, and budgeting), communication, and professionalism. Professional development needs mirror the significance of issues/problems. Many areas were rated as high professional development needs, with slightly more needs in planning and instructional leadership and organizational management than in communication and professionalism, e.g., budgeting, using technology, implementing technology, teacher evaluation, legal and political issues. Two issues in professionalism, managing stress and leadership skills, were rated relatively high as needs for professional development. Over half of the respondents indicated that they needed greater skill in use of technology for administration. Other needed skills included data-driven decision-making and finance and budget. Six additional skill areas were identified by about a third of the respondents. These results suggest that the sample is most concerned about immediate, practical issues and

problems, and that there is a continued need for professional development opportunities in many areas. There was a wide range of results concerning professional development needs, which indicates that there are differences that need to be accommodated. These issues are consistent with what superintendents indicated were the most significant changes in the last five years, and documented changes in actual time spent in different areas. Broadened accountability and testing, not surprisingly, were identified by the greatest percentage of respondents as significant changes. Legal issues, technology, and special education were also identified. The greatest change in job activities included more e-mail, paperwork, instructional leadership, and personnel and evaluation.

The final section in the survey addressed perceived value of preparation and other activities that are used for professional development. Clearly, job experience was most valued, whether it be in the central office, as principal, or as a teacher. Over half of the respondents indicated that graduate education was "much valued." Meetings and conferences were judged to have limited value. The survey found that administrators are provided with released time and financial support for engaging in professional development, though a lack of time prevents many from participating as much as they would like. When offered professional development activities, the respondents clearly favored a single or two-day format. Half-days were seen as too short and five-to-seven day academies were judged to be too long.

The final table addresses reasons that individuals with administrative endorsements were not holding a central office position. It was clear that reasons related to "lack of desire," (e.g., stress, long hours, pay) rather than qualifications, were most important. Somewhat less important was having an appropriate disposition, the difficulty in changing positions, broadened accountability, and family situations. Only 20 percent of the sample indicated that these individuals lacked appropriate training and preparation.

The results of this research provides a description of superintendent positions, job satisfaction, and professional development needs. Based on a high return rate, it can be concluded that there will be a significant turnover of individuals in these positions, with ongoing professional development needs for both new and continuing positions. This suggests that the Commonwealth of Virginia needs to assure that adequate training and professional development opportunities are provided. While most superintendents are very satisfied with their jobs, there is room for improvement, particularly in working conditions and salary. Professional development needs mirrored ratings of contemporary issues and problems. There is clearly a need for continuing professional development opportunities, particularly in areas that pose immediate practical problems and issues. Diversity in professional development activities is needed to accommodate individual differences. While practical experience was viewed as the most important professional development experience, graduate education was also highly significant. A single or two-day format for training is preferred.

In summary, the survey indicates a strong need for continuous, individualized professional development in areas related to assuring student achievement in a data-driven, high-stakes, accountability-driven environment. As the role of superintendent becomes immersed in data analyses, staff training, technology, and the need to create effective school cultures, there is a strong urgency for training and professional development in areas that affect these responsibilities.

Introduction

The purpose of this survey is to ascertain superintendents' opinions and perspectives concerning the nature of the expectations and demands of school division central office superintendent positions, including deputy, associate, and assistant superintendents, as well as their beliefs about professional development that are needed to keep pace with changing responsibilities. The survey complements one given to school principals in 2001, using many of the same questions, with modifications as needed to be relevant to superintendents. More specifically, the survey was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How satisfied are superintendents with responsibilities of their positions?
2. From what organizations do superintendents receive the most assistance in meeting their professional development needs?
3. What types of preparation or experiences have been of most value?
4. What skills need further development?
5. What barriers exist to receive needed professional development?
6. What are career plans of superintendents?
7. What is the current significance of various issues and problems in education that have implications for school leadership?
8. What is the extent of professional development needs in issues and problems in education?
9. How has the role of the superintendent changed in the last five years?
10. Why have individuals qualified for a central office position not taken these positions?
11. What demographics characterize individuals in superintendent positions?

Many of the questions are the same as those used in a 2001 statewide survey of principals, conducted by the College of William and Mary. This provides a basis of comparison between principals and superintendents to result in a comprehensive analysis of professional development needs.

It is clear that effective school leadership is essential to promoting student achievement and retention of teachers and administrators. It is also clear that such leadership is most effective when there are sufficient opportunities to meet changing professional development needs. It is hoped that this survey will provide data so that appropriate learning experiences can be developed and promoted.

Methodology

Sample

The sample consisted of every person in Virginia who currently holds a position of Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, or Assistant Superintendent. A listing of these individuals, with business mailing addresses, was provided by the Virginia Department of Education. The entire population (n= 334) was used for the study.

A total of 256 individuals returned surveys, for response rate of 77%. This response rate was the same for those holding the position of superintendent and those holding deputy, associate, and assistant superintendent positions.

Instrument

The survey was adapted from one used in 2001 in a study of Virginia Principals. The principal survey was developed by researchers from the College of William and Mary. Items from the principal survey were supplanted by similar items for superintendents. Several principal survey items were deleted since they could not be modified for superintendents, and several items were added to the superintendent survey. The items that remained unchanged concerned job satisfaction, significance of issues and problems, professional development needs, and many of the demographic items.

A draft of the superintendent survey was pilot-tested with several individuals for clarity; several changes were made to this draft to result in the survey that was used (Appendix A).

