

A graphic featuring silhouettes of athletes in various sports (running, jumping, boxing, and weightlifting) positioned around the text "Get in THE GAME". The text "Get in" is in a white serif font, while "THE GAME" is in a large, bold, dark blue sans-serif font. The background is light blue with white sparkles.

Get in THE GAME

wl WOMEN *in* LEADERSHIP

Reconnection Time

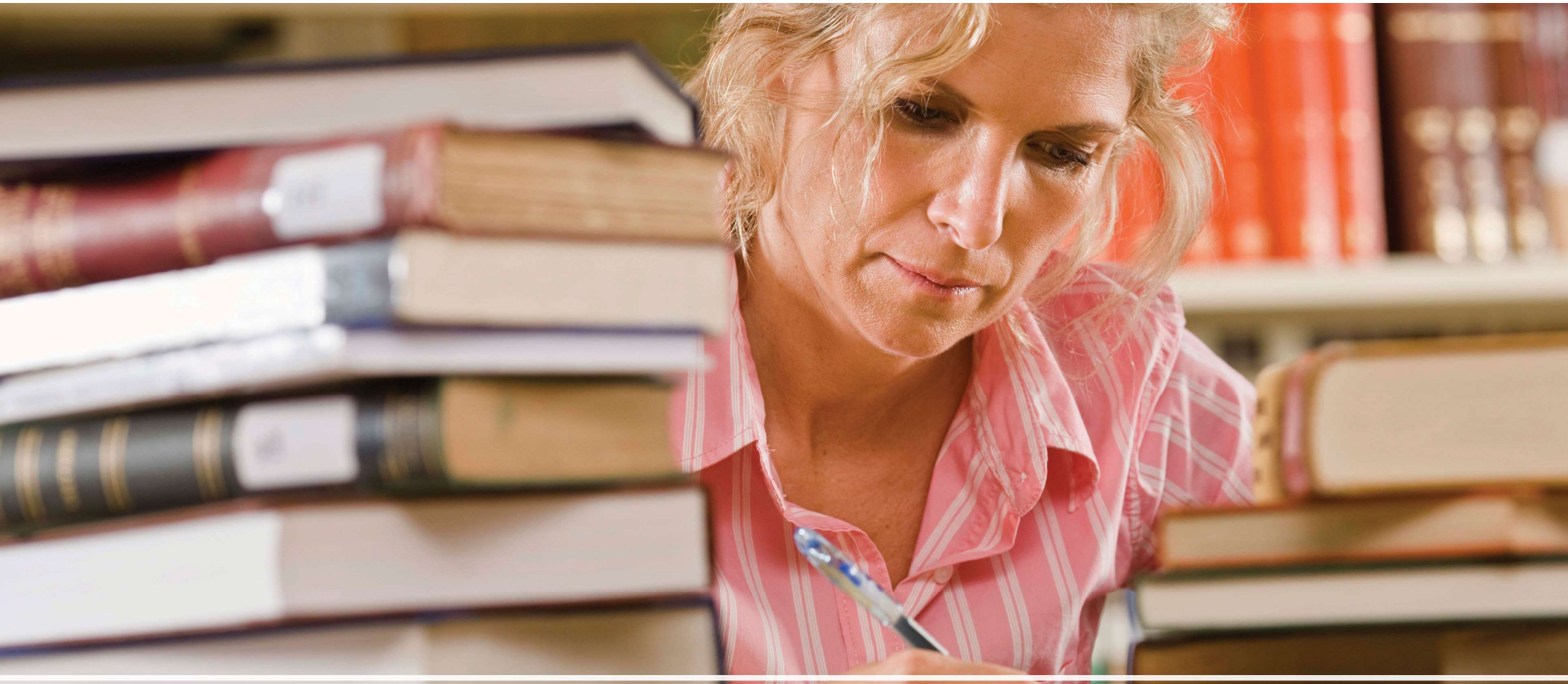


wl WOMEN *in* LEADERSHIP

Dr. Kristina Smith
Dr. Sarah Wisdom
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Christian





Let's Hear from the Researchers



Dr. Kristina Smith
Hollister School District

Previous research is consistent with current

- Previous researchers acknowledged that barriers encountered by females as they attempt to seek a lead superintendent position included the gendered expectations of the superintendent role by:
 - The Good Ol' Boys' Club and Board of Education members,
 - Lack of experience of females in personnel,
 - Facilities and finance,
 - Lack of sponsors and networking,
 - Inability or unwillingness to sacrifice family time, and
 - Lack of females expressing interest in becoming a superintendent.

