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## First African-American Female School Superintendent in Georgia: Reflections from the Field to the Forefront

Lisa Nicole Herring

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THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT IN  
GEORGIA:

REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD TO THE FOREFRONT

by

LISA NICOLE HERRING

(Under the Direction of Meta Harris)

ABSTRACT

This inquiry explores the career pathway, career barriers and personal and professional experiences of Mrs. Beauty Poole Baldwin, the first, African-American female school superintendent in the state of Georgia. This study emerged from the discovery of limited research on African-American female school superintendents in the United States. I video recorded an in-depth interview with Mrs. Beauty Poole Baldwin, Georgia's first African-American female superintendent. The purpose of this inquiry was to gain information from Mrs. Baldwin about career strategies that she used throughout her professional career, and recommendations from her, to other African-American women aspiring to become educational leaders. Mrs. Baldwin's experiences provided several recommendations in the field of educational leadership. Issues regarding interpersonal relationships in the community and workplace, securing a mentor, educational preparedness of educators, work ethics and career decision making strategies were discovered through the in-depth interview. The relevance of the findings reported,

surpass gender and race, and emerge as information useful for all educators and aspiring educational leaders.

The in-depth interview was video-recorded to provide the opportunity for a thorough analysis of the data. The video recording allowed me to refer back to the original data for clarification, and to capture the essence in which Mrs. Baldwin shared her story. Mrs. Beauty Baldwin was also available for additional clarification beyond the video-recording, by way of telephone or electronic communication. The ability to revisit the research participant, and to have open access to review the video-recorded interview, were critical to the process of securing accurate historical data regarding the development of how the first black woman superintendent in the state of Georgia advanced to her position. Mrs. Baldwin became the superintendent of the Buford City School District in Gwinnett County, Georgia on February 14, 1984. Her tenure as superintendent lasted for ten years. The life of Beauty Baldwin is a testament to the possibility of what can be accomplished for African-American women educators and educators at-large.

**INDEX WORDS:** Women superintendents, African-American women, educational leaders, women educators, Georgia educators

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GEORGIA:

REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD TO THE FOREFRONT

by

LISA NICOLE HERRING

B.A., Spelman College, 1994

M.ED., University of South Carolina, 1999

ED. S., University of South Carolina, 1999

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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LISA NICOLE HERRING

Major Professor: Meta Harris  
Committee: Ming Fang He  
F. Erik Brooks

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## DEDICATION

This body of research is dedicated to the women warriors, trailblazers and pioneers who have paved the way, knowingly and unknowingly. To my mother, Lena Jordan Herring, who has always told and taught me to reach for the sun, I Love You. To my grandmothers, Ocie Brewington Jordan (deceased) and Ruth Butler Herring, thank you for the power of your prayers and the wisdom of your journey.

To the men who inspire me everyday to see the strength and purpose for their creation, my father, who is the best model of servant leadership; Reverend Wallace Bryant Herring, Sr., I Love You; my brothers, Wallace Jr., John, and Moses, thank you for your laughter, guidance, support and strength. Grandpa John Thomas Jordan, Sr., sharecropper, elder and family patriarch, you are the smartest man we all know! Thank you for your laughter, wisdom, oral histories and love throughout the years.

To my very own woman warrior in the making, Imani Walena Herring, you are my inspiration and the legacy that will change the world. Thank you for your patience and understanding throughout this process. You are my eternal cheerleader, and I will always be yours. Mommy will always be thankful for your spirit, your joy, and your sunshine... **I Love You, *Butterfly!***

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Context of Study

For years, women across the world have broken new ground as “trailblazers,” “legacy builders” and “pioneers” in numerous areas of social change, political advocacy, world peace, and education (King, 2006). Women leaders, who have shaped the face and destiny of our world, have done so with sacrificial efforts and selfless commitment. As these women leaders shared the history and stories behind their journey towards service, many have declared that they were “called,” some “appointed” and others “placed” in positions that, in a single moment in time, challenged them to make decisions that would open a pathway of promise for the numerous women, known and unknown, who would follow in their footsteps (Alexander, 1999).

History, in education and the evolution of the struggles and challenges of women educators, specifically indicates that this ‘calling’ and ‘placing’ has been especially true for African-American women. African-American women, who have served as educational leaders, acknowledge this ‘calling’ in the stories they tell. Women educational leaders such as Maria W. Stewart, Sarah “Sadie” Delaney, and Mary Jane McLeod Bethune were pioneers who modeled very early the sacrifice, commitment, and labor associated with dedicating oneself to the development of a society through education (Delaney, Delaney, & Hearsh, 1993; King, 2006; Alexander, 1999).

“O ye daughters of Africa, awake! Awake! Arise!” (King, 2006) wrote Maria W. Stewart, who believed the salvation of black Americans could be attained best through education. “No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the

world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties.” Stewart has been chronicled as the first African-American public education advocate. Stewart’s dream of creating a powerful, educated populace was possible through the combined efforts of women pooling their earning, or uniting in raising money to build high schools. Ultimately, her objective was to develop generations of girls and boys whose knowledge would surpass their parents’ knowledge; furthermore, Stewart believed women had a special role in this endeavor (King, 2006).

Maria Stewart (1803-1879) was the first American-born woman to break the social taboo of women publicly speaking before a crowd of men and women, especially on political issues. Some 20 years before Sojourner Truth asked, "Ain't I a woman? ," Stewart questioned a Boston audience, "What if I am a woman?" noting the fact that white women have been honored and acknowledged for their wisdom and achievement while her own people went unrecognized. Her speeches were published in William Lloyd Garrison's Liberator and she published her own political pamphlets. Stewart was an advocate of black self-determination and independence from whites (Benefield, 1999).

Celebrated educator, Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), and known best for her national and international efforts to empower both African-Americans and America at large through education, founder of Bethune-Cookman College, is noted as identifying her passion to serve as an educator very early in life through a “calling.” At every opportunity, Mary Jane pestered her parents to send her to school. She yearned to read and write; she felt the Lord had given her an inquisitive, ambitious nature because He intended for her to use it to help blacks (Alexander, 1999). "Mrs. Bethune" was the *ne plus ultra* of black womanhood for young black women who came of age in the 1950s

and early 1960s. With that shock of snow white hair above her impeccable dress suits, she was a fascinating mixture: a wife and mother, a "race woman," and a highly successful career woman. She managed to embody all the Victorian virtues so admired by our mothers while also embracing thoroughly modern values in education in her career choices and in her tireless political activism (Hamilton, 2004).

Emerging as well from humble beginnings, Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin (March 9, 1942), has penciled her way into the history books of America, by becoming the first African-American female school superintendent in the state of Georgia. In her early years, Beauty recognized her fascination with the power of mathematics, a young Beauty Poole (Baldwin) felt the "call" of education. Her life journey, which led her to writing another chapter in the history books for African-American women, is also one that reinforces this "calling."

The past has provided examples of African-American women educators who set the path for leadership in education, and there continues to emerge African-American women leaders in present day, who carry on the tradition of breaking barriers and opening doors for the aspiring educational leaders of the future. The aspirations of such women have led to what some might consider the highest position in public education, the role of the school superintendent. In 2006, America identified educational leaders in many capacities: principals, heads of schools, district office administrators, and superintendents. It is, however, the role of the superintendent that best captures the highest level of leadership within a local school system. For many women, however, the road to the superintendency is extremely difficult (Brunner, 1999). Members of minority groups are rarer than women in holding public school administration positions. At the

four surveyed levels- superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal and assistant principal- the breakdown is as follows: 6.5 percent of the nation's superintendents, 17.3 percent of the assistant superintendents, 20.6 percent of the principals, and 28.5 percent of the assistant principals are individuals from racial or ethnic minority groups (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999).

As educational leadership positions continue to emerge in the United States, many women leaders have become eligible candidates for the position of public school superintendent (Wilmer, 2006). The continued growth of school systems across the United States generates an increase in the number of administrative positions at the school district level. Current data for the state of Georgia indicates an increase in the number of female superintendents from the Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2006 (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006). The available literature on female superintendents provides limited information on leadership practices, career experiences, personal challenges, and mentoring practices encountered by women, while securing the superintendency. There is limited data on national statistics regarding female superintendents. This research intends to add to that body of literature.

#### Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the historical experiences of Georgia's first, African-American, female superintendent, Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin. This research will identify the professional and personal experiences during her tenure as superintendent. The researcher will juxtapose the data collected with the current research on patterns and trends identified for African-American women who aspire or hold the superintendency in the United States.



There is a need to explore current data on current female superintendents' career paths, due to the limited national resource on current data of female superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1999b). The focus of the research is to explore the perception of roles and responsibilities and access to the superintendency, as narrated by Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, Georgia's first African-American female superintendent. This research will also investigate the various professional experiences along the journey to the superintendency of the participant and assess the data that reflects the current numbers of women and black women who are superintendents in the state of Georgia.

Public school districts across America have experienced slight growth in the number of women administrators at the district office level; however, they do not reach the superintendency. The roles of the twenty first- century leaders of public school systems at the central office level are being filled by a significant number of females, from executive directors and directors of various programs, to superintendents and associate superintendents. However, contrary to the growth of female central office level administrators, there are still fewer women, than men, who hold the title of school district superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2005)

In the United States, we lack a reliable, uniform, nationwide database that defines just how many women are school administrators and at what levels (Shakeshaft, 1999a). The misconception regarding the number of women who are educational administrators might easily be assumed. Studies have shown that search consultants rely heavily on a network of friends, professional associates, and associations to develop a field of candidates to present to boards of education for consideration (Shakeshaft & Kamler, 1999).

Individual states have been more effective in identifying specific data relevant to the growth of female superintendents. In July 1991, for the state of Georgia, the Georgia General Assembly created the Georgia Professional Standards Commission to assume full responsibility for the certification, preparation, and conduct of certified, licensed, or permitted personnel employed in the public schools of the State of Georgia. The Commission is also responsible for the development and administration of teacher certification testing. In 1999, the Georgia Teaching force Center was placed in the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for administration purposes. The Teaching Force Center is one component of the Georgia P-16 Council's Title II Plan for having a Qualified Teacher in every Classroom in Georgia by 2006

(<http://www.gapsc.com/AboutPSC/AboutUs.asp>). One of the primary functions of Georgia's Teaching Force Center is to provide data to drive the efforts towards the attainment of the stated objectives of Balancing Teacher Supply and Demand, Decreasing Teacher Attrition, and Ending Out-of-Field Teaching

([http://www.gapsc.com/Workforce/Data\\_research.asp](http://www.gapsc.com/Workforce/Data_research.asp)).

The 2006 Georgia Teaching Workforce report indicated that in FY06 (Fiscal Year 2006), the number of superintendents declined from 180 to 177. This decline indicated that some school systems had a superintendent vacancy. Superintendents' average age in FY06 was 54.7 years, while their average experience was 28.1 years. In FY06, 76.8% of superintendents were reported as being 51 years or older, while 79.1% were reported as having 25 years or more experience. This shows that a high percentage of individuals in this group may also be eligible for retirement in the very near future (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006).

In FY06, most superintendents were white (85.9%), male (71.8%) and held either an Education Specialist (49.2%) or a Doctorate degree (44.6%). Although males account for almost three-quarters (71.8%) of the superintendents, the number and percentage of female superintendents has continued to steadily increase since FY02, reaching 50 in FY06. The number of black superintendents declined in FY06 to 24 (13.6%) from 29 (16.1%) in FY05. There was one Native American Indian superintendent in FY06 (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006).

The emergence of women leaders in public education, beyond the classroom and beyond the principal's door, has surfaced as a topic warranting research and evaluation. Although the status of women has improved remarkably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many societies, women continue to lack access to power and leadership compared with men (Eagly & Johanneson-Schmidt, 2001). The challenges that women now face in pursuing administrative roles, beyond the school building, are centered around a multitude of issues. The reasons why women do not become school administrators can be explained by understanding that women are not valued as much as men and that this bias results in negative attitudes and practices toward women aspiring to be administrators (Shakeshaft, 1987).

### Research Questions

The overarching question of the research was this: What were the specific issues relevant to the career pathway, career barriers and personal experiences of Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, regarding significant professional experiences encountered as the first, African-American, female superintendent in the state of Georgia?

The sub questions for the research are as follows:

1. How have barriers and obstacles influenced the first black woman superintendent in Georgia on her career path to the superintendency?
2. What is the role of the mentorship in the career path to the superintendency of the first black woman superintendent in Georgia?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the access to the superintendency as the first African-American female superintendent and the perceived level of access for current African-American women who aspire for the superintendency?

#### Autobiographical Roots of the Study

I began my journey as an educator with a personal belief that education is the one common thread, which weaves a solid connection between potential, promise and destiny, for all people. I have been privileged to work in education as a teacher, counselor, and district office administrator. I have often pondered over what would be the next career move for my future, as an educational administrator. Much like my foremothers, I have experienced my own “calling” to serve others and empower learning in my community. In the process of considering future career moves, several factors are key issues in the equation: my extended family, my child, leadership style, and the acceptance and perceptions of colleagues and the community. To aspire for the role of school superintendent also requires consideration for sacrifice, commitment, and criticism. Particularly as a woman of color, certain barriers serve as even greater factors towards leadership, support and access.

Since women educators commit more and more to the pursuit of the superintendency, questions surrounding their barriers, personal challenges and

professional support warrant research. The increase in the number of women and African-American women superintendents in the state of Georgia, challenges me to decide if this will be a part of my own professional destiny. Regarding my own professional experiences and aspirations, for every career decision that I make, many outside factors are essential contributors to the final decision. My experiences serve as an influence to conduct an inquiry into the challenges that I have encountered and compel me to inquire about the barriers that women must face when deciding to become a superintendent. As a Georgia native, growing up in the public school system played a significant role in the development of my professional life. It was during my high school years that I was given the opportunity to experience the role of a public servant. Several academic accolades, which led to national recognition for me and for my school system, led to a more intimate involvement with public relations on behalf of the school system, through the invitation of the school superintendent of that time period. My school superintendent (a seasoned, white male) would personally call on me to represent our school system in community gatherings and at stakeholder forums. As an articulate, bright, African-American student, my superintendent would often allow me to speak and present publicly, on behalf of our school system, as a student who was “living proof” of the benefit of public education.

My professional experiences have extended from the opportunity to work in a large, metropolitan, urban school district and currently in a medium sized urban school district, which is also my hometown. These career experiences have afforded me access to the more intimate functions and responsibilities of senior level administrators. Because it is not a common practice for most to be privy to the intricate workings of public school

systems, having access to such experiences provided further insight into the process, power and prestige of school superintendents and their work experiences.

I find that so much of what I am and who I am becoming, began with my public school experiences as a student. As I aspire for other positions, I am cognizant of the different gender and cultural make up of public school systems. I find myself surrounded by women working at the district level who hold administrative positions, yet very few serving as superintendents. In the progression of this research, I have sought the experiences, professional journey and personal reflections of Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, the first African-American female superintendent in the state of Georgia.

#### Preliminary Literature Review

The literature review will examine the current literature on access to and securing the role of Superintendent by women and African-American women across the United States. The researcher will also identify the historical archives of women superintendents in the state of Georgia. The researcher will review a large body of research to identify current trends regarding women leadership and administration, career pathways of women superintendents, career barriers and leadership styles of women superintendents, and women educators mentoring other women administrators.

#### Historical Perspective

Early in the twentieth century, ambitious women seeking school leadership positions briefly enjoyed broad-based and enthusiastic support from a powerful emerging political constituency of women. Suffrage activism and the larger women's movement effectively propelled women into school leadership positions. During these years, hundreds of women waged successful campaigns for superintendencies, and by 1930,

women accounted for nearly 28 percent of county superintendents and 11 percent of all superintendents nationwide. Activists such as Ella Flagg Young, the superintendent of Chicago schools from 1909 to 1915, hoped that women would eventually dominate school leadership, just as they had teaching (Blount, 1999).

### Women's Career Pathway, Barriers and Mobility

The focus of leadership research and its relationship to gender has often been on equal opportunities or the comparison of leadership styles of women and men (Davidson & Burke, 2000). In his text, the author, Peter G. Northouse (2003) asserts that the essential questions that have emerged surrounding women in leadership are the following: Can women be leaders? Is there a difference between the leadership styles of men and women? Why are there so few women in the top educational leadership positions, such as the superintendency?