Procedures

The list of all superintendents, deputy superintendents, associate superintendents, and assistant superintendents, with business addresses, was obtained from the Virginia Department of Education. An initial letter from the State Superintendent, Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary, was mailed to all on the list, introducing the purpose of the survey and urging completion. One week later each person on the list received the survey and a postcard. To assure confidentiality and keep track of nonrespondents, the postcard, with the name of the respondent, was returned by separate mail. Individuals who did not return the postcard were sent a follow-up mailing with another copy of the survey. Once all surveys were received a database containing all responses was constructed, with no identifying information to assure confidentiality.

Findings

Demographics

Tables 1-8 summarize demographics and other characteristics of the sample. Of a total of 103 responding superintendents, 80% were male and 79% were between the ages of 50-59. Assistant superintendents, which not surprisingly make up the largest group (n=123), were 58% male and were only somewhat younger than superintendents.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Respondents by Gender and Position Title

	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%
Superintendent	83	80	21	20
Deputy Superintendent	8	89	1	11
Associate Superintendent	8	50	8	50
Assistant Superintendent	74	58	53	42
Total	173	68	83	32

Table 2

Number and Percentage of Respondents by Age and Position Title

	Age									
	35-44		45-49		50-54		55-59		60 or older	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Superintendent	2	2%	9	9%	44	43%	37	36%	11	11%
Deputy, Associate, Assistant Superintendent	17	11%	24	16%	51	34%	45	30%	15	10%
Total	19	7%	33	13%	95	37%	82	32%	26	10%

The locations of the divisions represented in the sample were classified as urban, suburban, and rural by the superintendents. As shown in Table 3, the vast majority of divisions was rural, with only 11% urban.

Table 3

Number and Percentage of Urban, Suburban, and Rural School Divisions¹

Location	n	%
Urban	11	11
Suburban	18	18
Rural	71	71

¹Location indicated by superintendents

The number and percentage of highest degree earned by the sample is summarized in Table 4. These results show that the vast majority of the sample, 90%, have education beyond the masters degree. Nearly 60% of the respondents indicated holding the doctor of education or doctor of philosophy degree. Most of the remaining had an educational specialist certificate. About 80% of the degrees earned were completed at Virginia institutions of higher education.

Table 4

Number and Percentage of Highest Degrees Earned

Degree	n	%
Doctor of education	126	50
Educational specialist	47	19
Doctor of philosophy	23	9
Master's in education	16	6
Master's not in education	11	4
Master's and coursework for doctorate	8	3

Table 5

Number and Percentage of Degrees Obtained in Virginia

Location	n	%
Virginia	201	81
Out-of-state	48	19

Table 6 indicates the nature of full-time positions that were held by the sample prior to taking their current position. Respondents could check as many prior positions as appropriate. Following teacher (89%), about three quarters of the sample also held a principal and central office position. Sixty-three percent had been an assistant principal.

Table 6

Percentage of Full-Time Positions Held Prior to Current Position

Full-time Position	Percentage
Teacher	89
Principal	75
Central Office Administrator	74
Assistant Principal	63
Supervisor or Curriculum Specialist	40
College Faculty	17
Other	15
Guidance Counselor	8

Respondents were asked to indicate the average number of hours worked. Table 7 summarizes their responses. It shows that 95 percent of superintendents, and 85 percent of other individuals, worked at least 50 hours per week. Thirty-eight percent, overall, indicated working 60 or more hours per week.

Table 7

Number and Percentage of Hours a Week Worked By Position

	Hours a Week									
	40-45		45-49		50-54		55-59		60 or more	
	n		n		n		n		n	
Superintendent	0	0%	6	6%	22	22%	18	18%	55	55%
Deputy, Associate, Assistant Superintendent	4	3%	17	11%	47	31%	43	28%	40	26%
Total	4	2%	23	9%	69	27%	61	38%	95	38%

Table 8 displays the percentage of the sample indicating membership in various professional organizations. Respondents indicated as many as appropriate. The results show that professional membership is dominated by five groups: Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Virginia School Boards Association, Virginia Association of School Superintendents, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the American Association of School Administrators.

Table 8

Percentage Holding Membership in Professional Organizations
(n=258)

Organization	Percentage
Virginia Association of School Superintendents	60
Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	54
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	52
American Association of School Administrators	52
Virginia School Boards Association	48
National School Board Association	28
National Association of Secondary School Principals	7
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals	7
Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals	6
National Association of Elementary School Principals	4

Two questions in the survey assessed future plans of the respondents. Table 9 indicates career plans for the next 3-5 years. Over 50% of the respondents planned to retire or be in a new position within 3-5 years. This indicates a substantial number of individuals who will have new positions for which professional development will be needed. Table 10 indicates further data to support this implication. These data show that 22% of the sample plan to retire or leave the field of education within 3 years, 44% within 5 years, and 70% in 7 years. These statistics hold for both superintendents and "others."

