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Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

An Autoethnography of a First-Time School District Superintendent: Complicated by Issues of
Race, Gender, and Persistent Fiscal Stress

by

Ardella Jones Dailey

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Joint Doctor of Philosophy

with

California State University, East Bay
San Francisco State University
San Jose State University

in

Educational Leadership

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Bernard Gifford, Chair
Professor Ruth Love
Professor Alex Saragoza
Professor José López

Spring 2011

ABSTRACT

An Autoethnography of a First-Time School District Superintendent: Complicated by Issues of Race, Gender, and Persistent Fiscal Stress

by

Ardella Jones Dailey

Joint Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

University of California, Berkeley

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California State University, East Bay
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Professor Bernard Gifford, Chair

This inquiry used autoethnography methodology in a self-narrative format that places the self within the position of a first-time superintendent as an African American woman. The design of this research will allow the reader to travel with me through my experiences to obtain information about the challenges and obstacles of the superintendent position. The study will focus on three dimensions of superintendent leadership (a) Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships, (b) Organizational and Human Resources Management, and (c) Leadership and District Culture.

The research design use of autoethnography, linked with the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT), and sensemaking and sensegiving of organization management will allow for the examination of the dimensions of superintendent leadership through the experiences of the researcher. These dimensions will be reflected upon, analyzed, and interpreted within their broader social context. Implications and recommendations regarding further areas for study are provided.

A basic premise of this study is that a relevant tactic to understand the work of public school superintendents is through the lens of superintendents. The purpose of this inquiry is to interpret a representative sample of my experiences as a first-time superintendent over a three-year period. There is sufficient acceptance of autoethnography as a qualitative research methodology from which valuable conclusions and findings can provide helpful information to superintendents, particularly first-time African American women superintendents, who are committed to educational social justice.

Dedication

I could not have completed this dissertation without the support of my lifemate and husband, Dr. Lige Dailey, Jr. He has encouraged me to be all I can be and proven to be my best friend and soul mate. I also dedicate this to my children Damu, Dafina, Marlina, and Hashima and my grandchildren Oni and Nazyia.

I give credit and praise to my father, Edward Bryant Jones, my mother, Evelyn Bernice Tillman Jones, and my mother-in-law Melvin Juanita Stinson Chaney Dillon. I also give thanks to my African ancestors who provided the foundation and roots on which I stand today.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and thank each member of my Dissertation Committee:

Professor Bernard Gifford, my Dissertation Chair, he was both demanding and encouraging throughout the entire dissertation process. His guidance and advice is deeply appreciated.

Professor Ruth Love, she consistently listened and provided me with support during every step of my journey to the completion of this dissertation. She has served as a mentor whenever I needed her.

Professor Jose Lopez, he has always been there whenever I have called on him. He has helped to give me confidence and gentle direction when I needed it.

Professor Alex Saragoza, he was very enthusiastic about the substance of my dissertation topic, and provided guidance regarding issues that I needed to consider.

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

- Currently a candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at University of California, Berkeley have completed advanced studies in areas of Curriculum and Instruction, Systemic Reform, Educational Equity, and Resource Management
- MA / Early Childhood Education and Special Education, CSU, San Francisco
- BA / Sociology, minor in African American Studies, City University of New York
- AA/ Liberal Arts, New York City Community College

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Program Chair Education Department

Argosy University, 1005 Atlantic Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501(Dec 2009 – Present)

Responsible for the leadership and coordination of the Department of Education serving graduate students in the following programs; Teacher Credentialing, Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Instructional Leadership, Doctor of Education (Ed.D) in Educational Leadership and Instructional Leadership. The position includes part time teaching responsibilities in the Masters Program.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Alameda Unified School District, 2200 Central Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501 (2005 – 2008)

Led a culturally and racially diverse California school district with 10,000 K -12 students, 200 preschool and 5000 adult school students with over 1,000 employees. Designed and implemented an action plan that improved student achievement focused on math and literacy. Managed an annual operating budget of over 80 million dollars and passed parcel tax to support the continuum of programs and services for the schools.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT – EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Alameda Unified School District, 2200 Central Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501 (2000 – 2005)

Responsible for supervision and coordination of preschool, adult school and K-12 Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) Educational Services programs including Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development, Standards, Assessment and Accountability, Special Education, Student Services, Alternative Programs, English Language Development, Equity and Diversity, Regional Occupation Programs and Career Education and Underperforming Schools Program, Child Development, and Adult School.

Curriculum Vitae

ASSISTANT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

Alameda Unified School District, 2200 Central Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501 (1996 – 1999)

Designed and implemented professional development for administrators and teachers in the areas of literacy, math, English language development, special education, and equity and student achievement.

ASSISTANT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR TRANSITION PLANNING

Alameda Unified School District, 2200 Central Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501 (1993 – 1996)

Responsible for the facilitation, planning, and coordination of all AUSD district activities related to downsizing and mitigating the impacts of closure of Alameda Naval Air Station to the district. This included restructuring, consolidation and realignment of resources to maximize resource allocation to the school sites to support student achievement goals.

PRINCIPAL – MILLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Alameda Unified School District, 2200 Central Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501 1990 – 1993)

Instructional leader of the educational programs impacting 525 K-5 students, the supervision and evaluation of 22 teachers, 4 clerical, 2 custodians, 6 paraprofessionals and the coordination of the resource and support personnel.

DIRECTOR OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Alameda Unified School District, 2200 Central Ave., Alameda, Ca. 94501 (1985 – 1991)

Responsible for the leadership and management of an educational program for 250 children at two sites as well as the supervision of a staff of 50 including teachers, paraprofessionals, clerical and custodians. This included budget management and program monitoring to ensure compliance with federal, local, and state licensing and funding requirements.

ADJUNCT FACULTY

Pacific Oaks College – Pasadena, CA (1984 – 1993)

Responsible for course planning and teaching for the Masters and Bachelor of Arts Extension Program in the areas of early childhood education, child development, anti-bias curriculum and educational administration.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR, UC Berkeley Child Care Services, Berkeley, CA (1980 – 1985)

COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR, Federal Advanced Teachers College at Katsiana, Nigeria (1977-1980)

TEACHER, San Francisco Unified School District (1972-1977)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Association of California School Administrators

Association for Supervision and Curricular Development

National Alliance of Black School Educators

Curriculum Vitae

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY AWARDS

Public Education Service Award, Alameda County Board of Education (2008)

Certificate of Recognition: Summit for Courageous Conversations for “Extraordinary passion, practice, persistence for leading courageous conversation and working to achieve racial justice and educational equity” (2007)

Phi Delta Kappa Award, California State University Hayward, Outstanding Administrator (2006)

EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATION

- Professional Clear Administrative Services Credential
- Life Standard Early Childhood Teaching Credential
- Certificate Leading the Leaders Professional Development Program for Superintendents, Association of California Administrators (ASCA)
- Certificate School District Management Negotiations Program, School Employers Association of Ca. (SEAC)
- Certificate Special Education Academy Course of Study, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)
- Certificate of Completion Coaching Leaders to Achieve Student Success from New Teacher Center's of California

Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

This chapter will begin by providing an overview of the rationale for an autoethnographic research study of the superintendency of a public K-12 urban school district in California. In addition, the purpose and scope of the study will be discussed. Then a brief description of the district demographics and my professional and personal background will be provided in order to establish the contextual and descriptive characteristics of the district as well as of this author. In this section I will also discuss how and why I became committed to educational social justice and engaged in public education. The chapter will end with a list of the research questions to be examined and a brief overview of the other chapters in this dissertation.

This inquiry will use autoethnography in the form of self-narrative that places the self within the position of a first-time superintendent as an African American woman. The research focus questions to be described below will allow this researcher to speak as a participant/observer from an insider perspective of a superintendent. As an observer I will use introspection in the form of a personal narrative as a primary data source. One of the fundamental hypotheses underlying the rationale for participant observation research is that human behavior is complexly influenced by the context in which it happens (Chang, 2008; Walcott, 2003; Wall, 2006; Wilson, 1977). In regards to this inquiry, the hypothesis that human behavior is complexly influenced by the context in which it happens is central to the choice of autoethnography as the appropriate methodology to use in order to examine the research questions. In the role of researcher my paradigm lens will move between involved and informed by my personal experience (interpretive) and an analytic and active learner (critical observer) located in the researcher's interaction with the social, political, and educational setting of a California K-12 urban public school district in the Bay Area.

The focus of this inquiry is to interpret a representative sample of my experiences as a first-time superintendent during a three-year period characterized by constant fiscal stress, organizational uncertainty, and shifting objectives and political coalitions among members of the school board. Reflecting its location in the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose Metropolitan Area, and its status as the long-time host to various military installations, the economically, racially, and linguistically diverse district, enrolling approximately 10,000 students, has a history of electing politically moderate individuals to its school board and city council. Prior to my selection as superintendent, I had worked in the district for 20 years, and immediately prior to being selected as superintendent, had served as Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services for eight years.

During the period prior to the departure of the outgoing superintendent, I had served as interim superintendent. When he left to become superintendent in another area school district, I was asked by the school board to serve a second stint as interim superintendent. Due to a series of factors, rather than being asked to step aside for a second time, the board appointed me as the first ever female African American superintendent of the district. I believe the events propelling my appointment included my prior service as interim superintendent, my familiarity with the district's political culture, my history of advocacy on behalf of the interests of the district's most educationally disadvantaged students, and my perspective as an African American female educational administrator. To these factors one would have to acknowledge the larger political

environment being fostered by the initial stages of the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (passed by Congress in January 2002). Referred in the public square as NCLB, the Act provided a framework with which my professional focus on disaggregating achievement data by race, language, and economic status was now being acknowledged by the President of the United States of America, and the overwhelming majority of the Congress and the Senate. Consequently, when my appointment became permanent superintendent, I knew that I had been provided a unique opportunity to participate in and observe the day-to-day activities of a school district superintendent during the early stages of a major transformation of the nation's public schools.

My objective in this thesis is to communicate these experiences in a form I hope will help other educational practitioners to not only make sense of my observations and interpretations but to use them as an instrument for interpreting their own experiences at a district level. The challenge I face is to identify empirical mechanisms, or lenses, through which I might present a representative sample of my experiences and situate these experiences among a collection of coherent organizational events and, most important of all, to communicate what I believe is the larger significance of my experiences to other educators. A core premise of this thesis is that there is much that can be learned by conducting a comprehensive review of one participant's experience in an organizational setting of a school district. This sample of one participant's experience will provide a thick lens through which an examination of the work of a superintendent leading change and reform in a K-12 California urban school district can be learned. The work of March, Sproull, and Tamuz (1991) presents a theory of organizational change based upon the premise that by carefully and comprehensively examining a small sample of experiences within a single organization, we may learn much about the organizational change process as researchers that choose to spread their inquires over a substantial number of small organizational events and organizational environments. As students of organizational behaviors, they state "We believe that useable knowledge can be extracted from fragments of history and that intensive examinations of individual cases can be used imaginatively to construct meaningful hypothetical histories" (p. 10). The examination of my individual experiences as a first-time African American superintendent will help to provide understanding and meaning to the superintendent's role and responsibilities when leading a district.

When educators examine the systemic reform efforts in schools and districts through case studies, we are in effect applying this theory of learning to small samples. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) discuss the research strategy of theory building from case studies, particularly multiple cases. March et al. (1991) propose that in order to do in-depth analysis and examination of systemic educational reform efforts, it makes sense to use a research strategy design that will allow for theory building based on a sampling of cases and the use of the story as evidence of the theory being built. Their concept of theory building is reflected in the autoethnographic methodology and the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework and provides support as further rationale for the research design selected to use in this study. This research is approached with the knowledge that an in-depth examination of my first time experience as an African American superintendent in California has application to increasing the understanding of the multi-layered complexity of the superintendent position within our American society and public school system. I propose that the deeper I can peel off the onion skin of the superintendency the more I will be able to expose the overarching themes that can provide another perspective to add to building an understanding of the dimensions of the superintendency.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Notwithstanding the growing body of research on the work of superintendents, there is little documentation of what superintendents deal with on the day-to-day tasks and role demands. There is significant research done on the general topic of the superintendent role by outsiders - those who do not have personal experience in the role and not enough by insiders - those who do have personal experience (Fuller, Campbell, Celio, Harvey, Immerwahr, & Winger, 2003; Kowalski, 1995; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005). As a former superintendent I can play a role as a participant observer through the use of established autoethnographic research methods to describe this day-to-day reality of the job of a superintendent (Chang, 2008; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001; Wilson, 1977). This ethnographic research should provide information useful to current superintendents, administrative training programs, and ideas regarding professional development content specifically designed for practicing superintendents of color.

As a former superintendent and education practitioner, a reflective examination of my representative experience, and the sharing of the day-to-day job described in my voice, can be of value in the discussion of how to lead change and reform in public school districts. This researcher, as a member participant in the superintendent position with a commitment to an analytic research agenda, will focus on an in-depth analysis through the lens of Critical Race Theory enabling me to add to the understanding of the social political role and dynamics of race and gender impact and influence the work of a superintendent. The actual voice/experience of superintendents needs to be examined in order to address the pragmatic issue of what it takes to do the job or to determine what needs to be addressed to make an impossible job become possible (Fuller et al., 2003). Garza (2008), in his autoethnography of a first time superintendent states, "Children do not fail, but rather the system fails them" (p. 163). Garza also points out that superintendents hold the position of the greatest administrative authority in a school district and in this position of power it is the responsibility and moral obligation of the superintendent to provide equitable opportunities for all students. I agree with Garza and found the description he provided in his article, of the challenges he experienced in his efforts to lead the agenda of reform and transformation of a school district, to be applicable and valuable to the discussion of achieving excellence and equity in our K-12 public schools and districts. He provided a voice as a practicing Hispanic superintendent by sharing his journal narrative descriptions of the obstacles and challenges that prevent implementation of district reform. His voice was an impetus for this dissertation proposal because it provided a model of how autoethnography could be used to examine the superintendency.

This study will involve the analysis of the experiences and events during my superintendency as a theoretical framework and lens to view the superintendent's job. Critical Race Theory (CRT) has as its core the basic premise that race and racism is a cultural factor in the social and economic organization and structures of America (Duncan, 2002; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). CRT will provide a means for seeing and interpreting the social political environment within which I worked as an African American superintendent. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) has provided an excellent summary of why the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework is relevant to this research and to me as a researcher:

My decision to deploy a critical race theoretical framework in my scholarship is intimately linked to my understanding of the political and personal stake I have in the education of Black children. All of my "selves" are invested in this work – the self that is

researcher, the self that is parent, the self that is community member, the self that is a black woman. (p. 272)

The above quote resonates with me; I can locate myself in the above quote and restate it in the following way – All of my selves are invested in this work – the self that is researcher, the self that is superintendent, the self that is an African American woman, and the self that is an educator committed to educational social justice and equitable opportunities for all children.

Additional theoretical frameworks this study will use are the concepts of sensemaking and sensegiving to understand the characteristics of the stages of strategic organizational change. Rouleau (2005) defines sensemaking as involving the way managers understand or create meaning for themselves based on the information surrounding the strategic change. Rouleau then defines sensegiving as being concerned with the managers' attempts to influence the outcomes, gain support and to communicate their thoughts about the change to others (p. 1415). The purpose of applying the sensemaking and sensegiving theoretical framework as a tool for analysis of my experiences and organizational actions during my superintendency is to provide another means to discuss the dimensions of leadership of the superintendency. Sensemaking and sensegiving concepts will also provide a means to examine the social and political context of a first time African American woman superintendent.

Demographic District Information and My Professional and Personal Background

During my superintendency from 2005 to 2008, the district consistently served 10,000 students from diverse ethnic and social economic backgrounds. The ethnic populations of the district include American-Indian (0.7%), Asian (32.6%), Pacific Islander (1.5%), Filipino (9.1%), Hispanic/Latino (11.8%), African American (12.1%), White (30.7%), and Multiple or No Response (1.5%). The five top language groups are Cantonese (30.3%), Spanish (18.0%), Filipino (12.3%), Vietnamese (11.1%), and Farsi (4.4 %). There are 32 different languages represented in the district K-12 population. Five of the ten elementary schools and two of the three middle schools were identified as Title I schools. The district API scores are as follows: 2005 (784), 2006 (807), 2007 (805), and 2008 (810). The district had one middle school in Program Improvement Status from 2005 through 2008. The economic diversity of the district ranged from Title I elementary and middle schools with free and reduced populations as high as 50%, to other schools in the district with free and reduced populations as low as 3%. The district is located in the Bay Area of the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose Metropolitan region of California. For purposes of this study I have renamed the district Alpha Beta Unified School District and in Appendix A I have provided a factual organizational chart reflective of my superintendency district.

Prior Experiences: Professional and Personal Background

Previous to stepping into the superintendent position I had over 25 years of experience in K-12 public education. I have had supervisory roles in the areas of curriculum and instruction, assessment, technology, special education, finance, maintenance and facilities operations, human resources, employee relations and negotiations, English language development and professional development. This includes the following specific leadership roles: Teacher, Professional Development Trainer, Preschool Director, Elementary Principal, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, and District Superintendent in a Bay Area urban K-12 district of 10,000 students. The career path I took to the superintendency is one of the most common (48%) from

teacher, to principal, to district administrator (instructional area) and finally superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). According to Brunner and Grogan (2005), African American women do not obtain superintendencies as quickly as their White women counterparts. Twenty-five percent of African American women report waiting five or more years to obtain superintendency compared to only eight percent of White women and nine percent of White men.

My personal and professional experience also parallels this statistic in that I applied for the superintendency in the same district five years previously and was passed over for an outside Asian male candidate. It was not until I applied a second time, five years later that I was selected. California Association of School Boards (CSBA) conducted the search for a new superintendent and the consultant conducted a series of community meetings to determine a profile the community deemed as necessary for the superintendency. The CSBA consultant also held interviews with each of the five board members and key city and community leaders identified by the board. The CSBA consultant and the Board of Education decided that as the only internal candidate I should be interviewed by the board prior to opening the position to external candidates. I was already serving as interim superintendent and the profile developed was obviously descriptive of my experiential background and characteristics. In November 2005 my one-year interim superintendent contract was replaced with a three-year superintendent contract. I was the first woman and first African American to be hired as superintendent in this district. The design of this research will allow the reader to travel with me through my experience and obtain information about the challenges and obstacles of the superintendent position.

Before moving on to the other chapters in this dissertation I will briefly discuss why I have chosen to become vulnerable both personally and professionally by choosing to do an autoethnographic work on my superintendent experiences. I believe that this dissertation will require a peeling away to the core of the superintendency job and will involve reflective and introspective analysis. I think the best way to start the peeling is to provide the reader with the following brief autobiographical background because I cannot share who I am today as an educator unless I also share information about my life experiences that brought me into the field of teaching and learning.

I was raised in the lower east side of Manhattan as a young child and moved to Harlem as a teenager. I can remember being aware of my race as a young child (five or so) and being told stories by the adults of the hangings of Blacks in the south. I come from a generation that started out referring to me as colored, then Negro, and then Black, and now I call myself an African American. During the passage from colored to African American my childhood years were spent deeply protected in an African American community. As a child my church supported the 1958 Montgomery bus boycott by collecting shoes to send to the people that had to walk to work and school. I remember my parents explaining that it was because of our race that we were not allowed to ride in the front of the bus. As a child I heard many times that it was because of my race that I would always have to struggle and work hard to obtain my goals and opportunities in life.

My high school experience was divided between a lower east side school and a high school that served students from Harlem, New York. The lower east side was a community of Jewish, White, Puerto Rican, and Blacks and the one thing we all had in common was the poverty of our families. My family was on and off welfare and I grew up in the projects of the lower east side and Harlem. My father was a World War II veteran who had completed high

school but could not get a better job than janitor and night guard. My mother was mostly a stay-at-home mom who also cleaned houses when she could get work. My father was a reader and from an early age I can remember sitting around the living room and having him read to us. It is interesting that I can bring these memories forward easily but I do not remember much of my schooling experiences.

A few memories do stand out, and the one that still comes to mind, is one in which I was given an assignment in the fifth grade. The assignment was to go home and talk to our parents, grandparents, and relatives about our history and find out what countries our family came from. I was a student who desired to succeed in school and believed that you did your best to do exactly what the teacher assigned you to do. I remember asking my mother and being told that my grandparents were born here and so were my parents. I pushed for more information and was told by my mother that she did not know anything about what country we came from. I wrote my assignment and said we were always here in America and did not know where we came from. The teacher gave me an F. I still many years later can remember my feeling of sadness as I looked down at the grade and read the teacher's note that I had not done the assignment correctly. I said nothing to the teacher and when I showed the paper to my father with what was probably tears in my eyes he told me he wanted to talk to me. It was then that my father told me about slavery and how we as a people came from Africa. My father also told me that we did not know where in Africa we came from because our great-grandparents were stolen from Africa. He gave me a book by J. A. Rogers that told of the history of enslavement of Black people and the loss and destruction of our African culture and language during slavery. It was not in school that I learned about slavery or how Blacks came to be in America. Many years ago, I have since come to the opinion that the information my father shared should have been a learning I obtained in school.

Another piece of this memory is the fact that I and three other Black students were the only students of color in the fifth grade class because we had been identified as what was called "advanced" and put in this special class. I remember that the teacher and all the other students were Jewish and White. I do not remember that I ever talked to the other students or the teacher about what my father told me. It was not part of school and I think I knew the teacher would not like or agree with what my father told me. School was not about learning, it was about doing what the teacher said. School was about taking the information the teacher provided and repeating it back to the teacher. School was not about learning together, it was about competing and achieving better than the other students. I succeeded in school because I understood these unwritten rules. I now realize that the "F" changed my understanding of school and gave me the first taste of how school did not treat me and other students fairly.

It is now clear to me that my K-12 public education experience did not provide me with many positive messages about me and/or other African American people. The only reason I wanted to succeed in school was because my family valued education. By the time I was in high school the civil rights movement was on television and at about the age of 14 I became an active participant in the movement. I was part of a community strike of New York schools to end what we labeled "de facto segregated schools" and what I now understand to be the inequity of the educational system in New York. I remember marching out of high school with my fellow students to go to a freedom school set up by community leaders in Harlem. Once again these external experiences are deep in my memory, while my schooling prior to this and even after freedom school closed and I returned to my high school, is not. At the freedom school we studied African American history (for the first time) and read books by African American

authors (for the first time). My teachers were African Americans (for the first time) and the material proved to be of real interest to me (for the first time). All of the students in my class were African Americans (not for the first time). This freedom school experience was life altering in many ways. I learned to value knowledge and wanted to be a teacher.

I still can remember the deep discussions we had in my freedom school class about our reading of the *Invisible Man* and the *Souls of Black Folks*. In the freedom school classes we were encouraged to express what we thought, not what the teacher told us to think. In freedom school I felt respected as an individual but I also was considered a member of a collective group where everyone was valued. I returned to high school and now I was making my own choices of what to read outside of school. I was doing more of my own thinking in school as well as outside of school. I now (for the first time) questioned and even challenged my teachers but I also began to spend less and less time in school. My time was now dedicated to the civil rights movement.

The civil rights movement was an important part of my high school years. I was a member of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) during my high school years. I participated in walkouts from our high school in New York to protest defacto segregation. I went to jail in the states of Mississippi, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia as a civil rights protestor. These activities started during my sophomore year of high school and continued into my college years. I was very clear that I was fighting racism and injustice in America because I wanted the pledge of allegiance to be a reality – "...with liberty and justice for all."

I attended the City University of New York (CUNY) and participated in a sit in that lasted for three weeks to demand that an Ethnic Studies Department be established at the school and that more students of color be admitted. An Ethnic Studies Department was created and courses were added in history and social science that examined other perspectives than the European western perspective. I participated in forming the first Black Student Union Group and we had forums on issues regarding Black Nationalism, classism, and racism.

Commitment to Social Justice

It is true that from my perspective my educational experience (K-12) was not the model I would want to have my own children or any children experience. Yet these experiences in public school and the alternative freedom school are at the root of why I want to be a leader of a system that reflects more of my experience in the freedom school. Freedom school was an experience that exposed me to ideas and a place where I felt respected as a learner. In freedom school I was safe. It was an experience that had curriculum that was relevant to my background, culture, and also challenged me to think. It is sad but true to realize that these negative experiences in public school have shaped me as an educator and motivated me to want to create a quality educational system that teaches students to think and challenges them to learn in a safe environment.

I think that because my African American race is core to who I am as a person, both in terms of how I am viewed by many in this country by my skin color first and in regards to how I have learned to operate in a world in which some believe that race (skin color) matters. I have obtained the level of a superintendent of a public school district and I believe that because of my life experiences and observations that racism is alive and thriving in America. This belief that racism is a societal reality in America is why I have chosen Critical Race Theory (CRT) as one of the theoretical frameworks to provide a lens to examine and analyze the research questions to

be studied in this paper. I know that I and others will continue to fight racism and work to provide schools that provide equitable learning opportunities for all students. I know I will have to teach my grandchildren as I did my children and as I was taught by my parents that my African American race can be a basis for how they will be treated. I will of course also let them know that it is not okay and they need to not allow it to stop them from being the best person they can be. I have evolved from a passive acceptance of the definitions and negative stereotypes of my people, into a civil rights activist, an expatriate living in Nigeria, and finally into an over 30 year commitment to become part of the solution in my professional and personal life as a public school educator in America. I am now a proud African American and passionate advocate for liberty and justice for all people. I have demonstrated my belief that public education is and can be a means to equitably achieve quality public education as the cornerstone of democracy with “liberty and justice for all.” I became a teacher because of this belief and moved into leadership roles in education because of my strong commitment to providing quality education to all students in my district. The research questions listed below will allow me as the researcher to further examine my professional superintendency role and my personal core values as a first-time African American woman superintendent in a K-12 urban school district.

Research Questions

As the researcher and participant/observer of this dissertation I have committed to the use of the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, sensemaking and sensegiving, and autoethnography methodology, to deeply examine the following research questions:

1. Drawing upon my experiences as a first-time superintendent, and also as an African American woman, are there lessons that might be of significance to other first-time superintendents?
2. What was my experience as I negotiated the dimensions of the superintendent leadership position?
3. How did the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district influence the ways in which problems were recognized as a need of attention by the local school board?
4. Did my commitment to educational social justice impact/influence my development as a first-time superintendent and, if so, in what way?

The remainder of this thesis is organized in the following manner: Chapter 2 reviews the literature on dimensions of leadership roles of superintendents, fiscal stress in public education, Critical Race Theory, autoethnography, and organizational concepts of sensemaking and sensegiving. Chapter 3 will discuss the research design methodology and rationale for use of autoethnography and the data management strategies used in the study. Chapter 4 consists of journal entries and contextual background of Alpha Beta Unified School District (ABUSD) with a focus on Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships. Chapter 5 examines superintendency leadership in the areas of organizational and human resource management and leadership and district culture. Chapter 6 discusses findings, conclusions, and research implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will provide a review of the literature in the areas of (a) dimensions of leadership roles and actions of superintendents, (b) national professional standards for superintendency, (c) women superintendents, sexism, and racism, (d) fiscal stress in public education, (e) Critical Race Theory, (f) autoethnography as a theoretical framework and research methodology, and (g) the concept of sensemaking and sensegiving in organizations. At the conclusion of this chapter there is a brief summary discussing three personal themes of my dual lenses as an African American and a woman, my experience as first-time superintendent, and my personal background and why it is primarily responsible for my commitment to educational social justice. The review of these specific areas was conducted to provide theoretical frameworks and social political constructs to use as lenses to examine my experience as a first-time female African American superintendent in a California Bay Area urban K-12 school district.

Dimensions of a Superintendent's Leadership Role

On a national level in America there has been increasing focus on the public school superintendent's roles in regards to school reform (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1995; Cuban, 2008; Fuller et al., 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Thomas, 2001). Based on my experience as a superintendent I agree that the demand for school district superintendents to provide leadership for reform and improvement of student achievement continues to increase. It is my opinion based on the years I served as superintendent that the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) legislated state accountability for student achievement has placed more and more pressure on states and local school districts to focus on test score gains as documentation of improvement of student achievement. In fact, the Board of Education in my district selection criteria for the superintendent included statements such as 'demonstrated experience leading reform initiatives' to 'improve student achievement' and 'experience in implementing effective programs designed to close the achievement gap'. In an attempt to describe a typical profile of public school superintendents in America I conducted a review of the available data about the characteristics and profile of superintendents. It revealed that over the past 20 years the gender and race characteristics of superintendents in America have remained generally consistent. The 2000 Study of American School Superintendency (Glass et al., 2000) found that the vast majority (94.9%) of American superintendents are White and 86.6% are male, 13.2% are female and superintendencies held by minorities was 5.1%. A mid-decade study conducted in 2006 by Glass and Franceschini (2007) found the gender of superintendents is changing and women superintendents have significantly increased to 21.6% (an 8.4% increase in a six year period). "Of this, 35% of the women employed were in suburban districts, 55.4% in rural and small town districts, and 9% were located in urban districts" (p. xix). Glass and Franceschini (2007) report that superintendents continue to be predominately White and that the number of minority superintendents is only 6.1% (a 1% increase in six years). In the state of California there are over 1,000 superintendents. In 2005-2006 (my first year as a superintendent) I became 1 of 16 African American superintendents, which is only about 1% of all superintendents in California. Eight of the sixteen African American superintendents are woman. In summarizing the information from the data discussed above, it is evident that as a first-time African American woman superintendent of a California K-12 urban public school district, the sharing and analysis of my superintendency will add to the understanding of the complexity of the position from an insider, participant observer perspective. It is a basic premise of autoethnography that the

understanding of sometimes previously unknown or unspoken societal issues can be revealed through autoethnographic work (Anderson, 2006; Duncan, 2006; Holt, 2003; Spry, 2001) and this is a core premise of this study.