According to research, in 2002, women filled 15.7% of corporate office positions (Catalyst, 2002). Although women hold more than half of the administrative positions in school districts' central offices, the traditional area from which superintendents are drawn (Curphey, 2003), these women are not being groomed or tapped for the superintendency. Internationally, the teaching profession tends to be numerically dominated by women, but in most countries, women do not occupy a commensurate proportion of senior leadership and management roles (Coleman, 2001). In a study conducted to identify factors that influence teachers' aspirations for the role of the principal, the research indicated that as men wanted leadership experiences so that they could understand the skills and experiences required by the principal, women on the other hand, wanted access to leadership experiences so that they could prove their leadership skills (Lacey, 2001). This

is indicative of the challenge that women must “prove” that they are both worthy and capable of superintendency, whereas men appear to focus on simply sharpening their skills.

Based on the information made available in the most recent research, there is a lack of sufficient data regarding statistical calculations and updates on women in educational leadership. A recommendation for additional studies, statistical data and a survey of leadership practices of women administrators is suggested by the researcher. Additionally, strategies and practices to mentor and empower future women leaders are also recommended.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

This research examined the historical and current career patterns and challenges of women who have successfully secured the role of school superintendent, focusing specifically on women of color and African-American women superintendents. Data was collected through individual interviews and ethnographic representation (narrative inquiry). The purpose of this study is to closely examine the life and experiences of an African-American female superintendent in the state of Georgia.

Before starting the process of collecting data, I conducted a review of the literature focusing on four bodies of literature: (1) women pioneers in educational leadership, (2) women's career pathways, barriers and mobility (3) leadership style, (4) professional advancement, (5) current trends in women securing the superintendency, (6) Networking and Mentoring, and (7) African-American women and the superintendency. This review provided a more detailed examination of the evolution of the female superintendent, from several perspectives that were relevant to this body of research.

#### Women Pioneers in Educational Leadership

Pioneer educator, Sarah "Sadie" Delaney recalls how she strategically "placed" herself for promotion in the joint autobiography of her life and the life of her sister Dr. Bessie Delaney in *The Delaney Sisters: The First One Hundred Years*. In *The Delaney Sisters* (1993) Sarah Delaney shares:

I wanted to teach at a high school because it was considered a promotion, and it paid better. But I had to be a little clever to find ways to get around these brick walls they set up for colored folks. So I asked around quietly

for some advice. A friend of my brother Hubert's, who worked for the Board of Education, suggested a plan, which I followed. This is what I did: I applied for a high school position, and when I reached the top of the seniority list after three years, I received a letter in the mail saying they wished to meet with me in person. At the appointment, they would have seen I was colored and found some excuse to bounce me down the list. So I skipped the appointment and sent them a letter, acting like there was a mix-up. Then I just showed up on the first day of classes. It was risky, but I knew what a bureaucracy it was, and that in a bureaucracy it's easier to keep people out than to push them back down. Child, when I showed up that day-at Theodore Roosevelt High School, a white school-they just about died when they saw me. A colored woman! But my name was on the list to teach there, and it was too late for them to send me someplace else. The plan had worked! Once I was in, they couldn't figure out how to get rid of me. So I became the first colored teacher in the New York City system to teach domestic science on the high school level. I spent the rest of my career teaching at excellent high schools. (p.137)

As school districts began hiring women teachers in the mid-nineteenth century, women's suffrage advocates discovered important new strategies for leveraging their right to vote. First, women's increasing property ownership opened the possibility for suffrage. Because women teachers earned salaries, low as they may have been, and because women teachers usually were single, they sometimes possessed their own property. Property owners were entitled to vote; therefore, women teachers who owned

property were thought to need suffrage (Phelps, 1912). Turn-of-the century women's activist drew much of their strength from and centered many of their aspirations on education. Education helped them prepare for greater roles in public work. Educated women created a profession for themselves, once complete with positions of public power and influence, such as the elected school superintendency. As women increasingly won superintendencies, therefore displacing men--some of whom were quite powerful in organized superintendency associations--the move to make the superintendency an appointed position quietly gained support (Blount, 1998).

It was during the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century that strong women activists worked diligently and continuously to influence political support of women's' right to vote. Their work was not easy, by any means. It called for political and cultural change. Because there was such a strong resistance to supporting women's' right to vote, their access to voting equity did not occur without four decades of persistent lobbying and persuasive efforts by dedicated women. They achieved their goal with the Nineteenth Amendment. The right to vote was anything but easy. The efforts of these strong women continue to guide our twenty-first-century efforts to insist that all citizens have equal rights and experience social justice in our pluralistic culture (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Since the rise of the modern women's movement, women have used the political and legal systems to fight for some measure of access to power in public schools, at least to the extent that power is inherent in positions of school administration; yet women's representation in these positions is still far short of their proportion in the teaching force (Blount, 1998).

### Career Pathways, Barriers and Mobility

It is the gender factor for women—gender prejudice, gender structuring—that influences what the national profile is for women in the school superintendency. Gender is the inherent and ever-present barrier. Whether it is extending efforts to acquire quality preparation, gain experience, move up the hierarchy, or serve as a school superintendent, the barrier for women *is* gender. The research on women’s leadership of school districts during the past two decades provides testimony to the male-dominated profession and to the differential treatment of women who occupy the CEO’s chair in a school district. In U.S. public schools, women are the teacher workforce; men occupy nearly all leadership positions (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Beyond individual aspirations, the societal context and sex-differentiated opportunity structures within educational organizations also help explain the scarcity of women and persons of color in the superintendency (Tallerico, 1999). Educational professionals who are or have been public school superintendents will confirm that there are barriers to accessing and entering the position of school superintendent and, for women, they are likely to be ever present. They also will confirm that the superintendent’s job is very complex and continuously requires facing and addressing ever-present challenges. Successful superintendents effectively meet whatever challenges occur. The voices of current or former women school superintendents confirm what a number of research studies in the past two decades have found: being female increases the difficulty of successfully overcoming barriers and of successfully meeting challenges (Shakeshaft, 1987; Grogan, 1996; Blount, 1998; Brunner 1999).

Another factor that becomes a barrier for women is gaining the necessary experience at entry levels of leadership in public schools and then moving up the

hierarchy into school district leadership. Gaining experience is sometimes difficult for men as well, but it is particularly tough for women. Issues for women are career path, location of job, nature of the job, lack of mobility, interviewing and selection, and gender-structured systems (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). The typical woman administrator does not look like that of the typical male administrator, and the path she takes to achieve her position differs from male administrators as well. The literature on careers and career paths in administration does not fit the career path of women administrators (more specifically black women), primarily because the experiences used to define career and document career routes have come from men (Alston, 1999). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the superintendency is the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States (Glass et al., 2000). School administration programs now enroll more women than men, but there remains a comparatively low number of women employed as school leaders. These enrollment figures indicate that for women aspiration is not the issue; opportunity is. Barriers to women's advancement, not competence, are of primary concern when it comes to increasing women in school preparatory programs. Clearly gender prejudice is number one on the list of barriers (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Barriers that women face have been categorized as internal, external and andocentric. Internal barriers that have been identified are those historical and societal assumptions that pressure women to conform roles and behaviors traditionally associated with women. External barriers are those societal stereotypes and organizational structures that perpetuate discrimination against women, while androcentrism presupposes that women function as men and, therefore, should view the world from a male perspective (Green & Manera, 1995). Nationwide, the culture of

educational administration is dominated by white males and their professional orientations. The U.S. Department of Labor has described the superintendency as the most gender-stratified executive position in the country (Young & Skrla, 2003). And while the percentage of female superintendents rose from 6.6 percent in 1992 to nearly 14 percent in 2000, the disparity between male and female superintendents is disheartening, especially since approximately 73 percent of teachers are female. According to the American Association of School Administrators, the lack of female superintendents is a major issue, particularly in light of the fact that school boards increasingly receive fewer and fewer applications from women when a position opens (Vail, 2001). With more than 50 percent of graduates in educational administration doctoral programs being women, it appears that something about the job or the hiring process must be eliminating female candidates (Witmer, 2006).

### Leadership Style

Leadership style is determined by deep seated values and beliefs about how people learn (Goldman, 1998). Current research indicates that women, who work in the role of educational leaders, perceive themselves as leaders and are conscious of the tension between their sex and their power role (Coleman, 2003). A transformational leadership style may be especially congenial to women because this way of leading is relatively androgynous and involves aspects of nurturing, which is considered to be a feminine trait. A considerable body of research has shown that women can be disliked and distrusted in leadership roles, especially when they exert authority over men, appear to be extremely competent or use a dominant style of communication (Brunner, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1999b; Brunner, 2000). Another component key to the success of the

transformational leader is the recognition of the need to share power with all members of the organization (Furin, 2004).

The major difference in leadership styles between women and men is that, in general, women are caring and nurturing. Translating this style to a leadership style, we find that women are more likely to listen to others and to show respect for the views of the individual. Thus, females are viewed to be more democratic and participative than men (Witmer, 2006). Transformational leaders make an attempt to change values in order to reflect a higher standard of fairness and justice. The transformational style involves active and emotional relationships between leaders and followers, and may lessen suspicion of female leaders, and alleviate problems of lesser authority and legitimacy, that these women superintendents face (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001). Based on strong attachment between the leader and followers, a transformational leader seeks to transform followers' personal values and self-concepts so that they (the followers) can broaden and elevate their needs and aspirations to focus and achieve higher levels of needs and potential. This high level of value alignment between the leader and the subordinates is what makes the impact that transformational leaders have on their subordinate's intrinsic motivation stronger than other leadership styles (Jung, 2001).

To better understand the steps needed for effective leadership, it is imperative to define leadership in the context of educational leadership in today's society. Peter G. Northouse, in his text, Leadership Theory and Practice, defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal." To examine leadership from an educational perspective, it is necessary to also consider leadership with varying levels of effectiveness. Schools, as learning organizations,

present educators with numerous opportunities. Those who take advantage of the opportunities will find themselves involved in a process that strengthens learning for students as well as adults. There must be resources available for building the capacity of women to lead transformation so that organizations can be responsive to needs that arise at critical moments (Antrobus, 2000).

Women who have broken through the glass ceiling have found that effective leaders do not come from one mold. In the past, female leaders have modeled their leadership styles after successful male managers. However, successful women often describe their leadership styles as transformational-getting workers to transform or subordinate their individual self interests into group consensus-directed goal toward a broader organizational goal (Crampton & Mishra, 1999). This leadership style attributes power to personal characteristics such as charisma, personal contacts, and interpersonal skills rather than to the organizational structure (Harper & Hirokawa, 1988).

#### Professional Advancement

People are self-conscious as they speak out about inequality, because people cannot take for granted that others share their views on matters of inequality, except perhaps within their own circle, and even then, matters of inequality often are debated passionately (Chase, 1995). Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt (2001) argue that in situations in which women are in male dominated organizations or roles, women tend to abandon behaviors that are seen as feminine. Women spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more than men do (Shakeshaft & Perry, 1995). Women working in male dominated industries have attracted attention less because of the



potential effects on leadership style, but more because of other perceived negative consequences (Tiggemann, 1999). Leadership has traditionally been construed as a masculine enterprise with special challenges and pitfalls for women. This perception raises the very interesting question of how women lead (Carli & Eagly, 2001).

Strong consideration for advancing women in educational administration should be given by veteran female administrators. One consideration for expanding opportunities for women in administrative roles in school districts is consideration for veteran women administrators to mentor future women administrators. Literature since 1980 has shifted emphasis from explanations for under representation of women in educational administration to a need for better support systems (Swiderski, 1988).

Since the 1970's, the "glass ceiling" has been persistently challenged by a range of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination measures. One of the main goals of Western feminism has been to open the top levels of public administration and politics to women, and progress on this count has become the most visible symbol of gender reform across society. Change has certainly occurred, but the results have been modest (Connell, 2006). Specific consideration towards the transition and empowerment of women into educational administration roles is always developing. Transition methods such as mentoring, recruiting and effectively informing potential women leaders should be considered women administrators. This attention to mentoring, role models and networks for women is one plausible explanation for the greater number of women preparing for these positions. Mentorships and responsible internship placements assist women with the transition into school administration and continue to be important (Logan, 1998). Women need not stand alone in their efforts to enhance or level their status; rather,

organizational agents can provide supports to facilitate women's effectiveness (Yoder, 2001). Several other considerations for assisting with the transition into educational administration have also been practiced. A noticeable increase in the percentage of women faculty in university preparation programs has been an encouraging influence for women to become educational administrators (Logan, 1998). A convergence of school reform, supply and demand for administrators, and societal changes enhances opportunities for more women to become school administrators (Logan, 1998). A need for continued research on women's leadership styles in education, specifically at the district level in public schools, is warranted best by the continued growth in enrollment and development of schools in public schools systems across the country. It is possible that leaders in education and in the public sector, generally, are more likely to operate as "people orientated" compared to leaders and managers in the private sector (Coleman, 2001).

Certain attitudes and leadership behaviors, specifically attributed to female leaders, are particularly effective in building leadership capacity, developing community, and in bringing about the type of systemic change necessary to transform an exclusively-oriented system (Irby & Brown, 2004). Further investigation into the leadership practices of women, as perceived by the individuals they lead, may assist in understanding the pattern of today's society. Women assuming leadership positions are confronted with the realities of their position as outsiders in an androcentric culture (Tripses, 2004). As research continues to suggest that the number of certified women administrators is increasing, further research is needed in order to investigate an accurate perception of the number of female, district level administrators. In the interim, consideration for the

execution of more creative ways of reaching out to aspiring female existing female leaders might serve as an option. Authenticity, respect, empathy and communication skills have key roles to play for educational administration and management (Tsui Yee Yeung, 2000). Attributes such as these could possibly enhance the public perception of female leaders.

### Current Trends in Securing the Superintendency

The U.S. Department of Labor has described the superintendency as the most gender-stratified executive position in the county (Young & Skrla, 2003). And while the percentage of female superintendents rose from 6.6 percent in 1992 to nearly 14 percent in 2000, the disparity between male and female superintendents is disheartening, especially since approximately 73 percent of teachers are female. According to the American Association of School Administrators, the lack of female superintendents is a major issue, particularly in light of the fact that school boards increasingly receive fewer and fewer applications from women when a position opens (Vail, 2001). With more than 50 percent of graduates in educational administration doctoral programs being women, something about the job or the hiring process must be eliminating female candidates (Witmer, 2006). Although few individuals preparing to enter the education profession intend to become a superintendent, data identified two distinct career paths. The most common path traveled by superintendents (48.5%) was from teacher to assistant principal or principal to central office administrator to superintendent. This career path is most prevalent among superintendents in districts serving more than 25,000 students and in districts with 3,000 to 24,999 students. The next most common route followed by aspiring superintendents (31.2%) was that from teacher to assistant principal or principal

to superintendent. This pattern appears to be the most common in districts serving fewer than 2,999 students as well as in very small school districts with fewer than 300 students (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2005). By 1992, the number of women in the superintendency increased to 6.6% and then moved to 13.2% by 2000—the highest level achieved during the past 90 years (Glass et al., 2000). The majority (68%) of women superintendents held positions in rural or suburban districts serving fewer than 2,999 students. The greatest gains for women in the superintendency between the years 1992-2000 were in suburban or urban districts serving between 3,000-24,999 students, increasing from 5% to 14%. Growth in the percentage of women in the superintendency over the past several decades might emanate from the growing consciousness for ensuring equitable treatment in search and selection processes (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2005). Both Tallerico (2000) and Shakeshaft and Kamler (1999) note that when search consultants are proactive in recruiting women, help to educate boards of education about their strengths as district leaders, and advocate for fair search and selection processes, a greater number of women are hired as CEOs. In addition, women who aspire to the superintendency are part of university professor, superintendent, and board of education networks; they are more likely to learn about district vacancies (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2005).

Even before the job-screening process begins, school boards usually show little initiative in identifying talented female applicants. Groups and associations that might be able to recommend potential women candidates are not consulted. Instead, school boards rely heavily on the services of executive head hunters to identify candidates for superintendencies. In recent years, though, slightly greater numbers of women and persons of color have been appointed to superintendencies of large urban school systems;

but arguably, some of these systems are economically distressed and plagued with a host of problems (Blount, 1998).