Table 9

Percentages Indicating Career Plans for the Next 3-5 Years

Plans	Superintendents N=104	Other N=152	Total N=258
Remain in present position	53	40	45
Retire from current position	37	29	32
Seek a position as superintendent of schools in a different school division	10	18	15
Seek a position in a different administrative capacity	0	8	8
Seek a position in a career outside of K-12 education	0	4	4

Table 10

Percentages Indicating Year of Anticipated Retirement or Leaving the Field of Education

Year	Superintendents N=104	Other N=152	Total N=258
2003	9	5	7
2004	7	10	9
2005	3	7	6
2006	13	11	12
2007	15	7	12
2008	11	13	12
2009	4	4	4
2010	9	11	10
2011 or later	28	32	30

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction results for all respondents are summarized in Table 11 by indicating the percentage of respondents satisfied or dissatisfied with typical job activities. These percentages indicate that respondents are generally very satisfied with most of what they do. Ninety percent or more are satisfied or very satisfied with 12 of the 15 job activities listed. Clearly the majority of responses given were "satisfied," which suggests that there is room for more satisfaction. Respondents were least satisfied with the amount of time devoted to the job (too much time), working conditions, and salary.

Table 11

Percentage Satisfied With Different Job Activities
(n=258)

Activity	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Amount of time devoted to job	2	17	63	18
Results achieved	0	6	66	27
Salary	3	20	64	14
Working conditions	0	10	57	33
Rapport with teachers	0	4	52	44
Rapport with students	1	6	57	36
Rapport with parents	0	4	63	34
Rapport with businesses	0	5	57	38
Rapport with community leaders	0	4	54	42
Relations with super-ordinates	0	3	49	48
Relations with peers	0	1	36	63
Relations with subordinates	0	2	45	54
Job security	0	6	57	37
Social status and prestige	0	4	63	34
Relations with school board	1	6	47	45

Professional Development Needs

Tables 12-14 relate directly or indirectly to professional development. One set of questions addresses the significance of various issues and problems (an indirect indication of need for professional development) and the extent to which respondents indicate a need for further professional development (direct). There is also an indication of additional skills needed (direct) and changes in education that suggest the need for additional professional development (indirect). Table 12 presents a comprehensive list of 41 contemporary issues and problems with accompanying percentages. Few of the issues or problems in the category Planning and Instructional Leadership were rated "not significant." In this category clearly "student achievement on standardized/SOL tests" was most significant (75% indicating "highly significant"). The following percentages indicating "highly significant" show the relatively strong importance of these issues:

- Strategic planning/goal setting (49%)
- Using research for instructional planning (59%)
- Curriculum improvement (58%)
- Effective use of instructional time (61%)
- Implementing technology in instruction (50%)
- Faculty/staff development (52%)
- Teacher evaluation to improve instruction (58%)

In the second category, Organizational Management, the percentages indicating "highly significant" were not nearly as large, overall, as those in Planning and Instructional Leadership. Four issues in this category that showed relatively high significance included "Budgeting and resource allocation," "Building an effective management team," "Legal issues in education," and "Managing the politics of education" were identified as important issues (65%, 55%, 47%, and 52% indicating "highly significant," respectively). The least significant issues in this section were "Paper work" and "Using models of distributed leadership."

The Communication section results were still less significant than the 13 items in Organizational Management. The three most significant communication issues were "Working with community leaders or government agencies" (51% "highly significant"), "Working with families" (42% "highly significant") and "Public relations and work with the media" (42% "highly significant").

Finally, the Professional category, with 5 items, indicated that "Enhancing my leadership skills" was most important (45% "highly significant"). "Personal time management" also was rated as important (83% indicating "significant" or "highly significant").

Overall, these results suggest that superintendents believe that the most significant issues and problems are those related to planning and instructional leadership, particularly with most aspects related to instruction, such as improving teacher evaluation, curriculum, and use of instructional time, and SOL testing, and budget. The high rating of "Using research for educational improvement" probably reflects the need to use data-based evidence in planning and evaluation. The significance of organizational management, communication, and

Table 12
 Percentages Indicating Significance of Issues and Professional Development Needs
 (n=258)

Issues/Problems	Significance of Issue/Problem			Professional Development Needs				
	Not Significant	Significant	Highly Significant	None	Low	Average	High	
Planning and Instructional Leadership								
(01) Strategic planning/ goal setting		7	44	49		8	27	48
17								
(02) Using research for educational improvement	5	36	59	6	21	50	22	
(03) Improving staff morale	10	51	40	12	27	48	13	
(04) Organizational climate	11	52	37	12	33	41	14	
(05) Curriculum improvement	6	36	58	7	23	49	21	
(06) Working with curriculum and technical specialists	15	51	35	16	29	44	12	
(07) Student achievement on standardized tests/SOLs	3	23	75	7	18	44	31	
(08) Effective use of instructional time	5	34	61	5	26	48	21	
(09) Implementing technology in instruction	3	46	50	5	16	50	29	
(10) Providing alternative programs (e.g., ESL)		9	55	36		8	29	46
18								
(11) Faculty /staff development	4	44	52	8	23	50	21	
(12) Teacher evaluation to improve instruction	2	39	58	6	21	47	27	
(13) Developing employee improvement plans	4	53	43	7	23	53	17	
Organizational Management								
(14) Non-academic student behavior (discipline, drugs, etc.)	8	55	38	10	35	40	15	
(15) Staff evaluation for promotion/dismissal	6	56	38	7	27	51	15	
(16) Management and supervision of support staff	12	61	27	10	40	41	10	
(17) Understanding and managing group dynamics	10	58	31	10	36	43	11	
(18) Group decision-making and implementation	14	53	32	13	37	38	12	
(19) Building an effective administrative team	7	38	55	8	27	41	24	
(20) Managing or resolving conflict	10	56	34	8	34	43	16	
(21) Legal issues in education	4	49	47	4	23	48	25	
(22) Managing the politics of education		6	42	52		7	19	42

