

# **Succession Planning Guided by Equity as a Tool for Leadership Development in School Districts**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Oftentimes, during the transition of key leadership positions in the public school district setting, multi-year initiatives and core values are disrupted as a new leader assumes their role. The purpose of this research is to examine how district leaders leverage a proactive approach to planning for transitions in key leadership positions. This dissertation used a case study of an urban district with a stated core value of equity to examine the approach of assessing, selecting, developing, and promoting future leaders. Through document reviews, meeting observations, and 14 interviews, this study examines the transition of key leadership positions within the district by addressing the following research question: How do the practices of district leaders foster equity through planning for future changes in leadership?

Using the framework of succession planning, findings of the study included the complexities of the district's approach to planning for future human capital needs in alignment with the values of equity, through both existing strategies and the goals of a new superintendent. Additionally, the bar was raised for initiatives to develop talent from within the organization as pipeline programs were re-emphasized and meeting the needs of students and families were prioritized. Finally, the district aspired to sustain these efforts through systemic equity and a recommitment to ensuring linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity among leadership positions. This case study suggests the complex nature of organizational change and the importance of coherence in supporting the vision of the district during periods of leadership transition.