Role expectations for public school district superintendents have continued to evolve over the past 150 years. The role has become more extensive, complex, and demanding (Candoli, 1995; Kowalski, 2005). According to Kowalski (2005) the superintendency has evolved through four traditional conceptualizations: superintendent as a teacher of teachers, as manager, as statesman, and finally, as an applied social scientist. Candoli (1995) identified that the original superintendent role was that of a schoolmaster and by the end of the nineteenth century, the great majority of urban superintendents had shed the role of supervisor of students and teachers to become managers of the administrative and day-to-day operations of the district. Cuban's (1976) categories include teacher-scholar, administrative chief, and negotiator. His study concluded that the superintendents were expected to assume each of the three roles at varying times, depending on which groups they were communicating with. According to Cuban (1976, 2008) these three roles of instructional, managerial, and political categories are sometimes conflicting. As instructional leaders, superintendents hold ultimate responsibility for improving student achievement (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1995; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005). As managerial leaders, superintendents must keep their districts operating efficiently and effectively, with a minimum of friction, yet taking risks to make necessary changes. As political leaders, superintendents have to negotiate with multiple stakeholders to get approval for programs and resources (Candoli, 1995; Cuban, 2008; Kowalski, 2005; Marzano & Waters 2009; Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001; Petersen, 2002).

Currently, superintendents leading school districts with existing multiple and complex problems are also placed in the position of responding to state, federal, and local community demands to improve student achievement with greater emphasis on the need to lead systemic reform. Bredeson and Kose (2007), Fuller et al. (2003), and Wills and Peterson (1992) propose that during the last 20 years we have witnessed an intense effort to improve this nation's public schools including increased demands for accountability to raise student achievement in the elementary and secondary grades. During the late 1990's a movement led by business-minded coalitions seeking better-educated workforce lobbied states to require demanding curriculum, more testing, and accountability (Cuban, 2008). In California, new content standards and other reform efforts have been implemented. These include new curriculum standards in the areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies; reduced class sizes, especially in the early grades; new end of course exams; high school exit exam, increased academic requirements for high school graduation; other major revisions to state-wide testing and assessment; and performance-based accountability requirements for schools and districts (Timar, 2003). By 2000 the federal government began to develop the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, which became law in 2002. In California the combined pressure of federal and state legislation aimed to raise reading and math scores has now required student achievement to be documented on state achievement tests with significant achievement gains required annually. Failure to make gains on test scores and to obtain state accountability assessment targets result in schools and entire districts being placed on program improvement status. Today's superintendents must lead the charge of ensuring that every school in their district is maximizing learning productivity for every student.

Recently, other researchers (Cuban, 2008; Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001; Thomas, 2001) have also identified the three roles of instructional, managerial, and political categories for

superintendents. The Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) study found that superintendents spent a significant amount of time thinking about and reacting to the interpersonal dimensions of their political and managerial roles, especially in dealing with their board of trustees. Studies by Kowalski (1995), Cuban (1976, 2008), and Petersen (1999) of urban superintendents identified the continued need for superintendents to dedicate time to educational and political leadership. In addition, Kowalski (1998, 2005) and others (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Petersen & Short, 2002) have identified a fourth and fifth element of the role of superintendent as communicator and social scientist. Kowalski (2001) provides an overview of the primary responsibilities and actions associated with the five major roles that superintendents perform. Table 2.1 below summarizes the roles identified by Kowalski. These role descriptions have been supported by the work of Candoli (1995); Cuban (2008); Marzano and Waters (2009); Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001); and Petersen and Short (2002).

In this comprehensive review of literature regarding the dimensions and domains of the role and responsibilities of superintendents, it is evident that the superintendent position is multifaceted and demanding as a pivotal leadership role in public education (Cuban, 2008; Fuller et al., 2003; Leithwood, 1995; Petersen, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2000; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The dimensions of the roles of a superintendent as discussed and identified by Kowalski (2001) are: scholar, manager, political leader, social scientist, and communicator. In recent years the literature contains various suggestions for superintendents to be more directly involved in curriculum and instruction as the instructional leader of the district (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Thomas, 2001) and also to be more involved in current educational reform priorities and politics (Bjork, 1993; Cuban, 2008; Kowalski, 1998; Leithwood, 1995; Petersen & Short, 2000; Thomas, 2001; Wimpleberg, 1997). Indeed while the description of the National Education Association Educational Policies Commission written in 1965 is over 45 years old it is still an accurate description of the role of a superintendent:

The superintendency of schools is one of the most crucial and perhaps most difficult public positions in American life today. The occupant of this position, more than any other single person in the community, influences the shape of public education. Thus he has a basic role in determining what will become of the young people of his community, and through them what his community and the nation will become. (p. 1)

Table 2.1 below is a chart developed by this researcher of Kowalski's (2001) superintendent leadership role conceptual framework of the primary roles, responsibilities, and actions of superintendents as (a) scholar, (b) manager, (c) political leader, (d) social scientist, and (e) communicator.

Table 2.1

Dimensions of Superintendent Leadership: Primary Responsibilities and Actions Associated with Each Role Conception

Role	Responsibilities	Actions
Scholar	Provide leadership in areas of teaching and instructional supervision.	Involves visioning, setting instructional goals, curriculum and

		staff development, and evaluation of programs and personnel.
Manager	Provides management of human and material resources.	Involves decision-making, planning, and resource allocation of budget and personnel.
Political Leader	Resolves conflict and builds coalitions.	Involves community outreach, negotiations with unions, and interactions with local, state and federal policy makers.
Social Scientist	Provides leadership for social and cultural issues.	Involves addressing the need for cultural change in districts and schools to be responsive to increasing levels of community diversity.
Communicator	Provides effective school community relations, internal and external communications, and information management.	Involves proactive and open systems of communication with feedback loops to identify and resolve issues and promote the district schools programs and develop new support and resources.

It should be noted that the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) 2006 Mid-Decade Study of the State of the American School Superintendency summarized the superintendency responsibilities as inclusive of instructional leadership, fiscal management, community relations, board relations, personnel management, and operations management (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). The AASA study additionally supports Kowalski's conceptual framework on superintendent leadership domains.

This review of the literature regarding the dimensions of the superintendent's role was designed to provide a contextual foundation and description of the areas of responsibilities a superintendent must address. My research will add a focus of a first-time superintendent who brings to the position personal demographics of race as an African American and gender as a female. This context of the superintendency discussed above is the framework from which I will examine my experience and look deeply at how my commitments to educational social justice impact/influence the development of me as a first-time superintendent. The use of autoethnography methodology will provide the tools to allow me to describe my journey through the multi-layered dimensions of the superintendency. The construct of the dimensions of the superintendent this researcher will specifically examine are within the six areas of (a) instructional leadership, (b) fiscal management, (c) community relations, (d) board relations, (e) personnel management, and (f) operations management. The theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory will support my analysis of this experience and help me to identify themes and patterns across the dimensions of the superintendent position. It is my hypothesis that this contextual construct and theoretical framework will provide me with the means to systematically

examine the themes, patterns, and issues I experienced as a first-time superintendent in the context of the complexity of social, political, and cultural environment of the district.

National Professional Standards for Superintendency

Another construct that will be a foundation of this research is based on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Professional Standards for the Superintendency (as cited in Hoyle et al., 2005). The AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency, chaired by John R. Hoyle, developed a set of eight standards as follows (a) leadership and district culture, (b) policy and governance, (c) communication and community relations, (d) organizational management, (e) curriculum planning and development, (f) instructional management, (g) human resource management, and (h) values and ethics of leadership. The AASA standards have been nationally accepted as comprehensive and an accurate description of the competencies, skills, knowledge, and values necessary to the role of a school district superintendent.

Table 2.2 is a chart I developed delineating the roles and responsibilities in each of the eight standards for superintendency identified by AASA with a comparison of related dimensions of superintendent leadership from Table 2.1 above.

Table 2.2

Comparison of AASA Professional Standards for Superintendency and Dimensions of Superintendent Leadership Actions

AASA Professional Standard for Superintendency	AASA Role and Responsibility Area	Related Dimension of Superintendent Leadership Role and Actions
Leadership and District Culture	Stress executive leadership vision, shaping and school culture and climate empowering others, and multicultural and ethnic understanding.	Social Scientist - Involves addressing the need for cultural change in districts and schools to be responsive to increasing levels of community diversity.
Policy and Governance	Centers in developing procedures for working with the board; formulating district policy, standards, and regulations; and describing public school governance in our democratic society.	Political leader - Involves community outreach, negotiations with unions, and interactions with local, state and federal policy makers.

Communication and Community Relations	Emphasizes skill in articulating district vision and purpose to the community and media. Also, stresses responding to community feedback and building consensus to strengthen community support.	Communicator - Involves proactive and open systems of communication with feedback loops to identify and resolve issues and promote the district schools programs and develop new support and resources.
Organizational Management	Calls for skills in gathering, analyzing and using data for decision making; framing and solving problems; and formulating solutions to problems. This standard also stresses quality management to meet internal and external customer expectations and to allocate resources.	Manager - Involves decision-making, planning, and resource allocation of budget and personnel.
Curriculum Planning and Development	Tests the superintendent's skill in designing a curriculum and a strategic plan to enhance teaching and learning, using theories of cognitive development, employing valid and reliable performance indicators and testing procedures, and describing the use of computers and other learning technologies.	Scholar - Involves visioning, setting instructional goals, curriculum and staff development, and evaluation of programs and personnel.
Instructional Management	Measures knowledge and use of research findings on learning and instructional strategies and resources to maximize student achievement. Centers on applying research and best practice to integrate curriculum for multicultural sensitivity and assessment.	Scholar - Provide leadership in areas of teaching and instructional supervision.

Human Resources Management	Assesses skill in developing a staff evaluation and assessment and supervisory system to improve performance. Requires skills in describing and applying legal requirements for personnel selection, development, retention and dismissal.	Manager - Involves decision-making, planning, and resource allocation of budget and personnel.
Values and Ethics of Leadership	Stresses understanding and modeling of appropriate value systems, ethics, and moral leadership. Requires the superintendent to exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding, and to coordinate social agencies and human services to help each student grow and develop as a caring, informed citizen.	Social Scientist - Involves addressing the need for cultural change in districts and schools to be responsive to increasing levels of community diversity. Provides leadership for social and cultural issues.

Source: Standards for the Superintendency: American Association of School Administrators (AASA), 1993 (as cited in Hoyle et al., 2005).

This literature review has concluded that there is a direct relationship between the identified six dimensions of superintendency and the eight professional standards of superintendency (see Table 2.2). This relationship further supports the description of the complexity of the superintendent position as multi-layered and demanding. Carter and Cunningham (1997) also support the concept that the societal expectations of the superintendent role varies and is multi-layered with complex demands when they point out in the most recent study of the superintendency, conducted under the sponsorship of AASA, the following criteria in rank order used by school boards to evaluate superintendents (p. 19):

1. General effectiveness.
2. Board/superintendent relations.
3. Management functions.
4. Budget development and implementation.
5. Educational leadership/knowledge.
6. Community/superintendent relationships.
7. Staff/superintendent relationships.
8. Personal characteristics.
9. Recruitment and supervision of personnel.
10. Student/superintendent relationships.

The information regarding the AASA Professional Standards for Superintendency, the dimensions of superintendent leadership roles, and actions and the criteria used by school boards

to evaluate superintendents were used as informational data and provided guidelines that shaped my decision regarding the areas to examine in this inquiry in order to ensure that the contextual and conceptual framework would appropriately describe my experience as an African American woman and first-time public school superintendent in a Bay Area California urban K-12 district. Due to the limitations of the researcher's time and to allow for a comprehensive examination of the research questions this dissertation will concentrate on three major areas (a) Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships, (b) Organizational and Human Resources Management, and (c) Leadership and District Culture. It is my opinion that the findings of this study will provide issues for further study in the areas of professional development and training in educational administration and educational leadership in addition to adding to the education fields' further understanding of the superintendency.

Women Superintendents, Sexism, and Racism

Discussed earlier in this chapter was the 2006 national data, which indicates 21.6% of superintendents were women and were in California. In 2005 there were only eight African American women and eight African American men serving as superintendents among over 1,000 in the state. In this section I will discuss three studies that examine women in superintendent positions in this country. The first two described below looked at women of European American backgrounds and third-one involved research on African American women superintendents.

Skrla, Reyes, and Scheurich (2000) examined sexism and discriminatory treatment that women school superintendent's experience. The study participants were purposefully selected by the researchers from women who exited from their superintendent positions. The criteria for selection of the women were (a) women by reputation who were perceived as successful, capable superintendents, (b) had more than three years of experience in the same position, and (c) each left her last superintendency for employment in another field. The researchers also noted that none were fired but all of the women negotiated agreements with their boards and resigned before the end of their multi-year contracts (p. 57). The case study methodology of this research focused on three White women and anonymity was a part of the research design. The districts the women superintendents served were all in the Southwest region of the United States. All three were interviewed individually twice, followed by a focus group session of the three.

Skrla et al. (2000) concluded that the superintendents "identified clear-cut examples of sexism in the forms of questioned competence, sex-role stereotyping and intimidation" (p. 57). They also identified that the former superintendents also "spoke clearly about their own silence while they were superintendents concerning these issues" (p. 57). All three women gave as their reasons for the silence a belief they had to be strong and would be conceived as weak if they complained or spoke out about the treatment. The other issues raised by the women was a view that there is professional silence surrounding gender discrimination in educational administration and a lack of acknowledgement of the sexism present in the culture of the superintendency. I believe a case study of African American women superintendents would also result in a discussion of the silence or unspoken feelings about the issues of not only gender discrimination but would include racial discrimination because I have had such discussions with other African American women superintendents.

The second researcher's work to be discussed in this section is Brunner (2000) who examined the discourse (talk) of 12 women superintendents who were of European American background from the Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast regions of the United States. In

Brunner's research there were two substantial findings consistent across the interviews that are relevant to this study. The first finding was the unsettled discourse of the women superintendents, which were full of stories of their experiences of inequality. According to Brunner, "the study documented the continuing existence, pervasiveness, and power of gender bias at the highest levels of leadership and decision making in school districts" (p. 106). The second finding was that the settled discourse of the 12 women superintendents identified that to some degree the women participated in their own experiences of inequality because they used strategies that covered, set aside, denied, and/or ignored the gender bias. As an African American woman I find these findings to be of significance to me because I know that if the discourse had been among only African American women there would have been discussion about how both racism and sexism has impacted our professional lives. As African American women we are "doubly marginalized" by societal issues of racism and sexism and when we talk to each other we share the experiences and strategies we have used to deal with this experiential reality.

In contrast to Skrla et al. (2000) and Brunner (2000) the research conducted by Alston (2005) focused on African American female superintendents' persistence in their positions. Alston states:

Despite the small numbers of Black female superintendents and the overwhelming obstacles of the position, those Black women who serve as public school superintendents continue to meet the challenges of educational leadership and are flourishing in their jobs... More important, the tenacity and resilience of those Black women who meet the challenges of the superintendency and are successful has not been studied extensively. (pp. 676-677)

Alston (2005) examines the question "What is it about these women that keeps them in their positions" (p. 677). The conclusion she reaches is that the majority of Black female superintendents are archetypal servant leaders. According to Alston, the Black female superintendents believe they are making a difference for students, have a strong sense of efficacy and "they are empowered and are deeply caring about their mission – to serve, lead and educate children" (p. 682). This description of the Black female superintendent is one I completely identify with and I have in fact described in my brief autobiographical narrative shared in Chapter 1.

Fiscal Stress in Public Education

I entered the superintendent position in 2005-2006 and retired from the position in 2008-2009. During that three year time period the district continually was required to implement what we labeled as spending reductions as if they were temporary but where in fact permanent budget cuts. In addition to the previous three years a total of seven million dollars in spending reductions were implemented. The spending reduction terminology of the district had been in place for years. I now understand its use to be part of the "Tooth Fairy Syndrome" described by Levine (1979) in which the initial prevailing attitude in the district was that the reductions could be replaced over time. The district had to address the double fiscal impact of externally controlled state and federal political budget decisions and locally the external demographic shift to a declining enrollment district. This paper will apply the seminal work of Charles Levine's (1978, 1979) examination of the decline of public organizations and the management of cutbacks as a conceptual framework to describe the fiscal stress experienced by my district from 2005 to

2008. Levine (1978) identified and categorized the causes of public organization decline into a four-cell typology (see Table 2.3), which he developed.

Table 2.3

Levine's Conceptual Framework of Public Organizations and Management Cutbacks

Dimensions	Internal	External
Political	Political Vulnerability	Problem Depletion
Economic/Technical	Organizational Atrophy	Environmental Entropy

According to Levine (1979), the causes of public organizations in decline are divided along two dimensions based on whether they are primarily the result of conditions located either internal or external to the organization or whether they are primarily a product of political or economic/technical conditions (p. 318). Levine defines the four types of causes in the following manner (a) problem depletion is largely a product of internal or external forces beyond the control of the affected organization (in the case of my district internally it was declining enrollment and externally it was the political state budget decisions); (b) environmental entropy occurs when the capacity of the external environment to support the public organization at previous resource levels erodes (in the case of my district the political dimensions of federal and state financial decline or revenues); (c) political vulnerability is an internal property indicating a high level of fragility and precariousness which limits the organizations capacity to resist budget decrements and demands to contract from the environment (in the case of my district the employee contracts and community needs limited our capacity); and (d) organizational atrophy involves the internal atrophy and declining performance which can lead to resource cutbacks or to a weakening of organizational capacity (in the case of my district high turnover in management positions and continuous reorganization due to previous budget cuts). The Levine scheme for the identification and differentiation among the four types of decline will provide a conceptual framework from which the analysis of the appropriateness of strategies for managing decline and cutbacks can be examined.

It is surprising to have Levine describe in 1979 a reality that I faced during my superintendency:

We are entering a new era of public budgeting, personnel, and program management. It is an era dominated by resource scarcity. It will be a period of hard times for government managers that will require tradeoffs, reallocations, organizational contractions, program terminations, sacrifice, and the unfreezing and freeing up of grants and privileges that have come to be regarded as unnegotiable rights, entitlements, and contracts. It will be a period desperately in need of the development of a methodology for what I call "cutback management". (p. 179)

Levine (1979) proposes that cutting back of public organizations requires management to confront unique problems. As an example of this he points out that a public organization is required to identify cutbacks while addressing collective bargaining agreements which can constrain the ability of management to target cuts. Levine categorized the problems specific to public organizations management of cutbacks. Below are descriptions of some of the problems

he identified that have relevance to my experiences with the management of cutbacks in the district I was superintendent. The first problem he labeled the “Paradox of Irreducible Wholes” – an organization cannot be reduced piece-by-piece, the reality is that a cut may resonate throughout the whole organization in a manner no one could have predicted (p. 180). The district example of this involved the reduction of 20 health aides in an elementary school by one hour a day. The plan called for a 30 minute later start time at the beginning of their work shift and a 30 minute earlier dismissal from work. Simply put, this did not work out because there were many schools where, due to special needs of students like a diabetic student who needed to come to the office at the end of the day and take medication, or a child falling on the yard in the morning at the start of school, or at the end of the school day to find that with the health aide gone there was no other staff person present with the job description to handle the situation. The classified union held the opinion that such work was not in the appropriate job description of any other classified position other than the health clerk. The district ended up making site-by-site decisions to restore 30 minutes to 1 hour and the budget cut was eventually eliminated. The piece-by-piece (60 minutes) budget cut had negative impact across the district and proved not to be cost effective and is an excellent example of the Paradox of Irreducible Wholes.

Another problem Levine (1979) identified and labeled was “Mandates Without Money.” According to Levine “this problem stems from the practice of legislative bodies and courts passing laws without providing funds to offset the additional expense incurred by compliance” (p. 181). In my superintendency district this was a continuous issue. The major contributor to the problem in any district is special education instructional programs. Another example is the pattern of mandating testing of students and underfunding the cost. Levine’s analysis of public organization and budget cuts identifies the dilemma of efficiency or equity decisions that involve the choice to allocate resources based on need (equitable distribution of resources) or efficiency (across the board percentage cuts to everyone in the organization). The one hour cut of all health aides was an efficiency cut and restoration of the cuts was based on need and an equity decision. It is true that the union approach regarding work to the job description was the catalyst that required our district to reexamine the original decision.

Autoethnography as a Theoretical Framework

The central hypothesis of this research study is that the use of autoethnography is the best approach to obtain a deeper understanding of the political context, organizational culture, and complex dynamics of the dimensions of the superintendency. The first empirical mechanism informing my perspective related to autoethnographic methodology provided by March et al. (1991). They begin by reminding us of the truism that organizations learn from experiences. They explain why it is necessary to develop mechanisms for helping organizations learn from experience especially, “when history offers only meager samples of experience” (p. 1). A power company cannot afford to wait until it has experienced an adequate sample of nuclear accidents before it decides to revamp its safety procedures. An airline company cannot wait until it has collected data on dozens of crashes before revisiting its maintenance and repair procedures. Similarly, a state department of education cannot afford to sit by and watch 20 districts go into bankruptcy before creating analytical procedures for identifying districts at risk of bankruptcy. Clearly, leaders of these organizations cannot afford to treat a nuclear accident, an airplane crash, or a bankruptcy as a single data point and wait around until a statistically valid sample of data points is available for analysis. Rather, they must treat these “data points” as historically and

organizationally important experiences (events) and subject them to their best sensemaking capabilities. In practice, this means looking at these events from multiple perspectives, employing multiple methodologies, and utilizing multiple interpretations to properly situate them within some larger explanatory framework. The above empirical premise is supported in the conceptual research methodology framework of autoethnography which is the other empirical lens I will rely upon in conducting this inquiry.

Similar to conventional organizational ethnographies, autoethnographic methods require the researcher to systemically collect data, to write up the data in a manner that follows the conventions of the field, and to interpret and present the findings in a manner the field privileges in its official journals and research publications. Although ethnographers make no pretense that their studies are cumulative in the same manner as conventional scientific studies, the field has historically sought to create observational methods relatively free of personal bias. In contrast to these aspirations, autoethnography welcomes the knowledgeable observer to express his or her experiences, observations, and interpretations. According to Reed-Danahay (2009) the term autoethnography can vary depending upon the emphasis placed on auto (self), ethno (the cultural link), and graphy (the application of a research process) (Wall, 2006). Put another way, in comparison to the participant-observer researcher associated with conventional ethnography, who is expected to keep his or her distance from the experiences (or events) under review, the participant-observer in an autoethnography is central to the act of sensemaking, interpretation, and final analysis. Anderson (2006) succinctly captures these distinctions in describing analytic autoethnography as:

Ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (p. 375)

Autoethnographies also offer a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance understanding of social, educational, political, and cultural issues (Holt, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sparkes, 1996). Participant observation consists of a group of methods that stresses observation in the setting, informant interviews, document analysis, artifact analysis, and informal counting of events (Alexander, 1982).

In addition, the analysis of the experiences and events during my superintendency will involve the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to provide a theoretical framework to examine the experiences of the researcher through the use of the qualitative research paradigm of autoethnography. According to Baszile's (2008) understanding of CRT, "many researchers emphasize the importance of counter/storytelling as a way to incorporate experiential knowledge and establish relevance of voices" (p. 200). My decision to use the CRT framework as a tool of analysis in this dissertation is based on my hypothesis that the experiences of an African American woman superintendent need to be expressed and will be used to add another voice and perspective to the understanding of the leadership role of the superintendency. The CRT theoretical framework to be described will provide the mechanism to deeply examine the multi-layered leadership dimensions of the superintendency and the dynamics of race and gender in the context of the political environment of a K-12 urban school district in northern California.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has at its core the basic premise that race and racism are a defining characteristic of American society (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). According to Duncan (2002), critical race theorists maintain race is a central feature in the social and economic organization and structure of America. The beginning of CRT originated as legal arguments in the 1950's and the 1960's civil rights cases in state and federal courts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racial discrimination (Duncan, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). The legal cases used as a strategy include the telling of stories and using narratives to describe the injustices of American society in areas of education, medicine, and the legal system. Parker and Lynn (2002) describe CRT as a legal theory of race and racism designed to uncover how race and racism operate in the law and in society that can be used as a tool through which to define, expose, and address educational problems. They document that historically CRT has arisen from African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American critical social thought.

Parker and Villalpando (2007) state:

CRT calls for the legitimization of narratives of discrimination, and the power of the law used against persons of color and the importance of these counter narratives are key aspects of CRT and have implications for educational leadership and policy. (p. 520)

The work of Aleman (2009); Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995); Dixson and Rousseau (2005); and Milner (2007) focused on three central concepts of critical race theory (a) the ingrained nature of race and racism in society and thus in education and education research, (b) the importance of narrative, counter narrative, and the naming of people of color's reality in education, and (c) the challenge of traditional claims of objectivity, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunities in American educational institutions. Milner (2007) in a paper in which he examines race, culture, and researcher positionality presents the argument that dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen can emerge for researchers when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others' racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world.

There is agreement on six major components or themes of CRT in the works of Crenshaw (1989); Dixson and Rousseau (2005); Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995); Matsuda (1995); Maylor (2009); and Parker and Villalpando, (2007). The six components or themes of CRT are listed below.

1. The centrality of race and racism: CRT asserts that race is a significant factor in society in general, and in education in particular, and even so it is an under-theorized topic of scholarly inquiry in education. There is agreement among CRT proponents that for people of color, the reality of racism can potentially put them at risk for discriminatory treatment, oppression, and exclusion from opportunities based on race.
2. The centrality of race and racism: In the CRT framework, race and racism intersect with other forms of subordination, such as gender and class discrimination, to create a variety of oppression.

3. The challenge to dominant ideology: CRT challenges traditional claims of educational objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.
4. A commitment to social justice: CRT shares a commitment to social justice through resistance that leads to social transformation by calling for the elimination of racism and racial oppression (critical race theorist's position presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage).
5. A centrality of experiential knowledge: CRT central tenet recognizes and insists the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding.
6. A historical context and interdisciplinary perspective: CRT promotes analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in a historical and contemporary context.

The theme of voice runs throughout the CRT literature. The message is strong that the voice of people of color in the form of narrative stories can be used to counteract the stories of the dominant group and to point to divergent experiences. This construct of voice has been used in various ways in the educational literature. The CRT educational research has used the voice of students, parents, teachers of color in K-12 schools, universities, and community colleges (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). DeCuir and Dixon (2004) used CRT to examine the differential treatment and instructional practices and policies experienced by African American students in a predominately White private school. An important feature of their work was the use of student voice and CRT tenet of counter-storytelling. This theme of authentic voice is also prevalent in autoethnographic methodology and central to the research design of this study.

Duncan (2006) shares that critics of Critical Race Theory charge that it has failed to meet the burden of proof that there is a significant difference between oppressed and dominant voices in our society that would warrant privileging the former over the latter in research. CRT proponents respond to this criticism by raising questions: what is left out due to the absence of voices of color, and what stories are changed when they are told by others in order for the stories to be respected and listened to (Duncan, 2006; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Holt, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maylor, 2009).

This theme of voice is also prevalent in autoethnographic methodology and central to the research design of this paper. The CRT framework provides a means by which to critique the experiences of my voice as an African American female superintendent and can be accepted as legitimate and an appropriate research design using an autoethnographic methodology. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) has provided an excellent summary of why the CRT framework is relevant to this research and to me as a researcher:

My decision to deploy a critical race theoretical framework in my scholarship is intimately linked to my understanding of the political and personal stake I have in the education of Black children. All of my “selves” are invested in this work – the self that is researcher, the self that is parent, the self that is community member, the self that is a black woman. (p. 272)

The above quote resonates with me; I can locate myself in the above quote and restate it in the following way – All of my selves are invested in this work – the self that is researcher, the self that is superintendent, the self that is an African American woman, and the self that is an educator committed to educational social justice and equitable opportunities for all children.

Baszile (2008) provided a brief historical analysis of critical race testimony (counter-storytelling of CRT), placing it in the African American autobiographical tradition, and most evident in the three autobiographical works of W.E.B. DuBois. This historical analysis concludes that Black autobiographies can be found from slavery into current time. Baszile (2008) argues that critical race testimony offers descriptions of African American life that many times is different from one offered by Whites. Many CRT researchers' descriptions in the form of counter-storytelling identify it as a way to combine direct experience and relevant knowledge through stories of people of color as a strategy for analyzing the social and political context of education in American society (Barnes, 1990; Baszile, 2008; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) historically researchers such as Woodson and DuBois presented cogent arguments for considering race as the central construct for understanding inequality (p. 50). DuBois provided a construct about the impact of racism which he labeled as a "double consciousness" experienced by African Americans. According to DuBois, an African American "ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 14). A central tenet of CRT acknowledges and recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate. It provides a conceptual framework to examine in depth this concept of the double consciousness as experienced by this researcher through the autoethnographic narrative. This concept of "double consciousness" will be examined and discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Sensemaking and Sensegiving

Rouleau (2005) summarizes the work of Gioia and Thomas as fundamental to the defining of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving as two complimentary and reciprocal processes. Rouleau states:

Sensemaking has to do with the way managers understand, interpret, and create sense for themselves based on the information surrounding the strategic change. Sensegiving is concerned with their attempts to influence the outcome, to communicate their thoughts about the change to others, and to gain their support. Although these processes appear to be conceptually different, the boundaries of each are permeated by the other. As discourse and action, sensemaking and sensegiving are less distinct domains than two sides of the same coin—one implies the other and cannot exist without it. (p. 1415)

Rouleau (2005) argues that by moving the study of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving processes to the organizational interface, the socio-cultural context cannot easily be ignored. Thus, the concepts of sensemaking and sensegiving provide a framework for understanding the distinguishing characteristics of the stages of strategic organizational change. The use of the theoretical framework of sensemaking and sensegiving in the analysis of the autoethnographic narrative will be fundamental to the analysis of this study.