### Networking and Mentoring

Prior to the coining of *network* as a term to define a support system and a means of connection to others, there was the phrase “*old boy’s club*” (OBC). While the meaning of both networking and old boy’s club is similar, networking encompasses a broader concept than OBC, because as a network it is not limited in definition to a male support system. The drive for these connections suggests a fuller experience of mutuality, not just taking and using, but giving and being present in ways that enable all parties involved to come to know, trust and support one another. Networking is important to an aspiring administrator because, regardless of who is doing the networking, the process of that interaction will affect the administrator. If you are not a part of it, you risk being isolated from informal channels of what is happening, who’s doing what, and where the job openings are going to be—information not generally known by those not in the loop (Witmer, 2006). Networks offer women a constructive way of dealing with frustration, of sharing their feelings about their work, and/or providing encouragement. In essence, they are supporting each other as they advance in their careers (Crampton & Mishra, 1999).

Mentoring is defined as guidance, training, support and one-on-one counseling that can be both formal and informal. The term mentor has its origins in Homer’s epic poem, *The Odyssey*, in which Odysseus entrusted the education of his son Telemachus to his trusted friend and counselor, Mentor. The term has continued to mean an older, more experienced guide who trains a younger, less experienced newcomer in the ways of profession or business. Since the entry of ever increasing numbers of women into the

ranks of aspiring managers and administrators, mentoring has become more of an issue and in some organizations, more formalized. Administrative positions have become much more competitive, and more aspirants are seeking an edge in the job market. Mentoring provides this edge. Further, mentors are found to be critical in the advancement of women. The practice of mentoring has been compounded by the fact that more men are mentors than women; it, therefore, follows that more men than women are being mentored because men are more likely to mentor men than they are to mentor women. In addition, even the few women, proportionately, who are in positions of power do not mentor as much or as often as men in comparable positions (Witmer, 2006). To use an old cliché, it is not always just a matter of what you know, but of whom you know and who knows you. It is often someone who is higher up in the organization, who possesses a wealth of experience, and who guides the protégé on how to survive and get ahead in the organization (Robbins, 1993).

#### African-American Women and the Superintendency

When women are hired as public school superintendents, it is likely to be in rural or small-town districts. Women of color can sometimes become superintendents in urban school districts where failure has permeated the culture. Both are tough places for women. In rural districts, for example, the superintendent is often the only central office administrator and must function in a variety of roles ranging from transportation director to buildings and grounds manager and director of curriculum and instruction (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). In 1937, four funds that were established to provide money for the education of destitute children, African-American children, and African-American master teachers were merged to form the SEF. The history of African-American female

superintendents is deeply grounded in the heart of the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) which was created in 1937. With the ending of the Civil War and provisions made for educating the children of freed slaves, there was concern on the part of many white Northerners who viewed education as the vehicle for not only industrial development, but also as a reuniting tool for our country (Alston & Jones, 2002). The Negro Rural School Fund (1907) was created by Anna T. Jeanes and the monies provided support for African-American master teachers called Jeanes Supervisors (teachers) who assisted rural Southern schools. An analysis of Jeanes Supervisors (teachers) shows that for 60 years, these teachers traveled to rural areas in the South that had high populations of minorities to provide education and other related services. Eighty percent of Jeanes Supervisors were women (Guthrie-Jordan, 1990). Between 1937 and 1950, the SEF devoted the majority of its resources to support Jeanes Supervisors. In addition, by the mid-1940's approximately 15% of Jeanes Supervisors held masters degrees (Easter, 1995). The Jeanes Supervisors were increasingly called upon to serve in administrative capacities as assistants to the county superintendent of schools (who were white males): they became essentially de facto superintendents (Jones, 1937; Dale, 1998).

In this new millennium, African-American female school superintendents are the quintessential servant leaders. As they have been viewed historically as the “messiah or scapegoat” for a school district (Scott, 1980), servant leadership has become their calling as a part of their philosophical and practical fiber. The 21<sup>st</sup> century African-American female school superintendent is a role model not only for her peers, but also for those who aspire to be leaders, for her staff, her community, and, most importantly, for her students (Alston & Jones, 2002).

Grogan and Brunner (2005) conducted a comprehensive nationwide study, commissioned by the American Association of School Administrators on women in the superintendency and women in central office administration positions. The study surveyed 2,500 women superintendents and 3,000 women in central office positions. Responses came from 723 superintendents and 472 central-office personnel — nearly 30 percent of the total population were women superintendents. Of those who participated in the 2003 study, 8 percent identified themselves as superintendents of color, compared to 7 percent of the women superintendents and 10 percent of the women in central-office positions who responded in the 2003 study. Grogan and Brunner (2005) also identified that African-American women do not obtain superintendencies as quickly as their white counterparts: 56 percent of African-American women were hired within the first year of actively seeking a superintendency compared with more than 70 percent of white aspirants. Moreover, 25 percent of African-American women report waiting five or more years to obtain the superintendency compared to only 8 percent of white women and 9 percent of white men. Most white women superintendents and women superintendents of color believe their boards hired them to be instructional leaders. Yet 8 percent of African-American women superintendents compared to 3 percent of white women believe they were hired to be community leaders as well. In addition, African-American women superintendents were twice as likely as white women to say they were hired as change agents and twice as likely as the general population of minority superintendents to say they were brought in to lead reform efforts. Women superintendents of color generally believed they shouldered the burden of having to prove themselves over and over. One commented, “A woman of color always has to do a better job. There is little room for



error. Her actions are watched and evaluated more closely.” Another shared, “The expectations are higher and the tools are not as available as for white counterparts.” (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Judy Alston (1999) identified the barriers and the supports that Black women experience in route to the superintendency. She found that women in her study ranked the following five factors as either a moderate or great barrier in their pursuit of the superintendency: (a) absence of “old-boy network” support systems, or sponsorship; (b) lack of awareness of political maneuvers; (c) lack of role models; (d) societal attitudes that blacks lack competency in leadership positions; and (e) no formal or informal method for identifying black aspirants to administrative positions. Alston also identified facilitators as follows: (a) those having positive working relationships with the school board, (b) those demonstrating solid teamwork with experienced, qualified staff and faculty, (c) those being accepted by non-black employers, (d) those showing confidence in personal and professional capabilities, (e) those providing a mentor or sponsor, and (f) those accepted by black administrators and teachers.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher's purpose for this study was to identify and explore the professional experiences and personal accounts of Georgia's first African-American female school superintendent, Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin. Although the primary focus was on the ascent to the Superintendency, the researcher also focused on the career pathway of the first African-American female superintendent in the state of Georgia, as experienced by Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, former superintendent of Buford City Schools. The researcher, through narrative inquiry, reviewed the past experiences of participant to examine the educational experiences, assess the professional career barriers and solicit recommendations from the experiences of the participant as a reference for African-American female administrators aspiring for the superintendency.

The researcher studied and identified the history of female superintendents in the state of Georgia in an effort to determine the first African-American female superintendent. The researcher, through a qualitative approach that uses narrative inquiry, sought to secure real life experiences to make meaning and suggest professional strategies for aspiring female educators of color.

#### Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research that takes story as either its raw data or its product (Bleakley, 2005). Narrative has become so identified with stories, and stories have such a particular unique sense about them-often treated as things to be picked up, listened to, told, and generally rolled around as might roll marbles around-that narrative inquiry has, for some, become associated with story recording and telling

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrative process-making sense of experience and shaping self -understanding- is at once a personal and cultural endeavor. Like all narratives about the self, professional women's stories display the culture in which the women live. When professional women narrate their experiences of power and subjection, they draw on meaning systems, discourses that American culture provides for talking about professional achievement on the one hand and inequality on the other (Chase, 1995). A person's life story is an internalized and evolving narrative of the self that selective reconstructs the past and anticipates the future in such a way as to provide a life with an overall sense of coherence and purpose (Hooker & McAdams, 2003).

#### Research Questions

One participant was interviewed, videoed and tape recorded in an attempt to secure the personal experiences as an African-American female superintendent. Research questions served as the guide for the study. The research design was developed through a qualitative research method and focused on one overarching question and three research questions. Generally, no more than three to six guiding research questions are needed to structure a study (Piantanida & Garman, 1999).

The overarching question of the research was: What were the specific issues relevant to the career pathway, career barriers and personal experiences of Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, regarding significant professional experiences encountered as the first, African-American, female superintendent in the state of Georgia? The specific research questions were:

1. How have barriers and obstacles influenced the first black woman superintendent in Georgia on her career path to the superintendency?

2. What is the role of the mentorship in the career path to the superintendency of the first black woman superintendent in Georgia?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the access to the superintendency as the first African-American female superintendent and the perceived level of access for current African-American women who aspire for the superintendency?

### Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitative narrative inquiry. The researcher used in-depth interviewing to secure data on the participant's life story as narrated by the research participant. Useful in gathering large amounts of data quickly, in-depth interviews allow participants to construct their own stories from which meaning and ultimately data may be gathered (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Through the interview the researcher will explore the unique experiences revealed towards the individual journey to the superintendency as experienced by Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, Georgia's first African-American female superintendent of Buford City School District, Georgia, now retired. Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that in-depth interviewing is relied upon quite extensively by qualitative researchers and that in-depth interviews are much more like conversations with predetermined response categories.

In-depth interviewing is defined as "conversation with a specific purpose-a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant's perspective of self, life and experience and expressed in his or her own words (Minichiello et al., 1995). In qualitative research, in-depth interviewing is an egalitarian approach to

interviewing which develops research relationships and rapport with participants by focusing on the participant's experiences from their own perspective (Beale et al., 2004).

#### Data Collection Methods

The researcher, using narrative inquiry, collected stories of the participant. The researcher collected the stories through the process of in depth interviewing. The interview method is arguably the most common means of obtaining data in qualitative research. One of the most interesting, yet demanding aspects of interviewing is the relationship between the interviewer and the respondent. It is a dynamic relationship which develops as the interview process proceeds. It begins on the very first occasion where the two people interact and can change in many ways before the interview concludes (Keats, 2000). In preparing for an interview, investigators need to consider strategies which are likely to increase their ability to establish rapport (Payne, 1999). Rapport is a psychological state involving both emotions and cognitive processes. The emotional process relates to feelings of well-being, acceptance and lack of aggression; the cognitive relates evaluations and attributions which are favorable (Keats, 2000).

The researcher relied on an in-depth approach to interviewing, to establish a rapport with the research participant. The depth interview is a conversation in which the researcher encourages the informant to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem. The researcher is not bound by a rigid questionnaire designed to ensure that the same questions are asked of all respondents in exactly the same way. The degree of structure necessary to provide a framework in which the informant feels free to elaborate his/her ideas depends on the topic, the informant, and the personal style of the interviewer (Walker, 1985). For the purpose of the study, the

researcher constructed specific questions relevant to the life experiences of the participant. Payne (1999) suggests that the reliability of structured interviews is established via a number of strategies including; training of the interviewers to ensure comparability in question format and style or a formal interview schedule where questions tend to have fixed or limited choice responses.

Scholarly personal narrative, which has also been labeled autoethnography, or personal experience narratives, is used in research to “use your life experience to generalize to a larger group or culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2003). As academics, we must accept the indeterminate nature of narratives and the scholarly products based on them. Fully incorporating the interview in the research process entails making the analysis and scholarly product itself, part of the discussion. In such a discussion, women’s theorizing about their own lives must be identified and respected so that a dialogue between theorists can occur. This process requires flexibility and openness to dialogue, criticism, and disagreements (Ceballo, 1999).

#### Participant Selection

The researcher reviewed several bodies of literature on African-American women and their access to the position of school superintendent. In the process of the study, the researcher identified the first African-American female superintendent appointed in the state of Georgia. Upon further investigation, the researcher identified that Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, Georgia’s first African-American female superintendent had retired but was working as the principal of a private Christian academy in North Georgia. The researcher secured contact information for Mrs. Baldwin and called Mrs. Baldwin at the school where she serves as principal. The initial telephone conversation provided an introduction

of the researcher to the potential participant and background information about the potential study. The researcher contacted Mrs. Beauty Baldwin as instructed by the protocol of the university and requested the consent of Mrs. Baldwin to serve as the primary participant; Mrs. Baldwin agreed to serve as the research participant.

### Participant Interview

Several structured interviews were scheduled and performed by the researcher, after the research participant agreed with the protocol for informed consent. The location for the interviews was agreed upon by the researcher and research participant. Although Mrs. Beauty Baldwin is a retired Georgia school superintendent, she currently serves as the principal administrator for the private academy of her local church, Hopewell Christian Academy in Norcross, Georgia. The interviews were conducted in Mrs. Baldwin's private administrative office and administrator's conference room at Hopewell Christian Academy. The location provided for a private and comfortable location for both the participant and the researcher. The questions were designed to identify the life story of Mrs. Baldwin, to chronicle specific professional life events, and to identify personal and professional experiences that might attribute to the professional considerations of aspiring African-American educational administrators. The research interview included, but was not limited to the following questions:

- When and where were you born? (RQ1)
- What was your childhood like and how was education emphasized? (RQ1)
- Where did you complete your undergraduate and graduate work? (RQ1)
- What certifications and licenses do you hold? (RQ1)
- Who did you look up to locally and historically? (RQ2)

- Who were your heroes? (RQ2)
- Are you married? If so, when did you marry and did you have children?  
(RQ1)
- When did you decide to enter into education? (RQ2)
- What positions did you hold prior to becoming a superintendent? (RQ3)
- Did you actively seek the role of superintendent on your own? (RQ3)
- Who were key figures in guiding your career? (RQ2,RQ3)
- Did you have strong community support during your educational career?  
(RQ3)
- Describe the type of community that you served as a superintendent (political environment, socio-economic status, demographics, race, and educational status)? (RQ3)
- What was your leadership style during your tenure as superintendent? (RQ2)
- Who were your right-hand people? (RQ2,RQ3)
- Who were your foes? (RQ2,RQ3)
- What professional obstacles did you experience along your career path as a female superintendent and as a female superintendent of color? (RQ2,RQ3)
- What practices, if any, were used to identify and mentor aspiring female superintendents? (RQ2)
- Describe any career barriers you experienced that could have hindered your access to the superintendency? (RQ3)
- What strategies did you use to overcome your barriers? (RQ3)



- Were there any experiences that you encountered which made the superintendency more accessible? (RQ3)
- How has the role of superintendent impacted your reflections on women of color and their access to the superintendency? (RQ2,RQ3)
- What recommendations would you offer to women of color who aspire for the superintendency? (RQ2,RQ3)

#### Role of the Researcher

I am currently employed as the Director of Student Support Services in the Bibb County School System of Macon, Georgia. My responsibility as a central office administrator has provided several opportunities to work under the direct supervision of a school superintendent. I am currently employed in a mid-sized, urban school system that is under the leadership of a white female superintendent. Prior to my current position, I worked under the leadership of black male superintendents within a very large metropolitan school system in metro Atlanta. While working as a female, central office administrator, I have had the opportunity to see and hear the dynamics of leadership from the superintendent level from both men and women superintendents. As Georgia continues to have a gradual increase in the number of superintendents, I am specifically interested in the access to the superintendency for African-American women. In 1984, Beauty Baldwin was elected as the superintendent of schools for Buford City. During that time, the state of Georgia had 187 superintendents: seven of the superintendents were women and only one, Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin, was African-American. In 2006, although males accounted for almost three-quarters (71.8%) of the superintendents, the number and percentage of female superintendents has continued to steadily increase since 2002,

reaching 50 in 2006. The number of black superintendents declined in 2006 to 24 (13.6%) from 29 (16.1%) in 2005 (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006). As an African-American female central office administrator (aspiring to one day secure a superintendency), I maintain an invested interest in the access to the superintendency from the perspective of both gender and race. Upon identifying Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin through extensive research, it became clear to me that her life experiences would have a significant impact on aspiring African-American, male or female administrators, such as myself. The relevancy of her experiences was anticipated to impact educational leadership from a historical perspective and for professional relevance towards future trends and practices.