	Significance of Issue/Problem			Professional Development Needs			
	Not Significant	Significant	Highly Significant	None	Low	Average	High
(23) Budgeting and resource allocation	4	31	65	6	21	43	31
(24) Paperwork (record-keeping, reports, accounts)	15	64	21	15	42	34	8
(25) Using computers and other technologies as administrative tools	6	53	41	6	28	43	23
(26) Using models of distributed leadership	15	62	23	12	31	47	10
Communication							
(27) Working with families		8	51	42	10	30	47
(28) Working with community leaders or government agencies	5	44	51	7	30	44	19
(29) Working with external advocacy groups and organizations	10	63	27	10	39	41	10
(30) Networking and collaborating with peers	10	53	37	10	36	42	11
(31) Getting better information from my superiors	28	52	20	25	36	32	7
(32) Communicating better with my subordinates	16	56	28	15	38	39	9
(33) Communicating better with my supervisors	25	5	24	22	35	35	8
(34) Public relations and work with the media	9	49	42	8	29	46	18
(35) Interviewing skills	22	54	24	25	34	34	7
(36) Dealing with child abuse and neglect		15	63	22	12	43	40
Professionalism							
(37) Planning my professional growth and career development	29	49	22	23	34	33	10
(38) Enhancing my leadership skills	12	43	45	9	24	45	23
(39) Personal time management	16	48	35	17	26	38	19
(40) Managing stress	22	44	35	20	27	31	23
(41) Pre-retirement counseling	22	49	29	17	24	38	21

professionalism, with some exceptions as noted above, was less than what is indicated for instruction.

Table 12 also provides a direct indication of whether there is a need for professional development for each of the issues and problems. Not surprisingly, reported needs tend to parallel the significance of the issues/problems, though there is slightly more need for professional development in the Organizational Management section than the other three. In the Planning and Instructional Leadership section about 30% of the sample indicated that the following rated "high" in professional development:

- Student achievement on standardized/SOL tests
- Implementing technology in instruction
- Teacher evaluation to improve instruction

Two issues/problems in the Organizational Management category also had about 30% of the sample indicating "high":

- Managing the politics of education
- Budgeting and resource allocation

Three additional issues/problems in the Organizational Management category had about 25% of the sample indicating "high":

- Building an effective administrative team
- Legal issues in education
- Using computers and other technologies as administrative tools

None of the issues/problems in the Communication or Professionalism categories showed any ratings of more than 23% "high," though two issues/problems, "Enhancing my leadership skills," and "Managing stress," did show a rating of 23% "high."

The areas that were rated lowest, showing relatively little indication of need for further professional development, included the following:

- Management of support staff
- Group decision-making and implementation
- Paperwork
- Getting better information from my superiors
- Working with external advocacy groups and organizations
- Communicating better with my subordinates
- Communicating better with my supervisors
- Interviewing skills
- Dealing with child abuse and neglect
- Planning my professional growth and career development

The results from Table 12 indicate that superintendents are most concerned about immediate, practical issues and problems such as SOL test scores, budgeting, politics, and technology. Even though there may have been opportunities to grow professionally in these areas in the past, this population of individuals suggests that even more professional development in the areas is warranted. Also, it should be pointed out that there is a fairly wide dispersion of scores for most

issues/problems. This means that a given individual or small group may differ from the general trends that have been drawn. In many areas that do not have "high" professional development needs overall, there is still a significant percentage of individuals who rate the area as "low" or

"average." Clearly, the percentages show that the sample indicates there is a strong need for continued professional development in many areas.

Respondents were also asked directly whether they needed to develop or refine specified skills. The choice for each area was "yes" or "no." The results for the sample as a whole as well as results for superintendent and other subgroups are summarized in Table 13. The three areas that were identified most often include "uses of technology for administration," "data-driven decision-making," and "finance and budget." Over half of the respondents indicated "uses of technology for administration," which was clearly the skill area with the greatest need. About 40% of the sample indicated that "data-driven decision-making" and "finance and budget" were needed skill areas. Several additional areas were selected by about a third of the respondents, including "policy analysis/development," "uses of technology for instruction," "school law," "resource allocation," and "special education implementation." Translated to numbers, these percentages show that about 100 individuals indicate a need for additional skills in several areas. This is a substantial number and has implications for professional development opportunities.

Table 13
Percentages Indicating Needs for Additional Skills

Area	Superintendents N=104	Other ¹ N=152	Total N=258
Uses of technology for administration	55	52	53
Data-driven decision-making	44	37	40
Finance and budget	25	48	39
Policy analysis/development	29	41	36
School law	25	35	31
Uses of technology for instruction	39	26	31
Special education implementation	25	34	30
Resource utilization	38	27	30
Time management	30	28	28
Standardized test analysis	30	24	26
Personnel evaluation	22	26	24
Stress management	21	26	23
Curriculum alignment	23	18	20
Effective communication	18	20	19
Student discipline	2	4	4

¹ Other includes Deputy Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent

Several significant differences were reported by superintendents as compared to "others." Superintendents were clearly more interested in the following skill areas than were "others":

- Use of technology for instruction
- Data-driven decision-making
- Resource allocation

Superintendents indicated significantly *less* need than "others" in several areas:

- Special education
- Policy analysis/development
- Finance and budget
- School law

Another way to identify areas of need for professional development is to examine changes in the responsibilities of the position. Table 14 summarizes such changes in the last five years. It is not surprising that "broadened accountability" and "focus on test scores" was judged by the highest percentage as changes. Significant percentages are also indicated for the use of technology, dealing with special education, and increased paperwork. The remaining areas had very low percentages, indicating little, if any, change.