SOLUTIONS-BASED: NEW RESEARCH WAS NEEDED

Previous researchers have not addressed how current lead female superintendents have implemented and utilized effective strategies that helped them overcome the perceived barriers.

This study addressed the solutions side.

Then vs. Now: Female Perceptions of Barriers to the Superintendency

Gender bias/gender stereotype

Research has revealed that female superintendents previously cited gender bias or gender stereotypes as the top barrier they had encountered in the early 1990s. however, most recent studies indicated that self-imposed barriers are the most noted barriers women identify in their journey to seeking a superintendent role

Self-imposed barriers

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Self-Imposed Barriers Defined

Self-imposed barriers have included “[t]he failure to attain the superintendency or the decision to avoid it because of family responsibilities”



Barriers to Entry
Buzzword

Self-imposed barriers identified in the study

- The time commitment required of a lead superintendent position.**
- Lack of understanding of district-level finances.
- Additional stress and responsibilities of the superintendent position.
- Consequences of community and Board of Education relations.
- The politics of a female in the lead superintendent role

*****It should be noted the barrier most cited by participants in the study was the time commitment a lead superintendent position would require of the participant [away from their family/domestic responsibilities].***

Strategies implored to overcome self-imposed, self-reported barriers

Communicating	Communicating with all stakeholders and asking for help.
Forming	Forming relationships and building a professional network of peers [literature findings vs. research findings].
Working	Working hard and proving themselves to gain respect from educational stakeholders.
Having	Having spouses and families willing to sacrifice and support them in their superintendent role and duties.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

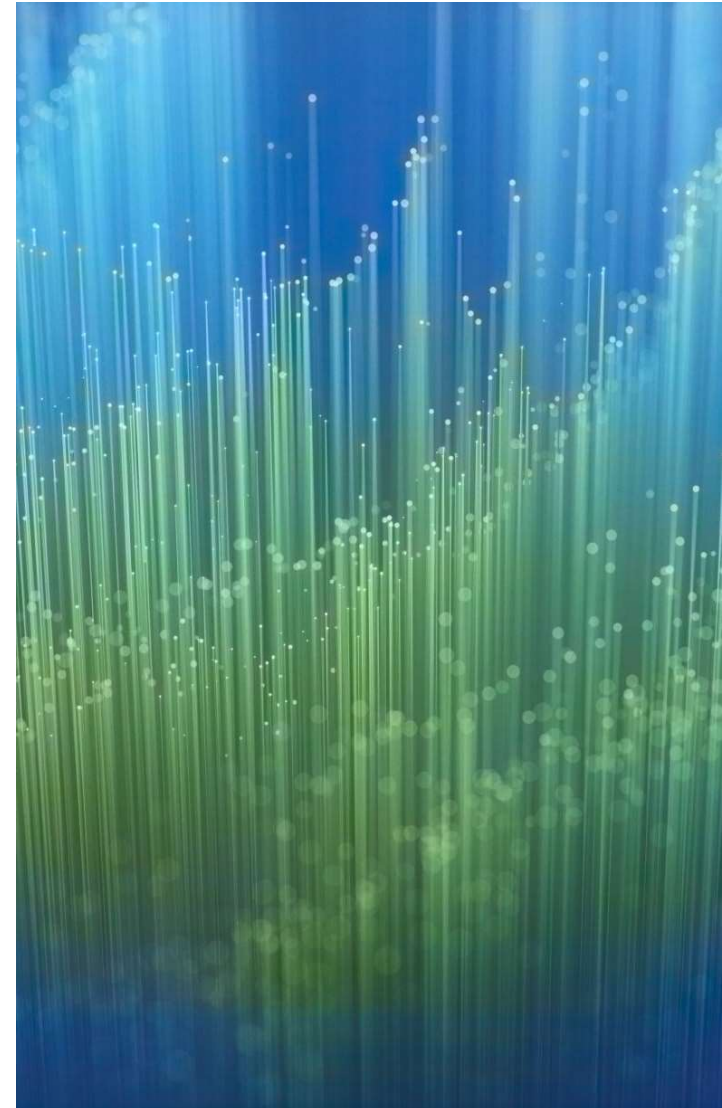
Additional research on how to surmount perceived self-imposed barriers.