My role in the research process was to identify, contact and confirm the participation of Mrs. Beauty Baldwin, the first African-American superintendent in the state of Georgia. I encountered Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin eleven months prior to the conclusion of this study. Mrs. Baldwin very graciously agreed to serve as the primary participant in this research study. I maintained a limited amount of communication with Mrs. Baldwin to inform her of the process and protocol for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and to maintain familiarity with her until the official interview was conducted. Upon the receipt of the IRB approval, I established a calendar of dates to communicate with Mrs. Baldwin by telephone, electronic mail and for face-to-face interviews. I scheduled the date and time for the research to be conducted. I interviewed Mrs. Beauty Baldwin in order to secure the data and also established a follow-up interview to secure historical artifacts such as newspaper articles and to confirm accuracy in the dates and events, as chronicled in the initial interview.

Throughout the course of several interactions with Mrs. Baldwin, I felt, as the researcher, a significant attachment to the importance of the history of her life experiences. Beauty Baldwin's life experiences became more significant to both the research process and to the history of women educational administrators in Georgia and significant to the history of African-Americans. The researcher began to establish a tremendous respect for this body of information. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) address this role of the researcher by acknowledging that the way an interviewer acts, questions and responds in an interview shapes the relationship and, therefore, the ways participants respond and give accounts of their experiences. The more time that was devoted to the interview process with Mrs. Beauty Baldwin allowed for a more intense and in-depth revelation of data. Once the data was secured, the information was transcribed and presented in Chapter Four.

#### Data Management

The data that was collected during the research process were maintained in a secure location. The researcher and the dissertation committee chair were the only individuals who were allowed access to the data. The researcher used digital recording and videotapes to record the interview. The digital recorder and video documentation were all kept in one location. The researcher kept the video and digital recording in a secure location throughout the process of this research. The researcher was the only individual with access to the data. In-depth interviews are usually recorded and transcriptions of the tapes are generally analyzed individually, although in the context of concepts and categories developed in the analysis of earlier interviews (Walker, 1985). Tape recorders are important in this version of the narrative inquiry because the stories

are the target: we need to get them right; and if linguistic analysis can tell us about story construction, then getting the words right by using the tape (digital) recorder is important (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To insure accuracy, the researcher met with the research participant to review the content of the transcribed materials and to check for accuracy and consistency in the transcribed data.

The collection of significant artifacts was considered to be a key factor in securing data for this body of research. The researcher specifically requested significant photographs, newspaper articles, and any material that the participant considered important to be included in the research process. Viewing these documents in the context of a narrative inquiry constitutes something that might be called than archaeology of memory and meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

#### Data Analysis

The process of data analysis is moving from raw interviews to interpretations that are evidence based to guide the foundation for published reports (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In the proposed research study, the researcher compiled and reviewed the data presented by the telling of the life story of the research participant, Georgia's first African-American female school superintendent. Payne (1999) suggests two strategies to help establish validity in the qualitative research process: triangulation and respondent validation. Triangulation of data and methods implies that by using other techniques of data collection, such as diaries, observations or questionnaires, in addition to the qualitative interview, evidence can be accumulated about phenomena of interest. Respondent validation is another strategy which draws on the expertise of the participants in validating the data by returning it to them as final arbiters of the "truthfulness" of the

analysis. The researcher, after compiling the data, also confirmed the accurateness of the information gathered by following through with additional communication with the research participant. The ability to conduct a “good” interview is not only dependent upon asking the “right” questions but also involves careful listening. It may be helpful to conceptualize “listening” as an active rather than a passive process (Payne, 1999).

The need to accurately analyze the data that was compiled by the researcher required that a specific approach was used to appropriately identify historical events and significant memories and personal accounts. The researcher referred to the identification of “annals” and “chronicles” as a way to create a framework for analysis, as defined by Clandinin & Connelly (2000). Through the process of composing annals and chronicles, participants begin to recollect their experiences and to construct the outlines of a personal narrative. Annals and chronicles may be thought of as rudimentary shaping and narrating of personal and social histories. Annals may be referred to as a list of dates of memories, events, stories, and the like. Chronicles are the sequence of events in and around a particular topic or narrative thread of interest. The timeline (see timeline, Appendix C), and the annals and chronicles constructed in and around the time line are useful in writing narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

#### Data Representation

Conclusions were drawn by the researcher to make recommendations for future research. In Chapter I (Introduction), the readers were introduced to context of the study, research purpose, research questions, preview of literature review, significance of the study, and preview of the methodology. In Chapter II (Review of Literature) seven bodies of literature related to the researcher’s topic were reviewed: (1) Women Pioneers in

Educational Leadership, (2) Career Pathways, Barriers and Mobility, (3) Leadership Style, (4) Professional Advancement, (5) Current Trends in Securing the Superintendency, (6) Networking and Mentoring, and (7) African-American Women and the Superintendency. Chapter III (Methodology) explained the qualitative and methodological explanation for the researcher's research. In Chapter IV (Data Presentation) the researcher presented the data collected from the individual interview. Chapter V (Summary, Findings, Concerns, and Future Directions), the researcher presented the summary of the dissertation study that included the components of findings, concerns, recommendations for further research, and implications of the study.

### Summary

During the past four years of my professional career, I have had the opportunity to work in central office administration for two large school systems in the state of Georgia. Throughout my professional career, I continue to encounter a large number of women who have expressed an interest in higher level administrative positions, such as the superintendency; however, they have spoken of various barriers and experiences that have limited their access to the position of superintendent. There was one overarching question and three research questions used to guide this study. The researcher used the research question to develop a strategic inquiry into the experiences of the first African-American woman in Georgia to access the role of superintendent. The design the researcher used was qualitative. The qualitative study best accompanied the research investigation and allowed for the research participant to adequately respond and engage in the research process. The data collection used for the study was interview questions. The interview questions served as the instrument of the study. After receiving approval

from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University the researcher was allowed to conduct interviews.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE JOURNEY TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY

*“I never wanted to do anything but teach. Never. Never aspired to do anything else but teach. God just decided He wanted me to do these things. I didn’t aspire to be a superintendent. I didn’t aspire to be a principal. I am the world’s best teacher. That’s all I wanted to do.”*

(Beauty Baldwin, Interview, February 16, 2007)

The face-to-face interview with Mrs. Beauty Baldwin provided rich details of her life, and other significant events that eventually led to her acceptance of the position of superintendent for the Buford City School District in 1984. She became the first African-American woman superintendent in the state of Georgia. The following information came from interview sessions conducted by the researcher, with Mrs. Baldwin, on February 16 and March 13, 2007, telephone conversations, and electronic mail communications. Therefore, all quotes from Mrs. Baldwin, that are used in this chapter and Chapter V, are from those interviews, telephone calls and electronic mail communications, and will not have citations.

#### From the Cotton Fields to the Schoolhouse

During the 1930’s, African-Americans in South Georgia were employable in only a few capacities. Many African-Americans made their living by farming and sharecropping, in the rural areas of Georgia, particularly South Georgia. Sharecropping was an agricultural labor system that developed in Georgia, and throughout the South, during Reconstruction, and lasted until the mid-twentieth century. Under this arrangement, laborers with no land of their own, lived and worked on farm plots owned by their employers, and at the end of the season, the landowners paid the laborers a share of the crop. Thus the term, ‘sharecroppers.’ This exchange between the landowners and



the laborers was notorious for the chicanery that it allowed landowners, creditors, and cotton buyers to commit. In many cases, the sharecroppers were told that the amount of money they had made selling their crops, was not sufficient to settle the debts they had accrued during the year. In these cases, the sharecropping laborers were bound to the landowners for another season (Giesen, 2007). This cycle repeated year after year until sharecropping became illegal when minimum wages were federally mandated. The life of a sharecropper was one of hard work, long labor and economic sacrifice.

Beauty Poole (Baldwin) entered the world on March 9, 1942, the daughter of cotton sharecroppers in rural South Georgia. Beauty was born the second child of six children in Milledgeville, Georgia. Beauty and her siblings, four sisters and one brother, grew up in very humble beginnings. Growing up as the daughter of sharecroppers who were cotton farmers in Milledgeville, Georgia, Beauty acknowledges that she was from a poor family. Poverty consumed her family due to the lack of resources. Financial opportunities were rarely extended to cotton sharecroppers. Like many other African-American sharecropping families in the south in the 1940's, Beauty and her siblings assisted the family by working in the cotton fields. Despite the family not having much money, Beauty immediately recalled that there was always a surplus of other necessities in life. There was always more than enough love, and more than enough hope. Little did the Poole children know, during their humble beginnings, the prayers of their parents helped to get them through those challenging times.

Moreover, the necessity for the Poole children to work alongside their parents in the field provided more than just a contribution to the end-of-the-year crop settlement, it was the beginning of establishing a lifelong work ethic, at a very early age.

Beauty Poole Baldwin grew up in the rural south during the 1940's and 1950's. Contrary to the experiences of many children, aside from working in the fields, Beauty's parents made certain that the Poole children understood the importance of education, as well as work. Beauty attended what was known as the "legendary" two-room, red school house" in Baldwin County. The school was housed on the grounds of Friendship Baptist Church. Beauty attended school a year early, in order to walk with her older sister, Elnora, to school. Beauty and Elnora would walk three miles to school each day. Her childhood education was based on the "pre-primer" curriculum. There was one teacher in one room with several grade levels. The students were sectioned off by age, early age to third grade and fourth to eighth grades.

It was during her early years that Beauty quickly came to know her calling on her life. Beauty knew in third grade that she wanted to be a math teacher. Beauty's recollection of her early years reflected on her love for Math and her early stages as a teacher's assistant in the classroom. It would be the experiences in the classroom that would lead to her continued interest in education.

The Poole family did their best to make a living. Beauty's parents made a decision to relocate the family to another county. Although this decision was made, Beauty and Elnora continued with school and her love for numbers continued. Beauty's family moved to Washington County, Georgia, when Beauty was in fourth grade. Rural researcher, T.J. Woofter (1936), reports that one factor in the educational development of children of cotton sharecroppers was the frequent moves made by the family. These moves would cut into the school term since they would commonly occur between November and February, after the cotton crop had been picked. Whereas for many

children, such a move might have been crippling, the destiny of Beauty's education was not delayed. Contrary to what might have been a delay, the family's move to Washington County was part of the catalyst to discover gifts within Beauty. Prior to moving, Beauty was administered an aptitude test, because her teachers wanted to test her skills and performance level. Her performance was so exceptional that she was skipped to the next grade level, where she was placed in the same grade level as her sister, in mid-school year.

Beauty and Elnora attended the local church school, California Junior High School in Deep Step, Georgia, when the family moved to Washington County. When she completed junior high school, Beauty and Elnora were bussed to Sandersville, Georgia, to attend T. J. Elder High School, because schools were still segregated. Beauty's love for math intensified, and she took all of the math classes that were available. Although the highest levels of math were geometry and trigonometry, Beauty was determined to complete all that was available, and with the support and approval of her parents, she excelled.

#### Life in the Early Years

I was born in Baldwin County. I am one of six children. My parents had three different sets of children, same Mom and Dad, they had my brother, me and my sister, they waited twelve years and had another one, and then they waited eight more years and had two more children. We had a lot of children in our family back then because we were farmers, sharecroppers. We were cotton farmers in middle Georgia. The kids helped to do the work on the farm. There was a reason to have a big

family so that you wouldn't have to have somebody else to come back in to harvest the crops.

We did not begin school until after Labor Day. We would work out in the field during cotton picking season and then our parents had us attend school when it was time for school to begin. I went to the legendary two room red school house. It was in Baldwin County at Friendship Baptist Church, the two-room school was on the church campus. I went to school a year early, because my sister, Elnora, was a year earlier than I and she had to have someone walk with her.

We had, back in those days, what they call the "pre-primer," which what we now call Pre-K. Elnora and I would walk about three miles to this little two room school building. That experience was great for me. We had the pot bellied stove in the classroom, one teacher in a room with several grades and another teacher in the other room with several other grades. The teachers would begin their work with one group and move to the other group to help them.

In those times, we did not have new books; we received books that were handed down to us from the white schools. We did not have buses. That is why we walked to school, the white kids would drive right pass us, and it didn't bother me because that's just the way things were. The experience was so great for me. We had great teachers who really cared for their students.

I always knew that I would be a math teacher, because I loved math. I would finish all of my work, and then I would go and help others with their math. Our class was divided by age, there was a younger group (from five years of age to about ten or eleven) and there was also an older group that was about twelve and older. My teachers would allow me to help others with their work. I helped with all of the students. I just had a love for numbers.

It was in the late fifties. We were in Deep Step, Georgia, when I finished junior high school. When it was time for high school, we (Elnora and I) were bussed to C.J. Ella High School, as segregation was still very active. I still had a love for numbers, I took all the math that I could, the highest was geometry and trigonometry, and we didn't have calculus. My mother would stay up late at night with me. She couldn't help me study, but she would stay up to keep me company while I studied.

#### A Life Changing Event

In 1959, Beauty was ranked third in her senior class of sixty-six students at California High School. She and Elnora graduated from high school together, with great ambitions to attend college. Beauty wanted to attend Tuskegee University, and Elnora wanted to attend school in Atlanta.

In celebration of their graduation, Beauty and Elnora were allowed to attend a senior trip to Silver Springs, Florida. Upon returning from the senior trip, Beauty experienced one of the most significant events of her life. When Beauty and Elnora returned from the senior trip to Florida, Elnora had reported having a headache. Beauty

attended school the Monday following the senior trip; however, Elnora stayed home due to her headache. When Beauty arrived home from school, she was told that Elnora had died. The death of Elnora, Beauty's sister and close friend, devastated her. Mrs. Baldwin remembered:

It was the Monday after the senior trip to Florida. As I was getting off of the bus, someone was coming back to our house to be there to tell us that she had died. They had rushed her to the hospital in Milledgeville and she had died of a cerebral hemorrhage. That probably was the one thing that almost deterred me from going to college altogether. We were very close. We slept together every night. My mother accepted her diploma, five days later at our graduation. That was, what I thought would be, the worst blow of my lifetime.

The death of Elnora was very painful to the entire Poole family. Beauty especially had a difficult time with the death of her sister, Elnora. Beauty had considered changing her decision to attend college. Her mother encouraged her to continue with her plans to go to college. Scholarships for college were not available for Beauty and her classmates. Beauty's parents were very poor and the money to finance college was not available. However, they were able to get loans through a few local companies. Beauty had managed to maintain a good grade point average in high school, and was able to secure loans to attend Savannah State University in Savannah, Georgia. Beauty left for college with the determination to become a math teacher. She attended Savannah State University with a major in math education, and a minor in physics.

Beauty had to maintain a “B” average in order to keep her loans for school. She also worked various jobs to support herself while she attended school. Beauty was determined to be resourceful and she also relied on her mother for some assistance. Her mother did what she could to try to help to support Beauty. Mrs. Baldwin recalled her college beginnings:

My mother and father always wanted the better for their children. Although we had no money, my sister Elnora wanted to go to college in Atlanta and I wanted to go to Tuskegee. There was one company, Pickett and Hatchett, which gave loans to students. I was able to get a loan because I had a good grade-point average, and I went to school at Savannah State University. I had a job every quarter, except the first one, that I was on campus. I worked for a professor on campus by keeping their daughter. I made thirty dollars a month. My mother would wash clothes and made two dollars and fifty cents a week. She would send the two dollars and fifty cents to me every week. When I was paid at the end of the month, I would send it back to my mother.

Beauty even decided to pledge a sorority while she was in college. Although there was very little money, Beauty’s mother assisted her with the money that she needed to pledge Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Beauty decided to drop her minor, physics, because she felt that it was more important to graduate within four years. Beauty finished Savannah State College, as an honor student, with a major in mathematics education in 1963.

Contrary to the challenges experienced during Beauty's childhood, she overcame many personal and social obstacles. Poverty never consumed the Poole family and it was never looked upon as a barrier. Education was paramount in the Poole household and the Poole children, especially Beauty and Elnora, had an appreciation for education. The recognition of Beauty's increased aptitude in mathematics was pivotal in her acceleration in school and on to college. Unbeknownst to Beauty and her family, her love for math did not only insure her ability to graduate from high school and from college, it was also the catalyst for Beauty's discovery into a successful career in education. Beauty would go on to establish a career that might have started with exemplary math skills and teaching abilities, but lead to so much more.