Table 14
Percentage Indicating Changes in Position in Last Five Years
(n=258)

Change	Percentage
Broadened accountability	66
Focus on test scores	54
Legal issues and mandates	35
Expanded technology as a management tool	31
Special education regulations and implementation	24
Increased paperwork	22
Increased student problems	6
Increased disrespect	5
Lack of parental support	4
Implementing site-based management	2

Another way to address the nature of the position is to show the average percent of time spent each week in different activities, and to see if that is more or less than compared to five years ago. Data addressing these activities are presented in Table 15, which shows the current average percent of time in different activities, and the amount of emphasis compared to five years ago.

Table 15
Average Percent of Time Per Week in Different Activities
and Comparisons with Five Years Ago

Activity	Mean %	Compared to Five Years Ago		
		% Much More Time	% About the Same	% Much Less Time
Paperwork	27	50	45	5
Instructional leadership	22	40	46	14
Meetings with administrators	19	36	62	2
E-mail	17	83	17	1
Personnel and evaluation	15	23	70	7
Policy influence	13	32	62	5
Meetings with parents	10	10	75	15
Meetings with community leaders	10	26	70	4
Student discipline	9	13	64	23
Meetings with higher education	5	11	70	20

Paperwork not only consumes the most time, it has increased for about half of the respondents compared to five years ago. There is also significant time with instructional leadership, which is much more time than five years ago. Not surprisingly, 83% indicated that they use e-mail much more. Meetings with administrators, email, and paperwork make up about two thirds of the time spent.

Perceptions of Preparation and Other Professional Development Experiences

Several questions on the survey addressed the perceived value of specific preparation and other experiences. Table 16 lists typical preparation and other experiences that individuals are likely to have completed with an indication of the extent of the value. Clearly, work experience in the current position, as a principal, in the central office, and, to a somewhat lesser extent teacher, were identified as having "much value." Following experience, graduate education was identified by 55% of the sample as "much value." Meetings generally had "some" or "much value." A substantial percentage, 25%, indicated that national meetings for superintendents were of little value. These results suggest that on-the-job experience is of most value, followed by graduate education.

Table 16
Percentage Valuing Preparation Experiences and Other Activities
(n=258)

Preparation or Activity	Little Value	Some Value	Much Value
Experience as a principal	0	6	93
Experience in central office	0	10	91
Experience in current position	1	9	90
Experience as a teacher	1	27	72
Graduate education	3	41	55
Regional meetings of superintendents	10	50	40
State meetings of superintendents	11	53	36
Local meetings of superintendents	11	55	34
Administrator institute or conference	8	60	31
National meetings of superintendents	25	53	21
In-service training	11	70	20

Table 17 shows the nature of school board support for different professional development activities, and indicates differences between superintendents and others. There were no significant differences between superintendents and "others." Both released time and financial support for all or most expenses to attend meetings and conferences are provided to just about everyone in the sample. About half pay all or a portion of both college and non-college tuition.

Table 17
Percentages Indicating School Board Support for Participation in
Professional Development Activities

Activity	Superintendents N=104	Other N=152	Total N=258
Allows released time to attend meetings and conferences sponsored by professional associations	98	97	97
Pays all or most of expenses to attend meetings/conferences	98	91	94
Pays all or a portion of college and non-college tuition	52	55	54
Provides sabbatical leave	4	12	9
Pays a portion (half or less) of expenses to attend meetings/conferences	3	9	7
Pays none of my expenses	2	0	1

Table 18 shows the percentages of respondents who indicate that barriers exist to attend professional meetings or conferences. Clearly the demands of the job is the most important barrier, though as many as a fifth of the sample indicated that there is a lack of relevant meetings or conferences. Financial support is not an issue.

Table 18
Percentages Indicating Barriers to Attending Professional Meetings or Conferences

Barrier	Superintendents N=104	Other N=152	Total N=258
Can't get away due to the demands of the job	87	85	85
Lack of relevant meetings or conferences	19	18	19
Lack of financial support	7	9	8
Can't get away due to division policy	0	1	1

Table 19 shows the preferences for different kinds of professional development formats. Each respondent checked two of the four alternatives. The preference for two thirds of the sample is for single-day workshops, seminars, or institutes. Almost half indicated that a two-day format would work well, and 38% indicated that a half-day format would be preferred. Only about ten percent indicated that a five-to-seven day leadership academy would be preferred.

Table 19

Percentage Indicating Preferences of Professional Development Activities
(n=258)

Activity	Percentage
Single-day workshops, seminars, or institutes	68
Two-day workshops, seminars, or institutes	46
Half-day seminars or institutes	38
Five-to-seven day leadership development academy	11

The final table summarizes responses to a question in which the respondents indicated reasons individuals with administrative endorsements, with whom they were familiar, were not holding a central office position. This was done for two individuals, which was combined as an average in Table 20. The two reasons cited most frequently, by 41% of the respondents, were stress of the job and long hours, both considered to be "lack of desire." More than a third checked "inappropriate disposition or temperament," and about a quarter mentioned three reasons - difficulty in changing positions, broadened accountability, and pay. Only 20 percent of the sample indicated that these individuals lacked appropriate training and preparation.