Recruitment strategies for aspiring female superintendents.

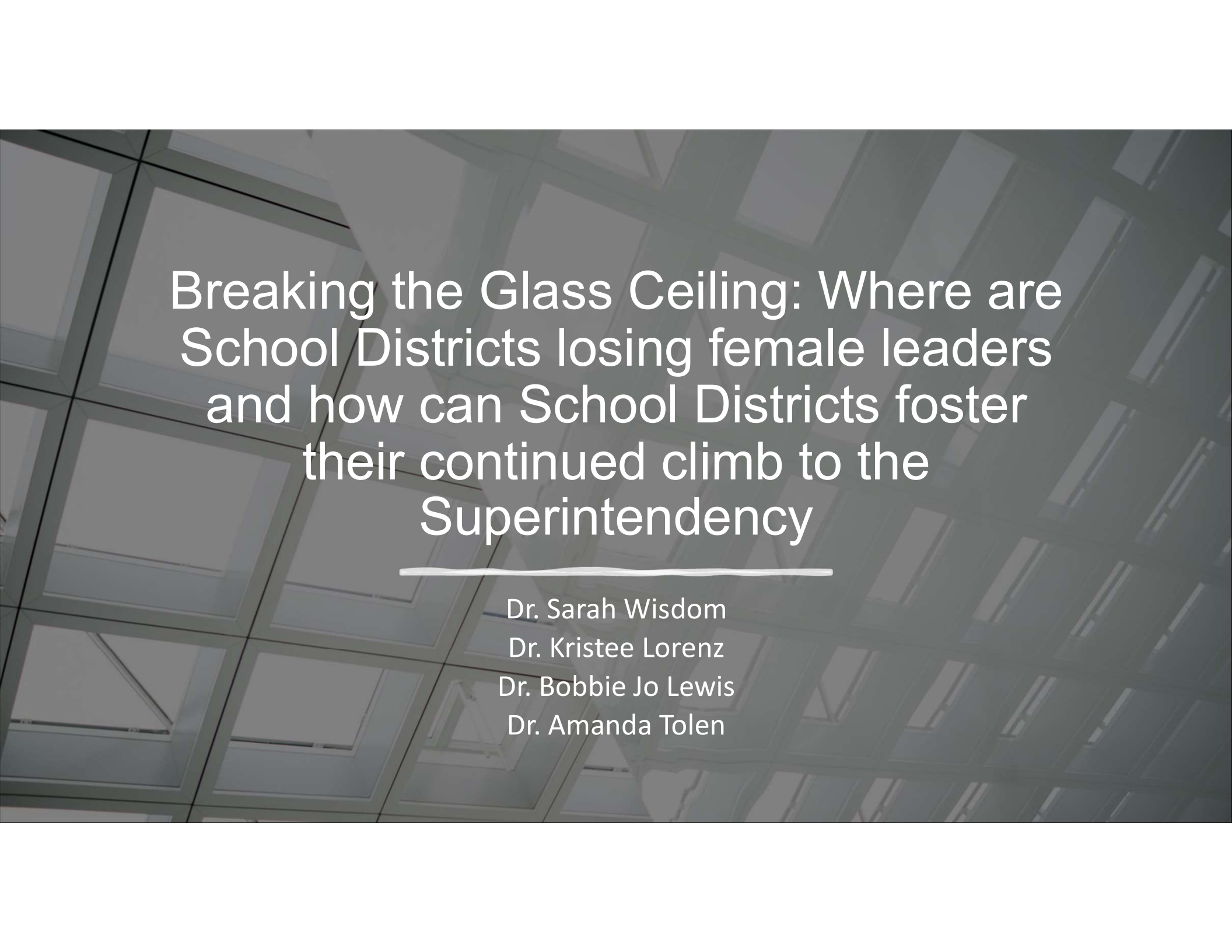
Female superintendents of a different race.

Number of years a female has served in the superintendency.

Female superintendents from various school district sizes.







Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Where are School Districts losing female leaders and how can School Districts foster their continued climb to the Superintendency

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Dr. Kristee Lorenz

Dr. Bobbie Jo Lewis

Dr. Amanda Tolen



Dr. Sarah Wisdom

New Bloomfield
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Results

Four overarching categories:

1. Gender role stereotypes in the hiring process and careers of female leaders.
2. Self-sabotaging thoughts by female leaders.
3. Prior positions held.
4. The time commitment and the importance of family roles and responsibilities.