#### Beginning a Lifetime in Education

Beauty decided it was more important to begin a career in education, as soon as possible, as opposed to staying on at Savannah State to minor in physics. Determined not to return to Washington County, Beauty accepted her first teaching job in Ellaville, Georgia, in Schley County at John Lewis High School. The name of the school, however, was a misnomer as it was not really a high school per se, but housed kindergarten through twelfth grades. Beauty also quickly learned that she was 'The' math department. She was the only math teacher for all of the students at the John Lewis High School, grades kindergarten through twelve. The school had two administrators, an elementary, and a high school principal, in one building. Segregation did not end in the South until the mid 1970s; therefore John Lewis was a segregated school.

I was the only person in the math department. We were a segregated school. I LOVED IT. We did everything. I taught math to the



entire school. I had a homeroom. Every homeroom teacher taught physical education. I had students in my class who were older than me. Every day after school, I would stay after school to work with those kids to make sure that they got it. The next week, the students would bring collard greens or something to say thank you. It was just one of those experiences that you do not forget. I worked in Ellaville for two years.

Beauty met her husband while she attended Savannah State. Her husband, Lucious Baldwin, came to Savannah State a year after she began college. They were engaged in April of 1963, the same year that Beauty began teaching and the same year that Beauty graduated from college. In June 1963, Beauty graduated from college and on December 26, 1963, Beauty married her college sweetheart. Beauty moved from Ellaville, Georgia, to Columbus, Georgia (her husband's hometown) shortly after she had married and after Lucious graduated from Savannah State.

Once in Columbus, Georgia, Beauty began teaching at Marshall Junior High School as a math teacher. Marshall Junior High was a segregated school. One of Beauty's colleagues, an English teacher, became principal at Spencer High School and asked Beauty to go with him. This position created Beauty's third teaching assignment. While at Spencer High School, Beauty had another major life event, she became pregnant. During the time of her pregnancy, teachers in the state of Georgia were not allowed to teach while they were pregnant. Beauty was not allowed to return back to work until after she had delivered. Her baby daughter, Geri Baldwin, was born December 20, 1967. Beauty returned to work in February 1968. While Beauty was out for maternity leave, integration had been enforced in Muscogee County, Columbus, Georgia in the public

school system. Beauty had to be reassigned during her maternity leave and was placed at one of the high schools in Muscogee County that was experiencing integration for the first time.

Students do not enter high school devoid of any racial attitudes nor, in many cases, without some previous experiences with people of another race. Their families probably have transmitted images of what those of another race are like and what kind of behavior toward those of another race is appropriate. Students also may have had personal experiences, either negative or positive, with other race people in their neighborhoods, grade schools or elsewhere in their community (Harding, Proshansky, et al., 1969),

When Beauty returned to work, she had been placed at an integrated school, Hardaway High School. Beauty's classes was no longer segregated, but integrated. Beauty had been assigned to an all white-school by her principal. The challenge of her professional career during this time was to develop strong interpersonal skills with students who had not previously been instructed by an African-American teacher. Mrs. Baldwin reflected:

Here I am, February 1968, walking into an all white school. I first walked into the classroom and the kids were wild. Shortly after I went into a classroom of all white students, in no time flat, we had no problems. There were five black kids in the entire school. These were rich white kids who had maids at their homes. The kids had black maids at their homes, who had also disciplined them. I had no problems with the students. They had a respect for me. Once you set the rules, then you were fine. I never

had discipline problems in my classrooms. I had a great experience at Hardaway High School.

During her time at Hardaway High School, Beauty's husband, who was also an educator, made a decision to move the Baldwin's to Atlanta. Her husband wanted to move in the middle of the school year. Beauty's husband moved to Atlanta in March and in June of 1973, Beauty also moved to Atlanta to join her husband, after she completed her school year. Beauty and her husband moved to Southwest Atlanta and Beauty chose to accept a teaching position at Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School. Teaching positions were also available to Beauty in the, predominately black, Southwest Atlanta area, however, her decision to teach in Gwinnett County created a logistical challenge of having to take a much longer commute to work. Beauty decided to accept Gwinnett's offer. Beauty, unknowingly, had made a decision that would also alter the course of her life, as working in Gwinnett established a continuation of first time opportunities for Beauty Baldwin. During her tenure at Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School, as a math teacher, Beauty was the only African-American adult in the school for seven years, from 1973-1980. Her previous experiences in both segregated and integrated school settings had been very beneficial in empowering Beauty to work well in the Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School as the only African American educator.

According to Patchen (1982) the key to reducing hostility between people of different racial or ethnic groups lies in bringing members of the groups into closer contact. If only each person has the opportunity to get to know better the members of the other group, then he will understand better and appreciate more members of that group. Serving the only African-American teacher at Central Gwinnett, Beauty had once again,

much like life at Hardaway High School, established an opportunity to educate across the color line and to break race barriers in education. Beauty was becoming a trailblazer.

After a year of enduring a very long commute, Beauty and her husband relocated to Norcross, Georgia, to live to be closer to work. During her time at Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School, Beauty and her husband decided to enroll at the University of Georgia. Beauty had pursued her Masters in mathematics. Beauty felt that it was extremely important to further her education. While securing her Masters in Mathematics, Beauty became aware of an opportunity in another department, the CVAE (Coordinated Vocational Academic Education) program, Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School was preparing to implement the program. Beauty decided to apply for the program at the high school and got in. Beauty was offered the position of CVAE Coordinator without having completed all of the requirements. Part of her agreement was that she would have to change her program of study at the University of Georgia from Mathematics to Vocational Education and complete the program at the University of Georgia. She was very drawn to the opportunity to assist students with career awareness and placement. Beauty accepted the position and worked to complete the program at the University during her tenure. For five years, Beauty served as the CVAE Coordinator at Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School. During her time at Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville, the school received national recognition for the CVAE program. This national recognition allowed for Beauty to empower her students through the connection between home and school and prepare them for the world of work. The recognition of this program also promoted the success of Beauty Baldwin's teaching skills to her colleagues and supervisors.

### Administration Finds Beauty

During her time at Central Gwinnett, the assistant principal, a white female, was promoted to a central office position. Prior to the promotion of the female assistant principal, Beauty was selected to serve with a group to interview the new principal for Central Gwinnett High School. After the selection of the principal, a white male, the female assistant principal received a promotion to central office. Beauty's new principal suggested that Beauty apply for the newly vacant assistant principal position. He was impressed with the work that Beauty had done while serving as the CVAE coordinator and he strongly encouraged Beauty to apply for the position. Initially, Beauty shared that she did not want to be an assistant principal. Her principal was adamant about her reconsideration. It was his encouragement and his reassurance that Beauty had all of the qualities of an assistant principal that altered Beauty's decision to apply for the position. Unknowing to Beauty, this would be another decision that would alter the course of her professional career. Beauty was selected for an interview. During the interview process, Beauty later discovered that she was interviewed by the first "Leadership Interview Team" in Gwinnett County. The team, which consisted of six people, was made up of central office people, the principal and others. After a very long interview, Beauty was offered the position. Once again, much like the offer of the CVAE Coordinator position, Beauty had been offered a position and was asked to secure all of the credentials after the position was offered.

The decision to become an assistant principal was one which Beauty reviewed with her husband. Her husband, also an educator, reminded Beauty that even the opportunity to be an assistant principal was a part of being a teacher. Beauty accepted the

position of assistant principal and went back to school to work on her second Masters in Administration and Supervision. At the time, there was not a black administrator anywhere in Gwinnett County. Beauty became one of the first black administrators in an integrated public school in the Gwinnett County School System, and the year was 1979. Beauty served as an assistant principal for two years at Central Gwinnett Lawrenceville High School.

### Moving to the Forefront

During the academic year of 1979-1980, while was enrolled at the University of Georgia working on her Masters in Administration and Supervision, she encountered another individual whose relationship with her would also alter the course of her life. Jim Puckett was serving as the superintendent of Buford City Schools and was also enrolled in the leadership program at the University of Georgia. Jim Puckett had the opportunity to develop a professional rapport with Beauty during their matriculation together at the University of Georgia. Jim was the superintendent of Buford City Schools at the time had established a respect for Beauty's role as assistant principal in the Gwinnett County School System. In his association with Beauty, Jim had envisioned other possibilities for Beauty's educational career. Jim would later become one of the most significant mentors in Beauty's professional career. Mrs. Baldwin recalled her conversation with Jim:

Jim said, "Beauty, I need to talk to you." He wanted to talk with both me and my husband. He explained that one of the principals in Buford County, a black male principal, was leaving Buford City Schools and that the system would be in need of a principal. As a black

administrator, the school that would be in need of a principal had the largest population of African-American students in the county.

Jim offered the position of principalship in Buford City Schools to me. That would have meant leaving Gwinnett County School System. My thing was that I was always loyal to my superintendents. I made an appointment to see him and I told him that I had been offered the job as principal in Buford City Schools and that I was considering the position. He said, "I wish you wouldn't do that, I will make sure you have a school next year.

Prior to making a decision about accepting the position, Beauty decided to talk with the superintendent of Gwinnett County Schools. Beauty had always valued the importance of loyalty within her profession. The superintendent of Gwinnett schools asked Beauty not to leave, as Gwinnett still had not hired its first black principal. He reassured Beauty that if she stayed, the position of principal would be a possibility for her for the following year. After much reconsideration and additional discussion with her husband, Beauty decided to accept the position of principal in Buford City Schools, making her the first African-American principal in the Buford City School System. This decision carved another milestone in the life of Beauty Baldwin, as he had now created history for African Americans in both the Gwinnett County School System and in the Buford City School System. Beauty believed that this position would help to prepare her for other administrative opportunities. She convinced her superintendent that she needed to leave, and she did. Beauty was principal of Buford Middle School for four years. The second year she was principal, her former superintendent in Gwinnett County called and

offered her a principal position if she would return, as he had promised to her before she left Gwinnett. The position that was being offered was for a larger school in a larger school system, with more money. This was a difficult career decision for Beauty Baldwin. Beauty was challenged to reflect on the current needs and future opportunities for her career and for the system that she served. Mrs. Baldwin recalled:

I wrote my letter of resignation to Buford City Schools. I placed it in my purse and I called Jim Puckett, my current superintendent of Buford City at the time. I called him and I told him that I needed to see him, and he agreed to come over. When Jim arrived, he asked me to come, get in the car and go for a ride with him. Jim took me on a ride throughout Buford City. During our ride, he took drive me through everybody's neighborhood, black and white, and he talked about the children of Buford City. When we returned to the office, Jim said to me, "They need you here." I said, "I'll be in a bigger school and I'll make more money." Jim said, "We will pay you what they would pay you...and they did."

Good mentors are advocates for their protégés' position: they back their actions in public one hundred percent of the time, even if they disagree privately. They advocate strongly for the person, giving visibility, "painting a picture of her as a leader" (Gardiner et al., 2000). Jim Puckett was a good mentor and friend to Beauty Baldwin. Jim Puckett saw something significant in Beauty Baldwin from their first encounter. As a mentor, he worked to advise Beauty on career opportunities. Also as her mentor, Jim Puckett was very significant in helping to identify those opportunities which would prove to be most beneficial to Beauty.



Beauty decided to stay with Buford City Schools and remained as principal for four years, 1980-1984. Every year, within the four years of her principalship, Beauty was offered a principal position in Gwinnett County Schools. Beauty, however, would deny the position and remained with Buford City. Her loyalty to her school system stayed very strong. Beauty would later discover that her loyalty, her professional track record and her leadership would once again make a powerful impact in the educational area in both Buford City and in Georgia at-large.

#### History Made in Georgia

Beauty and Jim Puckett grew as close friends during her tenure as principal in Buford City School and he also became her mentor. She had established herself as a successful principal and he had served as superintendent of Buford City Schools during her tenure. In 1984, Jim Puckett decided to make a professional transition and left Buford City Schools to work for MRESA (Metro Regional Educational Service Agency). The position of school superintendent became vacant in Buford City Schools, and a large number of local candidates applied for the position. Several candidates also applied from outside of Buford City Schools. Beauty Baldwin did not have any intention or interest in applying for the position of superintendent.

I had not thought about applying for the superintendent position.

There were many locals who had applied for the position. My husband encouraged me to at least apply for the position and voice that I was interested. My husband had always been a supporter of me. I shared with him that I did not want to be a superintendent. My husband suggested that I should write a letter to remind the system that I had all the qualifications

that were needed for a superintendent and that I was willing to give whatever I needed to give to the system....and that is the way that I wrote the letter.

Beauty wrote a letter of interest and submitted it to the Board of Education of Buford City Schools. As soon as the board received the letter, they set up a meeting to meet with Beauty. In Buford City, the decision to select a superintendent was completely determined by the school board. At the time, in 1984, the Buford City Board of Education was made up of five men, four were white males and one was African-American. The design of the Buford City School district was very unique and different than most school systems. The board was made up of four members that were elected at-large. The fifth board member was always the Chairmen of the City Commission, so whoever served as the chairmen of the city commission was also the chairmen of the school board. Buford City had three commissioners and the commissioners would rotate through as chairperson of the city commission. Through this type of design, the city had a great deal of ownership invested in the school system.

The board decided to meet with Beauty to discuss the possibility of her becoming superintendent. The all-male board met with Beauty P. Baldwin. The meeting was held at her school, where an interview was conducted on February 13, 1984. Shortly after the meeting, Beauty had to prepare to leave to attend the funeral of her uncle. When Beauty returned from the funeral of her uncle the next day, one of the board members met her at her home. Mrs. Baldwin remembered:

When I got back from the funeral, Tommy Hughes, one of the school board members, came to me at my home and said, 'The board voted unanimously to hire you as superintendent!'



Figure 1: Baldwin named Buford School Chief, Gwinnett Daily News February 15, 1984.

The selection process had been relatively competitive. Aside from Beauty, the selection pool had been narrowed down to another candidate, who was an educator that had been born and reared in Buford City. He was a white male. He had been identified as a strong candidate by some. Beauty and the other candidate did not have similar qualifications, as Beauty had more qualifications than the other applicant.

I was chosen over one of the local favorites, a white male. He was born and reared in Buford, but he did not have similar qualifications. That is what allowed me to win out over him. That is why I tell everyone I talk to, when the time comes, be prepared, he did not have a degree in

Administration and Supervision, and I did. It took a lot for some people to get over the selection.

The vast majority of the city of Buford was receptive to Beauty. Beauty had earned the respect of many in the community during her role as principal. Beauty had also worked to establish strong relationships with her students and her school community. Once the news of her appointment hit, inquiries from throughout the state began to pour in. The school board had not been aware of the history that they were making when they decided to select Beauty Baldwin as superintendent of Buford City Schools. Buford City received recognition both locally and nationally with this decision. Beauty was invited to Washington, D.C., to be honored by the Congressional Black Caucus. This invitation allowed for Beauty to bring along members from her staff. Beauty decided to bring two members from her board to travel with her to Washington, D.C.

The board did not realize what they had done. The newspaper got wind of this appointment and they soon discovered that I was the first African-American female superintendent ever selected in the state of Georgia. Although Buford City was a small school system they were somewhat private. They were not expecting this tremendous amount of attention that was caused by my appointment.

We got an invitation to go to Washington, D.C., by the Congressional Black Caucus; they were honoring black women superintendents across the United States. I took two of my board members. It was a wonderful experience for them. What I tried to tell them and do with them was to impart how important it was to go outside

of the Buford area to secure information and resources and get involved with other people.

As principal, and later as superintendent, Beauty attended every function that was held in the Buford City School System. The role of superintendent was an all-consuming responsibility. Some staff members showed a little resistance. However, Beauty found herself winning people over throughout her tenure. There was one educator who provided the most amount of challenges during her tenure as superintendent. Beauty eventually won that individual over as well. Mrs. Baldwin shared:

There was one older white gentleman. He did everything he could to undermine my authority. He didn't like to work for women, especially a black woman. He went out of his way to undermine me, but it didn't work. The time even came when one of my board chairs told me to get rid of him. I used to live Psalms 37. I had my ups and downs, but nobody knew it. Those ten years were a learning experience. An experience I would never give up and I would do it again.