The work of Karl Weick has been identified as instrumental in developing the conceptual framework of sensemaking. His work examined disasters and emergencies. Among the most famous include a fatal airline accident and a firefighting incident that resulted in the death of 13 smoke jumpers (Weick, 1991, 1993). The examination of the disasters allowed him to critique events that failed primarily due to training of the people that caused them to hold to standards and procedures that did not work in the emergency or disaster situation. Weick's work examined the role individuals play in the maintaining of organizational standards, policies, and traditions. Jeong and Brower (2008) "found in discussion with experienced emergency managers that they understand that what they are really doing in emergency situations is a sensemaking or conscious

meaning construction process” (p. 247). Sensemaking and sensegiving is relevant to the research focus questions of this dissertation because it will be necessary to construct meaning of the dimensions of the leadership role of superintendents. This theoretical framework of sensemaking and sensegiving will also allow for the application of Critical Race Theory tenets as another means to construct meaning and analyze the first time superintendency of an African American woman. In applying contexts to the process of sensemaking, Jeong and Brower (2008) hold that the actor in a sensemaking scenario first takes into account external observations and internalizes them for the purpose of processing what is observed externally. The next step taken by the sensemaker is to then externalize what had been internalized into some new external circumstance borne from the processed, internalized surroundings. This continuous cycle of interpretations of externalized experiences and observations linked to internalized sensemaking processes will be used as a strategy to examine the autoethnographic narrative descriptions of the superintendency dimensions of leadership.

According to Jeong and Brower (2008) the study of organizational sensemaking is important because it provides us with insightful findings about the process individuals in organizations use to recognize and solve the day-to-day situations and problems they encounter. They state “despite a growing literature on the topic, our understanding of organizational sensemaking remains somewhat fragmented, and discussions have not yet fully integrated related ideas into a conceptual framework that includes the contextual terrain in which these activities occur” (p. 223). Specifically, Jeong and Brower (2008) describe a case story of a Korean fire inspector process and then they apply sensemaking analysis by dividing his actions into three stages: noticing, interpretation, and action. In understanding the dynamic of the noticing stage of the three stages of sensemaking, researchers Jeong and Brower describe how the fire inspector, who investigated a five-story building, found that management did not install a fire escape device required by law under Korean fire code. As he was creating his report that cited the infraction, another fire inspector, Mr. Lee, observed that Mr. Kim had not noticed the fact that the building was not a five-story building at all, but rather a two-story building that had three other levels below ground. Mr. Kim had entered the building from one side of its location on a steeply sloped hill, while Mr. Lee viewed the building from another angle. The story pointed out that noticing, as the first element of sensemaking, is limited by one’s power to observe. Mr. Kim’s observations led him to his own interpretation of the facts, which then led him to a particular course of action. Jeong and Brower (2008) concluded that the stages of sensemaking are interdependent, with actions occurring that are based on interpretations, and interpreting information being only as good as the observations on which such interpretation is based.

This noticing stage concept is relevant and important to consider when analyzing autoethnographic narrative descriptions of events and experiences because it points to the fact that the limitations of the methodology are by the observation skills and subjective level of the researcher. In drawing these conclusions, Jeong and Brower (2008) identify a key limitation of sensemaking. What is noticed becomes the data for sensemaking. What is not noticed at the time becomes the potential subject of future sensemaking. They point out that whether noticing is automatic or an active-thinking process, it becomes the data used to interpret the observed data. There is also attention given to the notion that observers tend to fail to notice stimuli that are problematic in some way to the observer. This caution also applies to the autoethnographic methodology research design of this study.

Another example of autoethnographic research methodology is provided by the work of Smith, Plowman, and Duchon (2010) who conducted in-depth interviews and on-site visits with successful plant managers to understand similarities in their management approaches. Across 11

different plants, representing nine different industries, the researchers found each plant manager actively engaged in shaping how employees viewed the organization and its values through what the authors call “everyday sensegiving” (p. 221). They organized their research findings around four key values described by the 11 managers in their study – people, openness, being positive, and being part of a community. They found that sensemaking is not an isolated activity or event. In fact they found that once sense is made it is communicated and used to influence both the sensemaking and behavior of others. The interviews discussed in their study documented how the manager’s everyday behavior was consciously used to shape the organizational culture and belief system about the organization’s goals and purpose. Smith et al. (2010) link everyday sensegiving of these middle managers and extend the findings of the study to consider linkages to organizational performance and change efforts.

The theoretical framework of sensemaking and sensegiving provide researchers with a conceptual strategy for examining the role an individual leadership position such as a superintendent can play in providing direction and organizational purpose. In studying strategic change in a university setting and the role of the chief executive officer in initiating and implementing change, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) called upon this grounded theory to support analysis and understanding of the events studied through ethnography, of the choices that were made by a new chancellor to chart a new strategic direction for a large university. The researchers, in applying ethnography research process, needed a basis for developing understandings which could then be transferred in ways that made the resultant understandings of the change process in the university useful to others. Doing so involved an active admission that developing understandings using this type of research involves unavoidable subjectivity that must be embraced, acknowledged, and admitted to readers.

In this ethnographic look into the change process initiated by a new university chancellor, beginning shortly after his arrival, researchers Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) gathered, as evidence of their developed and subjective understandings, inter-office memoranda, meeting minutes, and other internal records of the change process. These artifacts were necessary to triangulate their primary evidence, diaries and in-depth interviews, to support their conclusions about the change process in a university setting. This study was particularly applicable to my own research, as some of the characteristics of governance and change in a university setting, particularly the university president’s leadership role in implementing change and initiating of a strategic planning process. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identified sensemaking and sensegiving as the two theoretical dimensions necessary to create meaning out of their ethnographic research.

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) observed that the university president’s actions are consistent with the organizational construct of *sensegiving*, an iterative, sequential, and reciprocal process, in which leaders committed to promoting substantive changes attempt to promote dramatic departures from the status quo by portraying the future of the organization in a manner intended to encourage key stakeholders to embrace the values and changes needed to help bring the envisioned organization into fruition. They also note that the process of sensegiving is also dependent upon the success of another key organizational construct, *sensemaking*. In the context of the university and its new change-minded president, “‘sensemaking’ has to do with meaning construction and reconstruction by the involved parties as they attempted to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of the intended strategic change” (p. 442).

Applying this sensemaking and sensegiving theoretical framework as a tool for analysis of my experiences during my superintendency will provide a means to construct and

conceptualize the dimension of leadership of a K-12 public school urban superintendent. It will also provide tools for examination of the social political context of a first-time African American woman superintendent.

Summary

Three personal themes have evolved as I began the process of categorizing my experiences into the three dimensions of leadership roles of superintendency and considered the relationship of Critical Race Theory to my experiences as a superintendent. One theme involved the “double consciousness” and dual lenses that I wear as an African American and a woman (discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5). Another theme involved the experience of a first-time superintendent. I also found that this theme of being a first-time superintendent was interactive and overarching across the other two areas. The third theme involved the impact of my commitment to educational equity and social justice in my role of a first-time superintendent (see Figure 2.1).

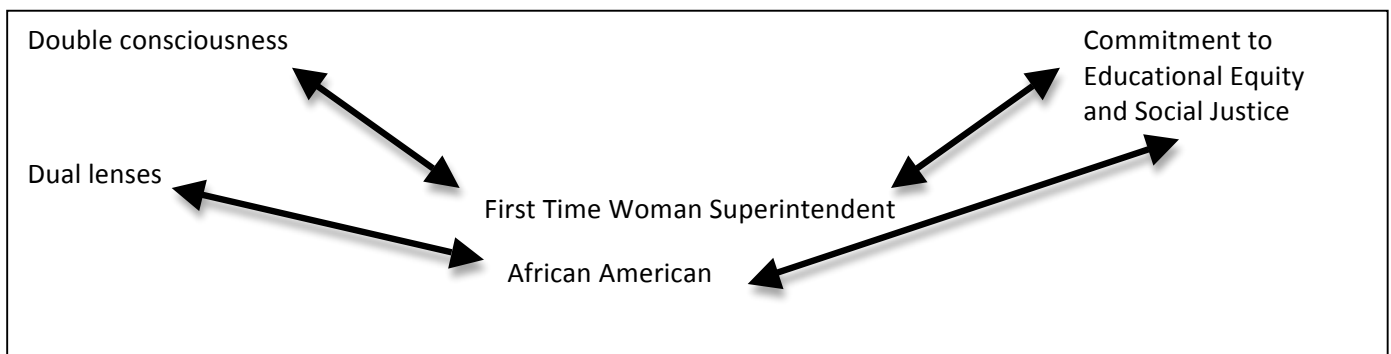


Figure 2.1. Double Consciousness Theme and Dual Lenses.

The fact that I was a first-time superintendent, and an African American woman, adds additional layers that I thought needed to be addressed to provide understanding of potentially previously unspoken issues. The metaphor of peeling an onion describes the dynamic of this autoethnographic work. It is as the participant, observer, reporter, insider, and somewhat of an outsider, when in the analytic role of the researcher that I will continuously peel away the skin of the onion (superintendent position) to reach the core of my experience as an African American woman and first-time superintendent. This view from my superintendent’s lens should also provide authentic representation and voice while allowing for a closer examination of the superintendent’s role in leadership for change and reform, and educational equity and social justice in K-12 public education in a California urban Bay Area district.

This study is based upon the premise that the practitioners direct experience, knowledge, and voice is limited in most of the discussions of how to lead change and ensure educational social justice for our students in public school districts. The literature on superintendency is populated with case studies of urban superintendents primarily in large size districts of 20,000 or more student populations (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Wimpleberg, 1997). Specifically the voice of African American women superintendents is significantly unrepresented even as a minority voice among the female gender of superintendents. Alston (2005) points out:

Historically, researchers incorrectly assumed findings from studies in educational leadership with White male participants could be generalized to help us understand the

experiences of females and persons of color in leadership positions. Although these studies help to shed light on the career paths, challenges, and success of those in the superintendency, the profile of the Black female superintendent was distinctly different from White female superintendent's experience. This difference can be highlighted in the divergent racialized and radical pathways to education. (p. 678)

I identify with the above quote because my personal background is reflective of my life experience, which has led to going into the field of education and eventually becoming a superintendent. I come from a generation that started out referring to ourselves as colored, then Negro, and then Black, and now I call myself an African American. During the passage from colored to African American my childhood years were spent deeply protected in an African American community located in Harlem, New York. What I remember, and have held onto throughout my life, is the value my father placed on being educated and the idea that it was a pathway to a better life. As a veteran of World War II my father continually shared a story within our family of returning from the Philippines after the war ended and being sent back to New York City on a train with other Black soldiers. The Black soldiers were put in train cars for "colored" and when they arrived in Arizona they were moved to cars with the cattle in order to allow German prisoners into the car trains because they were White. He shared how he felt as a man, who had fought for freedom for his country, being treated less than a human being as a citizen of America. He would always end this story by telling us that the reason he fought and would fight again was that he believed our treatment in America could be changed. My father stressed that education was the only path that would allow us to obtain justice and equality. I am the first and only college graduate in my family from my generation. For me my choice to become an educator is very directly tied to my race and the messages I received from my African American family and community environment where I was raised. I do not think my White superintendent counter parts would link their race to their decision to become educators in the way I just described.

I became a teacher and later an administrator in K-12 public schools because I fundamentally believe public education is the foundation of democracy and a means to ensure the civil rights movement for justice and equity continues. I think my story as an African American woman demonstrates the racialized and radical pathway to education Alston (2005) discussed above and provides further rationale for why I propose that my voice as an African American woman can add to the understanding of what it takes to do the superintendent job with the complexity of race and gender. This research can also provide insight into what needs to be addressed to make an impossible job become possible (Fuller et al., 2003) and insight to the implications for training and professional development for superintendents.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Framework

Chapter Overview

This chapter will discuss the (a) research methods of autoethnography, (b) the research focus areas to be examined in this study, (c) the rationale for the use of the autoethnographic research design, and (d) the data management strategies used in the study and a description of the specific study design.

Research Methods

The researcher will use autoethnography in a self-narrative format that places the self within the role/position of a first-time superintendent as an African American woman. Autoethnography methodology will be used to examine the experience of a first-time California school district superintendent, complicated by issues of race, gender, and persistent fiscal stress. The primary source of data collection in this research design will be the use of personal journals and notes written during the three-year period of my superintendency. My hypothesis is that a relevant tactic to understand the work of public school superintendents is through the lens of practicing superintendents. The core premise of this research is that the use of myself as the reporter of the superintendent's work will help to clarify parameters for future investigation into how superintendents perceive their role and the behaviors and actions they consider to be of priority. This research design also includes the review of the following artifacts and documents as the secondary source for data collection: weekly memos to board, board minutes, newspaper articles, minutes from community and staff meetings, district documents, emails, and written communication to staff, community, and board.

Autoethnographies offer a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance understanding of social, educational, political, and cultural issues (Holt, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sparkes, 1996). Critical Race Theory (CRT) will provide a theoretical framework to examine the experiences of the researcher through the use of the qualitative research paradigm of autoethnography. CRT consists of six primary tenets discussed in Chapter 2. I have specifically identified two of the six that I determined to be most directly linked to this research. The first central tenet recognizes and insists the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding (Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The second CRT tenet promotes analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in a historical and contemporary context (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Both the autoethnographic methodology and CRT legitimized this researcher as the primary source as a participant/observer and insider due to her position as superintendent of the African American race and female gender. Chang (2008) proposes that autoethnography allows for the combination of cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details and expects the stories of autoethnographers to be reflected upon, analyzed, and interpreted within their broader social cultural context (p. 46). In my role as researcher and participant observer I am committed to the use of the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, sensemaking and sensegiving, and autoethnographic methodology, to deeply examine the following research questions:

1. Drawing upon my experiences as a first-time superintendent, and also as an African American woman, are there lessons that might be of significance to other first-time superintendents?
2. What was my experience as I negotiated the dimensions of the superintendent leadership position?
3. How did the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district influence the ways in which problems were recognized as a need of attention by the local school board?
4. Did my commitment to educational social justice impact/influence my development as a first-time superintendent and, if so, in what way?

Research Focus Areas

The focus of this dissertation is an examination of three major areas of the superintendency as discussed in the above literature review (see Table 2.1). The three areas are (a) Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships, (b) Organizational and Human Resources Management, and (c) Leadership and District Culture. These three areas will provide the contextual and conceptual framework in which I will describe my experience as an African American woman and first-time public school superintendent in a Bay Area California urban K-12 district. The rationale for this consolidation into three areas is to allow the researcher the ability to categorize, organize, and identify themes and patterns within a framework of the dimensions of superintendency leadership roles recognized national standards of superintendency which are pragmatic and representative of the job. The use of established ethnographic research methods inclusive of a review of documents and use of participant observer methods is the central design of this research proposal (Bochner, 2000; Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Sparkes, 2000, 2002; Stivers, 1993; Vryan, 2006; Walcott, 1999; Wilson, 1977).

According to Spry (2001) a “good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal: it is a provocative weave of story and theory” (p. 713). This research will provide an opportunity to look deeper at the role through the lens of a recently practicing superintendent in California. The research will attempt to identify the challenges and areas consistently addressed in the day-to-day work of a superintendent, and align this information to the literature regarding the superintendent’s role and the dimensions of a difficult and complex job.

A technique used for this study involved a writing process in the development of a timeline of events central to the research focus areas. In this process I selected and chronologically listed major events or experiences during my superintendency specific to the research focus areas. I then used this list to review my journal entries and documents to select relevant representative examples from the descriptive narratives in the journals and among the secondary data sources in the theme areas of (a) Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships, (b) Organizational and Human Resources Management, and (c) Leadership and District Culture.

Autoethnographic Research Design Rationale

One component of the research design consists of an ethnographic research methodology of autoethnography. This supports the focus of my role as a participant observer using my three years of direct experience as a superintendent of a K-12 northern California urban school district of 10,000 students as a core data source. According to Scott and Morrison (2006) observation is a key feature of qualitative research in addition to naturalistic or participant observation, which is essential in attempting to get at the “inside” of rich and vicarious educational experience. The rationale for the use of self as a research participant is to fully understand the role of a superintendent and the dimensions of that position. As a research strategy it has historically been used in anthropological research, but since the 1960’s, it has become a widely used methodology in educational and social psychology research (Boyle & Parry, 2007; Philaretou & Allen 2006; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004; Watson, 2006; Wilson, 1977). Wilson (1977) has described the rationale underlying ethnographic methodology to be based on

two sets of hypotheses about human behavior “(a) human behavior is significantly influenced by the settings in which it occurs, and (b) the social scientist cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which the individuals interpret their thoughts, feelings and actions” (pp. 247-249). According to Chang (2008), “autoethnographic data analysis and interpretation involve shifting your attention back and forth between self and others, the personal and social context” (p. 125). The autoethnographic methodology design and narrative descriptions will present a representative sample of my experiences and situate these experiences among collections of coherent organizational events and, most important of all, to allow for analysis and interpretation of the larger significance of my experiences to other educators.

As discussed above, the consolidation of the six dimensions of superintendency leadership roles and the national standards of superintendency into three areas has allowed for the identification of the following types of experiences/events to be specifically examined in this dissertation by using autoethnographic research methods:

1. Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships: Board communication, community meetings, board meetings, public relations, Education foundation and PTA politics.
2. Organizational and Human Resources Management: Budget development and budget cuts process, closure of three elementary schools, parcel tax election, special education encroachment.
3. Leadership and District Culture: Strategic planning process, equity board policy development and implementation, supervision and evaluation of site administrators, and revisions and negotiations with employee groups.

Both the autoethnographic methodology and CRT legitimized this researcher as the primary source as a participant observer and insider due to her position as superintendent of the African American race and female gender. In the next section I have provided information on the social political context of the district in regards to its demographics, fiscal context, and Board of Education Composites.

Data Management Strategies and Study Design

My first steps have involved reading and rereading journal entries written from 2005-2008 and then reviewing other source documents such as minutes, agendas, emails, letters, and written file notes to identify supporting documentation. The process of comparing and contrasting my journal entries with other source documents led to the consolidation of the dimensions of superintendency leadership roles into three areas for purposes of this study. The procedure used to identify events and experiences to discuss in this paper involved the marking of sections of the journal in order to divide it into the three consolidated dimensions of superintendency leadership roles as mentioned in the previous section. I have already discovered that the writing of this autoethnographic research demands the reflective reading and rereading of the original of my personal journal entries. This process has resulted in a retrospective analysis and introspective examination of the journal as a participant observer and researcher. This categorization provided an organizational tool to then begin to pull out themes. Chang (2008) states:

Differing from data analysis, data interpretation focuses on finding cultural meanings beyond the data. Interpretation ‘involves making sense of data’ (Creswell, 1998, p. 144)

and ‘addresses processual questions of meanings and context. ‘How does it all mean?’ ‘What is to be made of it all?’(Wolcott, 1944, p. 12). Meanings are not available from the data as ready-made answers; rather they are formulated in a researcher’s mind. (p. 127)

Currently three themes as discussed previously have been consistently emerging across all three dimensions of the superintendent position (a) the perspective of my dual lens as an African American woman, (b) the experience of a new superintendent, and (c) the impact of my personal philosophy, advocacy, and commitment to educational social justice in my role as a superintendent.

The pitfalls in conducting an ethnographic research design that can threaten the scientific value of the study include: the researcher seeing only what serves their position on the topic or purposes, making claims beyond the evidence, and replacing objectivity with subjectivity. Chang (2008) identified five potential pitfalls to avoid (a) excessive focus on self, (b) over emphasis on narration rather than on analysis and cultural interpretation, (c) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source, (d) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives, and (e) inappropriate application of the label of autoethnography. The research design of this autoethnographic study will take steps to avoid these pitfalls. In order to avoid excessive focus on self and over emphasis on narration rather than analysis I will continually check to ensure to stay focused on the research questions and purpose of the study. I will not depend exclusively on my personal memory, and other data sources will include document analysis of emails, board minutes and agendas, newspaper articles, communication to staff, parents and community, artifacts, and journal entries written at the time of the events. In order to adhere to the ethical principle of confidentiality I know I must continually ask myself as recommended by Chang (2008) - do I own the story because I tell it?

Another potential pitfall is protecting of the privacy of others in autoethnographic narrative can be difficult because the identity of the researcher is already disclosed; the identities of others connected to the researcher can become apparent to the broader audience. To protect the confidentiality of others I use pseudonyms for all people cited and used in journal entries and secondary documents. I have created composite descriptions and profiles based on factual details in order to obscure identities. The location of the district will not be specifically described and will be designated as a district in the Bay Area within the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose Metropolitan Area. I have renamed the district Alpha Beta Unified School District for purposes of this study and when describing schools, they will be labeled as “School 1”, “2”, etc.

I must acknowledge the primary role my personal memory and journal entries will play in this autoethnographic research design. The data refinement process of narrowing and conducting deeper data analysis involved cutting out redundant materials not important or relevant to the areas and themes under study. This refinement process also included expanding more relevant and significant data by reviewing documents and artifacts. For example, after reviewing my collected data I noticed the emergence of three personal themes of “double consciousness” and dual lenses as an African American and woman, first-time superintendent, and my long standing commitment to educational social justice. I have used secondary data sources of emails, board agendas and minutes, newspaper articles, community and organization notes as data sources. This also involved a preliminary evaluation and categorization into the dimensions of the superintendent leadership position and the themes and areas identified above. Chang (2008) has suggested 10 strategies for data analysis and interpretation in autoethnographic research. In this study I have adopted five of the suggested strategies (a) search for recurring topics, themes and

patterns, (b) identify exceptional occurrences, (c) analyze inclusion and omission, (d) analyze relationship between self and others, and (e) contextualize broadly. The use of these strategies in this study will provide the ability to make interpretations and discuss the significance of the experiences and events examined in this dissertation.

Chapter 4

Journal Entries and Contextual Background of Alpha Beta Unified School District

Introduction

Overview

This chapter will be divided into two sections. Section one will consist of the district Contextual Background Information. It is designed to provide an overview regarding the district in this study. Section two will focus on Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships. In order to do this the researcher will provide excerpts from her journal written during the superintendency. The sequencing of section two will consist of an overview statement to provide contextual information followed by journal entries. Then there are commentary notes to provide additional information that is not evident from the journal entries. This second section of the chapter will conclude with reflections regarding the topic of Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships and the research questions of this study.

District Contextual Background Information

In this section I will provide a brief description of the educational, organizational, fiscal, and political climate of the unified K-12 district in which I served three years as superintendent. I will introduce myself as a key participant observer. In order to provide for confidentiality of the district where I served as superintendent I have developed the following contextual background information regarding the district. I have used pseudonyms for all people, the name of the district, and locations in the district. I have also created composite descriptions of the individuals based on factual details but have taken steps to obscure their real identities. The description regarding the district's location and demographics is accurate and also modified to obscure the identification of the district. The documents provided in the appendix have had all identifying information extracted or modified to obscure the district. Below I have provided an overview of the Alpha Beta Unified School District in the areas of demographics, fiscal context, Board of Education composite descriptions, and a brief set up of the social political context of the district.

Overview of District Demographics

Alpha Beta Unified School District (ABUSD) is located in the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose Metropolitan Area. The district had status as the long-time host to various military installations, the economically, racially, and linguistically diverse district, enrolling approximately 10,000 students, has a history of electing politically moderate individuals to its school board and city council. ABSUD historically is economically and racially divided and the citizens refer to one end as the north side and the other as the south side. The north is

economically middle and upper middle class. The north side is ethnically and racially diverse with a mix of Asian Americans from Chinese, Korean, and Japanese ancestry and European Americans from Italian, Irish, Scottish, and English ancestry. The south side is primarily economically low income, military, and racially and ethnically diverse with a mix of African Americans, Filipinos, Hispanics, and recent immigrants from Afghanistan, Russia, Vietnam, and Ethiopia. Second language learners make up 30% of the student population. There are economic class differences between the two sides of the city that can be traced back to the 1940's. The ABSUD has Title I schools on the south side and no Title I schools on the north side of the city. The second language population of the south side is as high as 30% in the elementary schools and on the north side as low as 5%. The free and reduced lunch population is as high as 75% on the south side and as low as 5% on the north side. An interesting dynamic of the ABUSD is that the midtown schools combined the economic and racial diversity of the city and the free and reduced populations in those schools are 15% to 20% and English Language Learner populations are 10% to 15%. The API chart (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2) reflects the achievement gap among the student population of the schools.

Table 4.1

Alpha Beta Unified School District Achievement Performance Index Data 2006

Number of Students included in the 2006 API	API		
	2006	2005	2005-06
Growth 7,508	Growth 806	Base 784	Growth 22

Table 4.2

Alpha Beta Unified School District Achievement Performance Subgroups Data and API Index

Subgroups	Number of Pupils included in <u>2006 API</u>	Numerically Significant in Both <u>Years</u>	Subgroup API	Subgroup API	Subgroup API
			<u>2006 Growth</u>	<u>2005 Base</u>	<u>2005-06 Growth</u>
African American (not of Hispanic origin)	936	Yes	671	660	11
American Indian or Alaska Native	56	No			
Asian	2,364	Yes	858	844	14
Filipino	689	Yes	806	766	40
Hispanic or Latino	881	Yes	709	688	21
Pacific Islander	104	Yes	738	732	6
White (not of Hispanic origin)	2,293	Yes	850	828	22
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	2,547	Yes	729	714	15
English Learners	1,883	Yes	758	742	16
Students with Disabilities	756	Yes	598	571	27

Table 4.3 below shows the school level data, which dramatically demonstrates the divide and achievement gap of the north, midtown, and south side schools of the ABUSD.

Table 4.3

State API Summary

	<u>All Schools</u>		<u>Deciles 1 and 2</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Targets Met*	4,264	53	835	51
API Grew, Targets Not Met**	1,640	20	403	25
API Remained Same or Declined, Targets Not Met	2,133	27	402	25

* Includes schools with 2006 Growth APIs of 800 or more.

** Includes schools that met schoolwide 2005-06 API growth targets but did not meet one or more subgroup targets.

Table 4.4

District API Scores and School District Comparisons

	API				Met Growth Target
	2006 Growth	2005 Base	2005-06 Growth Target	2005-06 Growth	Schoolwide
Alpha Beta U.S. District	806	784	D	22	
<u>Elementary Schools</u>					
North Elementary #1	932	946	A	-14	Yes
North Elementary #2	902	884	A	18	Yes
North Elementary #3	918	909	A	9	Yes
North Elementary #4	915	873	A	42	Yes
Midtown Elementary #5	818	772	1	46	Yes
South Elementary #6	758	788	1	-30	No
Midtown Elementary #7	823	820	A	3	Yes
North Elementary #8	871	842	A	29	Yes
South Elementary #9	855	829	A	26	Yes
South Elementary #10	725	748	3	-23	No
South Elementary #11	789	752	2	37	Yes

Table 4.4 (continued)

District API Scores and School District Comparisons

	API				Met Growth Target
	2006 Growth	2005 Base	2005-06 Growth Target	2005-06 Growth	Schoolwide
<u>Middle Schools</u>					
South Middle #1	693	674	6	19	Yes
North Middle #2	875	858	A	17	Yes
Midtown Middle #3	759	735	3	24	Yes
<u>High Schools</u>					
North High	803	786	1	17	Yes
Charter High Center	853	807	A	46	Yes
South High	715	704	5	11	Yes
<u>Small Schools</u>					
Special Small High School	893*	805*	A	88	Yes
South Charter High School	665*	601*	10	64	Yes
South Elementary #12	755*	768	2	-14	No
<u>ASAM Schools</u>					
Continuation High School	526*	486*	D	40	

Table 4.4 was provided to demonstrate that despite the district API of 806 there is a significant gap between all of the north and south schools. North elementary schools' API ranges from a high of 932 to a low of 871 while the South elementary schools' API range from a high of 789 to a low of 725 as compared to the district 806 API. The Midtown elementary school's API ranges from a high of 823 to a low of 818. The middle schools' API has a more significant gap between the north at 875 and south at 693 while the midtown is 759 and the district API is 806. The north high school's API is 803 and the south is 715 which are nearly a hundred points apart. This district has two charter high schools, one small specialized high school, and one continuation high school that draw their populations from the entire city and surrounding cities. The north/south divide is also reflected in these schools' data. Historically in the community, the schools on the north side are perceived as the academically better schools. The perception that the best schools are in the north of the city and the weak schools are in the south of the city is linked to the concept that those that are born and raised in the Alpha Beta city are the long term members of the community. The unspoken belief in the community is that long-term residents are White and the "new residents" are either in the military, second language learners, or African American and Hispanics who have come from other cities.

Fiscal Context

ABUSD is among 50% of districts in the state of California that experienced declining enrollment from 2005-2008. During all three years of my superintendency budget reductions totaling over seven million dollars were made. In year one of my superintendency the district was required, according to AB1200, to demonstrate that it can meet its financial obligations for the current year and two subsequent years. The chief financial officer informed me that the district would project a less than 3% reserve for the 2005-06 fiscal year. The Highlights of the Governor's May budget revision included:

- Breaks promise - \$3.2B owed to education, which equates to \$3.2M to Alameda. Even though there is extra revenue at the state level, funds continue to shift, including about \$469M in STRS payments, which will cost Alameda \$732K.
- Base revenue limit – up to 4.32%. In terms of winners/losers, K-12 education is a loser in this round of budget proposals.

Had we been given the money we were entitled to receive, the district would have received an additional four million dollars. Currently, we are still \$1.1 million short of our 3% reserve, and will be submitting a qualified budget to the county once again. The county will assign a fiscal advisor for 2005-2006.