Table 20

Percentage Indicating Reasons for Persons with Administrative Endorsement
Who are Not Holding a Central Office Position
(n=258)

Reason	Percentage
Lack of desire: stress of the job	41
Lack of desire: long hours	41
Lack of qualifications: inappropriate disposition or temperament	37
Lack of desire: broadened accountability	27
Family considerations: the difficulty in changing locations	27
Lack of desire: pay	26
Lack of qualifications: inadequate training and preparation	20
Family considerations: other	18
Lack of qualifications: other	15
Lack of desire: perceived inability to make a difference	13
Lack of desire: increasing disrespect	11
Lack of desire: other	7
Family considerations: health concerns	6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The high return rate for this survey suggests that the findings represent a complete description of superintendent beliefs and perspectives. A much larger percentage of assistant and associate superintendents were female (40-50%) than were superintendents (20%). As a group, the respondents were not particularly old but there will be significant turnover of personnel within the next five years, including a substantial percentage planning to retire. Illustrating the need for continued professional development, over 50% of the survey's respondents indicated that they expected to retire or be in a new position within 3-5 years. The implications from such a response are that the Commonwealth of Virginia must now position itself to offer training and development opportunities to those superintendents changing positions and to those new superintendents rising to fill the places of those departing due to retirement or relocation.

About 60% of superintendents hold a doctorate. Most superintendents work at least 50 hours a week. With some exceptions related to working conditions, job satisfaction ratings of different aspects of the job, with these individuals, is high. In our research, 90% of respondents indicated that they were "satisfied" or "highly satisfied" with 12 of the 15 job factors listed. Areas receiving poorer satisfaction ratings were "Amount of time devoted to job", "Working conditions," and "Salary." In a related point, while rating the significance of various issues and problem, 83% of survey respondents indicated that "Personal time management" was either a "highly significant" or a "significant" problem. This high percentage, coupled with the poorer satisfaction ratings given to "Amount of time devoted to the job," indicates a need for professional development in areas relating to time management skills. While there is much satisfaction there is also room for becoming very satisfied.

Professional development needs mirror ratings of the significance of different issues/problems. There is most concern and need for professional development about immediate, practical issues such as data-driven decision-making, student achievement on SOL tests, and effective use of instructional time. Needs concerned with planning and instructional leadership were generally rated as very significant, somewhat more significant than needs in organizational management and professionalism. As more than 50% of respondents indicated a "highly significant" response on several other issues directly related to curriculum and instruction, it is apparent that instructional issues comprise a second area from which professional development ought to be drawn.

While the enhancement of time management skills and the need to create conditions for improving student achievement are the most significant professional development needs noted, two other areas of skill development are worth examining. Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated the importance of "Building an effective management team" and 51% of respondents stated that "Working with community leaders or government agencies" was a "highly significant" need. Professional development sessions ought to be created for Superintendents to address these two concerns as well. There is a wide range of needs among superintendents. This suggests that it would be helpful to assure that a variety of professional development activities and opportunities are available.

Job experience is viewed most valuable as a professional development activity. Graduate education and one or two-day workshops were also viewed as valued experiences. Most indicated that they had adequate financial support and some released time for professional development, but lacked the time to engage in most scheduled activities. This suggests that professional development opportunities need to more effectively accommodate superintendents' busy schedules. Most indicated that they had adequate fiscal resources for attending meetings, while most value was obtained from direct experience.

There appears to be a large number of individuals with administration credentials and appropriate qualifications to fill many superintendent vacancies, but many of these persons lack sufficient desire due to long hours, low pay, stress, family considerations, and logistical difficulties.

There will clearly be ongoing professional development needs for both new and continuing superintendent positions. These needs will be best met through targeted, relatively short training sessions in which experience can play a major role. Providing professional development services to superintendents can be a difficult proposition, as it is hard for superintendents to carve out time for such endeavors. To that effect, results from this survey indicate that 68% of respondents prefer single-day workshops, seminars, or institutes for meeting their professional development needs. On the other end of the scale, only 11% mentioned a preference for a five-to-seven day leadership development academy. Providers of staff development would be well served to consider these preferences in the design of professional development opportunities.

Superintendents are mostly satisfied with their jobs, but there is room for improvement in working conditions that could keep current superintendents in their positions longer and attract new individuals to these positions.

The responses given to the Virginia Superintendents' Survey indicate a strong need for continuous professional development in areas relating to student achievement in a data-driven, accountability-rich environment. Also, as the role of contemporary superintendents becomes one focused on data analysis, staff training, and on creating a culture which fosters site-based management, time management assistance cited as a need by a majority of the Virginia respondents warrants an increased sense of urgency as a topic for professional development activities. As a result of and based on the specific expressed needs of Virginia Superintendents, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Conduct further research to determine the number of individuals who are currently eligible to assume superintendent positions, as well as those in the pipeline, to determine whether special efforts are needed to meet the probable demand for persons to fill a large number of vacancies in the near future.
2. Market to individuals currently holding administrative credentials the positive and fulfilling aspects of superintendent positions as a way to increase the number of administrative credential holders who assume superintendent positions.

3. In the face of lack of persons to fill superintendent (and assistant, associate, and deputy superintendent) positions, create and disseminate a marketing strategy to enhance the number of individuals willing to become superintendents.
4. Develop short, one-day or half-day workshops in needed areas that combine seminar formats with direct experience. Consider job shadowing as a way to prepare for such workshops.
5. Work with colleges and universities to offer one-half and one-day workshops in high need areas, such as technology, working with community leaders, personnel evaluation, and testing.
6. Develop professional development modules in needed areas that can be effectively packaged using technology to provide resources, structure, and availability.
7. Develop and disseminate information to help superintendents with time management. Given increased responsibilities there is a greater need now than before for superintendents to know how to prioritize and allocate sufficient time to different tasks. Professional development should be an integral part of the job with time blocked out as needed.