Although Beauty experienced a fair share of challenges in her position, one of the more memorable experiences came about during a school year when budget cuts had to be made within her system. Beauty had to fire a many people, primarily due to budget cuts that came down from the state. The cuts happened during the summer and Beauty had to call and release people from their positions. During the time of budget cuts, Beauty was encouraged to specifically fire the gentleman who had tried to undermine her most during her tenure. Beauty recalls that this gentleman was one year away from

retirement. Beauty felt that this was a disservice to any individual, friend or foe, and so she decided to implement a strategy to preserve his position for one more year.

This guy, the same one who presented some resistance towards me, he was one year away from retirement. I thought, 'I can't do this to this man.' You wouldn't do it to your worst enemy. So I went to my bank in Buford, who was a big supporter of the school system as a whole. I told them what was happening, and I asked them to back me with the funds to pay for the educator's salary. The bank president said yes. When I explained what I was asked to do and why I could not, in good consciousness do it, they backed me up. This was for the same gentleman who gave me a very difficult time.

I had a successful ten years as superintendent. We built new schools and we had a great curriculum. The first thing I did when I became superintendent was to bring all of my principals together to form a leadership team. I believe in including people and I believe in getting advice. I believe in letting them (employees) feel like they are a part of the organization and we solved things together. We were all in it together. I have always been that way, even as a middle school principal.

Beauty served as superintendent for ten years. Each year, Beauty would receive a new contract. Buford School Board was very invested in the schools and the school system. They were very pleased with the work that Beauty had done in Buford City. Beauty worked to maintain a very positive relationship with the press. The local newspaper also had Beauty become a monthly contributor to the paper. She would write monthly for The

Gwinnett Daily. The press came to all of her meetings and they would write about the system, good or bad. She had a great relationship with the press. They opened up the school system to others, so that it wasn't such a closed system. Mrs. Baldwin recalled:

My board would tell me that I stayed away so much. My thing was you had to be out there to know what was going on. My board ultimately saw that and agreed with my actions.

Beauty worked strategically and diligently to advocate for her system and her students. She made it a point to be visible in all of her schools as often as possible. She believed that it was important to not only reach out to her students and school communities, but Beauty knew that she was a living testimony to what other people could do; her life was a lesson to be learned. During the ten years of her tenure, the state of Georgia also experienced growth and gain in the number of female administrators.

## Women school officials on rise

Females hold most administrative jobs

**By Jacquie Jackson**  
*Daily News staff writer*

Men who have traditionally dominated high-ranking positions in education are having to make room for women faster than they can get their hands on the door.

Conventionally, women have been classroom teachers, and a lucky few were appointed as elementary school principals. But recent trends show that more females are becoming system administrators and heads of large departments.

In 1991, women accounted for 82 percent of all school system administrative positions, dominating areas of curriculum instruction, special education and food services, according to the state Professional Standards Commission.

"We have more women who are teachers, therefore there's a larger pool of women to choose from," said Tom Hall, commission research analyst.

Still, less than half of all principalships are held by women.

Women who have made it to the high-ranking positions say the key is to be educationally prepared, diverse and competent.

Gail Hulme, assistant superintendent for instructional services for the Gwinnett County School System, is the first female to hold a cabinet-level position since the 1970s.

The former high school English teacher, who is now in charge of four divisions and a \$12 million budget, credits her leadership skills and diverse work background for her selection to the post. Like many women, Mrs. Hulme said she never set out to become school superintendent or assistant superintendent. But accepted the offer when the opportunity arrived.

"I feel I've had a history of instructional leadership, and a history of collaboration. To be assistant superintendent of instruction, if I had a goal, would be it," said Mrs. Hulme, who assumed her position July 1.

"She had outstanding leadership qualities and had demonstrated exemplary leadership in previous assignments. Her ability to coordinate and her commitment to support teachers and administrators at the local school were primary factors that influenced my recommendation," said Gwinnett County School Superintendent George Thompson, who recommended Mrs.



In 1991, women accounted for 52 percent of all school system administrative positions. Some of those administrators include **Jessie Jones**, (top) with the Cobb County school system, **Gail Hulme**, (bottom left) with the Gwinnett County system, and **Beauty Baldwin**, (bottom right) the first black woman superintendent in Georgia.

## Women hold 52% of higher spots in school system

From page 1B

have been naive in the past — not studying the culture and success patterns in organization early on — and have been hindered from reaching the top.

work background and the ability to relate to different people is the key to moving up, according to Mrs. Baldwin.

"You've got to be prepared, but you have to be a people person. People have to want you on their team," she said.

### A new experience

Beauty Baldwin, the first female superintendent of Buford City Schools, and the first black woman to hold such a position in Georgia, predicts rapid change in top administration by the year 2000.

"There has been tremendous change in the length of time that I've been in education," said Mrs. Baldwin, one of two black female superintendents statewide. "Women are now ready. When these positions become available, women are there and prepared educationally to move into those positions."

Getting to the top was an arduous climb for the 28-year educator, who took charge of the rural school system with less than 1,000 students in 1984, but one that many women are prepared to make, she said.

Women educators still face an uphill battle. Statewide, there are only 14 female superintendents out of 184, according to the Georgia School Superintendents Association.

"But women are making strides in many areas, female administrators said.

"When I was coming along, you just didn't think you would be superintendent. I could either be a teacher or nurse. That's what you went to school for," said Mrs. Baldwin, who started her career as a high school math teacher in rural south Georgia, and worked as coordinator for a vocational program and school principal before becoming superintendent.

Having a sound education and

Mrs. Jones, who oversees instruction, curriculum for emotionally disturbed youngsters, counseling and media services for the school system, said doors are now open to women that were closed five years ago.

"There are more females in higher administrative positions than there has ever been," she said.

She agrees that women should be educationally groomed, but said they should center their future around their goals.

Please see WOMEN, page 5B

Figure 2: Women School Officials on Rise, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Date Unknown.

### Retirement Puts Beauty Back in the Field

In 1994, Beauty decided to retire. She decided to run for state legislature in 1994. Although she did not win, she realized that it was also not the position for her. Her daughter also decided to also get married in 1994.

In October of 1994, Beauty's only daughter got married. The day of the wedding, Beauty's father-in-law died at Beauty's home. Three weeks later Beauty's mother was killed in a car accident. Beauty recalls 1994 as the worst year of her life. Although it was



the year that she retired, she lost her mother, she lost her father-in-law and she lost her first and only state election. Although these traumatic events occurred in 1994, Beauty was able to conclude her tenure as a superintendent with her family members present. Prior to the events that occurred in the latter part of 1994, in the earlier part of 1994, Beauty's retirement party was held in June. At her retirement party, Beauty's mother was able to attend her retirement party, along with other significant people in her life, to help celebrate a most amazing life experience. Beauty had established an amazing respect and rapport with both the Buford City School System and the larger Gwinnett County School System and community as well. One notable fact, perhaps not captured in the history books, is the transition that Beauty was instrumental in developing for the community of Buford City to move beyond racial barriers. Beauty had established herself not only as a strong force in the community, but also as a connection between the races. During her retirement, a reporter very appropriately captured the essence of Beauty's ability to transcend race and bring the citizens of Gwinnett County to a point of respect and understanding in an article that appeared in the Gwinnett Post Tribune, as he reflected on her tenure.

**PERSPECTIVE**

## Baldwin's retirement is opportunity to reflect on how far we've come

Listen to anyone hold discourse on the economic realities of life in the "Empire State of the South" and you are sure at some point to hear discussion of the "Two Georgias" theory.

That theory holds that economically there are two distinct and easily identifiable portions of the state -- the advantaged "haves" of the metropolitan Atlanta area, and the disadvantaged "have nots" of the rest of Georgia.

The theory has much merit, as anyone who has ever lived or worked outside the Atlanta area can readily attest.

But there is another "Two Georgias" that exists in the minds of those who have lived here for more than 30 years or so, two Georgias separated not by economics but by time, states of existence so distant from one another as to make "then" and "now" inadequate points of reference.

As a child in the small south Georgia town of Blackshear I remember going with my grandfather to the local grocery store, usually in search of 6-ounce bottles of Coca-Cola, purchased by the case and consumed as an elixir of rejuvenation by all those in the household.

The store, as I suspect often was the case in small towns founded on agrarian economies, was one part of a bigger company that combined the selling of groceries and clothing with banking and agribusiness.

As modern grocery stores go this one was small, nothing special really, except that on one side it opened into an adjacent clothing store, and on the other there was access to the bank owned by the same company.

And somewhere along that common wall shared by the store and the bank there were water coolers, a precious commodity in the heat and humidity of a South Georgia summer.

When I was a child, one of those coolers had a sign noting that it was for the use of "whites;" the other was for "coloreds."

That was the Georgia of then.

For some reason, those water coolers were on my mind again on Sunday as I joined a host of well wishers and friends in a retirement reception for Buford School Superintendent Beauty Baldwin.

As might have been expected, hundreds turned out to wish Mrs. Baldwin well as she left the world of education after more than three decades of employment, the last 10 years as superintendent of the Buford school system.

As I stood listening to the heartfelt words of love and respect being spoken by those who worked their way up to the podium, I couldn't help but reflect how positive, how good it all felt.

This was, after all, Buford. To those who don't know any better, Buford has the reputation as the "redneck" side of Gwinnett County, an area where perhaps the residents aren't as "sophisticated" as some in other areas of booming and bustling Gwinnett.

This was Buford, where a decade ago city leadership was willing to hire the first black female school superintendent in the state, and where on Sunday they returned to thank her for a job well done.

This was Buford, and there we stood in a high school that would be the envy of any public school system anywhere, recognizing the achievements of an exceptionally talented lady who was being honored for her skill as an educator and school administrator. And the fact that she was black, as were probably half those in attendance, just didn't really matter to anyone.

And that was what was so satisfying, the fact that something as insignificant as skin pigmentation had nothing to do with the proceedings at hand.

In 20 years of newspapering I have grown weary of covering news stories in which the race of the people involved was the news. Too many klan rallies, too many demonstrations, too many protests, too many bigots, too many people refusing to see racism where it exists, too many using it for an excuse where it doesn't.

But standing there Sunday, watching blacks and whites together in the audience, talking, remembering, praising, working together, I couldn't help but think that maybe we had come some considerable distance from that other Georgia of just a generation ago.

There are those quick to note that we have not come far enough, fast enough, and they are right. But we can't lose sight of how far we have come.

Ironically, the man who has replaced Baldwin as superintendent in Buford is from a little south Georgia town called Blackshear, and as I stood against the wall along with others at Sunday's reception, at my back were two water fountains, neither of which had any signs hanging above them.

*Norman Baggs is the editor of the Gwinnett Post-Tribune.*

**Norman Baggs**

**EDITOR**

**In 20 years of newspapering I have grown weary of covering news stories in which the race of the people involved was the news.**

Figure 3: Perspective on Retirement, Gwinnett Post Tribune, June 15, 1994.

The decision to retire was not a difficult one for Beauty. Beauty had experienced a journey so full of promise and she had established herself as a trailblazer in education across Georgia. While serving as superintendent, in 1985 Beauty was appointed by then Governor Joe Frank Harris to a task force to devise a career ladder for teachers under the

Quality Basic Education Act. Also, Beauty had seen a great deal of success during her tenure. While serving as superintendent, Buford City School built two new schools and at the helm of her retirement, the Buford City School System had seen an increase in test scores.

Upon retirement, the pastor of her church, Hopewell Baptist Church in Norcross, Georgia, went forth with a plan to build the church an academy. It was the wish and request of the pastor that Beauty would serve as the Head of the School and work with the church to build the academy. Beauty agreed to do so and in 1997 and Hopewell Christian Academy was established with an initial enrollment of 50 students. Beauty soon found herself right back in the field of education. Today, the school has an enrollment of two to three hundred students annually. Mrs. Baldwin currently serves as the Head of the Hopewell Christian Academy.

Beauty Baldwin has been married to Lucious Baldwin, her husband of forty three years. Her husband, Lucious, has also been an educator for many years. He has been an ongoing supporter of his wife's professional journey since the very beginning. The Baldwin's have one daughter, Geri, who is married and has children. Beauty has found joy in balancing her life with community service. She is an active member of her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Incorporated. She is a serious Atlanta Falcons fan and she is an avid shopper. Beauty has clearly earned the opportunity and the right to have balance and peace in her life. Her legacy in education in Georgia, Buford City and Gwinnett County lives on.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the historical experiences of Georgia's first African-American female superintendent, Mrs. Beauty P. Baldwin. This research was designed to identify the professional and personal experiences during her tenure as superintendent. The researcher then juxtaposed the data collected from the interview with the current research on patterns and trends identified for African-American women who aspire for the position of superintendent.

#### Findings

The following section presents the findings, implications and summary of the study. There were five findings identified that were derived from the research study. These are the five findings: **(Finding 1)** Preparing oneself through appropriate education and certification is one of the most significant factors in securing promotional positions from one level to the next. As Mrs. Baldwin transitioned into the superintendency, the early stages of her life were focused on her education and her desire to be an educator. Mrs. Baldwin believed that educational preparedness was a critical factor in her selection as superintendent. **(Finding 2)** Mentoring is a necessary and extremely powerful tool for upward mobility for professional women educators who desire to progress in educational administration. Mrs. Baldwin acknowledged Jim Puckett as her mentor and friend. She acknowledged his role as a mentor during several administrative advancement decisions and specifically in her decision to replace him as superintendent of Buford City Schools. As an African-American female, mentoring is essential for professional growth and development. Mentoring was not only key in the recommendation for a superintendent

position, but also a key element for establishing a successful tenure as superintendent.

**(Finding 3)** There is a considerable benefit in paying specific attention to the issue of cultural sensitivity and race relations for African-American women who hold administrative positions. The ability to transcend racial barriers and to be culturally receptive to all people allows for more effective communication and empowers the ability to lead others and have them follow. Mrs. Baldwin taught and led in school environments where she was the minority. In several of her schools, she was either the only African-American or one of few African-Americans. During her tenure as superintendent, Mrs. Baldwin served a community that was predominately white; however, she was well received and embraced by the community and schools. **(Finding 4)** African-American women must not be afraid to present themselves to individuals of authority to express their interest in advancement. Highly-qualified female candidates must make avail themselves for consideration of promotional positions in educational administration. Mrs. Baldwin's decision to "make herself known" to the Buford City School Board was very significant in the school board's decision to review her as a serious and highly qualified applicant. **(Finding 5)** Recognizing the importance of personal support in the form of family and friends needs to be considered by African-American women who aspire for the superintendency. Mrs. Baldwin had the support of her husband, Lucious Baldwin, throughout her entire professional career. She acknowledged the strength that was provided in both her husband and her parents throughout her life, as positive forces.

This body of research, *The First African-American Female School Superintendent in Georgia: Reflections from the Field to the Forefront*, provided a unique focus on the professional experiences of Mrs. Baldwin and her ascension to the role of school system

superintendent. The development of this body of research has provided the researcher with insight into an amazing journey that was experienced by one of Georgia's history makers and female trailblazers in education. In deciding to narrow this body of research to an explicit analysis on the professional experiences of Mrs. Baldwin, I have found myself intimately involved in the understanding of professional career journeys and the impact and influence of careful decision making.

My professional career has been that of a lifelong educator. My first understanding of the importance of education was expressed to me by my maternal grandparents, John and Ocie Brewington Jordan. My grandfather, John Thomas Jordan, Sr., and his family, were just like Mrs. Baldwin's parents, a family of sharecroppers from Middle Georgia, Eatonton, Georgia (Putnam County). I had heard the story of the struggles of sharecropping very early in my life as a child. My grandparents imparted to all of their grandchildren the importance of getting an education. It was always stressed that education was the one thing that no one could take away from you. To that end, my value and appreciation for education grew and developed from a love of school into a passion for higher learning. My respect for education also transformed into a career focus. It was my grandmother, Ocie Brewington Jordan, who would tell me that, contrary to my desire to be an attorney, I would work with children and in the field of education. My life journey has taken me on a path that has been directed by pedagogy.