These themes were noted by the Researcher as main due to the overlapping of significance over at least two or more of the research questions.

Gender role stereotypes in the hiring process and careers of female leaders

- Assertiveness in leadership role had put female leaders in a bad light where males who also have these qualities are seen as strong leaders.
- Ninety-three percent (13 of 14) of the participants voiced the concern that gender stereotypes are still very much a part of the culture in the field of education.
- This theme aligned with past research from Orem (2018) as well as Creswell and Poth (2018).
- Of the 11 female superintendents who voiced gender role stereotypes as an issue, six of the 11 mentioned this directly related to Boards of Education. This is a vital statistic since Boards of Education are the hiring body of the district's superintendent.

- The Researcher found that the pressure females put on themselves can be a barrier for not only applying for top positions but also in caring out the demanding duties the superintendency brings.
- This makes a direct correlation to the research framework of role congruity theory of prejudice and how these thoughts are stifling our female leaders.
- Participants shared the perception that women are often times what holds themselves back, and that self-sabotaging behaviors can stifle one's career. Ten of the 14 participants referenced self-sabotaging behavior as a reason the field of education continues to see the disproportionality of male to female superintendents.
- Self-sabotaging behaviors were triggered involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intended control (Orem, 2018). These behaviors affected participants actions and decisions unconsciously (Orem, 2018). Implicit bias was women's attitudes or stereotypes that affected their understanding, actions, and decisions unconsciously (Orem, 2018). These biases were triggered involuntarily and without an individual's consciousness or intentional control (Orem, 2018).

Self-sabotaging thoughts by female leaders

Prior Positions Held

- Nine out of the 14 participants voiced that past teaching and administrative positions held was a reason the field of education continues to see the discrepancy between male and female superintendent numbers, with over half the group commenting that the path to the superintendency tends to be ran through the high school principal position.
- A 2019 fact sheet produced by the AFL-CIO's Department of Professional Employees indicated that females make up 54.2% of principals in the United States (Ramaswamy,2020). Research was noteworthy on the breakdown of elementary verse high school pathways to the superintendency. The same fact sheet provided data that showed 68% of elementary school principals were female, 67.3% of high school principals were male, and 60% of middle school principals were males (Ramaswamy,2020).
- This study found participants from middle and high school accounted for 43% of the participants, followed by 29% with elementary experience, 14% serving as special education directors, 7% serving a small district where the participant was a K-12 principal and one participant surprisingly coming with no prior administrative experience.

- 11 (79%) of the 14 participants interviewed shared how time and family can be a barrier that hinders more females applying.
- 13 of 14 (93%) of participants indicated that they simply do not have a work life balance.
- 12 of the 14 participants saying their children were older when they applied for the superintendency.
- Ramaswamy (2020) highlighted that the New York Council of School Superintendents stated that female superintendents who had school-aged children were only at 15%, as opposed to males with school-aged children being 50%. Ramaswamy's (2020) research directly compares to this study's research as it was found that 86% of the participants having older or no children in school before they took the superintendency.
- Research noted, long hours, coupled with time and stress that the superintendency brings, can be exhausting on a person and their family; therefore, some females leaders simply do not seek the position (Glass, 2000; Superville, 2016).
- Being an instructional leader, a mother, wife, and a caregiver can take its toll on a person (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Reilly & Bauer, 2015).

The time commitment and the importance of family roles and responsibilities

What Can We Do?

- Women must build self-confidence and be willing to take chances on applying for positions.
- Women must find and share strategies to balance home life and time commitments as they move into the superintendency.
- Being aware that gender role stereotypes are still an issue in the field of education. Acknowledging them and educating Boards of Education, search firms and district leaders is an important step in reducing role stereotypes.
- Districts can remove barriers by educating females about self-promotion and supporting them with mentorships. Supporting our young leaders was mentioned in 100% of the 14 interviews. Grow your own programs and opportunities for leadership in districts will provide confidence, experience and support for future leaders.



**“In the
Future,
there will
be no
female
leaders.
There will
just be
leaders.”**

- Sheryl Sandberg



What did you
hear?

Yes, And!



Time for Your
Voice

*Carousel of
Ideas*





Social Hour

*Please have fun
making
connections.*

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