The political roller coaster ride of California state funding combined with the local reality of declining enrollment during the three year period of my superintendency was a cause for fiscal stress and tension between the district and employee union leadership. In year one of the superintendency I initiated with full board support a process to determine which elementary schools would be closed due to the expense of operating schools with enrollments ranging from 175 to 250 students. The fiscal climate in the district over the three years of my superintendency continued to be unstable.

During my first year of my superintendency, I led a community process to close and consolidate three elementary schools into one new elementary school. In the second year, ABUSD began a process to place a parcel tax on the ballot to avoid cuts to programs and services in the schools. In the third year, the fiscal stability was once again in jeopardy.

Board of Education Composite Descriptions

The ABUSD has a five member at-large elected board. Terms are four years and there are no term limits. During my period as a superintendent the board that hired me remained in their positions. Only one of the four members of the board lives on the south side of the city. The other three live on the north side of the city. One member lives in the midtown section of the city. The following are composite descriptions of each of the five members. The president of the board is elected by the board on an annual basis and during the tenure I was superintendent I worked with three different presidents. The significance of this change in presidents will be described later in this paper.

1. Board member Alice is married and a retired teacher from the district. She is White and of European American ancestry. Alice has lived in the city for over 40 years. She identifies herself as a long term permanent resident of Alpha Beta. She taught for 30 years and was supported by the teacher union as a candidate for the board. She is in the third year of her first term. She consistently takes the union position on all issues and

meets independently with the leadership of the union on a regular basis. She has a grandchild in one of the elementary schools in the north of the city. She also has a daughter who teaches in one of the two charter schools in the district. She consistently expressed and voted the position of the teacher union on the budget reduction items involving board decisions.

2. Board member Betty is a social worker and has one child in one of the elementary schools in the north of the city. She is White and of European American ancestry. Betty was born and raised in the city and identifies herself as third generation from the city of Alpha Beta. She was supported by the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and city mayor and has publicly expressed interest in running for city council. She is active in city politics as well as PTA activities. She is in the first year of her first term on the board. She was president of the board in 2007-2008. She was an active member of the Alameda Democratic Club and Women's League of Voters and consistently pushed to have the city and school district partner and collaborate on such projects as the building of the new library, parks and recreation programs in the schools, and the creation of a youth commission. She also ran for a city council position while still on the board but lost the election and remained on the board.
3. Board member Carl is married, the owner of his own consultant business, and has three children. Two are in elementary schools in the midtown section of the city. The third child goes to a private K-8 school in another city. He is in his first year of a first term as a board member. He was one of the leaders of a successful parcel tax prior to joining the board and decided to run for the board after that experience. He was also president of the Alpha Beta Education Foundation the year he was elected to the board and resigned the position in order to run for the board. The Alpha Beta Foundation was established over 15 years ago to raise funds to support the ABUSD and has annually donated an average of \$50,000 to \$75,000 to support art, music, and academic specialized programs in the district. He is a member of the Alameda Chamber of Business and consistently worked to raise funds for arts in the schools. He also advocated for the community to invest in the schools through parcel taxes.
4. Board member Daniel is in his second marriage. He is White and of European American ancestry. He has two children from his first marriage and two step children from his second marriage. The children are shared in joint custody arrangements and all live in Alameda on the north side of the city. Two of the children are in elementary school and two are in middle school in the north side of the city. He also is in his first year of a first term as a board member. The year prior to joining the board he was one of the leaders of a successful parcel tax and decided to run for the board after that experience. He is employed in the shipping industry and works near the Port of Oakland. He was president of the board in 2006-2007. He consistently pushed the board to look at data and to make decisions based on need. He was a leader in the writing of the equity policy the board adopted (see Appendix L).
5. Board member Edward is married, has three children, all who attended schools in the south side of the city and graduated from South High School. His wife is an elementary secretary in one of the south side schools which their children attended. He is White of European American ancestry. Edward has one grandchild attending the preschool program operated by the district. He is in his first year of his second term on the board. He was president of the board in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. He was a PTA president and

PTA Council president prior to becoming a board member. He maintains his own website and is active in city politics as member of the League of Woman Voters and Democratic Club. He is a computer technician for a large retail firm. The website he maintained was perceived by many parents and community members to be a better source of information than the district website.

Social – Political Overview

The board members are voted for at-large and not as representatives of an area of the city. Historically board members have primarily lived in the north side of the city or midtown section. The board I worked with had one member who lived in the south side of the city and the rest all lived in the north side of the city. The perception of the parents, staff, and community from the south side of the town was that the board majority represented the schools from the community area (north) of the city they lived. School board members in the community typically came from backgrounds of PTA and/or Alpha Beta Education Foundation.

The perception that some schools had more (funding, technology resources, staffing, etc.) than others has a base in the social political reality of the ABUSD community. In any school district the PTA's in the community raise funds and the disparity of levels of money raised are typically based on the economic levels of the families attending the school. This social political fact was true in ABUSD, therefore an elementary school on the north side typically raised on an annual basis \$50,000 while an elementary school on the south side annually raised about \$5,000. The district has two high schools and the boundaries for the students were based on residency north and south. Another example of the disparity between the north and south sides of the city can be an examination of the high school boosters fundraising of the two schools. The fundraising totals also reflected the economic and racial division of the city. The north high school raised an average of \$40,000 a year while the south high school raised about \$10,000 a year. This economic divide of the district was also a racial divide.

Section Two

Through the Lens of a First-Time African American Superintendent

Overview

In this section the researcher will use a primary data source of journal entries from the ABUSD superintendency to examine the topic area of Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships.

It has been difficult to determine the most effective way to tell the story of an African American woman first-time superintendent as I negotiated the dimensions of the leadership position. I did maintain a journal throughout the three years. I have primary sources of my journal and reflections and observations as well as secondary sources with access to the board agendas and adopted minutes, emails, weekly memo to the board members, community meeting notes, and newspaper articles. I have reread the journal and found that the entries have a pattern of being written when I wanted to reflect and think or was struggling with an experience, idea, or issue. The other consistent pattern of the journal entries was the ongoing topics of equity and social justice, the social political context of the district, and the descriptions of my internal

struggle as a first-time superintendent. The difficult choice was what to use – what told the story but did more than tell a story – what among all of the materials provided answers to the research focus questions? What was my experience as a first-time superintendent as an African American woman in a California Bay Area urban school district? What was my experience as I negotiated the dimensions of the superintendent’s leadership position? What was the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district and my role with that context? How does a commitment to educational social justice impact/influence the development of a first-time superintendent?

In order to identify the recurring themes/issues related to the research questions it became obvious to me that it would take a combination of using all of the sources to weave back and forth between the journal, board minutes, emails, etc. to examine and analyze the first time experience of my superintendency. The autoethnographic methodology of this research provides the structure to examine the story through the lens of Critical Race Theory, sensemaking, and sensegiving theoretical frameworks. The focus of the reflection and comments will be to examine the research questions in the context of the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and sensemaking and sensegiving.

In order to examine the processes of distributed collective sensemaking and sensegiving in practice, this paper will revisit the influential ethnographic study of the strategic change process taking place in a state-financed institution of higher education, conducted by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). The Gioia and Chittipeddi study detailed the change-making strategies and actions of a newly appointed university president, who began his tenure by announcing his commitment to pursuing a course of action designed to move the large, multi-campus, public university into the top ten of public universities in the United States. The newly appointed president launched the strategic change process by espousing his vision of change, by describing the benefits of change in the form of credible “hypothetical scenarios,” by revamping the university’s administrative structure in a manner intended to realize these scenarios according to a specific timeline, and by taking immediate steps to reallocate resources from programs he concluded would not help the university achieve its long-term strategic goals and objectives, in favor of programs more in line with these envisioned outcomes (pp. 442-443). This study resonated with my own experiences as a first-time superintendent stepping into the role with a basic plan to be transparent and communicative about my vision, my expectations, and my goals designed to focus on improving student achievement. The immediate steps I took were to focus on the Board and Community Relationships and that is where I will start this section of the paper.

Overview Interim Superintendent: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

On June 28, 2005 I was appointed interim superintendent of Alpha Beta Unified School District. I served in this position until my appointment as superintendent on November 8, 2005. This autoethnographic research design used as one of its basic analysis techniques the reconstruction of representative events related to the dimensions of leadership identified in the literature review. This section will examine the superintendency leadership dimension area of board and community relationships. Journal entries during and prior to becoming interim superintendent are shared below.

March 5, 2005 (from my journal)

The current superintendent has taken a new superintendency and I need to decide what I will do. Five years ago I stepped forward and took the interim superintendent position and decided to apply but was not positive I was ready for the position. I can look back with hindsight and see how my uncertainty was viewed as weakness. Another major mistake was I assumed the board, community, and staff knew me. I did not think I needed to sell my strengths because I assumed everyone knew what I had to offer as a superintendent. I now think my biggest mistake was to step up with a mindset that if I didn't get the position I could always just return to the assistant superintendent position. I now know that I need to decide within the next few days what I want to do now. I know that the work I have done as assistant superintendent to improve learning and teaching practice in this district and to address closing and eliminating the achievement gap must continue. I know this time that a new superintendent may change the direction and focus and my job would be to go in the new direction. I experienced that last time and have spent years working to get this superintendent to understand the focus of the work must be about improving teaching practice. I know that because I am African American and a woman and have worked here for nearly 20 years is both an advantage and disadvantage. The disadvantages and advantages are centered in the fact that many people have formed opinions about me as a leader – good, bad, or indifferent – and it is too late to change that. I know that my consistent push to eliminate the achievement gap and to name who we are failing by race has been challenged by staff, parents, and a few of the board members. I know many think that because I am African American I push the agenda for eliminating the achievement gap because African American students are on the bottom.

I have always been one of the few administrators of color in this district. I remember joining the district 20 years ago and being told by African American parents and staff they were surprised I got hired. I currently am one of two African Americans in a district leadership position. I know if I choose to announce that I want to be superintendent I will not just automatically be appointed by the board. I do wonder if I were a White male with 10 years experience as an assistant superintendent in this district as I have if I would have to compete and prove my worthiness for the position. No matter what, I know that I need to have a game plan. There are things that I will not make the mistake of assuming this time. I do not know what each of the board members in the past would think about me as a candidate for the superintendency. I do not know what staff and the community response to me will be. At least I have learned that assuming I know all there is to know about the district is a mistake.

To be or not to be, to step forward or stay where I am. If I do step up and declare my intent to apply for the superintendency this time I also need to be prepared to leave the district if I am not selected. I am prepared to take on the interim superintendent position in order to be able to compete for the superintendent position. I need to set up a contract which will allow me to return to the assistant superintendent for the remainder of the school year if not selected as superintendent. The Plan B becomes my search for superintendency in another district. When I read what I just wrote I realize that I am truly in a different mindset from the previous time because my Plan A is to be superintendent of this district so that I can lead this district to become one of the districts in this state that eliminates the achievement gap by eliminating the predictability of which students are at the bottom. I want my legacy to this district to be about equity of opportunity and educational experiences for all students. I believe we have the capacity

to do it and I know I am ready and can lead this district. I need to think more deeply about my game plan to become superintendent.

March 9, 2005 (from my journal)

I have spent the last few days avoiding responding to the question – are you going to become superintendent? It seems everywhere I go someone asks a version of this question. Edward, as president of the board, approached me today and asked if I would be willing to serve as interim superintendent. I was prepared for that question yet I felt my stomach tighten and I took a breath then said I have some conditions that I need in order to take the position. I then told him that I wanted my current contract as assistant superintendent to be amended to make me interim superintendent with the return to assistant superintendent position if I did not become superintendent for the remainder of the 2005-2006 school year. I am glad I was ready for the question and continue to realize how much I want to take on this superintendency in this district.

March 20, 2005 (from my journal)

I am going to focus on three key messages to consistently respond to inquiries from staff, parents, and community members about my becoming superintendent. Message one: I am ready and willing to be the next superintendent. Message two: I believe this district has quality staff, strong parent involvement, and community support which are a huge asset. Message three: as superintendent I can work collaboratively with all stakeholders to lead the district on a pathway to excellence and equity. I must believe and demonstrate to all that I am superintendent. The core of my game plan is to act as superintendent not an interim - not to be tentative and anxiously waiting to be chosen as superintendent as I did last time. I believe I am the best person for the job at this time and I need to convince others and the best way to do that is to walk the talk and take the lead.

April 12, 2005 (from my journal)

I decided to write out my ideas about what my district needs from my perspective. I just want to get it written to help me gather my thoughts.

MY VISION

ABUSD NEEDS: Clear, strong, and collectively held educational vision and institutional mission. My focus needs to be on closing the achievement gap, equity issues, and continuous improvement of teaching and learning. I need to continue to ensure the district is focused on work to build a strong committed professional learning community that is about collaboration, de-privatizing practice, and provide for sustained professional development and coaching to improve practice at all levels.

Learning environments that promote high expectations and high standards for student achievement that are standards based but they must also address the need for learning options that include intervention and support as well as accelerated options for students.

I believe that communication and relationships across the community are essential to ensuring implementation of reforms. We need to develop successful partnerships with parents, community members, agencies, businesses, universities, and other community organizations.

Other thoughts to address:

- Raise the achievement level of all students.
- Narrow the gap between the highest and lowest performing student populations.
- Eliminate the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student populations occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.
- ABUSD needs a plan to address the fiscal demands and decisions regarding resource allocations that will support district goals.

This vision of what is needed to improve teaching and learning in the district in order to eliminate the achievement gap is based on my belief that the quality of teaching practice is what we as a district need to focus on to improve our learning outcomes. I have reread this and realize that this in many ways is my theory of action for the district to actualize the closing of the achievement gap. Now that I have done a brainstorm of my vision for this district, I will work on putting together a document that I can publicly share to all stakeholders. I need to take my stand and be open and direct in my communication with everyone.

April 30, 2005 (from my journal)

The board has had a number of closed sessions regarding the superintendent search and I am now sure that they plan to appoint me as interim superintendent for the academic year of 2005-2006 and conduct a search for superintendent. My game plan still is to step into the position and perform as the superintendent.

May 24, 2005 (from my journal)

The chief fiscal officer informed the board and community at the board meeting tonight of the fact that currently, we are still \$1.1 million short of our 3% reserve, and will be submitting a qualified budget to the county office for 2005-2006 (see Appendix B). The county will assign a fiscal advisor. I will start my superintendency with a deficit. I have already started individual discussions with board members about going out for an extension of our current parcel tax. We will in all likelihood need to do this. I will need to get on a learning curve about the legal do's and don'ts of parcel tax and study the district budget. I have decided to have FCMAT do a fiscal analysis of the district and to conduct a review of the special education program in regards to compliance and finances. I want outside eyes and expertise to examine the district and present recommendations that will be public and then can be used to strategically plan our actions. This kind of transparency is necessary to build support for the actions we will need to take to gain fiscal stability.

June 28, 2005 (from my journal)

Tonight the board unanimously appointed me interim superintendent for the 2005-2006 academic year. As I left the meeting my thought was they could have chosen to appoint me as superintendent. I have had private conversations with each of the board members. It is clear to me that individually when they talk to me they each say they see me as the candidate they want as next superintendent. Yet they all qualify their statements to me with comments along the lines of the community needs to have a process for selection of the superintendent. Another favorite comment is the board needs to know that you are ready (I hear strong) for the position. I think that I hear the term strong because each of the board members questions is asked with an undertone of - can you do the job? Each of the board members has individually, in discussions with me, raised concerns about the tough fiscal times we must deal with. I notice that I am focused on improving student achievement and understand the relationship to decisions about budget cuts. The board as a whole seems to be focused on the budget cuts. I understand that as superintendent I must be able to provide instructional leadership and operational leadership. I think the members of the board are probing at my ability to perform in the complex role of superintendent as opposed to my previous role as Assistant Superintendent of Education. It is disturbing to learn that they seem individually to each have doubts about me in the role of superintendent. I can't pin any of them down to specifics. Yet, I think they are concerned about the fiscal issues we must address and my ability to handle this.

Another area they individually have raised questions is in regards to how I see the district addressing the needs of all kids including the children who need accelerated programs of study. I

think I hear a subtext from each of the board members that they think closing the achievement gap is about some kids and not all kids and particularly not about the advanced kids. The board reflects the parent voices who are concerned that the focus on closing the achievement gap leaves out their children who are academically strong. For me there is a subtext that goes deeper and is about the race of the kids who are struggling academically. The question not asked is can you as an African American be about all kids. I hear that unspoken question and I am reminded of how far we as a district have to go if the board members don't seem to get the concept that closing the achievement gap will benefit all our students. I have work to do with this board and the community to obtain common understanding of why I see a focus on closing the achievement gaps in our district is about improving the educational experience of all our students. I am working on a document I will be sharing first with the board, then staff, parents, and community. It will expose to all my leadership direction and my vision for the district.

Commentary Notes

District Context July to October 2005

I am the interim superintendent with a one year contract as an addendum to my assistant superintendent contract. The board hires consultants from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to conduct a superintendent search. The consultants are holding a series of community meetings, interviewing board members, community leaders, city government leaders, parent leaders, and leadership of all of the employee groups including management. They also provide open time slots for anyone from the community that would like to meet with the consultants. I, of course, do not attend these meetings. The interviews are conducted in the conference room in my office and so I do see the many people coming to talk with the consultant. There is a report once a month beginning in August through October 2005 at the board meeting summarizing the information obtained regarding the characteristics, skills, knowledge, and types of experience and background the many stakeholders deem as necessary for the position. There is also a closed session each month with the board members and the consultant. The city newspapers announce my appointment as the first African American superintendent and point out that the city now has a woman mayor and a woman as city manager thus making the leadership positions in the city to be all women. I notice that the White women are not identified by race but I am. I am amazed that I still can be surprised that I always find myself labeled by my race and gender and race seems to be the primary label. During this time I keep my focus on being superintendent. I have my plan for entry as superintendent and the first component is to listen and learn as if this was a new district to me. The second component is to make transparent who I am in the role of superintendent.

Dr. Bernard Gifford, University of California, Berkeley professor, has emphasized to me that in order to create a situation in which transmittable meaningful change becomes possible, it is imperative that superintendents understand the need for communication mechanisms that will both help and encourage influential decision makers, including building principals and specialists in curriculum, assessment, and teacher professional development, to differentiate between the opportunities likely to enhance the district's chances of achieving success, from the snares and distractions likely to thwart meaningful change. Dr. Gifford further clarified that since different factions within the interminable interest groups found in publicly financed educational organizations approach the process of organizational change with varying levels of doubt and

skepticism, superintendents must be sensitive to the existence of these groups, and their willingness to support change. Some of these groups will fight mightily to maintain the status quo; some will adopt a wait and see stance; some will sign on without fully understanding the long-term consequences of their commitments; and others will understand the need for change at a level of sophistication that exceeds that of superintendents and school board members. My experiences as I entered into the role of interim superintendent for ABUSD support Dr. Gifford's advice and these organizational change processes as enacted in the district will be further described below.

July 6, 2005 (from my journal)

I know I will need to put in work with each of the board members to get agreement that there are three goal statements for improving student achievement, which must be inclusive of language that identifies the race of the student populations. I have finished the document that I will share with the board during the closed session on my evaluation and goals for 2005-2006. I have set up individual meetings with each of the board members to ask each of them the following questions: What are your hopes and dreams for the district, What are the major issues that we must deal with, What are the greatest strengths and the greatest needs of the district, In your opinion what is the best thing that I can do as superintendent for the district this year? My plan is ask the same questions of everyone I meet with so that I can look for areas of agreement and differences in their focus/goals for the district. I will also let the board know that I plan to meet with leaders from employee groups, parents, management staff at district and site level, the community, and students from the high schools in the next couple of months. The purpose of the meetings is to ask the same key questions of all these people. I will also ask the board members who else they think I should meet with and follow up with their suggested lists.

My goal is to not fall in the trap (as I did last time) of thinking because I have been in the district for so many years I know all there is to know about what the key stakeholders think and want for the district. I will use July through September to meet with people and gather the answers to my primary questions. I need to engage in broad outreach to the multitude of stakeholders in this district and make sure I proactively reach out to underrepresented stakeholders. In my brainstorm of groups and individuals not typically approached by a superintendent I have added the Ministers Council, DELAC meeting, High School Boosters Club, Filipino Association, Retired Educators Group, Multicultural Center board members, and I will approach individuals identified by me and staff as supporters of our schools or active at the school level but not in a leadership role with PTA. I plan to share my vision and my view on the superintendent's role.

Commentary Notes

Transparency as a Superintendent

I have included in Appendix C a document I developed as a result of the outreach efforts described above. I distributed it in the following order (a) board, (b) management staff, (c) all employees, and (d) opening letter to parents and the community during the months of August and September 2005. I also distributed this document during 2005-2006 at PTA meetings, PTA Council, community meetings, and meetings open to all staff. I developed a document that was first shared with the Board of Education as part of the closed session regarding my evaluation process, goals, and action plans. In the appendix I have provided the other information that

became public as I distributed the ABUSD action plan document for 2006-2009 which the board agreed would be used to evaluate my superintendency (see Appendix D).

July 23, 2005 (from my journal)

My purpose in sharing a written statement is to be transparent with board, staff, and the community and go on record (by putting it in writing and distributing it throughout the community and district) about how I envision my role as superintendent and to communicate to everyone my core beliefs and expectations (see Appendix E). I guess I feel that since I have been second in command that many find it hard to think of me as a leader who can take charge. The three R's (responsibility, respect, and relationships) motto is to address the major areas I believe need focus based on my conversations with board members, staff, community members, parents, and students over the summer. Responsibility is in reference to the accountability the district had for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Respect is about how we needed to treat each other and that as superintendent I must develop a trusting relationship with the many stakeholder groups in the district. Relationships reflected the need to work collaboratively to build a strong internal and external support system to improve the district outcomes for all students. As interim superintendent, with a goal to become superintendent with a three year contract in a district in which I had spent 20 years in a variety of administrative roles, I know it is important to make transparent to all stakeholders who I would be as superintendent of the district. The Expectations section of the document was designed to share what I would hold myself and others accountable too. The expectation areas identified were: work ethics, students, decision making, school district, parents/guardians students and community partnerships, evaluation, recruitment/retainment of employees, and fiscal/financial. I decided that I must make myself as transparent as possible about what my agenda is as leader of the district.

The next major message I shared with the staff and the community was first shared with the board as part of my goals. I informed the board that I thought it was important and necessary to move from 12 goals to a maximum of four goals and that three of the four goals needed to focus on improving student achievement and continuous improvement of teaching and learning in the district. I also insisted that we make it a practice to identify the race of the students that were part of the achievement gap and the ones that were achieving. This would address the need to target students and develop intervention and support strategies that are designed for the student population. It would also provide consistency with the state student achievement data reports. Below are the four district goals discussed and agreed to in the August 2005 closed session with the board.

GOAL 1:

Narrow and close the achievement gap in English Language Arts and mathematics between our lowest performing students (African American, Latino, English Learners, and Special Education students) and our highest performing students.

GOAL 2:

Align the spending plan with educational objectives while ensuring the highest and best use of limited resources and long-term solvency.

GOAL 3:

Ensure all students will be in educational environments that are safe and conducive to learning.

GOAL 4:

Recruit and retain highly qualified and diverse staff and provide systems of support for and recognition of all employees.

There were sub goals identified for each of the four goals (see Appendix F) that were my responsibility to implement and manage in working with district and site staff.

August 18, 2005 (from my journal)

I mailed to certificated and classified management staff the Three R's (Responsibility, Respect, and Relationship) Superintendent's Role Document (see Appendix E). I opened the meeting with the four goal statements (listed above) and walked them through the Three R's and Superintendent's Role. I shared that I saw a need for all of us to know that as superintendent I would commit to ensuring resources were allocated based on student need and their job was to focus on the whole child and to cultivate talent and ability among all of our students. During the month of August I used the same documents and repeated the same message in meetings with the leadership of all of the employee groups.

August 25, 2005 (from my journal)

The superintendent search discussion at the board meeting the other night I found it was hard to sit composed as they discussed the two-tier approach of interviewing the internal candidate (me) and then if not selected moving to interviews of external candidates (see Appendix G). I carried it off because I have come to believe that this indeed is the best process. At the end of it when I am selected as superintendent the community and staff will know that I was not just appointed because I happened to be in the second seat. They will know I was selected based on community and staff input and a rigorous selection and interview process. I believe this process will help to build consensus that I am the right person for the superintendent position.

September 30, 2005 (from my journal)

Well, I have done it; I have been able to get board agreement on the district goals and to narrow our focus to 4 goals instead of the 12 goals and 45 sub goals previously adopted. This past month has been a whirlwind. The chief fiscal officer and the chief human resources officer have resigned and not at my request. I was blindsided by both events and I know now that I shouldn't have been caught surprised by it. I feel most surprised by the decision of the chief human resources officer to leave to take a position with the former superintendent from this district in his move to a new district. When he told me within a few weeks of the chief fiscal officer announcement to me that he was leaving, I just sat and in my head said, Now what do I do? In my second month as superintendent I had to ask the board for a closed session to discuss personnel matters regarding all three executive cabinet positions of assistant superintendent of education (replacement for me), chief fiscal officer, and chief human resources officer. There is no way this district can absorb a search for replacements of all three positions as I have just been selected as interim superintendent and we are in process of a superintendent search right now.

My solution is to recommend to the board the promotion of the current director of fiscal services to the position of chief fiscal officer, the return of the retired former chief human resources officer to that position and the return of the former retired director of curriculum and instruction as acting assistant superintendent. I am recommending that all three to be appointed for the academic year of 2005-2006. To me this is an obvious solution to what could be a disaster otherwise. I know I can work with each of them and I believe they will be able to work with me as the executive leadership team. I know the three people have creditability in the district as former leaders in basically the same roles they are to replace. I am pleased that they have agreed to do this because they know how much the district needs leadership that can stabilize the district. They also join and are committed to working to support my agenda. I wonder how many first time superintendents have found themselves with this amount of turnover in executive level

positions within their first few months. I know it is important to get the entire board to accept my plan. I have to reach out and have individual conversations with each of them multiple times to get them to understand my strategy.

August and September have taken intense work to ensure the transition from those leaving to the return of two former staff and the promotion of another while opening schools, managing new school construction, modernization, dealing with fiscal issues, and most difficult learning how to work with a board. The ensuring that I keep all informed and constantly checking in is new to me. I truly am learning I have five individuals I need to understand and who need to understand me. I am doing a weekly bulletin and we agreed its primary focus was to keep them informed. I am struggling with what they need to be informed of and what in regards to confidentiality and the Brown Act is acceptable to include. I am going to check in with other superintendents and legal counsel regarding the protocols and policies of weekly bulletins. I see the bulletins as important to communication and my issue of transparency with the board, yet I am aware not everything goes into a weekly bulletin.

October 2, 2005 (from my journal)

I joined Rotary due to my role as superintendent and I am finding it to be a cultural learning curve that was unexpected. They have a practice of doing songs as a whole group and many times I don't know the words to the songs. Today it was a Roy Rogers song and everyone at my table seems to know it and sang along. I moved my mouth as if I was singing it but I had no clue, Roy Rogers is not part of my cultural experience. I am caught by surprise sometimes as an African American in a majority White setting how I can feel sometimes excluded by the content of the conversation. The sing-a-long brought back the feelings I had on my first time at the Rotary meeting when I looked around the room and found no other African American in the room of over 50 people. The majority of the room consisted of White men and there were about three Asian men as the only other people of color in the room that day. The rotary experience is making me more conscious of how White the power structure of this community is. We are a multicultural/multilingual majority district yet the city leadership, chamber, business community, and even district leadership is majority White.

Today I was the speaker as a new member of Rotary and had to introduce myself to everyone standing at a mike in front of the room. I really felt out of place and nervous. I had planned my talk but the sing-a-long had an effect on me. I decided to share more about myself – I wanted to be explicit about being an African American woman with a leadership position in the community. I opened with the story on my being born in New York City and raised in Harlem and the role my father played in my valuing of education as a pathway to a better life and knowledge. I found myself talking from my heart and discarding the prepared talk. I shared that my own education was completed in public schools from elementary through college. I spoke out about my passionate belief that American public education is the foundation for democracy. I also shared my belief that quality and equitable public education would ensure the pledge of allegiance promise of “liberty and justice for all” as a reality someday. I received a good amount of applause and I feel good about what I said.

October 8, 2005 (from my journal)

Could two experiences be more different even though the same message was shared? Today I spoke to the Multicultural Board and at the PTA Council. I shared the Three R's, the four district goals and superintendent's expectations with both groups. The Multicultural Board (a community based organization) with 10 members present consisting of one Native American, three Asian (one Japanese, two Chinese), two White, two Hispanics, and two African Americans

didn't question the focus on closing the achievement gap but they did ask how I planned to accomplish this. While the PTA Council (about 25 people, majority White, but for three people of color from south side schools) did ask if we were focusing on the closing of the achievement gap how were we going to ensure the kids who were doing well were pushed to continue to do well. How were we going to make sure the academic needs of the advanced and proficient students were also addressed? I get this question and I really see it as a code for another question — What are you going to take away from my kid in order to close this gap? I am not happy with how I handled the question. I realize that I need to find a way to answer the real question and not just answer the coded version that I am asked about advanced academic students. This is the same question the board raised during our retreat. I find myself caught between what I know they really mean and what is being articulated. There is a secret code in ABUSD and over the years I have accepted it with very little challenge. A Goethe quote is very appropriate to express what I am feeling and thinking at the moment - To think is difficult, to act is difficult, to act as one thinks is the most difficult.

November 8, 2005 (from my journal)

I can't seem to relax and just enjoy the fact that I now have a three-year contract as superintendent of ABUSD (see Appendix H). I am bubbling over with joy. Close session was such a positive experience. Each of the board members spoke to why they had decided to go forward with me and not continue with more interviews. Each mentioned how they were approached by staff, community leaders, and parents, who wanted them to select me. They also indicated they saw me "step into the position and take charge." I think my decision to perform as if I was indeed the superintendent and not an interim one was a wise decision. I have owned the job since day one and have had to make so many decisions that a new superintendent would have just had to live with. It is amazing since July I have hired a new executive cabinet, four new principals, three new vice principals, and three new directors. It is fortunate that I was able to choose among current staff and primarily make shifts at the site level. Otherwise I truly think so many new players to the district would have been much more disruptive than we could have handled. I am now facing leading the district through a process to consolidate and/or close elementary schools on the south side of our city. I really can't seem to shut my mind down but I need to rest.

Commentary Notes

Background and Context of School Consolidation/Closures

A major issue I had to deal with in year one (2005-2006) was the decision to close elementary schools on the south side of our district. In the last five years, ABUSD had experienced declining enrollment. In that same five-year period, ABUSD routinely collapsed and consolidated classes at south end schools due to the continued declining enrollment. In both 2004-05 and 2005-06, three elementary schools have had an enrollment of less than 250 students. Continued declining enrollment in these elementary schools negatively impacts our use of facility, financial, and educational resources. The district had 12 elementary schools serving nearly 4,500 students but there were enrollments of 600 to 400 on the north side of the city and schools on the south side with enrollments of 200 to 250 including an increasing percentage of inter-district permits. In October 2005 we provided the board with an enrollment study prepared by consultants. The study included a five year analysis of enrollment and a five year enrollment projection. Specifically, the financial impact of 2005-06 declining enrollment will necessitate at

least an \$800K budget cut for 2006-07. The consolidation of one school would provide a \$300K savings and the consolidation of two would provide \$600K of the projected \$800K cut for 2006-07.

The district was looking at school consolidation as a means to mitigate these impacts of the continued declining enrollment. A board workshop was held on Wednesday, November 16 at Woodstock School and at the November 22 Board of Education meeting.

December 1, 2005 (from my journal)

I am rethinking my final recommendation for school consolidation to go to the board in January. It is clear to me that I don't currently have the full support of the board to consolidate all three south end schools into the new school. We are facing a timeline of March 15 for notification of teaching staff layoffs and we need to submit the January preliminary budget for 2006-2009 that addresses reduction in cost. The consolidation of at least two of the schools would prevent budget reductions across the district. I truly believe this consolidation is our win-win. Putting this together has truly challenged me and staff. To get the board to agree to change the new school from a K-8 to a K-5 and to close and consolidate schools into the new school has been much more difficult than I originally thought. The series of community meetings on the topic actually made some members of the board take a step back and I am taking the step back as well. I will only ask them to consolidate one school but make it clear that we may still in the next year consider the closing of the third school. I have put together a complicated package due to facilities renovation issues, new school construction, and declining enrollment in one end of our district (see Appendix I).

The complexity of balancing the financial, academic, employee contract requirements and community concerns to develop a package deal the board would be able to vote on has been difficult. I am struggling with finding the best equitable solution. It is hard to listen to the parents from the schools with a majority of students of color talk of this consolidation destroying their community. Yet I know that the consolidation of the schools will allow better use of resources (Title I, special education, classified staffing). I also know that the consolidation will for the first time create a school with demographics that are socially, economically, linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse student populations because the school will be in the center of a new development with homes starting at \$800,000. In a way I see the school district as having an opportunity to do some social construction through the consolidation of the schools into a new school. Instead of the south-north divide that has been a part of this city and district for over 50 years we will have a seed planted that will bring together students and families from diverse social economic classes and ethnicities. I have expressed this idea of a new beginning to staff, parents, and community but this vision is mostly ignored due to the passion surrounding the idea that schools will close. How do I get the entire board and community on board with this vision?

January 12, 2006 (from my journal)

I have worked with staff and we took to the board a compromise recommendation that I thought we could get the votes for (see Appendix J). I can live with the final vote but I truly think we should have consolidated L school this time as well and not put it into a kind of "watch and see" status. I was worried about getting board votes and I still barely got the compromise proposal passed. I am already thinking about how I can bring it back when we do budget cuts. I will keep talking to board member Daniel (because he voted no) and board member Alice who was absent for the vote. I have got to convince them this is the time to do it because we will have to do it for sure next school year anyway. I feel badly about bringing it back in this way but it

needs to be done. I need to keep working the board. What is so ironic is that I got the unions to go for the consolidation of all three schools but not the board. Again I say to myself work the board.

Commentary Notes

South Side Elementary School #10 School Fence: Racism or Artistic Freedom?

In August I received a letter from a retired African American former principal in the district. She lived in the community and was very upset because she had driven by a school and there were figures on the fence of children, the figures were alternated on the fence and made from metal. She described the figure as looking stereotypically like a pickaninny caricature. Pickaninny is a potentially offensive, derogatory term, which refers to children of Black descent or a racial caricature thereof. She was most offended by the braids sticking up in the air and demanded that the figures be removed immediately. I contacted the principal and learned that the parent group had received special funding from the South Side Community group to add artwork to their school. A parent in the school had created the metal sculpture pieces as cutout figures to be wired to the fence as artwork. There was no specific district policy regarding school site decisions to add artwork.

As superintendent I could not just order the removal unless of course it was derogatory or inappropriate. The retired principal thought they should be removed on the grounds that they were racially, stereotypically negative representations. The artist did not agree and the principal thought the school community, which was multiracial, had raised no objections and the figures had been put up two weeks previously. This request resulted in city-wide community discussions and board members began to take positions. I am including my journal entries regarding this because they document the double consciousness concept discussed in Chapter 2. I will also discuss this further in the reflection section at the conclusion of this chapter.

August 30, 2005 (from my journal)

I drove by the school to look at the figures and I do see that the figures are questionable. I would not call the figures pickaninny caricatures but I can see how they do closely resemble the caricatures. I had my teenage daughter in the car and asked her what she thought of the figures. She said “nothing”, I then asked her if the figure in the braids looked like a pickaninny to her and she asked “what is that?” As an African American I see why the principal is upset and I am from a generation who can remember seeing “cartoons” and even movies that showed a Black child with braids sticking up, big lips, big eyes, and a stupid grin on her face.

September 6, 2005 (from my journal)

Just got off the phone with Diane, the retired principal and she is mad. I did not agree to her request to immediately take the figures down. I told her I would need to meet with the principal and the PTA group to discuss their removal. She called me coward and said that what good was it to have an African American superintendent who wouldn't stand up for her people. Boy, do her comments hurt, she and I have a friendship that goes back years. Diane finally agreed to let me work it through a process, but she really thinks I have the authority to just take them down. I do have the authority but I feel strongly that I need to work with the principal and PTA to understand Diane's objections. I feel like two people at this moment. One is the superintendent following process to ensure community decisions are addressed respectfully and the other is as an African American who shares the pain of another African American hurt by the figures being allowed to stay up.

September 12, 2005 (from my journal)

The assistant superintendent and I met with the school principal and three members of the South Side Elementary School #10 PTA. It turns out that the artist who created the figures is also the PTA vice president. The purpose of the meeting was to try to share the perspective of Diane, the retired principal, and discuss issues. As you know, the artist has stated that she will not be placed in a defensive position. The decision whether to remove the figures will be one that needs to be made involving the school and the district. The principal has informed me that a meeting with the South Side Community Association that provided the grant to commission the artwork has been scheduled for September 19. After the meeting, Jeff will work with the PTA to determine the options regarding removing or leaving the figures, and whether all or just the figures in question would be removed and make a recommendation to me. I expect that they will arrive at a decision by next week.

I ended up sharing my story regarding driving by with my daughter. I told the group in the meeting that I could see the issue Diane was raising but my daughter couldn't. I think I ended up giving them an out because one of the parents immediately said "so these elementary kids don't see what you see either?" They then got into talking how the figures were art and were not intended to offend. The artist shared that she had taken pictures of children on the yard and then created the sculptures using the pictures to design a composite figure and the Black girls on the yard all had braids. I left the meeting saying to myself "they don't get it."

October 16, 2005 (from my journal)

It has been a month since I met with the PTA group and since that time much has happened among the board members. I have heard from Alice and Betty both of whom think that the figures are artwork and don't see the issue of the pickaninny raised by Diane as only one reason to take the figures down. I have heard from Carl and Daniel and they each have expressed that we not get involved and let the school site decide. The South Side Community Association has submitted in writing support for Diane's request to remove the three figures that were considered to be stereotypically negative, and to leave the remaining figures on the fence. The principal and I have agreed and the decision has been made, and they will be removed by Friday of next week after school. On Monday the 17th, the principal will share the decision at his staff meeting, and on Tuesday, he will share it at the PTA meeting. He is currently drafting a letter that will go out to the parents and friends of South Side Elementary School #10 and the South Side Community Association explaining the decision. The Association has offered to pay for alternate replacement figures, as well as the use of a consultant to facilitate a community meeting to discuss the rationale for removal of the figures and to focus on how a community can work to respect the diverse perspectives of its community members. That meeting has been scheduled for November 10. The White people in the community at-large and at the school still don't get that it is not about artistic freedom. To me and other African Americans it is about slavery and all the negative messages we have received as a people. I am struggling keeping my superintendent hat on.

November 18, 2005 (from my journal)

In the last week, I have spoken with the artist of the figures, Michael, pastor of a community church, the principal, and the consultant selected to facilitate the community meeting in order to get input into planning the meeting. The next community meeting is scheduled for November 29 at 7:00 PM at Washington School. The principal and I agreed that there is also a need for smaller meetings with him and individuals, which will be occurring sometime in the upcoming weeks. In the meantime, the staff has written a letter to me asking for a meeting to

discuss their concerns with the decision to remove the figures. I will meet with them but at this point I have come to realize that “artistic freedom” and the lack of other African American voices other than Diane makes the White people think we are overreacting and not respecting them. And the African Americans are expressing to me that they don’t get why the White people are talking about artistic freedom and not respecting them. I have personally requested African American community people to attend the meeting explaining to them that Diane can’t be the only person to speak up on the issue. I find myself in a strange position as an African American superintendent even when I raise my voice in support of Diane’s request I am told that it is about artistic freedom.

December 2, 2005 (from my journal)

Well, two board members attended the community meeting. Both spoke out in favor of artistic freedom. I have spoken to each of them to once again share why I don’t think it is about artistic freedom. As follow-up from the community meeting, I have asked the student services director to serve as a facilitator for a meeting between the principal and the artist, as well as another meeting between the principal and the school staff. These meetings are being scheduled to occur as soon as possible.

Both the principal and the consultant agreed to the fact that at the second meeting there was only one African American voice who attended in support of the silhouettes being removed, and she left the meeting early, once again raised the question in the meeting as to whether it was only a few African Americans that were upset. The majority of the attendees were either opposed to their removal, advocates for returning the original silhouettes, or still had concerns about the way in which they were removed. There wasn’t a true dialogue regarding what should be done next. The consultant, principal, student services director, and I will be discussing next steps for the process to redraw the silhouettes. We are considering facilitated workgroups to design the new silhouettes.

I am personally drained by this fence stuff. The idea that keeps surfacing that because it is only a few African Americans makes me feel as if we are dismissed unless there are many yelling and complaining. The message is not being listened to and whether it is one or hundreds the figures need to be removed. As an African American I think we are not even in the same conversation on this issue that Diane is raising regarding the pain the figures cause her and that pain is not being addressed with conversations about artistic freedom.

December 11, 2005 (from my journal)

Alice, a board member, has alerted me that Mr. G., who spoke at the last board meeting, as well as other friends of South Side School # 10, have reached the conclusion that the figures should be returned because of the low turnout at the second meeting of voices that were “for” the fence figures staying down. Alice has advised Mr. G. to contact me. As of yet, I have not heard from him. The student services director will be working with the principal and the artist to facilitate a discussion regarding next steps. The principal is working with Michael, pastor of the community church and R, president of the teacher’s union, to put together a work group on redesigning the silhouettes.

December 23, 2005 (from my journal)

I just learned that the artist of the silhouettes removed from the fence is showing the pieces at an exhibit at the Alameda Art Center at 1701 Webster Street. There was a reception with the artist at the Center on December 20. Again they hold to artistic freedom. The principal continues to work towards rebuilding relationships between the PTA and staff and is planning to pull a small group together of people who have previously volunteered to work on redesign of

the figures. Hopefully the artist will be willing to participate in this process as she originally agreed, but her decision to display the figures does not appear to indicate she is willing now to work on this.

May 14, 2006 (from my journal)

I have heard – in the Alameda way – that there is a group forming to advocate for the fence figures being returned to the fence. The principal has not been able to get the two groups (the ones who wanted the figures removed and the ones that wanted the figures to remain on the fence) to sit down and discuss the alternative of redoing a figure to be placed on the fence. It looks like compromise is not possible. I have heard no more from board members on this issue in the last couple of months so I guess life goes on. I do wish we could have come to a better place than this and I still believe my decision to have the figures removed was the right one, but I do wonder what would have been the decision of a White superintendent.

Reflections Regarding Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

In this section I will reflect on the research study questions drawing upon my experiences as a first-time superintendent, and also as an African American woman, Are there lessons that might be significant to other first-time superintendents?; What was my experience as I negotiated the policy and governance dimension of the superintendent's leadership position?; and, Did my commitment to educational social justice impact/influence the development as a first-time superintendent and, if so, in what way? Below I will revisit the experiences discussed above and critically reflect on my role as a superintendent. The experiences described in this chapter will be examined in the following order: interim superintendency and transparency, school consolidation, and school fence: racism or artistic freedom. The use of autoethnographic methodology has allowed me to share my observations as a participant researcher. It has also provided the opportunity to read and reread my journal written at the time of the events described here. The writing of this dissertation has allowed me to revisit and reflect on the events with the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory, and sensemaking and sensegiving, which will be further discussed below.

The Interim Superintendency and Transparency Strategy

My learning as a result of writing this autoethnography was that the political reality of my superintendency was a challenge for me from day one. My previous background as assistant superintendent of educational services provided me with strong knowledge and experience as an instructional leader of the district but I was challenged by the work now necessary in the area of board management and communication. My previous role had been internal to the district operations. The superintendency was much more of a public external role in the community. My previous experience as assistant superintendent did not fully prepare me for the demand for constant direct interaction with the board members. I had to consistently and redundantly make clear the district agenda and focus on improving student achievement through quality professional development and coaching of the instructional staff. I constantly struggled to make sense of the board dynamics and to understand the views of each of the individual board members. I learned what was said to me individually could be changed for some of the board members based on the last person he or she talked to. It also could be changed for other board members by pressure from a particular interest group. I learned that I had to stay in constant

communication with each of the board members. In a review of the weekly board communication sent by email to the board I determined that during the three years of the superintendency the board members discussion topics when they met with me on an individual basis were consistent in the following topics they focused on:

- Board member Alice usually discussed negotiations with employees groups, specific school issues she became aware of, board policy implementation concerns, parcel tax election, and personal stories of her experiences in the district. People in the community and staff would go to her with their issues and she tended to want to fix things.
- Board member Carl raised issues regarding marketing and communication, charter school issues, fiscal and budget cuts, parcel tax, political advocacy for school funding, and employee negotiations.
- Board member Betty's interest was on school policies such as wellness, head lice, discipline, parcel tax, and specific school issues she became aware of. She was the one board member who tended to micro-manage and actually would call district staff directly to question them on issues despite the board agreement to go through me first.
- Board member Edward focused on fiscal and operational issues such as employee negotiations, modernization, technology, and parcel tax.
- Board member Daniel would discuss fiscal issues such as budget cuts, parcel tax, modernization budget, political advocacy for school funding, charter school issues, and school issues brought to his attention through PTA council members.

This review of the board topics members consistently expressed interest in their individual meetings with me revealed that student achievement was not a topic they raised. It was the topic I kept bringing up with them on an individual basis. I had to push the agenda of closing the achievement gap. I would also point out that they each were in agreement that it was important and to publically adopt the goals targeted to address improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap. As superintendent I also came to realize that they expected me to lead and ensure implementation of the goals. I think that my commitment to educational equity in our district was owned by me and okay with each of the board members perspective but they did not seem to hold educational equity in the same level of priority as I did. I sometimes felt it was because as an African American woman I did feel the urgency of the students who were failing in our system differently than the board members. As described in Chapter 2, according to Alston (2005) the Black female superintendents believe they are making a difference for students, have a strong sense of efficacy and “they are empowered and are deeply caring about their mission – to serve, lead and educate children” (p. 682). This description of the Black female superintendent is one I completely identify with and I have in fact described in my brief autobiographical narrative shared in Chapter 1.

I have found the leadership dimension of policy governance: board and community relations complex and multi-layered. Previously in this paper the Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) study was discussed in regards to the detailed change-making strategies and actions of a newly appointed university president. As I reviewed my experience as a newly appointed superintendent I have identified similar experiences. In applying the construct of sensemaking and sensegiving to my efforts to be transparent in my behaviors and communication to staff and community it is evident to me now that my visibility in the community and in the schools, outreach strategies implemented, and presentations of the Three R's and Superintendent's

Expectations to the many stakeholder groups in the district was a strategy I used as district leader to provide a means to make sense about the organizational direction under my superintendency. As superintendent I was providing meaning construction to the involved parties and stakeholders of the district. I was attempting to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the district's four goals (see Appendix F). I openly shared with the board, community, and staff my agenda and the focus on improving student achievement and closing of the achievement gap aligned with my core values, beliefs, and expectations for the district. My purpose in doing this was to obtain stakeholders investment in our schools. This indeed was the strategic process of sensemaking and sensegiving introduced through the Three R's, Superintendent Expectations document (see Appendix E) to the district. The use of the motto 'responsibility, respect, and relationships' from the first month as interim superintendent and its continued use throughout the superintendency allowed me to keep in the forefront the ideas that as superintendent I was about accountability, respect, and building trust. In fact during tense employee negotiations we would be reminded of the motto by the union members and we were even told that the district was not treating the employees with respect or being accountable to their needs.

I found the outreach to staff, parents, and community during the superintendency was the easy part of my job. As mentioned earlier, the most difficult dimension was to learn how to do the balancing act between the community and the board. The value of working to be transparent was that people knew my leadership was about equitable outcomes for all students. The push back from the board and community was about what it meant for their children. When examining this balancing act through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens it is apparent that my commitment to educational social justice and the reform of public education by calling for the elimination of the racial achievement gap in the district was not embraced as deeply by the board. Also in regards to CRT my position was one of challenge to our educational system. The board was open to this challenge yet it became my role to continually challenge and lead the district's agenda of improvement of educational opportunities for all students.

School Consolidations

In the above sections I have described the approach I took to make my concept of the superintendent role transparent to the board and community. This section will focus on the process used with the community and board to address the decisions regarding consolidation of schools complicated by the need to address fiscal and facilities issues. As I consider the journal entries above in regards to school consolidation as superintendent I must confess that I did not effectively bring the board along with me as to why the consolidation of the three schools was the best decision for the district. I did not help them to make sense of my recommendations. I did work within the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district and managed to lead the district in making equitable decisions for all students. An examination today with an honest researcher's view of the consolidation decision-making process would conclude that it ended up resolved and with an appropriate decision but the struggle with the board and community could have been handled with less turmoil if I had worked using an on-going strategic plan and review process. I found myself in a reactive mode instead of proactive and anticipatory of both board and community issues. The constant fiscal stress of budget reductions in all three years added to the tendency to be reactive as opposed to proactive and strategic in our decision-making process.

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) observed that the university president's actions were consistent with the organizational construct of *sensegiving*, an iterative, sequential, and reciprocal process, in which leaders committed to promoting substantive changes attempt to promote dramatic departures from the status quo by portraying the future of the organization in a manner intended to encourage key stakeholders to embrace the values and changes needed to help bring the envisioned organizational into fruition. As the new superintendent and leader of the district I attempted to implement strategic change through the consolidation of the elementary schools on the south end of the district. The district needed to address the impact of declining enrollment.

My decision to make a recommendation to the board of closing one school instead of two described above was made based on my belief that I could not get the entire board to take the more aggressive action. So the recommendation I truly thought best was not the one I took to the board. The resulting vote was three yes, one no, and one board member was absent on the evening of the vote. I had split the board by going forward with my compromise recommendation (see Appendix J). As a part of the process of writing this and reviewing the board minutes, my journal and community meeting notes, I have come to the conclusion that I made a fundamental error of a first-time superintendent — I misread my board and made a decision based on where I thought the board was on the issues. The fundamental error was to make my decision and recommendation to the board based on what I thought they would vote for instead of what I thought was the best decision for the district. The decision to take the conservative approach in order to get all of the board to vote for the recommendation backfired and resulted in a series of board meetings and additional community meetings around spending reductions (budget cuts) in January and February 2006. The final recommendation I then took to the board included the closure of the additional school. The turmoil to the school and staff of the school that was added after the other school closing was not something I am proud. As I write this nearly five years later I once again feel in my heart that my attempt to compromise was an error and took its toll on the south end community the schools were located. The fact that these schools I closed had a majority of children of color in a district in which I was the first African American superintendent seemed to me to be an incongruity.

School Fence: Racism or Artistic Freedom?

The journal entries above describe my experience as an African American dealing with an issue centered in a school that had what was labeled as stereotypical pickaninny metal figures placed on the school fence as part of a project to add art to the school environment. When one applies a CRT framework to the events described, there are three major tenets that relate (a) CRT central tenet recognizes and insists the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, (b) CRT promotes analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in a historical and contemporary context, and (c) CRT tenet of counter-storytelling. The fact that the PTA, staff, and even board members, as well as other members of the school community, could not accept the experiential counter-storytelling regarding what the figures represented to some African Americans supports the CRT tenet that the recognition of people of color is that knowledge and experience is necessary. In this situation the fact that it was not recognized and instead responded to as a denial of another person's artistic rights was difficult for me to deal with. Indeed the double consciousness discussed in Chapter 2 definitely applies to my experience.

I was being asked to ignore my own experiential knowledge as an African American even after I voiced my story of recognizing the figure as stereotypically negative. The fact that I also shared that my daughter did not share my same recognition was not understood as rooted in the historical experiences of African Americans in this country. I did not write into my journal at the time but I also received some hate-speak emails about me as a Black person preventing White people from expressing what was “only art”. I did not write about it at the time because I also chose not to share it with the board or staff. I did not want to add to the chaos at that time. As I write this I am aware that there is a link to the decision of the White women in the Skrla et al. (2000) case study in which all three women gave as their reasons for the silence a belief they had to be strong and would be perceived as weak if they complained or spoke out about the treatment. I mentioned earlier in this study that I would be open to being vulnerable and to dig deeply into my experiences as a first-time African American woman superintendent. I think this reflection on the interim superintendency and transparency, school consolidation, school fence: racism or artistic freedom has allowed me to critically reflect upon the research questions in this study.

Chapter 5

Superintendency Leadership in the Areas of Organizational and Human Resources Management and Leadership and District Culture

Overview

This chapter will concentrate on two major areas of superintendent leadership dimensions of (a) Organizational and Human Resources Management, and (b) Leadership and District Culture. As discussed in Chapter 2, the AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency developed a set of eight standards as follows (a) leadership and district culture, (b) policy and governance, (c) communication and community relations, (d) organizational management, (e) curriculum planning and development, (f) instructional management, (g) human resource management, and (h) values and ethics of leadership. The AASA standards have been nationally accepted as comprehensive and an accurate description of the competencies, skills, knowledge, and values necessary to the role of a school district superintendent. For purposes of this study I have combined the areas of organizational management and human resources into one dimension of superintendency leadership and the other standard of leadership and district culture into another dimension of superintendency leadership to be examined. In order to identify the recurring themes/issues related to the study research questions it will involve using all of the previously described data sources in Chapters 3 and 4. The researcher will provide excerpts primarily from the weekly email bulletins written by me as superintendent to the board and executive cabinet documents and other district artifacts as they are relevant to the topic. The sequencing of this section will consist of an overview statement to provide contextual information followed by documents and narrative descriptions. In each section the researcher will discuss reflections and rationale for the actions described in the excerpts.

The autoethnographic methodology research design of this study provides the structure to examine the superintendency through the lens of Critical Race Theory, sensemaking, and sensegiving theoretical frameworks. The focus of the reflection and comments at the conclusion of this chapter will be to examine the research questions in the context of the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and sensemaking and sensegiving. The research questions to

be examined in the context of the superintendency leadership dimensions of organizational and human resources management, and leadership and district culture are:

- Drawing upon my experiences as a first-time superintendent, and also as an African American woman, are there lessons that might be of significance to other first-time superintendents?
- What was my experience as I negotiated the dimensions of the superintendent leadership position?
- How did the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district influence the ways in which problems were recognized as a need of attention by the local school board?
- Did my commitment to educational social justice impact/influence my development as a first time superintendent and, if so, in what way?

Organizational and Human Resources Management

This section of the chapter will consist of an examination of human resources management in the areas of resource allocation of budget and personnel and the organizational areas of internal and external management of customer expectations. In order to analyze the leadership dimensions this study will focus on the district negotiations with the teacher union and the fiscal implications of the district budget cuts as a part of school closures and consolidation.

ABUSD Teacher Union Negotiations

Overview

During the superintendency from 2005-2008 interactions and negotiations between the district and the teacher union were vacillating between friendly and tense. During the three year period of the superintendency the district went to arbitration regarding a negotiated salary formula, was able to work through agreements regarding the consolidation and closure of schools, and participated in a Personnel Relations Employee Board (PERB) mediation process to reach a settlement on the contract agreement between the district and teacher's union. At the last hour we were able to reach a contract settlement and avoid a strike vote which was the next step if mediation had failed.

The Alpha Beta Education Association (ABEA) was the local teacher union branch of California Teachers Association (CTA) for the district. ABEA's mantra was that they were at the bottom three districts in the county in regards to salary compensation. A district communication strategy I implemented was to send out Negotiations bulletins (see Appendix K). The union had a practice of consistently doing this in my 20 years experience in the district. I decided that the district needed to do our own messaging to all employees, parents, and the community and not continue to allow the teacher's union to be the only voice on district and union issues.

Below are excerpts from district communication to staff, email bulletin updates to the board, and teacher union communications to teachers. One purpose for providing these excerpts is to establish the context of the economic, educational, cultural, and political environment of the district, specifically in relation to the district's relationship with the teacher union. The other purposes are to examine my superintendency in the leadership dimension area of human resources management and to provide a view of how my commitment to educational social

justice impacted/influenced the negotiation process and my development as a first-time superintendent.

Year 2005-2006

October 23, 2005 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABEA Salary Formula: We are currently reviewing the ABEA salary formula we agreed to and are scheduling a meeting with three ABEA members and three from the district to walk through the formula step-by-step and reach agreement on the content and next steps.

December 16, 2005 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABEA Letter: You will be receiving a copy of a letter from ABEA addressed to Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) from R. E., President of ABEA, that indicates that if the district is not in agreement over the Measure A money (parcel tax), they are ready to propose that we go forward to arbitration. We had, prior to his letter of December 15, scheduled a meeting for January 5, 2006. We are proposing to request that we go forward with that meeting and CHRO will be writing a letter to Earl to that effect.

February 5, 2006 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABEA/ABUSD Memorandum of Understanding: R.E., ABEA President, and the CHRO have been able to reach agreement regarding the selection process for teaching staff for the M/W consolidation. We have signed an agreement. The CHRO and R.E. presented the process to be used for selection for the new school staffing to both the M and W staffs. On Monday, February 6, the teachers will individually meet with CHRO, R.E., the principal of the new school teachers are to be consolidated into, and the principals of the schools we are closing to select the position they wish to have at the new school. This will be done on a seniority basis in combination with the number of years of experience in the grade level or teaching area they have worked in previously. Teachers who did not want to go to the new school will be provided a list of other openings in the district to select from. Their selection options will also be based on the same criteria used for placement at the new school. As you know this process has been agreed to in a side letter with ABEA. It was important to me that we negotiate the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) because the union contract only allowed for seniority. By the end of the day, the teaching staff of the new school will be determined. We anticipate at least one classroom teaching position – with a possibility of an additional categorical teaching position – to be eliminated. Another major difference between the teacher contract and this MOU is that we've kept the selection process limited to the two staffs of the schools that are losing as opposed to opening it up to seniority across the District.

April 7, 2006 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABEA: Good news! We have been able to work through with ABEA/CTA the layoffs so that the hearing has been canceled. All praise to our CHRO, legal counsel and H. M. for the excellent work in preparing and working through this process. Thanks also go to ABEA and CTA for the collaborative way in which we were able to work together to avoid the cost of a hearing, which could have been \$10,000 or more.

Year 2006-2007

September 27, 2006 (Board weekly bulletin)

ABEA Arbitration: CHRO, CTA representative, R.E. and I met to discuss the delay in the availability of the unaudited actuals until Wednesday. We agreed if the delay in receiving the unaudited actuals and other information requests pushed our timeline past November for

payment of the salary adjustment to based on the salary formula to be in the checks, that we would go forward with at least the payment based on the 3.9% calculation as opposed to not being able to give any retro pay to the teachers in the November paycheck. The Chief Fiscal Officer (CFO) and I met with the CTA representative, and R.E. on Friday to review the unaudited actuals and provide additional info requested by the union.

November 9, 2006 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

Meeting with R.E., ABEA President and M.G., ABEA grievance chair: the CHRO, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services and I met to discuss the Principal Professional Development that we are currently engaged in. The issue of concern for them is our plan for walk throughs into classrooms with Principals. The Assistant Supt provided us with an overview and explanation of what we were doing and why we were doing it and how we were going about it. Our emphasis was on the fact that we see the training as support for the role/responsibility of Principals, VP's, and Ed Services as instructional leaders. Their concern is that the walk-throughs would be used against teachers in evaluations. We assured them that there was no connection to the evaluation process and that in fact, it was meant as learning/practice for the Principals, etc. We explored the idea of creating an information video that would be shared at staff meetings that would explain the walk-throughs and the rationale and process. We reached agreement that the video would be a joint video, with ABEA and ABUSD participation. We will be doing walk-throughs beginning in January, so obviously we will need to get this video done quickly. The video would be no more than 5-10 minutes. I think this is a positive outcome and allows us to give the same message at all of the schools about what we're doing and why we're doing it.

District Communication (emailed and sent hardcopies to sites to ensure distribution to all employees on December 4, 2006)

The District issued its [December 06 update](#) on their website.

Representatives from the Alpha Beta Unified School District (ABUSD) and the Alpha Beta Education Association (ABEA) are in the process of negotiating a new employment contract, retroactive to July 1, 2006. ABUSD and ABEA negotiating teams have met four times so far during the school year: September 20, October 5, October 20, and November 14.

From now on, following each negotiation session, the District will provide an update on the status of proposals made by the District to the Alpha Beta Education Association.

The first District Negotiations Bulletin begins with November 2006 attached. The [November Bulletin](#) includes the District's Core Values, developed by the Board of Education and the Executive Cabinet, in order to provide a guiding foundation for the decision-making process used by the negotiating team (see bulletin below).

Negotiations Bulletins will also be available on the District website, www.alameda.k12.ca.us under the link, Negotiations Updates.

November 2007 Negotiations Bulletin Communication to Staff

In preparation for negotiations, core values were developed by the Executive Cabinet and the Board of Education in order to provide a guiding foundation for the decision-making process used by the negotiating team (see below).

CORE VALUES

1. Support Student Achievement by Promoting Efficiency, Communication, and Responsibility: We must continue to support student achievement and make ongoing progress towards closing the achievement gap between the lowest and highest performing students and in building our curricular and instructional continuity. By doing so we will:

- Provide clear language in our contractual agreements
- Preserve the ability to evaluate effectively
- Maintain effective communications
- Promote efforts to work towards District achievement goals

2. **To Preserve Fiscal Integrity and Responsibility of the District:** We must maintain the integrity and responsibility of fiscal resources. By doing so we will:

- Maintain a balance budget, including consideration of parcel tax revenue, declining enrollment, and increases in fixed costs
- Achieve a positive budget certification from required agencies
- Adhere to federal, state, and local laws related to budget and fiscal integrity

3. **Given Available Resources, Recruit and Retain Highly Qualified, Competitively Compensated Employees:** We must continue to ensure our students the highest quality of education provided by professional educators who meet all state and federal requirements for certification, are recognized for and supported with professional development that is focused on the needs of our students. Additionally, our educators will be provided with professional support reflecting the academic needs and demographic composition of the students attending ABUSD schools, and with competitive total compensation to the best of our abilities. By doing so we will:

- Provide a good working environment
- Promote an attractive educational climate
- Ensure fairness and fair treatment

March 2, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABEA Action: This Thursday, March 1 was negotiations and ABEA put out literature requesting that all teachers wear red shirts in support of negotiations going on at the table. They have also put out literature that raises the question about why ABUSD received an 8% increase from the state and gave nothing to employees for 06-07. It looks like they're escalating actions as we continue to negotiate.

Follow-Up with Staff Regarding Budget Cuts: The following is a description of the process and communication steps involved after Board approval (March 6 - Special Board Meeting agenda) on action items involving reduction in force (possible lay off), non-reelection, release from temporary contract, and/or release/reassignment of certificated administrators.

After the March 6 meeting, the following steps will be taken:

1. All employees impacted by Board action will be listed in the Human Resources Department by name, site, and position.
2. There will be a list generated for each category (i.e., possible layoffs, release/reassignment, etc.).
3. A notice will be generated for each employee based on their category of reduction (with a sample copy to principals and/or department administrators).
4. Site principals/department administrators will then be contacted by Brandon to review the list of names of employees impacted at their site and to review the content of the notice. Additionally, the CHRO will provide details for the principal's/department administrators knowledge that will assist them in providing necessary support, guidance to the employees impacted. The CHRO will provide clearly written guidelines for principals to use for reference.
5. The CHRO will arrange meetings with the employees impacted in order to review the notice, answer any questions, provide a hand-delivered copy of the notice, and review

the next steps with them individually.

6. Notices will then be distributed by certified mail (in addition to the original, hand-delivered copy) on Monday, March 12.

Closing Agreement to Salary Formula: R.E. and I have signed the agreement which allocates an additional increase of 0.8% for a total of 4.7% for the 05-06 salary increase. We have informed the other employee groups and are awaiting word from them as to how they want to apply the increase. ABEA will be conducting a survey of their unit to determine if members want to apply all to a salary increase or apply it to increase the health insurance cap. The retro pay from July 1, 2005 through April 1, 2007 will be provided in the April 30 paycheck to all employees. We will provide you a copy of the agreement at the March 6 Special Board Meeting during Closed Session.

March 9, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

Heads up – ABEA Negotiation Strategies: In the last couple of weeks, ABEA Negotiations Updates have been much more accusatory towards the District in general. Below are the headings from the most recent negotiation update flyers:

February 13, 2007

“The District came to the table today empty-handed which limited our face-to-face negotiations to one-half day. As of the end of our bargaining session, ABEA is now waiting for the District to respond to the following articles: 12 – Health and Welfare; 14 – Salary; and 29 – Technology. In addition, the District is working on proposals from their sunshine for the following articles: 8 – In Lieu and Collaboration; and 10 – Teacher Transfer.”

March 1, 2007

“The District made a couple of SMALL concessions when they presented their latest counter proposal for Article 13 – Safety and 29 – Technology. Your ABEA team was able to immediately respond to their counter on safety. We are still reviewing and considering their technology proposal. ABEA has provided the District with comparable data on salary schedules and recent pay increases for surrounding districts. ABUSD has not yet given a written salary/benefit proposal.”

They have also put out a flyer that asks the question, “Where will you be when next we rally?” What is interesting to me is that at the table, we are hearing none of these complaints or issues. In fact, the March 1 negotiations, ABEA’s negotiations team shared how pleased they were with the progress we were making on the different articles. At the February 13 negotiations, it was understood in advance that we were not going to be presenting any items.

Negotiations Postponement: It has become quite obvious to the CHRO that non-reelections, the release of services and employees performing those services, upcoming release of temporary certificated, etc. is much different and much more personal in Alpha Beta Unified School District. Because of the time being spent on personal meetings with those affected and the legal timelines of notifications, it has been difficult to be fully prepared for negotiations scheduled for March 13 (for future negotiations, no meetings will be scheduled during the first weeks of March). Combined with other negotiation team members having unforeseen personal matters to address, the combination has resulted in the need to postpone the March 13 session. As a result, the team is working diligently to prepare for the March 29 session with response to compensation proposals (which will be presented in closed session on March 27).

The CHRO has been in communication with the CTA representative and R.E., President of ABEA to inform them of the need to focus on the March 15th issues thoughtfully. He has shared the above mentioned sentiment that had he known the differences of reductions in force between

his former district and here, he would not have agreed to meet this next week. The CTA representative and R.E, both expressed understanding and appreciation for the amount of attention given to each individual impacted by recent decisions and to the fact that ABUSD is really working on a proposal. As a "heads up" however, they said that there would be potential unrest as the AEA members are anticipating a proposal from AUSD regarding compensation (and had hoped to hear about it at an upcoming March 14 meeting).

I support the CHRO decision and am more comfortable with the postponement (and early notification to that affect) than having a meeting where we are still unable to have a proposal with the information we've been able to work with so far. I anticipate, given the above information from AEA ("Heads Up"), means they will put out information that indicates we canceled and delayed deliberately. This is not true, but it is what I believe what will be communicated by AEA.

April 6, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABEA Declares Impasse: The impasse was filed on Thursday, April 5. This means that we will not hear until sometime towards the end of next week as to the decision regarding their request for a mediator. The primary reasons for the request for the impasse stated by ABEA are *"The Union declared impasse on March 29, 2007. There has been very little progress in one year of bargaining and the District has been very slow to respond to the Union's proposals and counters. The length of bargaining, lack of progress and the final attack on elementary preparation time have damaged the bargaining atmosphere to the point that the Union believes that no further progress can be made without the aid of a mediator."*

May 4, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

Upcoming ABEA Member Actions: We have learned that ABEA members are being "strongly urged" to attend the May 8 Board Meeting. They have been instructed by ABEA to do the following: (Below is the information flyer distributed to teachers)

- Wear red and their buttons
- Have staff members sit together
- Create banners to clearly send a message to the Board during the meeting that we want a fair contract now. The slogan should be simple and to the point and appropriate for public viewing. (Examples: "Alameda Teachers Deserve a Fair Contract" or "We ARE the Core!")
- We will depart as a group at 7:30 in order to make a strong and visible statement that are united
- Reminder your staff – a low turnout will demonstrate no solidarity

ABEA members are also being instructed to participate in the first District-wide public demonstration on May 10, the next Bargaining Team meeting with the impasse mediator.

Members have been instructed to:

- Wear red and your buttons
- Carry your car sign or use signs from May 8 Board meeting
- Meet at the District Office at 3:15 PM

We will, of course, continue to keep you updated as we learn more.

May 11, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

Mediation Update: The bargaining teams for the district and ABEA had their first meeting with the neutral state mediator for over eight hours on Thursday (May 10). The session seemed productive and collaborative as both parties reviewed their positions and background information with the mediator. A second mediation session has been scheduled for Friday, May 25.

Executive Cabinet will be working together to review information from this session and will present updates in closed session on May 22.

May 16, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

On May 16, 2007 the CHRO issued the following statement via District Email:

First mediation session with ABEA is productive, collaborative

The bargaining teams for the district and the Alpha Beta Education Association (ABEA) met with the neutral state mediator for eight hours on Thursday, May 10. The session was productive and collaborative as both parties reviewed their positions and background information with the mediator. A second mediation session has been scheduled for Friday, May 25.

May 29, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

On May 29th, 2007 ABUSD issued the following communication to its employees: As of about 8:00 p.m. on Friday, May 25, ABUSD and ABEA reached a tentative agreement on a three-year contract effective July 1, 2006 and continuing through June 30, 2009. At this point, ABEA is making arrangements with its membership to proceed with a ratification process, scheduled to take place within the next week. If the ABEA membership ratifies the tentative agreement, the Superintendent would then make a recommendation for approval to the Board of Education.

On April 18, 2007 the State Mediation and Conciliation Service has been appointed to work with ABUSD and ABEA in the mediation stage of impasse.

The initial (orientation) meeting with the mediator is set for Thursday, May 10.

On April 13, PERB issued a determination (received by ABUSD on April 16) that impasse exists between ABUSD and ABEA and that a mediator will be assigned to work with the parties.

- PERB has contacted the State Mediation and Conciliation Service (SMCS) to assign a mediator.
- ABUSD is looking forward to working with the assigned mediator who will facilitate a process intended to assist in both parties coming to a tentative agreement.
- If a mediator determines that both teams are still unable to reach a tentative agreement, the teams move to a fact finding process. In fact finding, a representative from each negotiating team and a neutral fact finding party work through a process with the intention of reaching a tentative agreement.

On April 5, ABEA filed request for impasse from the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB)

Year 2007-2008

October 19, 2007 (Board Weekly Bulletin)

ABUSD / ABEA / CTA Initial Planning Meeting: ABUSD Executive Cabinet met with the new ABEA leadership, ABEA President, ABEA Vice-President, CTA Chapter Consultant, CTA Charter Schools Specialist, CTA Negotiations and Organizational Development Specialist and CTA Community Outreach Specialist on October 17. The interests we discussed included collaboration time, closing the achievement gap, increasing teacher input at an earlier point on district spending reduction task force, new and creative curriculum, and an exploration of additional / alternative education options / models including charter options. We have another follow-up meeting scheduled October 31 all day to continue these discussions.

Commentary Notes and Reflection

Teacher Union

In 2005-2006 the major work with ABEA was around the closure and consolidation of three elementary schools into one new site on the south side of the district. Noted above is the MOU we were able to negotiate with the union. I made a decision to set up a subcommittee consisting of myself, the CHRO, the president of ABEA, and the grievance chair of ABEA (the former president of ABEA) to work on negotiating the details of staff reassignment and transfers from the school closures and consolidation of teaching staff. I deliberately chose myself and the CHRO because both of us had creditability with the current leadership of ABEA due to a working relationship that spanned nearly 10 years in the district. The two union leaders I requested to work with also had creditability among the teachers in the district and I knew had demonstrated to me their support of an equity agenda for our students. I was also depending on my reputation in the district for honest and fair treatment of staff and their reputations for fighting for teacher's rights.

Prior to our first meeting I worked with the CHRO to develop our prioritized list of desired outcomes for the MOU. The list was based on an agenda rooted in educational equity for the students in the schools to be consolidated. My basic premise was that the contract would only allow for seniority to transfer and/or reassign teachers and that was not in the best interest of the district because it did not allow for choice in teaching staff. Some amount of choice was important so that we could build a staff that was skilled and trained in the instructional strategies and best teaching practices the district needed for the high percentage of Title I and English Learner population the school would enroll. We were able to collaboratively work to common agreement at the first session that it was also in the best interest of the teachers to have some amount of choice as to their new school assignments and that in this situation seniority might not really allow for choice. We also agreed that we would work together throughout the process to get teacher buy-in at the schools affected by the consolidation. The MOU maintained seniority but allowed the number of years of experience in the grade level or teaching area they have worked in previously to be a factor. The other major difference between the teacher contract and the MOU was that it allowed the selection process to be limited to the two staffs of the schools that were losing staff as opposed to opening it up to seniority across the district.

In my opinion I was working to develop an organizational response that addressed the issue of the status quo of seniority as an obstacle and moved the district towards a future in which seniority was modified and changed to meet the district needs for more control of teacher selection and placement. The change in contract agreement was clearly a one-time deal as documented by the MOU but from my perspective it served as an opening to the door of seniority that we could work to reopen or expand upon in the future.

My analysis of the above process using sensemaking and sensegiving as a theoretical framework identified two related concepts. The first involves the work of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) in which they observed that the university president's actions were consistent with the organizational construct of *sensegiving*, an iterative, sequential, and reciprocal process, in which leaders committed to promoting substantive changes attempt to promote dramatic departures from the status quo by portraying the future of the organization in a manner intended to encourage key stakeholders to embrace the values and changes needed to help bring the

envisioned organization into fruition. In my superintendency role I was able to bring about a substantive departure from the status quo of the union contract by working with the union leadership to embrace and agree with my premise that teacher choice was of equal or more value than seniority in the circumstances we needed to deal with.

The second concept also links to the work of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) in which they note that the process of sensegiving is also dependent upon the success of another key organizational construct, *sensemaking*. In the context of the university and its new change-minded president, “‘sensemaking’ has to do with meaning construction and reconstruction by the involved parties as they attempted to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of the intended strategic change” (p. 442). In my district’s situation by establishing the subcommittee of the top leadership as involved parties of the district and the union to create meaning as well as develop an understanding of the rationale for the change was an example of the theoretical construct of sensemaking.

In 2006-2007 the district and union relationship became tenser and as first-time superintendent I was not personally prepared for the way in which the union communication took on “the superintendent”, “the district”, and “the Board” as evil and oppressors of teachers. There is a mental or theoretical understanding of this common strategy of unions but the stress and personal attacks were hard to deal with. At the time I had two of my daughters in the south side high school and on May 10 the action day mentioned in the ABEA communication above occurred and my daughter called me to say that one of her teachers took her aside and told her that I should be ashamed of how unfairly I was treating teachers since I was Black and should know about unfair treatment. On that same day the teachers came in mass (about 100) and marched in front of my office and through the school district office building carrying signs. One of the recurring signs was, “Ardella, you should know better what about our rights to fair treatment.” As I looked out the window at the signs I think my reaction was a gut one that was about me as an African American and then as a first time experience as a superintendent involved in tense union negotiations.

When I examine this experience through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pointed out that historically researchers such as Woodson and DuBois presented cogent arguments for considering race as the central construct for understanding inequality (p. 50). DuBois provided a construct about the impact of racism which he labeled as a “double consciousness” experienced by African Americans and according to DuBois, an African American “ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 14). A central tenet of CRT acknowledges and recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate. Standing at the window I truly felt the “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 14). One soul and thought as an African (Negro) was hurt and angry that my people’s struggle for freedom from slavery was publically equated with a union issue about pay increase. The other soul and thought was as an American public school superintendent facing my first experience of the personal targeting of unions I struggled to accept as not really personally directed at me. These were unreconciled and legitimate feelings and thoughts that I shared with my family and a personal/professional friend who is African American but not my staff, board members, or union leaders. As the researcher using an autoethnographic research design in this study with the commitment to peel the onion I now think that as an African American there is a tolerance level for experiences like this and that I have learned to live with two souls and two thoughts. I also think that what I did was to share

my experiences with family and with other African American professionals is a typical reaction as an African American. The racialized conversations about our experiences are helpful as coping mechanisms to deal with the subtle kinds of racism experienced in our lives.

Fiscal Implications of Budget Cuts

In this section an examination of excerpts from district communication to staff, email bulletin updates to the board, and teacher union communications to teachers revealed that the budget cuts that resulted in the school closures and consolidation had fiscal implications and requirements to negotiate procedure and process based on the district /union teacher contract. Discussed in Chapter 2 was the work of Levine (1979) in which he developed a conceptual framework regarding public organizations and management of cutbacks. In the framework he defines the four types of causes of cutbacks in the following manner (a) problem depletion is largely a product of internal or external forces beyond the control of the affected organization (in the case of my district internally it was declining enrollment and externally it was the political state budget decisions); (b) environmental entropy occurs when the capacity of the external environment to support the public organization at previous resource levels erodes (in the case of my district the political dimensions of federal and state financial decline or revenues); (c) political vulnerability is an internal property indicating a high level of fragility and precariousness which limits the organizations capacity to resist budget decrements and demands to contract from the environment (in the case of my district the employee contracts and community needs limited our capacity); and (d) organizational atrophy involves the internal atrophy and declining performance which can lead to resource cutbacks or to a weakening of organizational capacity (in the case of my district high turnover in management positions and continuous reorganization due to previous budget cuts). The Levine scheme for the identification and differentiation among the four types of management of budget cut backs will provide a conceptual framework from which the analysis of my district experiences with cutbacks can be examined.

Levine (1979) proposes that cutting back of public organizations require management to confront unique problems. As an example of this he points out that a public organization is required to identify cutbacks while addressing collective bargaining agreements. ABUSD was faced with internal political vulnerability due to the teacher union contract seniority requirement for teacher reassignment or transfer. Another problem Levine identified and labeled was “Mandates Without Money” which was the experience in ABUSD. According to Levine “this problem stems from the practice of legislative bodies and courts passing laws without providing funds to offset the additional expense incurred by compliance” (p. 181). In my superintendency in ABUSD this was a continuous issue and an example was the collective bargaining laws which required the district to negotiate impacts of budget reduction without providing funding to support agreements reached to mitigate the impacts. This presented the district with a dilemma of equity decisions that involved the choice to allocate resources based on need (equitable distribution of staffing resources) or efficiency (simply adhere to the teacher union contract). This situation proved to be a challenge to my commitment to educational social justice and my resolution for this was to hold to core values and collaboratively work with the union to reach a MOU both organizations could live with.

Leadership and District Culture

Overview

This section of the chapter will consist of an examination in the area of leadership and district culture. In order to analyze the leadership dimensions, this study will focus on my work as superintendent to working as a team with the board to develop governance agreements and an equity policy statement for the district. Beginning in August 2006 the executive cabinet and I had a series of closed sessions to conduct an evaluation of my first year in the superintendency. As part of that process we developed Governance Team Agreements (see below) and an Equity Policy statement (see Appendix L). The reason these were a result of the superintendent evaluation process was that it had become clear to me that we needed written agreements and standards that we could hold ourselves accountable too. I received agreement from the board to obtain an outside facilitator for the series of meetings (three in total). I had determined, based on the evaluation, that the board members each had their own ideas of the expectations for me as superintendent and decided I needed to provide more structure to the process. I also identified a need to ensure we were in agreement on issues of equity and resource allocation decisions because we would once again be faced with the need to make hard budget cut decisions. We recognized that in order to build a district culture that was rooted in the Three R's of responsibility, respect, and relationships once again more transparency about our decision-making criteria proved to be necessary. In this section the researcher will discuss the process for the development of these documents and examine them using the theoretical frameworks of CRT and sensemaking and sensegiving. Below is the following original document ABUSD Governance Team Agreements.

ABUSD Governance Team Agreements

In order to develop the Governance Team agreements we first developed the following statement: "The Board of Education, the Superintendent and Executive Managers work together as a team and our agreements in the following areas will facilitate the success of the Governance Team. The Board of Education has identified three key roles that are supported directly by the Superintendent and the Executive Management ~ Policy, Communication, and Board Meetings." The Governance Team established consisted of all five of the Board members, and the Executive Cabinet members which were the Chief Fiscal Officer, Chief Human Resources Officer, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services and Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. The document below delineates in each of the three areas of policy, communication, and board meetings the following items:

POLICY

Achievement gap – Board needs regular input and updates regarding the subgroups performance and interventions. Providing comparisons with other similar districts is helpful to the Board. Board should be updated more often on PI schools or sites with other NCLB compliance issues. The Board has authorized the President of the Board and the Superintendent to develop an Equity Policy statement to be deliberated and adopted at a Board meeting within the next month.

Fiscal oversight – The Superintendent and CFO will inform the Board informally or formally about changes in operations that impact the financial picture. Board and Superintendent will meet regularly to discuss the links between strategic plan and budget. The Equity policy statement will include a clarification of the district definition of equity as it relates to resource allocation decisions. The Superintendent will be responsible for ensuring recommendations to the Board provide rationale based on equitable resource allocations and student needs.

Programs and Operations – In some cases the Board may become involved with operational decisions, especially when controversial issues are brought to the board by parents, students or staff. In these cases, the Superintendent will provide the Board with direct information about the issue in the weekly memo, in closed session, or in one-on-one meetings, and the Board will review all information before responding publicly.

Multiple Perspectives – the Board and the Superintendent will develop a process for getting other opinions and perspectives on highly controversial or visible issues (*pending 11/06*).

COMMUNICATIONS

Written Memos – Superintendent will issue weekly memos to the Board with cc to the Executive Cabinet. The focus of the weekly memos will follow up the agreed upon annual priorities and goals. The Superintendent will also include items that maybe of interest to the media and/or heads up information. Matters related to personnel will be non-specific.

E-Mail – When requesting information or action from the Superintendent, Board members will communicate their expectations regarding the expected response time.

One-on-Ones – One-on-one meetings will be scheduled as needed with a possibility of paired Board members meeting to save time. In her weekly update to the Board the Superintendent will summarize information shared during the one-on-one that would be of interest to all Board members.

Board Member Request for Information – Board members will issue their request for information to one of the Executive Cabinet members based on their areas of responsibility. The Executive Cabinet member is responsible for handling the request for information and for following up with the Board member(s) and for keeping the Superintendent updated.

Agenda Building/Monday Meeting – The version of the agendas reviewed at the meeting will be sent to all Board members by the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. Superintendent and staff will distribute to the Board an annual meeting calendar with topics and dates, and will update the calendar as necessary.

Public Requests for information – When questions or requests for information or action are directed to the board, the Board President will acknowledge receipt of the petition. Board President will request information from cabinet or superintendent as necessary to respond. If a Board Member responds directly about their position or views on the issue in question, they should copy the superintendent and other Board Members.

BOARD MEETINGS

Packet – Superintendent will ensure that Board members have an opportunity to review all Agenda documents and information, including written reports, handouts and PowerPoint presentations, prior to each Board meeting.

Questions – If Board has questions for the presenter they may be sent ahead of time for clarity and to give staff time to research the issue and prepare to respond at the Board meeting.

Timelines – As much as possible staff should keep to the presentation timeline in the Agenda (this should be supported by the Board President through timekeeping reminders).

Time/Location – Closed session will begin at 5:30, and the schedule will be reviewed quarterly. Meetings will continue to be conducted at City Hall and televised, unless there is a conflict with the City Council meeting schedule.

Oral Communications – If the Board desires to respond to an issue or concern raised during Oral Communication, the Board President will work with the Superintendent to develop a response and/or agenize the item for further action. The board members will restrain from responding to the issues raised when it is not on the agenda due to Brown Act restrictions.

Board Deliberations at Board Meetings – We will follow the guidelines established in the February workshop. They are:

1. A staff presentation is made to the Board.
2. Public comment is invited.
3. Board may question staff to obtain clarification of issues.
4. President entertains a motion on the agenda item.
5. A discussion is held by the Board on the merits of the issue.
6. Board takes action.
7. Requests for information are made before the meeting whenever possible.

The above was agreed to as an internal document to be shared among the board and the executive cabinet.

Commentary Notes and Reflection

ABUSD Governance Team Agreements

I had the good luck to be selected for the superintendency by the board I worked with over my three-year period and, even though there was an election during my superintendency, the same members were reelected and stayed on the board. The Governance Team Agreements (shared above) did primarily fulfill the purpose and intent of providing a means to hold ourselves accountable. It also supported the building of a culture about how we were to operate together. There were one, and sometimes two, board members who consistently had to be reminded by me of the agreement to communicate with the superintendent when they had concerns, especially in regards to controversial issues prior to making a public comment. The work to build a district leadership team for governance of the district was continuous throughout the three years. When I examine this dimension area of leadership and culture as described in the AASA professional standards for superintendents they stress executive leadership vision, shaping school culture and climate, empowering others, and multicultural and ethnic understanding. In Kowalski's (2001) analysis of the superintendent's role in the area of leadership and culture he found it to be one of a social scientist. In this social scientist role the superintendent becomes involved in addressing the need for cultural change in districts and schools to be responsive to increasing levels of community diversity. My experience resonates with these descriptions of the superintendency. I found that work of building the governance team of board, executive cabinet, and superintendent to be one of the most challenging areas of the superintendent job. In retrospect I would say that the work in these areas was done in small steps. The Governance Team Agreement addresses

the details of how we should operate, but now upon reflection, I do not think we reached deeper into the values we shared about educating our students. The agreements did help to ensure we had a touch stone to return to when we were not functioning effectively. In fact that is the way the agreements were used. We could call each other on our actions based on the written agreements. They allowed us to make sense of such things as board meeting protocols and communication processes and procedures. At the end of the school year of 2006-2007, the Governance Team did revisit the agreements. We used them as a checklist to evaluate the success of the implementation of the agreements. We basically gave ourselves a fair to good ranking.

The original idea of establishing board agreements as discussed above came out of my need to obtain more clarity from the board about their expectations of me as superintendent. I found the facilitated (outside consultant) discussions to be of most value in helping me to understand what each of the board members saw as my areas of responsibilities. When one puts all five board members list together it became obvious to us all that we needed to narrow and prioritize the list. That process also opens the door to multiple conversations (over three sessions) about what the board responsibilities as governance and policy shapers of the district were and what mine as superintendent were in this area. Again we were going through a process that involved us in sensemaking and sensegiving regarding our organizational management.

I must confess that during the process of the development of the agreements we created a catch-all area entitled “Multiple Perspective” (see above) that became a form of code language for the issue of institutional racism in our Governance Team. There were discussions that happened during the meetings that we would as a group get into and the majority of the board rejected the idea that our district was racist – they would not continue the discourse and so with facilitation we ended up with the following statement, “Multiple Perspectives – the Board and the Superintendent will develop a process for getting other opinions and perspectives on highly controversial or visible issues (*pending 11/06*). The pending comment refers to the fact that I was to work further on how we addressed “controversial issues” (code in our case for unresolved issue in the conversation about institutional racism) as a governance team. Truthfully we never came back to it as a team. What did happen is that we focused on the development of the Equity Policy statement.

Equity Policy Statement

The Equity Policy Statement (see Appendix L) was to be about the board and executive team making transparent one of the major criteria we were to use for decision making regarding district operations and educational programs and services. It was also to serve as (a) a foundation for our efforts to bring about reforms and change in the district, (b) to push forward on the agenda for equity of educational opportunities for our students, and (c) a tool to communicate to the employees, parents, community, and students that the district was addressing student needs as a priority. In retrospect this became an exercise in wishful thinking because we did not implement the policy as envisioned in our discussions as a governance team. As a first-time superintendent I now understand that this action had good intentions wrapped all around it but it did not prove to have the impact of a strategic organizational systemic change.

In my opinion we did not plan for open discourse on the policy – it was on a board meeting agenda and we all said the appropriate things, the board unanimously passed it and that was that. In retrospect because we avoided the institutional racism discussion and compromised

with the equity policy we had only succeeded in avoiding making sense of the issues related to equity and institutional racism as an organization. As I reflect on this experience as an individual I was operating from the CRT tenet the challenge to dominant ideology: CRT challenges traditional claims of educational objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. I thought that the board members were open and ready to a conversation about institutional racism based on the individual one-to-one conversations we had about closing the achievement gap, and the racial and economic class divide between district schools. I would express statements at board meetings regarding the achievement gap and the push that we must figure out how to close the gap, that it cannot be tolerated and would see heads nod in agreement from the board (see Appendix M as an example of the kind of statements I made). As a result of this autoethnographic research experience I must acknowledge that I did not realize during the superintendency that I was the major initiator of the conversations about racial equity. I now understand that it was my conversation and we were not truly in dialogue about it. I now wonder if they did not challenge me because I was African American and they were uncomfortable about having the conversation with me. Thinking about this dynamic with retrospective and introspective CRT analysis I believe that the board held onto traditional claims of educational objectivity, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity and did express these ideas in a variety of ways I did not fully recognize at the time.

During the governance team discussions board members expressed that to acknowledge institutional racism was to say the district was racist and we were not racist. This is where our discourse got stuck. We shared examples of the way in which the district policies and practices were forms of institutional racism. An example was the primary referral for special education assessment which was made by regular education teachers and that our district had a significant disproportional representation of African American males referred for assessment and placed in special education classes. The board did not understand this to be an example of institutional racism and generally went to the concepts of educational objectivity of the teachers, color-blindness, and race neutrality. In reflection upon this behavior I now see how White privilege was one of reasons for the boards lack of understanding or acceptance of the concept of institutional racism. Yes, we were stuck and so we moved to the equity conversation. We were able to talk about equity of resource allocations to ensure we met the needs of our students but not about the institutional practices that support the traditional status quo of student placement decisions that had dramatic disproportional representation of African American males. How could this be true in our district? During my superintendency this disproportionality was never really addressed. So in reflection I would now say that the development of the equity policy was our attempt to take some action to address the issues on inequity of the educational experiences for our students.

The equity policy did provide the opportunity for me in my role as the superintendent to bring forward during the budget cutting process increases in the spending areas of special education and technology equipment and training for staff. We used the equity policy statement as a foundation and rationale for the decision to increase spending for professional training and coaching for special education teachers and instructional assistants in the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM). SIM is designed for teachers in their challenging assignment of teaching academically diverse classes by providing a broad array of research-validated instructional methods and materials with accompanying professional development support services. I was able to quote from the policy during the board deliberations “equity demands the allocation of resources based on need and support for each student’s success.” This same rationale was used in

the resource allocation decision-making process to explain the increase in expense in the areas of technology equipment, staff training, and one classified staff position increase to the technology department. The push back from the certificated and classified staff was minimal even though we made it transparent that the increase in resource allocations would result in an increase in the amount of decrease in resource allocations to other programs and services.

The board also was able to reach agreement on the increases using the equity policy as a frame or criteria to make the decision. They were able to publically articulate the position that equity is not the same as equality and define equality as providing the same resources throughout the system on a per capita basis and equity as providing the allocation of resources based on need and support for each student's success. In the last two years since I retired from the superintendency I have personally struggled with the question of sustainability of the equity reform strategies in my former district. The current board membership has only one remaining that was on the board when I was superintendent. The executive cabinet is also nearly entirely different from the one that worked with me. The exception is the administrative assistant to the superintendent. In many ways the experience of working on this autoethnographic study has raised for me more questions about what I could have done differently to effectively institutionalize the equity policy and change the district practices and culture that have resulted in inequity such as disproportional representation of African American males in special education.

Chapter 6

Findings, Conclusions, and Research Implications

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the findings and conclusions obtained from the use of the autoethnographic design of this study. The findings and conclusion will be sequenced into the three dimensions of superintendency leadership of (a) Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships, (b) Organizational and Human Resources Management, and (c) Leadership and District Culture. As the areas are discussed the researcher, as the participant/observer of this dissertation, will include as appropriate to the discussion the use of the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, sensemaking and sensegiving, and autoethnography methodology, to examine the following questions:

- Drawing upon my experiences as a first-time superintendent, and also as an African American woman, are there lessons that might be of significance to other first-time superintendents?
- What was my experience as I negotiated the dimensions of the superintendent leadership position?
- How did the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district influence the ways in which problems were recognized as a need of attention by the local school board?
- Did my commitment to educational social justice impact/influence my development as a first time superintendent and, if so, in what way?

The above four questions can be framed into one summative question of:

- What did I learn from my experiences as a first-time African American woman superintendent as I negotiated the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational,

and political environment of the district in regards to the dimensions of superintendent leadership and my commitment to educational social justice?

This summative question is the one I will focus on as I discuss my findings, conclusions, and the research implications I perceived to be of value.

My objective in this thesis was to communicate through the use of my autoethnographic writings experiences of the superintendency in a form I believe will help others to make sense of my observations and interpretations. The challenge I faced was to identify empirical mechanisms, or lenses, through which I might present a representative sample of my experiences and situate these experiences among a collection of coherent organizational events and, most important of all, to communicate what I believe is the larger significance of my experiences to other educators. According to Chang (2008):

Autoethnographic writing engages you in a constructive interpretation process.

Autoethnography is interpretive in a sense that your personal perspectives are added in all steps of research, whether in data collection where certain memories are selected, in data analysis where certain themes are probed, or in data interpretation where certain meanings are searched. It is also constructive in a way that you are transformed during the self-analytical process. (p. 140)

As this dissertation evolved I discovered there were three personal themes discussed that consistently emerged across all three dimensions of the superintendent leadership position as I probed for the answers to the above research questions. These themes were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 and they are (a) the perspective of my dual lens as an African American woman, (b) the experience of a new superintendent, and (c) the impact of my personal philosophy, advocacy, and commitment to educational social justice in my role as a superintendent. These themes are directly related to the research questions and pushed me to be reflective as well as analytical in my examination of the dimensions of superintendent leadership. It also needs to be noted that the quote above from the autoethnographic researcher Chang (2008) raises a caution regarding the fact that my selection of the experiences and events to describe, and leadership areas to examine, were based on my perspective of the superintendency. Taking Chang's remarks into consideration this research has validity as an autoethnographic research study because as the researcher I was engaged in a constructive interpretive process, one of the fundamental theoretical concepts of autoethnography.

Findings and Conclusions

Area: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

Finding Number One: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

In regards to transparency and board communication I found I constantly struggled to make sense of the board dynamics and to understand the views of each of the individual board members. I learned what was said to me individually could be changed for some of the board members based on the last person he or she talked to. It also could be changed for other board members by pressure from a particular interest group. I learned that I had to stay in constant communication with each of the board members. As discussed in Chapter 4 in my review of the board topics they raised in our individual one-on-one meeting their interests expressed were not

about improving student achievement or closing the achievement gap. It was the topic I kept bringing up with them on an individual basis. I had to push the agenda of closing the achievement gap. In retrospective analysis of the superintendency I would of done more workshops and board training sessions regarding the district efforts to improve student achievement for all students and close the achievement gap. These additional sessions would also been open to the public and engage our community in the discussion and information sessions.

Finding Number Two: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

My previous background as assistant superintendent of educational services provided me with extensive knowledge and experience as an instructional leader of the district but I was challenged as a first-time superintendent by the work now necessary in the area of board management and communication. My previous role had been internal to the district operations. The superintendency was much more of a public external role in the community. My previous experience as assistant superintendent did not fully prepare me for the demand for constant direct interaction with the board members. In other words, I found the “the care and feeding of the board” as a first-time superintendent was my biggest challenge throughout all three years in the position.

Finding Number Three: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

I think that my commitment to educational equity in our district was owned by me and okay from each of the board members’ perspective but they did not seem to hold educational equity in the same level of priority as I did. I sometimes felt it was because as an African American woman I did feel the urgency of the students who were failing in our system differently than the White board members. As described in Chapter 2, according to Alston (2005) the Black female superintendents believe they are making a difference for students, have a strong sense of efficacy, and “they are empowered and are deeply caring about their mission – to serve, lead and educate children” (p. 682). This description of the Black female superintendent is one I completely identify with and I have in fact described in my brief autobiographical narrative shared in Chapter 1.

Finding Number Four: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

In the analysis of school closures and consolidation processes described in Chapter 4, I found that I made a fundamental error of a first-time superintendent — I misread my board and made a decision based on where I thought the board was on the issues. The fundamental error was to make my decision and recommendation to the board based on what I thought they would vote for instead of what I thought was the best decision for the district. When I reread my journal entry nearly five years later I once again feel in my heart that my attempt to compromise was an error and took its toll on the south end community the schools were located. The fact that these schools I closed had a majority of children of color in a district in which I was the first African American superintendent seemed to me to be an incongruity.

Finding Number Five: Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

In the narrative description of the school fence: racism or artistic freedom in Chapter 4, I became aware of the fact that my own personal experience and interpretation of the fence figures as negatively stereotypical of the pickaninny caricature was not recognized and instead responded to as a denial of another person's artistic rights. This was difficult for me to deal with. Indeed the double consciousness discussed in Chapter 2 definitely applies to my experience. I was being asked to ignore my own experiential knowledge as an African American even after I voiced my story of recognizing the figure as stereotypically negative. The fact that I also shared that my daughter did not share my same recognition was not understood as rooted in the historical experiences of African Americans in this country. I did not write into my journal at the time but I also received some hate-speak emails about me as a Black person preventing White people from expressing what was "only art". As I revisited this experience I became aware that there is a link to the decision of the White women in the Skrla et al. (2000) case study in which all three women gave as their reasons for the silence (in reaction to sexist treatment) a belief they had to be strong and would be perceived as weak if they complained or spoke out about the treatment to my experience of becoming silent. The reminder at the time and the learning even now is that even though I have what can be viewed as a high level status position of authority my racial, personal, and historical experiences as an African American can be dismissed and misunderstood by the majority White culture. This finding is relevant to one of the CRT themes of the centrality of race and racism: CRT asserts that race is a significant factor in society in general, and in education in particular, and even so it is an under-theorized topic of scholarly inquiry in education. There is agreement among CRT proponents that for people of color, the reality of racism can potentially put them at risk for discriminatory treatment, oppression, and exclusion from opportunities based on race.

Conclusion

Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships

What did I learn from my experiences as a first-time African American woman superintendent as I negotiated the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district in regards to the dimensions of superintendent leadership and my commitment to educational social justice? In the area of Policy and Governance: Board and Community Relationships I learned the following:

- My biggest challenge throughout all three years in the position was in the area of board management and communication.
- As an African American woman I did feel the urgency of the students who were failing in our system differently than the White board members.
- Even though I have what can be viewed as a high level position of authority my racial, personal, and historical experiences can be dismissed and misunderstood.
- As a first-time superintendent my fundamental error was to make my decision and recommendation on school closures and consolidation to the board based on what I thought they would vote for instead of what I thought was the best decision for the district.
- In order to educate the board and community regarding the district efforts to improve achievement for all students and eliminate the gap, more than the annual three reports a

year focused on test achievement data, should have been provided to the board and community.

Findings and Conclusions

Area: Organizational and Human Resources Management

Finding Number One: Organizational and Human Resources Management

As the researcher using an autoethnographic research design in this study with the commitment to dig deep I believe that as an African American there is a tolerance level I have developed for racialized experiences like I described in this study and that I have learned to live with two souls and two thoughts. As described in Chapter 5 I truly felt the “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings.” One soul and thought as an African (Negro) was hurt and angry that my peoples’ struggle for freedom from slavery was publically equated with a union issue about pay increase. The other soul and thought was as an American public school superintendent facing my first experience of the personal targeting of unions I struggled to accept as not really personally directed at me.

Finding Number Two: Organizational and Human Resources Management

A problem Levine (1979) identified and labeled was “Mandates Without Money” was my experience in ABUSD. According to Levine “this problem stems from the practice of legislative bodies and courts passing laws without providing funds to offset the additional expense incurred by compliance” (p. 181). In my superintendency in ABUSD this was a continuous issue and an example of the collective bargaining laws that required the district to negotiate impacts of budget reduction without providing funding to support agreements reached to mitigate the impacts. This presented the district with a dilemma of equity decisions that involved the choice to allocate resources based on need (equitable distribution of staffing resources) or efficiency (simply adhere to the teacher union contract). This situation proved to be a challenge to my commitment to educational social justice and my resolution for this was to hold to core values and collaboratively work with the union to reach a MOU both organizations could live with.

Finding Number Three: Organizational and Human Resources Management

I did work within the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district and managed to lead the district in making equitable decisions for all students. An examination today with an honest researcher’s view of the consolidation decision-making process would conclude that it ended up resolved and with an appropriate decision but the struggle with the board and community could have been handled with less turmoil if I had worked using an on-going strategic plan and review process. I found myself in a reactive mode instead of anticipatory and proactive of both board and community issues. The constant fiscal stress of budget reductions in all three years added to the tendency to be reactive as opposed to proactive and strategic in the decision-making process.

Conclusion

Organizational and Human Resources Management

What did I learn from my experiences as a first-time African American woman superintendent as I negotiated the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district in regards to the dimensions of superintendent leadership and my commitment to educational social justice? In the area of Organizational and Human Resources Management I learned the following:

- CRT helped to clarify for me that I have two souls and two thoughts: one soul and thought as an African and the other soul and thought as an American public school superintendent.
- The dilemma of equity decisions that involve the choice to allocate resources based on need or efficiency and status quo pressures were a challenge to my commitment to educational social justice and my resolution for this was to hold to core values.
- The constant fiscal stress of budget reductions in all three years added to the tendency to be reactive as opposed to proactive and strategic in the decision-making process.
-

Findings and Conclusions

Area: Leadership and District Culture

Finding Number One: Leadership and District Culture

As a first-time superintendent I now understand that the development and adoption by the board of the Equity Policy Statement (see Appendix L) had good intentions wrapped all around it but it did not prove to have the impact of a strategic organizational systemic change I had thought it would. So in reflection I would now say that the development of the equity policy was our district attempt to take some action to address the issues on inequity of the educational experiences for our students but the policy did not have long-term sustainability in the district. Policies that are implemented successfully result in changed behavior and practices.

Finding Number Two: Leadership and District Culture

I thought that the board members were open and ready to a conversation about institutional racism based on the individual one-to-one conversations we had about closing the achievement gap, and the racial and economic class divide between district schools. As a result of this autoethnographic research experience I must acknowledge that I did not realize during the superintendency that I was the major initiator of the conversations about racial equity. I now understand that it was my conversation and we were not truly in dialogue about it. I now wonder if they did not challenge me because I was African American and they were uncomfortable about having the conversation with me. During the governance team discussions board members expressed that to acknowledge institutional racism was to say the district was racist and we were not racist. This is where our discourse got stuck. In retrospect I now think that use of board workshops, and trainings in the areas of race relations and educational equity concepts and

strategies would have strengthened the leadership of the board and superintendent in our district efforts to improve student achievement.

Finding Number Three: Leadership and District Culture

The board was able to publicly articulate the position that equity is not the same as equality and define equality as providing the same resources throughout the system on a per capita basis and equity as providing the allocation of resources based on need and support for each student's success. In the last two years since I retired from the superintendency I have personally struggled with the question of sustainability of the equity reform strategies in my former district. In many ways the experience of working on this autoethnographic study has raised more questions about what I could have done differently to effectively institutionalize the equity policy and change the district practices and culture that have resulted in inequity such as disproportional representation of African American males in special education.

Conclusion

Leadership and District Culture

What did I learn from my experiences as a first-time African American woman superintendent as I negotiated the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district in regards to the dimensions of superintendent leadership and my commitment to educational social justice?

In the area of Leadership and District Culture I learned the following:

- Policies that are implemented successfully result in changed behavior and practices. As a first-time superintendent the development of the equity policy did not result in long-term sustainability in the district culture change of practices.
- I must acknowledge that I did not realize during the superintendency that I was the major initiator of the conversations about racial equity. I expected other board members to also raise the issues. I now wonder if they did not challenge me because I was African American and they were uncomfortable about having the conversation with me.
- In the last two years since I retired from the superintendency I have personally struggled with the question of sustainability of the equity reform efforts in my former district.
- In my introspective and retrospective analysis of the superintendency years I think more specific trainings and workshops for the board and management team in the areas of educational equity and issues of institutional racism need to be provided.

Research Implications

The research literature in the area of autoethnography acknowledges that in comparison to the participant-observer researcher associated with conventional ethnography, who is expected to keep his or her distance from the experiences (or events) under review, the participant-observer in an autoethnography is central to the act of sensemaking, interpretation, and final analysis. Anderson (2006) succinctly captures these distinctions in describing analytic autoethnography as:

Ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (p. 375)

Autoethnographies also offer a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance understanding of social, educational, political, and cultural issues (Holt, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sparkes, 1996). Participant observation consists of a group of methods that stresses observation in the setting, informant interviews, document analysis, artifact analysis, and informal counting of events (Alexander, 1982).

The research implication of the value of autoethnographic studies in superintendency leadership is in the area of administrative training programs and professional development content that can be specifically designed for practicing superintendents. The sharing of the stories in the voices of individuals who have walked in the shoes and who are willing to analyze and share their learnings as I did in this study can be used as case studies content in educational administrative courses. This study's conclusions support the original hypothesis that an in-depth examination of my first-time experience as an African American superintendent in California has application to increasing the understanding of the multi-layered complexity of the superintendent position within our American society and public school system. I started this study with the hypothesis that human behavior is complexly influenced by the context in which it happens (Chang, 2008). Therefore, the deeper I could peel off the onion skin of the superintendency the more I would be able to expose the overarching themes that can provide multiple perspectives to add to building knowledge and understanding of the dimensions of the superintendency leadership.

Another research implication suggests that further autoethnographic research based on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Professional Standards for the Superintendency (as cited in Hoyle et al., 2005) could be of use to aspiring superintendents as well as practicing superintendents. The AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency developed a set of eight standards in the areas of the dimensions of superintendent leadership. These include (a) leadership and district culture, (b) policy and governance, (c) communication and community relations, (d) organizational management, (e) curriculum planning and development, (f) instructional management, (g) human resource management, and (h) values and ethics of leadership. This study focused on essentially four of the areas solely based on the researcher perspective of their importance to her in the superintendency role. These include policy and governance, leadership and district culture, organizational management, and human resource management. The other areas human resource management, curriculum planning and development, instructional management, and values and ethics of leadership are also important and in need of further research using an autoethnographic research design. This type of research could result in more comprehensive knowledge regarding the superintendent leadership role available to share with practicing superintendents.

In my role of research participant I recalled conversations I had with other African American women and think that the application of the research design used by Skrla et al. (2000) in which they examined sexism and discriminatory treatment that women school superintendent's experience could be replicated to examine racism and discriminatory treatment of African American women superintendents. Another study that could be replicated with African American women superintendents was conducted by Brunner (2000) who examined the discourse (talk) of 12 women superintendents all of who were of European American

background from the Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast regions of the United States. In Brunner's research there were two substantial findings consistent across the interviews that are relevant to this study. The first finding was the unsettled discourse of the women superintendents was full of stories of their experiences of inequality. According to Brunner, "the study documented the continuing existence, pervasiveness, and power of gender bias at the highest levels of leadership and decision making in school districts" (p. 106). The second finding was that the settled discourse of the 12 women superintendents identified that to some degree the women participated in their own experiences of inequality because they used strategies that covered, set aside, denied, and/or ignored the gender bias. As an African American woman I find these findings to be of significance because I know that if the discourse had been among only African American women there certainly would have been discussion about how both racism and sexism have impacted our professional lives. There is limited research that has examined the African American male or female experience as a superintendent. As African American women we are "doubly marginalized" by societal issues of racism and sexism and when we talk to each other we share the experiences and strategies we have used to deal with this experiential reality. Focus group discussions facilitated by a researcher could provide data regarding the different standards and double marginalizing experiences of African American women superintendents.

An even boarder application would be to do a comparative research design based on CRT theoretical framework using focus groups constructed by racial identity to examine the different experiences and perspectives of superintendents of color and their White colleagues. This type of research could prove significant in opening dialogue in areas where, in my opinion, there is a lack of honest discourse about discriminatory practices within the field of educational administration as well about the institutional racism in our educational settings that impacts our students on a daily basis.

It is based on my identification in this study that my biggest challenge throughout all three years in the position was in the area of board management and communication or "the care and feeding of the board" that I would propose a further research area examination in effective strategies for working with a board to implement sustainable reform and change in a district. This study documented that the context of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and political environment of the district will influence board and superintendent dynamics. The sensemaking and sensegiving organization theoretical framework could be used to do further research to analyze this complex area of board management by a superintendent. The lesson I learned was about what not to do and what I needed as a first-time superintendent was mentoring or coaching or other resources to help me make sense of the dynamics of working with a board consisting of five individuals.

In summary the areas for further research recommended as a result of this study are (a) more autoethnographic studies to develop multiple perspectives to add to building knowledge and understanding of the dimensions of superintendency leadership, (b) more autoethnographic research focused on the AASA professional standards of superintendency leadership and first-time superintendents, (c) a comparative research design based on CRT theoretical framework using focus groups constructed by racial identity to examine the different experiences and perspectives of superintendents of color and their White colleagues, and (d) more research to identify effective strategies for working with a board to implement sustainable reform and change in a district.

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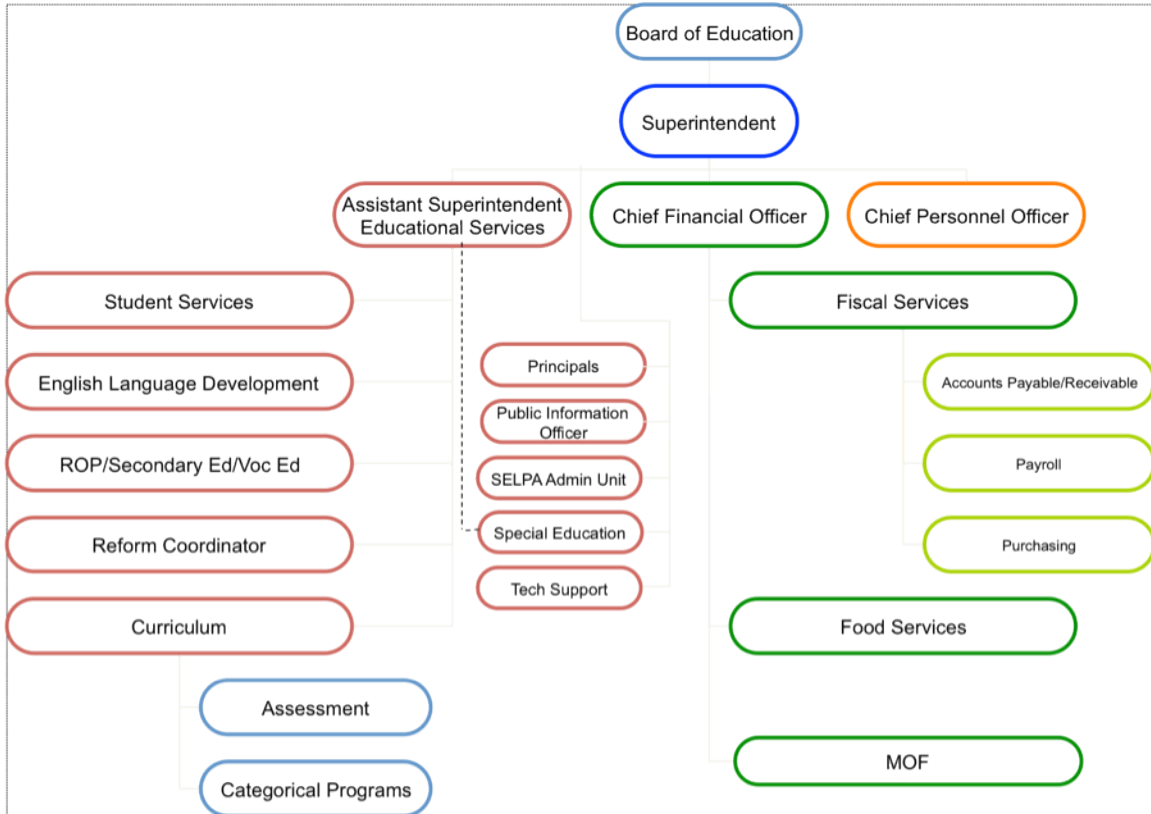
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Appendix A
 ABUSD Organizational Chart
 2005-2006



08/05

Appendix B

Adopted ABUSD Board Minutes of May 24, 2005

Third Interim Report

Pursuant to Education Code 42130, the governing board of each school district filing a qualified or negative certification for the second report required under Section 42130, or classified as qualified or negative by the county superintendent of schools, shall provide to the county superintendent, the Controller, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction no later than June 1, financial statement projections of the District's fund and cash balances through June 30 for the period ending April 30. The financial statements commonly referred to as the Third Interim Report is submitted for Board review and approval.

According to AB1200, a District must be able to demonstrate that it can meet its financial obligations for the current year and two subsequent years. Currently, the District projects a less than 3% reserve for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

Chief Financial Officer reviewed the report. The Governor's May Revise highlights:

- Breaks promise - \$3.2B owed to education, which equates to \$3.2M to Alameda. Even though there is extra revenue at the state level, funds continue to shift, including about \$469M in STRS payments, which will cost Alameda \$732K.
- Base revenue limit – up to 4.32%. In terms of winners/losers, K-12 education is a loser in this round of budget proposals.

Had we been given the money we are entitled to, we would be looking at an additional \$4M to the District. Currently, we are still \$1.1M short of our 3% reserve, and will be submitting a qualified budget to the County once again. The County will assign a fiscal advisor.

MOVED: Member Carl

SECONDED: Member Beatty

That the Board of Education approves the Third Interim Report as submitted.

AYES: Carl, Beatty, Daniel, Alice and Edward

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

MOTION CARRIED

Appendix C

Communication to Board Regarding Management Meeting, August 2005

From: "Dailey, Ardella"
To: "Board of Education" **Sent:** Sat, August 6, 2005 5:38:09 PM
Subject: Letter to All Management

This is the letter and the attachments to it mentioned in weekly bulletin # 3.
August 8, 2005
To all management staff:

I am very proud to have been selected as Interim Superintendent, and I look forward to working with each of you to ensure that the District vision to have all students achieve at high levels while closing the achievement gap is attained. As Superintendent, I am taking this opportunity to share with you my perception of the Superintendent's role, my personal vision, and my core beliefs and expectations. I want you to have an opportunity to read the attachments in order to be prepared for the All Management Meeting on Aug 18, where we will participate in a reflective dialogue about the documents. Below are dates for you to be aware of and to add to your schedule if appropriate:

TUESDAY, August 16: New Administrator's Orientation (NEW ONLY)
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Superintendent's Conf Rm

THURSDAY, August 18: Principals, Vice Principals, & Ed Services Staff Coaching
Workshop
8:00 AM – Noon, Elks Lodge (Upstairs)

NOON – 1:00 PM LUNCH provided for all management

All Management Meeting
1:00 PM – 6:00 PM, Elks Lodge (Upstairs)

TUESDAY, August 23: New Teachers Lunch
Noon – 1:00 PM, District Office Patio

WEDNESDAY, August 24: Staff Development Day

THURSDAY, August 25: Staff Development Day

There are a number of changes to the regular opening events – the "Welcome Back" usually held at EHS will not take place this year. Instead, I will be working with Principals to schedule site visits in order to personally present the "Years of Service" pins to all staff employed for twenty-five years or more. The "Nuts and Bolts" talking heads has been revamped so that there is only one day, Aug 18, from 8:00 AM to Noon for Principals, Vice Principals, and Ed Services Staff.

Appendix C

Communication to Board Regarding Management Meeting, August 2005 – continued

In addition, all management level positions will join us for lunch at Noon, and from 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM for our meeting. Together we will engage in the dialogue about my beliefs, expectations, and vision. We will also have time to go over any operational issues that need to be addressed in order to get schools open and ready for teaching and learning to occur on the first day our students return.

I look forward to working with all of you in leading the District to reach our vision. Your participation, cooperation, and leadership are essential elements in our success.

Welcome back!

Ardella Dailey, Interim Superintendent

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE

The Superintendent is responsible for implementing all decisions made by the Board of Education, and for demonstrating effective leadership in the following areas: District's day-to-day operations, fiscal responsibility and management, the achievement of the District's vision, all other District matters, including working with the City, County, State, and Community.

VISION STATEMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT

Alpha Beta Unified School District creates a system that enables every student - including those with diverse needs - to meet or exceed our rigorous standards for academic performance and success. All students will discover and develop their special talents, achieve their highest potential, and obtain their educational and career goals. We are individually and collectively responsible (AUSD can and will) for eliminating the racial predictability of which student populations occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories. All students will develop the, knowledge, skills, behaviors, character and habits needed to be effective, productive, confident and contributing members to our global community.

CORE BELIEFS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

- All people can learn and every person has value
- It takes a whole community to raise a child
- All students have the right to equal access to quality teaching and learning in order to have equitable outcomes
- Individuals are accountable and responsible for their behavior
- Respect for self and others is essential to our interactions and relationships
- Diversity enriches and strengthens our lives
- We must work collaboratively to create and maintain a learning community focused on equity and the continuous improvement of the teaching and learning process and environment

Appendix D

Adopted ABUSD Board Minutes of September 27, 2005

The report below that was shared at the September 27, 2005 Board meeting, it presented student achievement data from the 2004-2005 school year which served as a baseline for the District measurable goals for 2005-2006.

District Achievement Goals, 2005-06 – Aligned to Accountability Data, 2004-05

The Coordinator of Student Achievement, Assessment, Intervention and Curriculum introduced the item. The District has developed a strategic plan to increase achievement for all students while closing the achievement gap in English Language Arts and Math between our lowest performing subgroups – African American and Hispanic students – and our highest performing subgroups – Asian and White. Based on data from the 2004-05 school year, the Superintendent has established all District measurable goals aligned with the District Strategic Plan as well as the LEA Plan:

GOAL #1: The District will increase the proficiency performance of all AUSD student subgroups in English Language Arts and Math while increasing or maintaining the performance of any group performing at or above 90% proficient.

GOAL #2: The District will close the achievement gap in English Language Arts and Mathematics for continuously enrolled students between our lowest performing subgroups – African American and Hispanic students – and our highest performing subgroups- Asian and White.

GOAL #3: The District will increase the number of students who graduate from high school and are eligible for college and/or career options.

The report presented student achievement data from the 2004-05 school year, which served as a baseline for these District measurable goals. An analysis of the 2004-05 STAR data shows:

- The District showed its greatest gain on the APR in 2003/04
- ABUSD has met the AYP targets and is demonstrating increased performance keeping pace with the AMO targets

Appendix D

Adopted ABUSD Board Minutes of September 27, 2005 - continued

- Grades 3 and 7 score well above the state percentage proficient on the Reading, language and Spelling subtests on CAT/6
- District-wide, there was a net-positive gain in performance band movement of matched students in ELA CST. Grades 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10 demonstrated positive growth (+10). This may reflect the District-wide efforts in literacy over the past three years
- District-wide, there was a net positive gain in performance band movement of matched students in Mathematics CST. Grades 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 11 demonstrated positive growth
- We are seeing definite improvement in the area of Mathematics as evidenced in the Algebra 1 scores and progress on both the CST percentage proficient and the Cat/6 over three years
- There is slight improvement in the achievement gap when viewed by continuously enrolled students
- Our high schools demonstrated increased performance in the ELA and Mathematics content areas, especially grade 9
- The District has done a good job of moving African American and Hispanic students from the bottom performance bands to Basic, but has difficulty moving their performance to Proficient and beyond
- Grades 3, 6, 8 and 11 demonstrated a negative net movement of “slippage” on CST ELA
- There is slippage from higher performance bands to lower performance bands in Mathematics for Grades 5, 8 and 10. While excellent gains were made increasing the percentage of proficient students, there is significant slippage of students in performance bands to result in an all District net performance band movement gain of only +1
- While all sub groups are improving, the achievement gap still remains cemented
- Approximately 17% of AUSD 10th graders do not pass the CAHSEE their first testing experience
- The subgroup student performance is significantly better on the CAHSEE than on the CST, even allowing for the test content variability
- It will be necessary to increase the proficiency of our underperforming subgroups at a faster rate than our high achieving subgroups (closing the achievement gap) in order to remain above the AMO targets and remain out of Program Improvement under the NCLB regulations in future years
- High school science is an area of concern

Member Carl noted there seemed to be big gains in certain grades and asked if there is a correlation in future years. Student Member Lilly asked about the subgroups data. Member Daniel replied that subgroup data is required by the Federal Government. The Coordinator noted in order to formulate improvement strategies, we need to break apart and look at how different subgroups perform so we know where we need to focus our attention.

Member Carl asked what programs we are using to achieve goals. The Coordinator replied that at the elementary level, staff is bringing in a data system where the teacher has the ability to look at systems by subgroups and can target students in their own class immediately instead of waiting until the end of the year. There is also differentiated instruction.

Appendix E

Superintendent's Expectations: The Three R's...Responsibility, Respect, and Relationships

WORK ETHICS

- The core purpose of our work is the academic achievement of all of our students in the classroom
- All employees must be involved in the continuous improvement of the teaching and learning process and environment
- All employees are role models for our students
- All employees work in concert to improve the academic achievement of all students
- All employees ensure the safety of all students
- All employees are essential and respected for their contribution to our core responsibility and mission – teaching and learning

STUDENTS

- All students must have equitable opportunities to learn
- All students must have support to reach their highest academic potential
- All students must be provided safe, engaging and challenging learning environments
- All discipline action will fit the offense and will be progressive – behavior is learned and we are in the business of teaching
- Students should be involved in setting goals and making decisions about their learning needs and their plans for involving their future

DECISIONS

- Decisions are aligned with our vision to have all students achieve at high levels while closing the achievement gap
- Effective decisions by a group include dialogue and/or discussion before a decision is made. Decisions are always made in the best interest of our students
- Decisions are made to maximize learning in a safe environment for all students
- Decisions will be made at the lowest level possible
- Decisions must be based on a sound rationale that is data based
- Decisions need to be implemented/evaluated and adjusted based on data
- All administrators will be held accountable for implementing district decisions
- Complaints/concerns will be addressed at the lowest level including complaints about books, supplies, and safety
- The Superintendent has the responsibility to make a decision when a consensus cannot be reached as well as the right to make a decision without consensus

SCHOOL DISTRICT, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, STUDENTS, & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- The school district parents/guardians, students and community are partners in ensuring the safety and academic success of all students

Appendix E

Superintendent's Expectations: The Three R's...Responsibility, Respect, and Relationships - continued

SCHOOL DISTRICT, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, STUDENTS, & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- As partners, we respect and embrace the diversity within our community and will reach out to include all voices from our schools (parent/student groups, school site councils) and community partners to ensure all students are successful in reaching their highest academic potential
- Parents/guardians and their students should be involved in setting goals and making decisions about the learning needs and plans involving their student's future
- As partners, we work together to ensure the safety and academic achievement of all our students
- As partners, we must continuously assess the perceptions of our parents, students and community in regards to the services AUSD delivers
- The ultimate evaluation of AUSD (individually and collectively) will be based on how well our students perform academically

FISCAL/FINANCIAL

- All expenditures of funds/resources must be aligned to our vision to have all students achieve at high levels while closing the achievement gap
- All resources must be expended to ensure/establish an equitable educational system
- Fiscal resources are to be expended to benefit the most students
- Funds need to be expended within a plan that has a long-term effect on students achievement and capital improvements to benefit students
- All programs must be evaluated using data to determine if they are moving toward our vision to have all students achieve at high levels while closing the achievement gap

EVALUATION

- All employees must be supported, coached and evaluated on a regular basis
- Evaluation for all employees will be respectfully based on improving performance
- All site administrators must demonstrate instructional leadership in the areas of assessing effective instructional practices, building collaborative relationships and learning communities as well as coaching staff to support improved academic achievement for all students
- All central office administrators will support site administrators in accomplishing the district vision to have all students achieve at high levels while closing the achievement gap

RECRUITMENT/RETAINMENT OF EMPLOYEES

- AUSD will develop and implement a plan to have the work force represent the diversity of our student body
- Our recruitment goal is to continue to obtain the most qualified staff at all levels
- Our commitment is to retain our high quality staff by providing respect, equitable support and opportunities for professional growth

Appendix F

ABUSD Goals 2006-2009, Adopted December 5, 2005

(This was compiled from Strategic Plan, LEA Plan, Superintendent's Goals, etc.)

GOAL 1:

Narrow and close the achievement gap in English Language Arts and mathematics between our lowest performing students (African American, Latino, English learners, and Special Education students) and our highest performing students.

Subgoals

- ✓ Monitor and oversee the implementation of goal #1
- ✓ Develop and implement a process of prioritize spending aimed at closing the achievement gap and continuous improvement for all students
- ✓ Provide K-12 Principal research based professional development: “Improving Student Achievement through Observation and Feedback, and provide coherent articulation at Principal Meetings focused on student achievement
- ✓ Lead and support school sites in the analysis of ongoing benchmark data using Measures to help make instructional decisions
- ✓ Implement Single School Plan (SSP) protocols using Cycle of Inquiry process to analyze and revise site plans to achieve optimum student success
- ✓ Develop a process and protocol for program evaluation
- ✓ Create a substitute teacher pool to provide consistency of coverage and instruction at schools of focus (e.g., “Program Improvement”)
- ✓ Develop and implement a plan for a continuum of educational programs and services for all students inclusive of special education and general education

GOAL 2:

Align the spending plan with educational objectives while ensuring the highest and best use of limited resources and long-term solvency.

Subgoals

- ✓ Monitor and oversee the implementation of goal #2
- ✓ Accurately project revenues, expenditures, and fund balance
- ✓ A Contractual Agreement that is based on the values of student achievement and fiscal responsibility
- ✓ All administrators will be trained on the practice and impacts of contracts
- ✓ A position control system will be fully operational
- ✓ Revise and implement technology plan ensuring it aligns with educational objectives and resource allocation decisions

Appendix F

ABUSD Goals 2006-2009, Adopted December 5, 2005 – continued

GOAL 3:

Ensure all students will be in educational environments that are safe and conducive to learning.

Subgoals

- ✓ Monitor and oversee the implementation of goal #3
- ✓ Build a team to address the needs for maintenance, operations, and facilities services (MOF: TBD)
- ✓ Build a self-sustaining Food and Nutrition Fund
- ✓ Limit exposure to avoidable/containable risk
- ✓ Examine and refine current Board policies and develop new policies related to school climate, wellness, and safety
- ✓ Revise and implement disaster/emergency preparedness plan and policies

GOAL 4:

Recruit and retain highly qualified and diverse staff and provide systems of support for and recognition of all employees.

Subgoals

- ✓ Monitor and oversee the implementation of goal #4
- ✓ Develop and implement a recruitment plan to outline all recruitment events, target candidates that are reflective of our staffing goals/needs
- ✓ Provide support for a leadership standards-based evaluation system
- ✓ A reorganization of Human Resources and its work to best meet the needs of all end users

Appendix G

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of August 23, 2005

Superintendent Search

Superintendent Search

In April 2005, former Superintendent announced he was leaving the district effective July 1, 2005. The Board of education made a decision to appoint Ardella Dailey as the Interim Superintendent for the 2005-06 school year, and to begin conducting the search for a permanent Superintendent in the fall of 2005.

The Board was looking for a cost-effective process that provided flexibility in conducting the search. Initial research on placement services determined that all but one service provider charged full price for their services, even if the placement was an internal candidate. The service provider who had a 2-tiered pricing structure was the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

CSBA provides a number of services to member school districts, including superintendent placement services. CSBA presented their proposal to the Board at the August 8, 2005 meeting.

Some community members expressed interest in facilitating the superintendent search themselves. It was decided that action would be taken at the August 23, 2005 meeting to allow other interested groups time to submit their proposals for consideration.

Member Edward reviewed the terms of the CSBA proposal, noting the first tier covers paying for services to conduct community meetings in order to receive input to an overall profile for the Superintendent. CSBA will develop questions for the interview process, and will provide an opportunity to interview the current internal candidate. If at that point, the Board decides to approve the internal candidate, CSBA services would end at a cost of \$7,800. If the Board doesn't accept the internal candidate and decides to go external, CSBA would prepare a brochure and be responsible for all the additional work associated with identifying external candidates, setting up interviews, etc. That would cost \$13,000.

Member Carl added that the Board does know the value of every dollar. If the decision is put into perspective, the decision about the Superintendent is the most important one the Board will make, and the duty is not taken lightly.

Member Alice noted the motion is to accept the whole process if needed, and although we it may only cost \$7,800, we are voting on a possible expense of \$13,000. Member Alice asked if it would be necessary to amend the motion to note that if the Board decides to end the contract at Tier 1, there would be no constraints to continue with the process.

Member responded Daniel that the Board is voting on the contract, and the contract has 2 tiers, with the provision that the Board can end it halfway through with the \$7,800.

Appendix H

Appointment of Superintendent

Adopted Minutes of November 8, 2005

Appointment of the Superintendent

In April 2005, former Superintendent announced he was leaving the District effective July 1, 2005. In April, the Board of Education made a decision to appoint Ardella Dailey as the Interim Superintendent for the 2005-06 school year.

In August 2005, the Board approved a contract with the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to conduct the Superintendent search. The first step in the process was to gather recommendations from the community for the criteria to be used in selecting the permanent Superintendent. CSBA representatives held community meetings on September 28 and 29. The output from these interviews and community meetings was used to assist the Board in selecting the set of questions used in the interview process.

The Board interviewed an internal candidate on November 1. Member Edward stated that the Board, in Closed Session, approved the contract to appoint Ardella Dailey as the permanent Superintendent of the Alpha Beta Unified School District.

Superintendent Dailey thanked the Board, adding she is very proud to accept the appointment, and believes strongly in the District. Superintendent Dailey added she supports the Board's process in terms of going through determining what the profile was for a Superintendent, adding the it strengthen of the process ensured the community that Superintendent Dailey was selected based on a rigorous process.

ACSA President and Principal of Elementary School, congratulated Superintendent Dailey on her appointment, and congratulated the Board on adopting a process that was fair, open to the community and others, and was relatively inexpensive. The results will provide continuity for the District, as Superintendent Dailey is familiar with the issues and able to move us forward.

Appendix I

School Consolidation Report

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of November 22, 2005

Declining Enrollment, Facility Usage, and School Consolidation Report

Superintendent Ardella Dailey, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer, MOF Director, and Student Affairs Officer the item. In the last five years, AUSD has experienced declining enrollment. In that same five-year period, AUSD routinely collapsed and consolidated classes at south end schools due to the declining enrollment. In both 2004-05 and 2005-06, three elementary schools have had an enrollment of less than 250 students. Current declining enrollment in these elementary schools negatively impacts our use of facility, financial, and educational resources.

A Board Workshop was held on Wednesday, November 16 at Woodstock School. At that Workshop, staff presented the following scenarios to the Board and community for consideration:

Scenario 1: Consolidate M School and W School, straight rollover of current students
TOTAL: 393 students occupying 20 rooms, with 0 vacant rooms and 35 seats available

Scenario 2: Consolidate M School and W School, straight rollover of current students, minus inter-district transfer students
TOTAL: 338 students occupying 17 rooms with 3 vacant rooms and 30 seats available

Scenario 3: Consolidate M School, W School, and L School, straight rollover of current students, minus inter-district transfers, with additional wing at new W School
TOTAL: 495 students occupying 26 rooms with 2 vacant rooms and 62 seats available

Based on the discussion and comments from board members, staff, and community members at the workshop, the scenarios have been revised into the following:

Scenario One - Consolidate M/W School with a new wing
TOTAL: 486 students occupying 25 rooms with 3 vacant rooms and 27 seats available

Assumptions

- Straight rollover of W and M students generates an enrollment of 393 students.
- Current enrollment pattern for the last three years has generated an average of 87.6 per grade. If the pattern continues enrollment could increase by 40 students.
- Use of low generation rate for B1 apartments (5) and new B2 housing development (48) would result in 53 additional students over the next 2 years.

Appendix I

School Consolidation Report - continued

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of November 22, 2005

Considerations

- Current inter-district students would stay.
- Use of high generation rate for B1 (16) and B2 (51) would result in 67 additional students over the next two years.
- W and M attendance zones are combined. No other boundary changes.
- Three possible rooms to be used to accommodate CDC after school program.
- Need student transition plan to move to new school.
- Actual enrollment from B3 (3), M1 (2) have generated few elementary students.

Facilities Implications

- Need to construct new wing (8 classrooms) to accommodate projected additional students (a cost of \$2.4 million).
- Potential space needs for universal pre-school.
- W school would temporarily house H School during H School retrofit project.
- M School would temporarily house IL High until W School is remodeled for IL High occupation.
- IL High housing project can proceed as soon as site is vacated.
- Planning for facility specifics take place from January to March 2006.
- Longfellow remains open. When H Island project reaches completion and enrollment information is actual, school closure criteria will be applied to reevaluate situation.

Scenario Two - Consolidate M/W/L Schools with new wing addition at new school under construction: Total 591 students occupying 28 rooms with 0 vacant rooms and 21 seats available.

Assumptions

- Inter-district students (75) from M/L/W are placed in schools east of West St.
- Straight rollover of remaining students from M, L and W schools.
- Use of low generation rate for B1 (5) and B2 (48) would result in 53 additional students over the next 2 years.
- Use low generation rate for H Island (41).
- Current enrollment pattern for the last three years has generated an average of 105 per grade. If the pattern continues enrollment could increase by 39 students.
- Place no more intra-district placements (33) at the new school. If the pattern continues enrollment could increase by 39 students.

Appendix I

School Consolidation Report - continued

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of November 22, 2005

Considerations

- Placement of 75 inter-district students M/L/W at other schools east of West Street where rooms and individual seats are available.
- Use of high generation rate for B1 (16) and B2 (51) would result in 67 additional students over the next two years.
- Use of high generation rate for H Island (152).
- Annex part of L school attendance zone to P school.
 - Both sides of Pan Avenue south to Lincoln, west from West.
 - Phase in during 2006-07 school year. Mandatory for Kindergarten and all new students in area.
- Consider limiting P's middle school program (2006-07) to the students enrolled in the 6-8 program.
- Close the new school to open enrollment for opening year and P school through phase-in period of annexed attendance zone (except for siblings).
- Place no more intra-district transfers or diversions, west of Webster and allow current intra's to return to home schools. This would reduce enrollment by 94 students over time as students work their way through the grade levels.

Facilities Implications

- Need to construct new wing (8 classrooms) to accommodate projected additional students (a cost of \$2.4 million).
- Potential space needs for universal pre-school.
- W school would temporarily house H School during H School retrofit project.
- M School would temporarily house IL High until W School is remodeled for IL High occupation.
- IL High housing project can proceed as soon as site is vacated.
- Planning for facility specifics take place from January to March 2006.
- L school site could also be used ROP, Adult Classes and office space for various grant services (McKinney/Vento, Even Start, etc.).

Since the estimated cost of the new wing exceeds 10% of the total contract (\$19.1 million) for the new school, a bid process is needed. There will be a Special Meeting on Monday, November 28th to make decision about going to bid for the new wing.

- The Board discussed holding a Special Meeting on Monday to approve any construction resolutions and/or bid approvals related to preliminary work on the new wing (pouring the concrete slab).

Appendix I

School Consolidation Report - continued

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of November 22, 2005

- Superintendent Dailey noted she will hold another series of community meetings, adding that the staff wants to ensure we make an effort to get as many community members/parents as possible to provide their input. Staff is looking at the January Board of Education meeting as the one in which a decision will be made regarding specific school consolidation. There will be a follow-up item at the December 13 Board of Education meeting after input from the community has been gathered.

Appendix J

School Consolidation Recommendations

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of January 10, 2006

School Consolidation Recommendations

In the last five years, ABUSD has experienced declining enrollment. In that same five-year period, ABUSD routinely collapsed and consolidated classes at west end schools due to the continued declining enrollment. In both 2004-05 and 2005-06, three elementary schools have had an enrollment of less than 250 students. Continued declining enrollment in these elementary schools negatively impacts our use of facility, financial, and educational resources.

Specifically, the financial impact of 2005-06 continued declining enrollment of 150 ADA will necessitate at least an \$800K budget cut needed for 2006-07. The consolidation of one school would provide a \$300K savings and the consolidation of two would provide \$600K of the projected \$800K cut for 2006-07.

The District is looking at school consolidation as a means to address these impacts of the continued declining enrollment.

A Board Workshop was held on Wednesday, November 16 at W School and at the November 22 Board of Education meeting. The two following scenarios were presented on November 22 and December 13, 2005:

Scenario 1: Consolidate M, W, and L school populations into a new wing, straight rollover of current students minus inter-district transfers, with additional wing at new W School.

Total: 591 students occupying 28 rooms, with 0 vacant rooms and 21 seats available

Scenario 2: Consolidate M and W school populations into a new wing, straight rollover of current students.

Total: 486 students occupying 25 rooms, with 3 vacant rooms and 27 seats available

In addition, community meetings were held to provide information on the two scenarios and to obtain input and reactions. The meetings were held at P school on November 28, L school on November 29, and M school on November 30.

After considering input from the comments, questions, and concerns expressed at the November 16 workshop, the November 22 and December 13 Board of Education meetings and the community meetings, the Superintendent presented the following recommendation:

Appendix J

School Consolidation Recommendations - continued

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of January 10, 2006

Staff has presented to the Board of Education two options for addressing the District's declining enrollment pattern that has resulted in a continuous loss of revenue over the last five years. These options were reviewed and discussed at several meetings.

Having given consideration to financial, demographic, and educational data; input from community meetings, staff and Board meetings discussions, Superintendent Dailey recommended that the District proceed to consolidate M and W school populations into the new W Elementary School so that the District can ensure that we have taken appropriate action to respond to the potential for changing demographics and, therefore, increased student population in our south end community.

Superintendent Dailey noted she sees the need to consolidate and close two schools, but is recommending the more conservative proposal to close only one school.

- This recommendation does not eliminate the choice to consider further consolidation of schools if needed in the future
- This recommendation will address only \$300,000 of the \$800,000 projected budget deficit for the 2006-07 year created by declining enrollment
- This recommendation will require the Board to approve \$500,000 in additional spending reductions for 2006-07 in the coming weeks

As part of this recommendation, the following facilities decisions will be implemented in the 2006-07 school year:

- L school will remain open and school consolidation criteria developed in this process will be reviewed once again in 2006-07
- IL High School will be permanently moved to the M School campus
- Plans for developing the existing E Avenue IL High site into affordable employee rental housing will continue to be developed
- The existing W school site will be occupied by H School for 2006-07. Options for use of this site in 2007-08 will include a District office staff development training center, multicultural center, adult school classes, and continued use for community-based programs such as Head Start, McKinney Vento, and Categorical Programs
- W Child Development Center School-Age Program will have classroom space at the new school. The new school will also provide opportunities for space needs to be addressed if universal preschool legislation is passed in this year's state budget
- A school Consolidation Committee consisting of parents, staff and community members from M and W schools will be established to develop a school consolidation plan, including consideration of a new name for the new school

Appendix J

School Consolidation Recommendations - continued

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of January 10, 2006

ACSA President supported the Superintendent's recommendation, adding it is a difficult decision to close any school, particularly since both M and L schools have shown significant gains in test scores and API, and are working hard with their student population.

We acknowledge that there are complex issues that go into making this decision – there is a clear fiscal advantage to closing two schools. Several other issues mitigate this, however. Educationally, research suggests that the most effective school size is between 300-400 students. Research suggests the achievement gap increases in larger schools. Attitudes towards school and social behavior are better at smaller schools.

The number of uncertainties adds to the difficulty of this decision. What is the impact of the Governor's commitment to give more money? The enrollment picture is unknown. If you close a school, it is difficult to go back. If you close L school, then find you need to re-open it, it is difficult to recover from that kind of impact on staff and the community. The decision to close L school could be made in the future, after waiting at least a year for better information to help make that decision.

ACSA supports the Superintendent and staff in their recommendation to consolidate M and W schools.

MOVED: Member Edward

SECONDED: Member Carl

That the Board of Education approves the Superintendent's recommendation to consolidation M and W into the new W Elementary School.

Member Edward noted the Board has had discussion in the past related to the factors involved in this decision. The bigger issue is the root cause of declining enrollment. We have lost 500 students over 5 years. What is happening on the west end, or what is unique about the west end that is not happening on the east end?

We need to have a better sense of the factors occurring in the community that are contributing to this loss of enrollment. If the Board has to revisit consolidation again, perhaps in a year from now, we want to have a better sense of historical information.

Member Daniel asked if the Board doesn't choose to close a school with 166 general education students at this time, at what point would it be closed? There isn't any fat left to cut from the budget. Further cuts are going to impact students.

Member Carl reiterated that if we didn't have Measure A, we would have been over \$4M in the negative. Measure A is only a temporary situation. We need to look at the big picture.

Appendix J

School Consolidation Recommendations - continued

Adopted ABUSD Minutes of January 10, 2006

Clearly, the Board will have to revisit this scenario again early next year. The big question will be enrollment. If it goes down, we will not have a choice. Despite the laments of parents – and the Board is very sympathetic – at the end of the day, the Board’s responsibility comes down to dollars and cents. We can only provide what we can afford to pay for, despite personal preferences.

By approving this option, there is no fat left over after all cuts have gone through. We’re not talking about headcount cuts. What that means is all the things suggested in prior cuts that weren’t done – counselors, athletic programs, etc. – all those things that make education a full experience – are potentially on the chopping block.

Student Member L noted that concerned parents need to think about the domino effect that’s going to occur if no closure is made. Cuts will be made that affect all students within the District.

President Betty noted the parcel tax is not enough to compensate for our declining enrollment and the board is going to have to make some very tough decisions regarding spending reductions.

Member Daniel added he is struggling with how we explain to the community, having just passed the parcel tax that we have to make these huge cuts, which will affect every child in the District.

President Betty noted it sounds like Member Daniel is advocating the closure of two schools. Another consideration is that we have a lot of small elementary schools that have portables on the grounds because school enrollment isn’t static. We know we have to work together to make the hard decision and cut programs that effect children at all schools, but we don’t want to see portables at west end schools in the next 5-10 years.

AYES: Betty, Edward, Carl

NOES: Daniel

ABSENT: Alice

MOTION CARRIED

Appendix K

Sample ABUSD Employee Email Bulletin to all Staff

2006 Negotiations

- [Go to teacher negotiations section](#)
- [Go to CSEA section](#)

Teacher Negotiations - 2006

June 2007

On June 15, the District issued a [summary of the tentative agreement](#) for the ten day review period prior to the June 26th BOE meeting.

In a [Letter to the Editor](#) North Side Middle School teachers voice their opinion to the Board of Education.

In an [Alpha Beta Sun Letter to the Editor](#) R.E. respond to M. P. letter. The [Alpha Beta Sun](#) covered employee reaction to the tentative agreement and publish an editorial titled [Teachers Deserve a Living Wage](#).

On June 11, R. E., President of AEA, issued a letter to the AUSD Board of Education, Ardella Dailey, Superintendent and, CHRO and Chief Negotiator titled: [Tentative Agreement Ratification](#).

On June 8, the District issued a [Fact Sheet](#) of how the tentative agreement would impact a teacher salary over the term of the contract.

On June 7, the District issued the following communications to its employees:

We are pleased to announce that Alpha Beta Education Association membership voted last night, with an 85% affirmative vote, to ratify a new three-year employment contract for teachers effective July 1, 2006. The terms of the contract include 0% in the current year (2006-2007), a 2% raise in 2007-2008, (1% raise effective July 1, 2007, and 1% raise effective January 1, 2008) and a 4% raise in 2008-2009 (3% raise effective July 1, 2008, and 1% increase toward Health and Welfare benefits effective December 1, 2008).

The next step in the contract ratification process is final approval by the Board of Education. A summary of the proposed contract terms will be presented at the June 12 meeting and the Board will vote at the June 26 meeting. Updates will be available on our district web site and notification will go out to employee group leadership for further communication.

Appendix K

Sample ABUSD Employee Email Bulletin to all Staff – continued

As with all compensation (salary and benefits) increases negotiated, the terms of this new three-year agreement with regard to raises will be implemented equitably for all Alpha Beta Unified School District employees. Other employee group leaders will be contacted and asked to facilitate a process to determine the distribution of the compensation increases for their membership. The Fiscal Services and Human Resources will work together to provide all employees with a detailed summary of the agreement and how to calculate the impact on individual salaries.

We are very grateful for the hard work and commitment to our employees, by negotiating teams, ABEA members, Board of Education, the ABUSD Executive Cabinet, district management, and community that has brought us to this point in the process.

[Alpha Beta Journal](#) reports on the teacher approval of the contract on June 7.

[KCBS](#) reports on the ongoing vote by the teachers on June 6, 2007. [Alpha Beta Sun](#) also reports on the ongoing teacher vote.

May 2007

In an [Alpha Beta Sun Letter to the Editor](#) M.E., counters E. R.'s [letter from 5/17](#). The [Alameda Journal](#) covered the announcement of the tentative agreement.

On May 29th, ABUSD issued the following communication to its employees:

As of about 8:00 p.m. Friday, May 25, ABUSD and ABEA reached a tentative agreement on a three-year contract effective July 1, 2006 and continuing through June 30, 2009. At this point, ABEA is making arrangements with its membership to proceed with a ratification process, scheduled to take place within the next week. If the ABEA membership ratifies the tentative agreement, the Superintendent would then make a recommendation for approval to the Board of Education.

The [Alpha Beta Sun](#) recapped the teacher demonstration at the May 24th BOE meeting. The [Alpha Beta Journal](#) also covered the teacher demonstration at the May 24th BOE meeting. In addition, the Alameda Journal published a Guest Commentary by Ann Casper titled: [Alpha Beta City must provide fair wage to teachers](#).

The [Alpha Beta Sun](#) recapped the first mediation session in the May 17th issue. In the same issue, ABEA President R.E. sent a letter to the Editor titled: [Where's the Support?](#). President R.E. also sent a Letter to the Editor for the Alpha Beta Journal titled: [Money talks, except for ABUSD](#).

Appendix L

ABUSD Equity Policy Statement

Alpha Beta USD Board Policy Statement

The Governing Board believes that Alpha Beta Unified School District must create a system that enables every student, including those with diverse needs, to meet or exceed our rigorous standards for academic performance and success. The Board recognizes that in order for all students to develop the knowledge, skills, behaviors, character and habits needed to be an effective, productive, confident and contributing member to our global community; there must be equity of access to programs, services and resources.

The Equity Policy Statement expresses the Governing Board's commitment to equity, excellence, and the achievement for an inclusive learning environment for all students.

Equity Policy Statement:

We believe that equity is a set of actions that produce results that are not determined by differences of race, sex, or economic status.

Equity is not the same as equality. Whereas equality provides the same resources throughout the system on a per capita basis, equity demands the allocation of resources based on need and support for each student's success.

Therefore, in order to achieve equity, ABUSD will factor in student needs when making decisions regarding resource allocations.

Adopted December 11, 2006

Appendix M

Discussion on Closing the Achievement Gap

Adopted ABUSD Board Minutes of September 27, 2005

At the middle schools, the abilities become broader and are harder as you get older. There are second classes forming for reading in addition to CORE and REACH. At the high school level, staff is identifying students who have not passed the CAHSEE and are providing them with a second English /Math class. Teachers are getting instruction on how to use different strategies to help students learn math in a different way. Current twelfth graders are the first class that MUST pass the CAHSEE in order to graduate.

Member Alice asked about special education students and what can we do to help them graduate? Or do we plan to offer alternative certificates of completion? Interim Superintendent Dailey replied that there is a waiver process in progress, as well as the issue of alternative certification. Staff is working

Hard to keep the motivation and morale of students up and has been extremely understanding of their circumstances in dealing with CAHSEE issues.

The Coordinator added the state is working on legislation to develop an alternative CAHSEE exam, but it looks like it will not pass.

R.M., AEF President, addressed the Board and noted the community should be outraged at the gap that exists, and it really does speak to an equity issue. Mr. M suggested that the District should challenge itself more and aim for improvement targets higher than 5% and 10%.

Interim Superintendent Dailey noted there are huge consequences if we do not figure out how to close the achievement gap. We are responsible for all students achieving, and there are some federal sanctions, including Program Improvement, which could be initiated. We want to do it because we want all kids to achieve, but the gap cannot be tolerated. The Gap exists even among the GATE student population.