The first transition that I experienced in education was to move from serving as a school teacher to becoming a school counselor. As I started out as an elementary and middle school teacher, I discovered a greater appreciation for working and supporting students from a support service perspective. At the recommendation of several students,

parents and colleagues to go into counseling, I pursued a Masters in School Counseling and the Educational Specialist degree in Counselor Education, in order to receive certification as a school counselor. I served five years as a school counselor in DeKalb County, Georgia. While working as a school counselor, I also decided to secure certification for Educational Leadership. I recognized that as my career began to unfold, it would be my advantage to expand my credentials for future opportunities. During my sixth year as a school counselor, a monumental career event took place. I was selected to become the Director of Guidance, Counseling and Mentoring for my school system at-large. A promotion of this magnitude, in a large school system, was not only rare, but very significant, as there were many other highly qualified candidates, and I had been selected to supervise nearly three hundred school counselors, some of which were in leadership positions that I had not yet experienced.

When Mrs. Baldwin began reflecting on journey to the superintendency, as the researcher, I often reflected on the importance of intentional career decisions and the professional associations and affiliations that she established. Her journey, almost as if it had been planned from birth, was a reflection of a lifetime of decisions and opportunities that all occurred in tandem with her destiny. In exploring and analyzing the significant findings from this research, the researcher has identified findings that will potentially provide recommendations and suggestions for graduate students, education professionals (both neophyte and veteran educators) who find themselves at a critical or non-critical point of decision making.

The value and importance of education was an essential part of personal development for Mrs. Baldwin. The emphasis placed on education was foremost in her

decision to become a lifelong learner. As a result, Mrs. Baldwin found herself both prepared and qualified for promotional positions and considerations when opportunities arose. By insuring that she acquired the appropriate education and certification, she positioned herself to be eligible for positions of advancement (**Finding 1**). When inquired about her eligibility for superintendent, Mrs. Baldwin responded without hesitation, on the importance of credentials and education;

I was chosen over one of the local favorites, a white male. He was born and reared in Buford, but he did not have similar qualifications. That is what allowed me to win out over him. That is why I tell everyone I talk to, when the time comes, be prepared, he did not have a degree in Administration and Supervision, and I did.

Mrs. Baldwin secured her bachelor's degree from Savannah State College and two master's degrees from the University of Georgia. The significance of advanced degrees became more relevant as Mrs. Baldwin moved upward in her career.

For Mrs. Baldwin, each promotional opportunity that presented itself was one that was passed on to Mrs. Baldwin by a veteran colleague, usually a supervisor. Her supervisors not only provided direction to Mrs. Baldwin for success in her previous positions, they also encouraged her to seriously consider the positions as they became available. Specifically, when she decided to become an assistant principal, a principal and later, superintendent, Mrs. Baldwin was encouraged by her white male supervisors to apply for these respective positions. One supervisor became her mentor along her professional journey. Jim Puckett, the former superintendent of Buford City Schools and Mrs. Baldwin's predecessor as superintendent, was also a mentor to Mrs. Baldwin during



her tenure as a principal and during her tenure as superintendent. Mentoring played a monumental role in her professional advancement (**Finding 2**). Administrative positions have become much more competitive, and more aspirants are seeking an edge in the job market. Mentoring provides this edge. Further, mentors are found to be critical in the advancement of women. The practice of mentoring has been compounded by the fact that more men are mentors than women; it therefore follows that more men than women are being mentored because men are more likely to mentor men than they are to mentor women. In addition, even the few women, proportionately, who are in positions of power do not mentor as much or as often as men in comparable positions (Witmer, 2006).

When women are hired as public school superintendents, it is likely to be in rural or small-town districts. Women of color can sometimes become superintendents in urban school districts where failure has permeated the culture. Both are tough places for women. In rural districts, for example, the superintendent is often the only central office administrator and must function in a variety of roles—anything from transportation director to buildings and grounds manager and director of curriculum and instruction (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). It was very important to Mrs. Baldwin to empower her schools, the leaders of the system and the community to work together. Mrs. Baldwin worked hard to establish unity during her ten years as superintendent of Buford City Schools. Her work to empower the system was strong enough to see beyond color and to move towards a unified effort for success.

I had a successful ten years as superintendent. We built new schools and we had a great curriculum. The first thing I did when I became superintendent was to bring all of my principals together to form a

leadership team. I believe in including people and I believe in getting advice. I believe in letting them (employees) feel like they are a part of the organization and we solved things together. We were all in it together. I have always been that way, even as a middle school principal.

Mrs. Baldwin was appointed superintendent of one of Georgia's smaller school district. In 1984, Buford City Schools consisted of an elementary school, a middle school and a high school. The total enrollment during Mrs. Baldwin's tenure was approximately 1,400 students and 26 percent of the students were African-American. The ability to transcend racial barriers and to be culturally receptive to all people allows for more effective communication and empowers the ability to lead others and have them follow (**Finding 3**). There was a charisma and passion that was evident in the work that Mrs. Baldwin did while serving as superintendent of Buford City Schools. This charisma was both contagious and highly impressionable. More women might find the superintendency appealing if they had different conceptions of the role and different models suggesting the collaborative nature of the position. Women who plan to become superintendents may also benefit from alternative views of the position. If district administrators perceived a superintendent's primary role as one of commitment to relationships with all members of the staff, with board members, and with community members, if they realized teaching and community metaphors were as important in administration as in the classroom, if they knew some superintendents continue to be involved with curriculum and instruction, and if they saw the political, public nature of the position as an opportunity for coalition building, more women might aspire to the superintendency and become mentors and role models (Scherr, 1995).

When faced with the decision to allow herself to be considered for the position of superintendent, Mrs. Baldwin had to decide whether or not she would be willing to take the risk of putting herself in the candidacy pool. In Chapter IV, Mrs. Baldwin shared how she progressed toward applying for the superintendent's position. Mrs. Baldwin stated:

I had not thought about applying for the superintendent position.

There were many locals who had applied for the position. My husband encouraged me to at least apply for the position and voice that I was interested. My husband had always been a supporter of me. I shared with him that I did not want to be a superintendent. My husband suggested that I should write a letter to remind the system that I had all the qualifications that were needed for a superintendent and that I was willing to give whatever I needed to give to the system...and that is the way that I wrote the letter.

Once women candidates have established confidence in the work and experience that they have accomplished, they must not be afraid to present themselves to superiors or to a group or to an individual with decision making power (**Finding 4**).

Personal and professional support was established early on in the life of Mrs. Baldwin. As a child, Mrs. Baldwin recalled the expectations of her family regarding the importance of education. Her mother followed through with the expectation by sitting up late at night with her, although she could not literally assist Mrs. Baldwin with her homework, she provided support by sitting up with her, while she worked on her school assignments. Much like the support that her mother provided, Mrs. Baldwin surrounded herself with individuals who had her best interest at heart and who could provide an

avenue of support throughout the journey of her career. Mrs. Baldwin's husband of forty-two years was one of the most influential supporters of her career decisions that led to the superintendency. Personal support from family and friends is paramount in developing a foundation for personal well-being and strength (**Finding 5**). Educational professionals who are or have been public school superintendents will confirm that there are barriers to accessing and entering the position of school superintendent and, for women, the barriers are likely to be ever present. They also will confirm that the superintendent's job is very complex and continuously requires facing and addressing ever-present challenges. Successful superintendents effectively meet whatever challenges occur (Tallerico, 1999).

#### Implications

The implication for this study is that specific strategies and intentional planning can be significant factors in pursuing career advancement for African-American women or all women of color. Although the pattern of career advancement for Mrs. Baldwin was both planned and unplanned, one clear fact was that preparation was essential in being ready when opportunity presented itself. Educational leaders can learn a great deal of professional practices from the experiences that were encountered by Mrs. Baldwin. Contrary to the factors that are historically looked upon as barriers for both women and women of color, Mrs. Baldwin was able to rise above those barriers. The issue of gender, although significant, does not have to maintain a place in professional advancement. The basic professional elements that remain important on the journey to advancement are (1) respect and appreciation for all people, (2) maintain a conscious and consistent effort to monitor one's own work ethics, (3) recognize your own potential and capitalize on your

skills and talents, not so much to be recognized by others, but to demonstrate value, professionalism and true skills in one's performance ability, (4) establish short-term and long-term goals, and (5) learn to understand and work within the concept of the "old boy network".

Mrs. Baldwin's career goals changed to reflect the experiences and opportunities that she came across on her professional journey. Although Mrs. Baldwin asserted many times that as a child, her long-term goal was to be a math teacher; the goal of being an educator was clear and specific. Mrs. Baldwin's goals began to alter as the educational profession and opportunities changed. The ability and necessity to implement long and short-term goals played a significant role in moving upwards toward the superintendency.

African-American women who are educational leaders must be able to recognize the "old boy network" and also understand how to effectively work through and within such a network. The number of women in superintendent positions continues to be less than that of men, specifically white males (Shakeshaft, 1999a, Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000, Witmer, 2006). Contrary to the fact that white males currently dominate the position of school superintendent in the state of Georgia, Mrs. Baldwin's career experiences presented a unique perspective on the "old boy network" concept. Mrs. Baldwin worked in many instances as the only African-American and maintained a rapport with her white male counterparts and supervisors. Mrs. Baldwin developed a mutual level of respect with her peers. The ability to establish a healthy, professional rapport helped her to position herself successfully within the "old boy network," even during historical times when the challenges were great.

While the meaning of both networking and old boy's club is similar, networking encompasses a broader concept than OBC, as a network is not limited in definition to a male support system. The drive for these connections suggests a fuller experience of mutuality, not just taking and using, but giving and being present in ways that enable all parties involved to come to know, trust and support one another. Networking is important to an aspiring administrator because regardless of who is doing the networking, the process of that interaction will affect them. If you are not a part of it, you risk being isolated from informal channels of what is happening, who is doing what, and where the job openings are going to be—information not generally known by those not in the loop (Witmer, 2006).

The fact remains that there are more white males who sit in the highest position in public education, the school superintendency. The need to contribute relevant and factual experiences of professionals, like Mrs. Baldwin, remains critical towards addressing ways in which other individuals can “move up” the professional ladder. This study was designed specifically to provide strategies and recommendations for aspiring African-American women educational administrators. Through this research, I have discovered that the importance of the findings surpasses gender and race and establishes itself as information that is essential for all educators.

### Summary

Career journeys that reflect the experiences of Mrs. Baldwin are perhaps both rare and unique. Much like the first man on the moon, life's course has shown us that only one can assume the position of being a “first.” It was, in this researcher's reflection, Mrs. Baldwin's destiny to become the first African-American woman in Georgia to serve as

school superintendent. Rising from the challenges of poverty in South Georgia, moving through a series of historic events that placed her strategically in the movement of the Civil Rights Era, integration, and major educational changes, certainly something (or someone) greater than Mrs. Baldwin had prepared to map out the course of her life. Mrs. Baldwin grew up poor, in the rural south, yet with a tremendous amount of love. Even out of meager circumstances, there arose an enormous expectation. The expectation was that the Poole children could do more and that they could do better. Embedded in that expectation for doing better, there was a forced respect for work and a serious embrace for the work ethic. Mrs. Baldwin knew early on that math would be her calling; however, her work ethic and the understanding that she could do anything she set her mind to do was part of the magic that placed Mrs. Baldwin in the position to accomplish many firsts.

As educational administrators and as aspiring superintendents, we must not move away from the significance of maintaining a respectable work ethic. In each opportunity that presented itself, Mrs. Baldwin established pride in her work and presented a commitment to what she had been hired to do, educate and lead others. She only wanted to be, as she put it, “The world’s greatest math teacher.” Aspiring administrators must redirect themselves to present their best efforts in their current positions. Although there may not be a guarantee of promotion, there is a promise of reward for those who aspire for greatness in their work.

Mrs. Baldwin recalled that as this “little country girl” from the south, she was able to get along with all people. Mrs. Baldwin maintained a high level of respect for everyone that she worked with throughout the years. Mrs. Baldwin was often the only

African-American professional in her work environment during historical times of integration and was able to bring many lessons from her experiences. She invested her work towards the good of the entire community and the benefit of the fruits of her labor was the assurance that she was accepted by her peers, her students, her colleagues and her superiors. Throughout the course of my time with Mrs. Baldwin, there was never an acknowledgement of preferential treatment towards race or gender; it was “our” classroom, “our” schools and “our” school system. Mrs. Baldwin learned early in life that the value in people was not in their race and gender, but in the tapping of their potential.

I was challenged with the question as to whether or not narrative inquiry of this nature would prove relevant to educators and educational administrators. In discovering my answer to the nature of the relevancy, several factors were unfolded. Mrs. Baldwin’s life is packed with experiences, stories and lessons for all of us to learn. As a qualitative researcher, I clearly understand that it is “all in the asking.”

In 2007, there are many challenges facing the educational system in terms of reform, accountability and the learning process. For those few individuals who will make up the small percentage of administrators with decision-making power and true authority, we must not allow ourselves to be so far removed from the “field” (of education) that we are unable to move “our” children, “our” schools and “our” system to the forefront of greatness.



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**APPENDICES**



**APPENDIX A**  
**TIMELINE**

## TIMELINE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>March 9, 1942</b>	<b>Birth</b>	<b>Parents: Beurena and Sammy George Pool; Sharecroppers</b>
<b>1946-1953</b>	<b>Childhood, Recognized Personal love for math</b>	<b>Worked in the cotton fields of South Georgia</b>
<b>Spring 1959</b>	<b>Graduated high school T.J. Elder High School</b>	<b>Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in class of 66 students</b>
<b>Spring 1959</b>	<b>Death: sibling Sister, Elnora Poole</b>	<b>Challenged decision to leave for college.</b>
<b>1959-1963</b>	<b>Entered college: Savannah State College Graduated: 1963</b>	<b>Major: Math Education Met Lucious Baldwin, Husband</b>
<b>1963-1965</b>	<b>Hired as Math Teacher John Lewis High School Schley County, Georgia</b>	<b>First teaching position Segregated Schools</b>
<b>1965-1967</b>	<b>Math teacher, Georgia Marshall Junior High School Columbus, Georgia</b>	<b>Moved to Columbus,  (Husband's hometown) Meets principal who makes next career move</b>
<b>1967-1968</b>	<b>Math teacher, Spencer Junior High School Columbus, Georgia</b>	<b>Hired by Previous colleague from Marshall Junior High</b>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>1969</b>	<b>Birth of daughter, Geri required</b>	<b>Maternity leave was Students could not see Teacher pregnant</b>
<b>1969-1973</b>	<b>Math teacher, Hardaway High School Columbus, Georgia</b>	<b>Returned to work to be placed at a newly integrated school</b>
<b>1973-1978</b>	<b>Math and CVAE teacher Central Gwinnett High School Gwinnett County Schools</b>	<b>Only black adult in school building for 7 years</b>
<b>1978-1980</b>	<b>Appointed assistant principal Central Gwinnett High School</b>	<b>First black administrator Gwinnett County Schools</b>
<b>1980-1984</b>	<b>Appointed principal Buford City Middle School</b>	<b>First black administrator Buford City Schools</b>
<b>1984-1994</b>	<b>Appointed superintendent, Buford City Schools</b>	<b>Georgia's first black female superintendent</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>Mother passed away shortly after retirement</b>
<b>1994-Current</b>	<b>Principal Hopewell Christian Academy Private Church School</b>	<b>Beauty continues her legacy in education.</b>

**APPENDIX B**  
**FIGURES**

## Black Woman Is Superintendent



**By Lily Grace Dozier**

There are 187 school system superintendents in Georgia. There are only seven women among them. And Beauty Baldwin is the first black woman to serve as a school system superintendent in the state of Georgia. She took the position as superintendent of the Buford City Schools in Gwinnett County on July 1. But she has spent her entire 21-year career in education and was well-prepared for the job of looking after 1,400 students in three schools and administering an annual budget of \$3 million.

Beginning her fifth year with the small independent system, Baldwin took over in the middle of a \$684,000 renovation project at the elementary school. Naturally, when asked what her goals were, the first one was the successful and timely completion of the renovation. Monies for the system come from three sources: federal and state governments, and 100% of Buford City taxes (approximately \$1 million).

Upgrading the system academically is her second goal, Baldwin says. She and the school faculties will be seeking ways for students to perform better, teaching them how to take the tests such as exit exams and SATs. Baldwin feels that the teachers are excellent, but that they should be accountable for how the students perform so she favors such measures as the Teacher Certification Test (T.C.T.) and the paperwork and constant supervision teachers have.