Appendix A

Virginia Superintendents' Professional Development Survey

Virginia Superintendents' Professional Development Survey

Directions: The survey that follows is part of a study of superintendents in Virginia. We hope that a greater understanding of the changing demands on superintendents will enable us to do a better job of both advocating on their behalf and training future administrators. Your participation is voluntary and completely confidential. You may skip any items you are uncomfortable answering. Please return the completed survey in the enclosed envelope, as well as the postcard, by January 31. **Your cooperation is much appreciated.**

A. Conditions of Employment

1. On the average, how many hours a week do you work at your job as an administrator?

40 - 44
 45 - 49

50 - 54
 55 - 59

60 or more

2. Please indicate your level of job satisfaction as an administrator in education in response to each item below:

Factors in Job Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dis-satisfied	Very Dis-satisfied	
a. The amount of time that you devote to the job	4	3	2	1	
b. The results that you achieve		4	3	2	1
c. The salary that you receive		4	3	2	1
d. The working conditions	4	3	2	1	
e. The rapport that you have with teachers	4	3	2	1	
f. The rapport that you have with students	4	3	2	1	
g. The rapport that you have with parents	4	3	2	1	
h. The rapport that you have with the business community	4	3	2	1	
i. The rapport that you have with community leaders	4	3		2	1
j. Relationships with super-ordinates	4	3	2	1	
k. Relationships with peers	4	3	2	1	
l. Relationships with subordinates	4	3		2	1
m. Job Security		4	3	2	1
n. Social status and prestige in the community		4	3	2	1
o. Relationships with school board	4	3	2	1	

B. Professional Development Needs

3. In which of the following state-level professional organizations do you currently hold a membership? *Check all that apply.*

- Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals
- Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
- Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Virginia School Boards Association
- Virginia Association of School Superintendents

4. In which of the following national professional organizations do you currently hold a membership?

Check all that apply.

- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- American Association of School Administrators
- National School Board Association

5. Where do you believe that you can get the most assistance in meeting your professional development needs? *Check your top three.*

- State professional organization-sponsored activity, institute, or conference
- National professional organization-sponsored activity, institute, or conference
- Activity conducted by private consultants
- School division-sponsored in-service activity
- College or university programs, courses, workshops, or partnerships
- State Department of Education institute or conference
- Assistance through a mentor or coach
- Professional development tapes/training videos
- Educational or closed circuit television
- Internet based programs

6. What has been the value of the following types of preparation or exercises in your role as an administrator?

Preparation or Experience	Of Much Value	Of Some Value	Of Little Value	Not Applicable
a. Graduate Education	4	3	2	1
b. Experience as a teacher	4	3	2	1
c. Experience as a principal	4	3	2	1
d. Experience in central office administration 1		4	3	2
e. In-service training	4	3	2	1
f. Experience in current administrative job 1		4	3	2
g. Local meetings of superintendents	4	3	2	1

h. Regional meetings of superintendents 1	4	3	2	
i. State meetings of superintendents 1	4	3	2	
j. National meetings of superintendents 1	4	3	2	
k. Administrator institute or conferences	4	3	2	1

7. To make you a more effective administrator, what additional skills do you need to develop or refine? *Check all that apply.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uses of technology for administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uses of technology for instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Discipline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum alignment | <input type="checkbox"/> Time Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standardized test analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Data-driven decision-making | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance – Budget Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special education laws and implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> School law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skills in evaluating employees and documentation | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource identification and utilization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy analysis/development | |

8. Indicate all of the following that apply to your school board's support for your participation in professional development activities. *Check all that apply.*

- Allows released time to attend meetings/conferences sponsored by professional associations
- Pays all or most of my expenses to attend meetings/conferences
- Pays a portion (half or less) of my expenses to attend meetings/conferences
- Provides sabbatical leave
- Pays all or a portion of tuition for college and non-college credit hours
- Pays none of my expenses

9. Which of the following have been barriers to your attending professional meetings or conferences during the past five years? *Check all that apply.*

- Can't get away due to the demands of the job
- Can't get away due to division policy
- Lack of financial support for travel and registration
- Lack of relevant meetings or conferences

10. What are your career plans for the next 3 – 5 years? *Check one.*

- Remain in my present position
- Retirement from current position
- Seek a position in a different administrative capacity
- Seek a position as superintendent of schools in a different school division
- Seek a position in a career outside K-12 education

11. What year do you anticipate retiring or leaving the field of education?

2003
 2004
 2005

2006
 2007
 2008

2009
 2010
 2011 or later

C. Problems and Issues in the Field of Education

12. This section of the survey lists issues or problem areas in the field of education. Please indicate your reaction to each of the following statements by indicating:

- (A) the significance of the issue or problem, and
 (B) the extent of your need for professional development or in-service training relative to the issue.

	A. Significance of Issue/Problem			B. Professional Development Needs					
	Not Significant	Significant	Highly Significant	None	Low	Average	High		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
Planning and Instructional Leadership									
(01) Strategic planning/ goal setting		1	2	3		1	2	3	4
(02) Using research for educational improvement	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(03) Improving staff morale	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(04) Organizational climate	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(05) Curriculum improvement	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(06) Working with curriculum and technical specialists	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(07) Student achievement on standardized tests/SOLs	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(08) Effective use of instructional time	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(09) Implementing technology in instruction	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(10) Providing alternative programs (e.g., ESL)		1	2	3		1	2	3	4
(11) Faculty/staff development	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(12) Teacher evaluation to improve instruction	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(13) Developing employee improvement plans	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
Organizational Management									
(14) Non-academic student behavior (discipline, drugs, etc.)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(15) Staff evaluation for promotion/dismissal	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(16) Management and supervision of support staff	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(17) Understanding and managing group dynamics	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(18) Group decision-making and implementation	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(19) Building an effective administrative team	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(20) Managing or resolving conflict	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(21) Legal issues in education	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		

(22) Managing the politics of education	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
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	A. Significance of Issue/Problem			B. Professional Development Needs					
	Not Significant	Significant	Highly Significant	None	Low	Average	High		
(23) Budgeting and resource allocation	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(24) Paperwork (record-keeping, reports, accounts)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(25) Using computers and other technologies as administrative tools	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(26) Using models of distributed leadership	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
Communication									
(27) Working with families		1	2	3		1	2	3	4
(28) Working with community leaders or government agencies	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(29) Working with external advocacy groups and organizations	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(30) Networking and collaborating with peers	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(31) Getting better information from my superiors	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(32) Communicating better with my subordinates	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(33) Communicating better with my supervisors	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(34) Public relations and work with the media	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(35) Interviewing skills	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(36) Dealing with child abuse and neglect		1	2	3		1	2	3	4
Professionalism									
(37) Planning my professional growth and career development	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(38) Enhancing my leadership skills	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(39) Personal time management	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(40) Managing stress	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
(41) Pre-retirement counseling	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		

13. Indicate the types of in-service training or professional development activities in which you would most like to participate. *Check two.*

- () Half-day seminars, or institutes
- () Single-day workshops, seminars, or institutes
- () Two-day workshops, seminars or institutes
- () Five-to-seven day leadership development academy

D. The Changing Role of the Superintendent

14. What are the most significant ways in which your presently held position is changing or has changed in the last five years? *Check three.*

- Broadened accountability
- Focus on test scores
- Increased paperwork
- Expanded technology as a management tool
- Lack of parental support
- Legal issues and mandates
- Special education regulations and implementation
- Increasing disrespect
- Increased student problems
- Implementing site-based management
- Other: _____

15. What is the average percentage of time you spend each week in the following communication activities compared to five years ago? *Circle the correct answers.*

Time	Current Percentage (%)	Compared to 5 years ago		
		Much More	About the Same	Much Less
a. Student 1 discipline	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	
b. Paperwork	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
c. Meetings with parents	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
d. Instructional leadership	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
e. Personnel and evaluation	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
f. Meetings with administrators	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
g. Meetings with community leaders	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
h. E-mail	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	1
i. Policy influence 1	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	
j. Meetings with 1	0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 >45	3	2	

16. Does your school have adequate administrative support (i.e., administrative assistants and secretaries) to fulfill your management responsibilities and requirements?

Yes No

17. Think of one or two individuals you know who hold an administrative endorsement in the state of

Virginia and do not currently hold a central office position. For each individual, please indicate why

you believe that is the case. Check all that apply.

A. First individual:

Lack of qualifications for an administrative position due to
 inadequate training and preparation
 inappropriate disposition or temperament
 other

Lack of desire for an administrative position due to
 stress of the job
 pay
 long hours
 increasing disrespect
 broadened accountability
 perceived inability to make a difference
 other

Family considerations, such as
 the difficulty in changing locations
 health concerns
 other

B. Second individual:

Lack of qualifications for an administrative position due to
 inadequate training and preparation
 inappropriate disposition or temperament
 other

Lack of desire for an administrative position due to
 stress of the job
 pay
 long hours
 increasing disrespect
 broadened accountability
 perceived inability to make a difference
 other

- () Family considerations, such as
 () the difficulty in changing locations
 () health concerns
 () other

E. Demographic Information

18. Position Title

- () Superintendent () Associate Superintendent
 () Deputy Superintendent () Assistant Superintendent

19. What is your gender?

- () Male () Female

20. What is your age?

- () 24 - 34 () 45 - 49 () 55 - 59
 () 35 - 44 () 50 - 54 () 60 or older

21. With which ethnic group would you identify yourself?

- () Caucasian () American Indian/Alaskan Native
 () African American, () Asian Pacific Islander
 not Hispanic
 () Hispanic () Other: _____

22. How would you characterize the community served by your school division?

- () Urban
 () Suburban
 () Rural

23. What is the highest degree you have earned?

- () Master's Degree in Education
 () Master's Degree not in Education
 () Master's Degree with additional graduate work
 () Educational Specialist, six year program, or equivalent
 () Master's Degree and *all course work* for a doctorate
 () Doctor of Education
 () Doctor of Philosophy
 () Other: _____

24. Where did you complete your graduate education in school administration?

- () Virginia
 () Out of state

25. How many years have you been an administrator?

- () None () 4 - 6 years () 15 - 19 years
 () One year () 7 - 9 years () 20 - 24 years

- 2 - 3 years 10 - 14 years 25 or more years

26. **What full time positions have you held prior to entering your present position?**
Check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor or curriculum specialist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> College faculty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> Central office administrator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> Other - non-education |