

## Leaders Are Readers: What Journals Do Public School Superintendents Read?

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### Abstract

This study involving 233 participants from ten states sought to identify the types of educational journals practicing superintendents read. The findings indicate that the majority of superintendents are reading publications provided by professional and trade organizations rather than peer-reviewed journals. Across all subgroups, *Educational Leadership*, *School Administrator*, *Education Week*, and *The American School Board Journal* were the four most frequently read periodicals. The majority of superintendents are reading publications provided by professional and trade organizations rather than peer-reviewed journals.

### Key Words

superintendents, educational leadership, educational administration, journals, faculty, magazines





to inform their practice (Anderson et al., 2005; Penuel et al. 2018; Zirkel, 2007). Anderson et al. (2005), the impetus for this article, described the journals that educational leaders read. The study, over fifteen years ago, considered the journals award-winning school leaders and educational leadership professors read. The study surveyed 60 participants from the following two groups: (1) K-12 principals of Blue Ribbons Schools for the 2001-2002 school year and (2) chairs of university educational administration departments.

The results of the study identified *Educational Leadership* (93% of the respondents), *NASSP Bulletin* (67% of the respondents), *American Educational Research Journal* (60% of the respondents), *School Administrator* (60% of the respondents), and *The American School Board Journal* (42% of the respondents) as the top five journals cited by respondents. Anderson et al. (2005) surveyed a mix of practicing K-12 principals and education faculty; therefore, it is not surprising that a mix of practitioner and peer-reviewed publications were most widely read. This survey did not distinguish between the publications practitioners and academics read and was limited to a specific group of K-



**Table 1***List of Educational Leadership Journals Included in Survey*

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Journals	Cited in
Administrative Science Quarterly	



## Results

The 233 superintendents participating in this investigation read a total of 66 unique journals. The number of occurrences for any particular journal ranged from 0 to 173.

Table 3 presents the distribution of the top 10 journals in descending order, starting with the journals most often read by all superintendents.

Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 present the distribution of the top 10 journals read by male superintendents, female superintendents,

superintendents with a doctorate degree, and superintendents with a masters or specialist degree, respectively.

In each of these tables, the percentages add up to more than 100%, because participants could select *up to* five journals. *Educational Leadership*, *School Administrator*, *Education Week*, and *ASBJ* were read most often, although in different order depending upon the subgroup.

**Table 3***Journals Read by All Superintendents (n=233)*

Journal	Number (Percentage) of Participants Reading Each Journal
Educational Leadership	173 (74.3%)
School Administrator	150 (64.4%)
Education Week	120 (51.5%)
ASBJ	66 (28.3%)
NASSP Bulletin	48 (20.6%)
HER	23 (9.9%)
JEA	23 (9.9%)
PDK	20 (8.6%)
AERJ	19 (8.2%)
District Administration	12 (5.2%)
The Learning Professional (Formerly: Journal of Staff Development)	11 (4.7%)
Other journals combined (n=55)	93 (39.9%)
I do not frequently read educational leadership journals	35 (15.0%)

**Table 4***Journals Read by Male Superintendents (n=171)*

Journal	Number (Percentage) of Participants Reading Each Journal
Educational Leadership	121 (70.8%)
School Administrator	112 (65.5%)
Education Week	81 (47.4%)
ASBJ	51 (29.8%)
NASSP Bulletin	38 (22.2%)
JEA	17 (9.9%)
HER	13 (7.6%)
PDK	13 (7.6%)
AERJ	11 (6.4%)
District Administration	8 (4.7%)
JSL	5 (2.9%)
Other journals combined (n=44)	60 (35.1%)
I do not frequently read educational leadership journals	30 (17.5%)

**Table 5***Journals Read by Female Superintendents (n=62)*

Journal	Number (Percentage) of Participants Reading Each Journal
Educational Leadership	51 (82.2%)
Education Week	39 (62.9%)
School Administrator	38 (61.3%)
ASBJ	15 (24.2%)
NASSP Bulletin	10 (16.1%)
HER	9 (14.5%)
AERJ	



**Table 7***Journals Read by Superintendents with Masters or Specialist Degree (n=128)*

Journal	Number (Percentage) of Participants Reading Each Journal
Educational Leadership	89 (69.5%)
School Administrator	80 (62.5%)
Education Week	56 (43.8%)
ASBJ	33 (25.8%)
NASSP Bulletin	29 (22.7%)
District Administration	9 (7.0%)
HER	8 (6.3%)
JEA	8 (6.3%)
PDK	8 (6.3%)
AERJ	7 (5.5%)
School Effectiveness and School Improvement	3 (2.3%)
The Learning Professional (Formerly: Journal of Staff Development)	3 (2.3%)
School CEO	3 (2.3%)
Other journals combined (n=32)	36 (28.15)
I do not frequently read educational leadership journals	15 (11.7%)

## Discussion

*Educational Leadership*, *School Administrator*, and *Education Week*, and *The American School Board Journal* were the top four publications read by all superintendents, male superintendents, female superintendents, superintendents with a doctoral degree, and superintendents with a masters or specialist degree; however, the order varied slightly among the groups.

While all demographics of superintendents in this study indicated they most often read *Educational Leadership*, one more female superintendent said she read *Education Week* when compared to *School Administrator*.

All four of these publications are editorial reviewed and except for *Education Week*, affiliated with a professional organization that superintendents may choose to join. *Educational Leadership* is a monthly member benefit of ASCD, *School Administrator* is a monthly member benefit of AASA, and *The American School Board Journal* is bi-monthly member benefit of the National School Board Association.

In addition, there were no notable differences in the top five publications read by superintendents with a doctorate degree when compared to those with a masters or specialist degree.

As Fusarelli (2008) noted, educational crisis management, administrivia, and the daily



writing. If the primary goal of educational scholarship is to influence practice, to grow the knowledge in the field of educational leadership, and bridge the gap between

scholars and practitioners, then publications should be prioritized where practitioners indicate they are most frequently reading.

### **Author Biographies**

Matt Townsley is an assistant professor of educational leadership at University of Northern Iowa. In addition to his educational leadership research, he is co-author of *Making Grades Matter: Standards-based Grading in a Secondary PLC at Work*, published by Solution Tree, 2020. E-mail: matt.townsley@uni.edu