Thirdly, Baldwin wants to see a Community Advisory Committee functioning in the system. A community suggestion resulted in computers and instruction in their use in the system's schools. And number four is to have a fulltime counselor in each school. There are presently counselors in the middle and high schools, but Baldwin seeks one for the elementary school also.

Baldwin discussed the variety her new job affords her. She deals with such projects as the renovation and building and grounds maintenance, faculty, curriculum, parents, and community.

Baldwin also discussed the make-up of their board: of the five members, one is female, and one black. The board chairman is also chairman of the city commission. The other four members are elected. Close to 15 percent of the system's faculty are black, while nearly 25 percent of the students are black. But Baldwin says that a more important statistic is that 33 percent of the students are on the free lunch program. She says that there are economic differences in the community but that the people are proud of

Gwinnett's Beauty Baldwin is head of Buford System.

See Baldwin, p. 19

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### BALDWIN

their independent system and want to maintain it.

"If all we had to do was educate the children, our job would be much simpler. But some parents expect the schools to do everything for the child; they have abdicated a lot of responsibility and consequently some of the rewards of being a parent," says Baldwin. And she knows about those rewards and responsibilities first-hand with her own fifteen-year-old daughter.

Baldwin spent 14 years in the classroom, teaching math and vocational training, and only three are required before getting into top administration.

from 1

mandated third grade tests and for 10th grade exit exam.

Beauty Baldwin is a poised, self-confident and obviously dedicated educator and administrator. Her love of the students and concern for the quality of their education came through in the first few minutes of conversation. She is the Buford City School System's biggest promoter, always looking for better ways to help the system such as the possibility of a foundation.

There was a handwritten notation on the back of a copy of Baldwin's resume that says it all: "the fact that I am black has no bearing on the position."

Figure 4: Black Woman is Superintendent, Atlanta Women's News, October 1, 1984.

# She Had Tough Row to Hoe

## Sharecropper's Daughter at Helm Of Buford Schools

By Wanda R. Yancey  
Staff Writer

**W**HEN BEAUTY P. BALDWIN walks into board rooms and classrooms across the county to lecture on educational reforms, she lays out her plans with the confidence characteristic of someone used to butting heads with the best of them.

Colleagues say she doesn't leave without getting her way.

Mrs. Baldwin is charming and charismatic, but beneath it all, she's tough enough to have made the difficult trek from sharecropper's daughter to Georgia's first black female school superintendent. As head of the Buford system, she is the most powerful black official in Gwinnett.

"It was a challenge," Mrs. Baldwin said recently, sitting in her modest wood-paneled office. "It was very difficult — being black and female. But like most challenges I learned to conquer them."

In this small town, two-thirds white and dominated by what many call a good ol' boy network, Mrs. Baldwin, 47, said she hasn't had any problems.

"When I took this post, they saw that a woman could be a leader," she said. "I learned a long time ago you have to earn your way and earn your respect. I have 25 years of experience and I think I have earned respect."

"I can confidently say I have the total support of my [School Board] and the community."

By training, she is a mathematician, with a bachelor's degree in math from Savannah State College and a master's in education administration from the University of Georgia. In 1967, she was one of three blacks teaching at a predominantly white Columbus high school.

Eight years later, Mrs. Baldwin moved to Gwinnett where she taught math at Central Gwinnett High School. By 1979, she was the school's assistant principal.

She joined Buford's school system in 1980 as principal of the middle school.

When Mrs. Baldwin took over this 1,400-student school system in 1984, Buford students had lower achievement scores than children in Gwinnett County schools, which were praised nationally for high marks and progressive programs.

But five years later, Mrs. Baldwin has worked to raise students' scores by implementing programs designed to enhance math and grammar skills. She is proud that achievement test scores are on the rise in Buford, where one-third of the students qualify for a free lunch and 26 percent are black.

Since 1982, scores on the Basic Skills Test are up systemwide by an average of 20 points. And last year, the number of sixth-graders who passed a state mandated essay test increased by 17.1 percent.

"I think we compare very favorably against the Gwinnett school system," Mrs. Baldwin said, but noted that Buford, a three-school system, should not be compared to larger systems.

Her efforts to improve the system have not gone unnoticed.



STEVE DEAL/SM

Dara Daniel (left) and Guila Poole spend some time with Beauty P. Baldwin while the children do classwork at Buford Elementary.



*"They need to know that despite the odds, they can make something of themselves."*

— Beauty P. Baldwin

In 1985, she was appointed by Gov. Joe Frank Harris to a task force to devise a career ladder for teachers under the Quality Basic Education Act.

"She's the kind of person who is only concerned about getting the job done," said Barbara Fricks, vice chairman of the Buford Board of Education. "She doesn't care who gets the credit

as long as the job is done correctly."

"We have had many disagreements on the School Board but I think friction is necessary. Usually she will get her way, but we know she has the interest of those children at heart."

Last spring, while about 55 percent of the system's 1989 graduating class went on to some form of higher education or the military, 10 percent dropped out.

But that's 10 percent too many lost to teenage pregnancy and other social ills, Mrs. Baldwin said. The school system is trying to implement a program to address the problems of dropouts — socially and educationally, she said.

Mrs. Baldwin is also implementing a Head Start program to smooth preschoolers' entry into school. The program, new to Buford, will provide preschool education, recreation and nutrition for 65 children.

"We see this as a very critical need," Mrs. Baldwin said. "We talk about the dropout rate, but programs like Head Start help to prevent it. Once students are motivated about school they will do well."

Although Mrs. Baldwin would like to see all of her students attend college she knows it is a high goal.

"We have our share of low-income and our share of one-parent families," she said. "We realize it is a struggle for many of these students to just graduate. But Buford is a very proud community and very self-sufficient. We

take care of everyone."

Whether Mrs. Baldwin succeeds by her friendly smile or her demand for perfection is unclear. But the fact remains that she is building Buford City Schools and is continuing to expand the system's scope.

"She is a leader and a tremendous asset to the school and to Buford," said City Commissioner Phillip Beard, a former school board chairman. "Everyone loves Beauty Baldwin."

But that respect didn't come easily — Mrs. Baldwin said she slowly earned it, partly by implementing an open-door policy.

"I personally handle a lot of the situations that come up," she said. "If a parent or student want to come by with a complaint or just to talk, my door is always open."

Almost any day of the week she can be found addressing schoolchildren, telling them that there is no excuse for not succeeding.

"I tell them all the time that I was a poor sharecropper's daughter with zero money," Mrs. Baldwin said. "I let them know that I chopped cotton in the hot summer sun, that I worked in the kitchen during college and sent all of my money home to my parents."

"They don't believe me when I tell them I grew up poor, but I tell them anyway," she said. "They need to know that despite the odds, they can make something of themselves."

Figure 5: Tough Row to Hoe, Atlanta Journal and Constitution- Date Unknown.

# Beauty Baldwin sees challenge, opportunity as new school leader

By Gail Hawkins  
Staff writer

"It's a great opportunity, a real opportunity," Beauty Baldwin enthused last week as she reflected on her recent appointment to head the Buford city school system, the county's only independent school system. Mrs. Baldwin, currently principal at Buford Middle School, will begin the process of moving her desk supplies over the superintendent's office with the stepping down

of Jim Puckett as Buford's Superintendent July 1.

"Jim Puckett has put into motion a very good system. He has kept all the principals informed on what's been taking place," she said. "Because of his leadership, my transition will be an easy one."

Not that Mrs. Baldwin plans any radical moves once she occupies the superintendent's chair. She is planning on a full year of learning the job and carrying on those programs

that Puckett has put into motion.

"I want to work on getting the curriculum guides finished and in the hands of all teachers," she said. "That is high on my list." The revision of curriculum guides was begun by Puckett and will represent a system wide revision when completed.

The second major program that Mrs. Baldwin will work on as superintendent will be the continuation of the teacher in-service

program. Growing from no program to one that encompasses every teacher in the system is pointed to with pride by Puckett and Mrs. Baldwin. The in-service effort stresses time on task, or ways classroom and planning time can best be used by the instructional staff.

"I'm a firm believer in time on task measures," Mrs. Baldwin said. The whole program is based on the "Excellence in Education" report and based on the report; priority areas were selected for school and system-wide improvements.

The in-service education program is a natural followup to the various school priorities, she explained. "An example would be Buford Middle's priority areas. The first area identified was discipline, student behavior. The teachers instituted the WHO Club and it's a big success in this (discipline) area," Mrs. Baldwin said. The schools' other priorities, learner involvement and building pupil self confidence serve as the basis for the in-service program for staff. Each school has identified its goals and the staff have developed their in-service around them.

Another factor that she cites as making the transition smooth is the support of the administrative staff and teachers. "The board has notified me that the administrative staff will be the same next year, and they have offered complete support. I'll depend on them," Mrs. Baldwin said.

Beyond the challenge and opportunity of leading the Buford City School system toward excellence, Mrs. Baldwin is aware of the other roles she will be assuming as the first black woman to be appointed school superintendent in the state.

Some of her time will be spent as a good will "ambassador" for the school system. "I want the whole state of Georgia to know this: there is an excellent school system in the city of Buford. That's part of my job," she said. "I'll be working every day to improve the system, and with the support of the board of education and the city, I'll strive to make the system better and then tell others about it."

Mrs. Baldwin has taught in four different settings during her educational career. She began teaching in a small rural school near Americus where parents would bring lunch food to school for their favorite teachers. From there she moved to Columbus where she taught in an inner city junior high school. She loved that situation although the lifestyle of the students was far different than that of rural Georgia. From that position Mrs. Baldwin moved to a high school where population was mostly housing project kids. Her last teaching assignment was at the other end of the economic scale in a high school serving an affluent community.

"There is a similar thread among all my experiences in education," Mrs. Baldwin noted. "Kids want to be recognized. If you let them know you care about them, they will learn. Creating that environment is what I want to do," she said.

Mrs. Baldwin plans to stay a superintendent "as long as I am functional". After her year of learning the job, she may return to class herself and work on obtaining a doctorate in education. "I've always gone to school. After next year, I'll probably work on that degree in my spare time."

She is a member of the National Educational Association, the Georgia NEA and the Gwinnett County Association of Educators. In addition she is serving a two-year appointment on the Private Industry Council (P.I.C.) group in Gwinnett. She is a member of the National Supervision and Curriculum Association and is this year's president of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals. She is a member of the statewide Georgia Advisory Council on Education, appointed by

Continued on P. 5



Gail Hawkins/Staff

incoming Buford School Superintendent Beauty Baldwin, left, gets firsthand instruction from students in Mrs. Murphy's sixth grade class on how to interpret computers. Giving her pointers are (left to right) Gerry Mardingill, Terry Maddox, Heather Dilla and Crystal Kelsey. Mrs. Baldwin begins serving as superintendent on July 1.

## Beauty Baldwin

the state board of education. Recently Mrs. Baldwin was made a member of the Gwinnett County Advisory Council for Vocational Education, a panel of experts who will oversee the education development for the new Gwinnett Vocational

Tech School. Mrs. Baldwin, her husband and family live in Lilburn. Mr. Baldwin is assistant principal at Cent Gwinnett High School in Lawrenceville. Education is a family affair. "When we're talking about education, we're talking about child-

ren. All children have the same needs, the same problems. And all kids achieve with the proper environment. That's the challenge and opportunity I have here."

To place a classified ad

Figure 6: New School Leader, Gwinnett Daily News, Date Unknown.

## a legacy in Buford



*"I congratulate [students] when they are winning and hug them when they lose. The kids know me. I get into the schools very regularly and try to attend as many activities as I can attend. I do have a lot of contact with the kids."*

like that. They just have a lot of pride in their schools."

During the years, Baldwin has found there is much more to being a school superintendent than academics and brick-and-mortar. She has made a point to attend football games, baseball games and other school events. She has enjoyed them all, especially having close contact with the students, she said. Baldwin even has returned to the classroom to teach when a teacher is absent.

The approach has personalized education for Baldwin.

"I congratulate them when they are winning and hug them when they lose," she said. "The kids know me. I get into the schools very regularly and try to attend as many activities as I can attend. I do have a lot of contact with the kids."

Baldwin is pleased that her retirement will give her more time to take part in her many community interests. These have included working with the Red Cross; the Big Brother/Big Sister organization and the Coalition of Health and Human Services.

Baldwin also keeps a busy schedule with her church, Hopewell Baptist in Norcross. At Hopewell, Baldwin is chairman of the finance committee, chairman of the deaconesses ministry, treasurer for pastor's aid and a Sunday School teacher. She says she loves Hopewell and enjoys it all.

And the milestone in Baldwin's life has been the recent creation of a scholarship in her name by her sorority at Savannah State College, Alpha Kappa Alpha. The group began its first chapter in Gwinnett County about 18 months ago.

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Beauty P. Baldwin Scholarship will be awarded to students planning to attend college and who have been accepted.

"[The scholarship] will be based mostly on need," Baldwin said. "Last year, it went to a young lady from Buford to buy her books. We hope someday to have a couple of big scholarships for seniors in high school."

Baldwin, who said she has known she wanted to be a math teacher since she was a fourth grade student in her native town of Deep Step, near Sandersville, feels blessed that she has reached such high echelons of the educational system. But classroom teaching was meaningful.

Before becoming Buford superintendent, Baldwin's career took her to Schley County in western Georgia to teach math, then to Columbus where she taught at Colum-

bus Junior High School and at Spencer and Hardaway high schools.

She later was on the staff at Central Gwinnett High School for seven years: five years as a teacher and two as assistant principal. In Buford, she was middle school principal for four years before coming to her present job. Baldwin and her husband have one daughter, Geri Mitchell, a CPA with Norrell Services, the temporary employment services agency.

During her long career, Baldwin said she always has believed in putting everything possible into her work. She is happy that the learning quotient in Buford has been reflected recently in higher test scores.

"The children are in technical preparation or are college-bound," she said. "We're expecting more out of the kids, and they're doing what they're supposed to do."

Still, the thought of leaving has its poignant moments. The Buford system, with its three schools, is like a family, she said.

"You know when it's time; education is not easy," Baldwin said. "But, I'm excited that I'm leaving when the test scores are up and we have all new facilities and the best teachers and best principals around."

Figure 7: Legacy in Buford, Gwinnett Daily News, Date Unknown.



**APPENDIX C**  
**RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When and where were you born? (RQ1)
2. What was your childhood like and how was education emphasized. (RQ1)
3. Where did you complete your undergraduate and graduate work? (RQ1)
4. What certifications and licenses do you hold? (RQ1)
5. Who did you look up to locally and historically? (RQ2)
6. Who were your heroes? (RQ2)
7. Are you married? If so, when did you marry and did you have children?  
(RQ1)
8. When did you decide to enter into education? (RQ2)
9. What positions did you hold prior to becoming a superintendent? (RQ3)
10. Did you actively seek the role of superintendent on your own? (RQ3)
11. Who were key figures in guiding your career? (RQ2,RQ3)
12. Did you have strong community support during your educational career?  
(RQ3)
13. Describe the type of community that you served as a superintendent (political environment, socio-economic status, demographics, race, and educational status)? (RQ3)
14. What was your leadership style during your tenure as superintendent? (RQ2)
15. Who were your right-hand people? (RQ2,RQ3)
16. Who were your foes? (RQ2,RQ3)
17. What professional obstacles did you experience along your career path as a female superintendent and as a female superintendent of color? (RQ2,RQ3)

18. What practices, if any, were used to identify and mentor aspiring female superintendents? (RQ2)
19. Describe any career barriers you experienced that could have hindered your access to the superintendency? (RQ3)
20. What strategies did you use to overcome your barriers? (RQ3)
21. Were there any experiences that you encountered which made the superintendency more accessible? (RQ3)
22. How has the role of superintendent impacted your reflections on women of color and their access to the superintendency? (RQ2,RQ3)
23. What recommendations would you offer to women of color who aspire for the superintendency? (RQ2,RQ3)

**APPENDIX D**  
**IRB APPROVAL LETTER**

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Lisa Nicole Herring  
4058 Metro Way  
Macon, GA-31204

**CC:** Dr. Meta Harris  
P.O. Box-8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 22, 2007

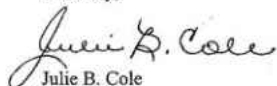
**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H07133**, and titled "**The Journey to the Superintendency: How Georgia's First, African-American, Female Superintendent Journeyed to Empowerment**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs