

State Superintendents of the Year: Reflections of Successful Practice

Robin Hardey Mentzer

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Dr. John F. Eller, Committee Chair

Dr. John A. Banbury, Committee Member

Dr. Theodore B. Creighton, Committee Member)

Dr. Walter D. Mallory, Committee Member

March 5, 2008

Falls Church, Virginia

Keywords: Superintendent, School Board, State and Federal Mandates, Tenure

State Superintendents of the Year: Reflections of Successful Practice

Robin Hardey Mentzer

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted involving the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) State Superintendents of the Year to gain information related to their perceptions and strategies for success and longevity. The study examined the factors of personal traits, school board relationships and current instructional issues such as No Child Left Behind and IDEIA to determine which, if any, contributed to their longevity and success of tenure. Surveys were mailed to all 150 State Superintendents of the Year, as identified by AASA. Descriptive were analyzed to examine trends and possible correlations. Strategies used to build board-superintendents relationships and deal with educational mandates, their perceptions of the effectiveness of their boards, the impact of educational mandates, and personal and professional characteristics of these superintendents were found.

DEDICATION

To my husband Ron and our children; without their support this project would never
have been completed;

To my sisters, Pam, Karen and Bridget, whose faith in me has been a constant
source of strength and;

To my parents, for always encouraging me to follow my dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When one begins a doctoral program, one never knows the events that will transpire between the first course and the final defense. Completing this degree was a two-decade process. Without the support of so many, I would not have been able to accomplish this dream.

In particular, I would like to thank my committee chairperson, Dr. John Eller. I greatly admire his dedication, professionalism, and never-ending enthusiasm, which has kept me moving forward to completion of this study. And to my committee members: Dr. Ted Creighton, Dr. John Banbury and Dr. Walt Mallory, for sharing their experiences, providing their insights and their dedication to this study.

My appreciation and deep gratitude to the staff of the American Association of School Administrators, especially Mr. Bruce Hunter, for their assistance and support in the development of this study. Mr. Hunter's wit and guidance from the beginning of this study to its completion helped me gain insight to the unique individuals who are, the State Superintendents of the Year.

To the State Superintendents of the Year, for their interests in this study, their words of encouragement and feedback, have allowed me understand and appreciate their deep commitment to the children in our country. Their recognition of excellence in education is merited.

To colleagues and friends in the Northern Virginia Cohort especially Tony and Frances who have shared this journey and enriched my perspective.

To Justin, Kristina, Colleen, Andrew, Bridget and Ross: your collective whole is a tremendous source of strength and pride. I love you all. To my sister Karen, who has read each word, more than once and my sister Pam who has provided her skill in design and layout of the survey. To my husband Ron, who has always believed in me and always guided me with timely advice and support, this undertaking would not have been possible without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Assumptions.....	8
Limitations.....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Organization of the Study.....	9
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	10
Superintendent Tenure Today.....	10
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Vulnerability Theory.....	13
Dissatisfaction Theory.....	14
Cumulative Theory.....	14
Contingency Theory.....	15

Factors Affecting Tenure.....	15
Personal and Professional Characteristics	15
Age.....	16
Race	17
Gender.....	17
Highest Degree Held.....	17
Educational Issues of Mandates	18
Superintendent Perceptions of Mandates.....	18
Strategies Utilized by Superintendents to Meet the Challenges of Mandates.....	19
The Superintendent and the School Board	22
Superintendent and School Board Relationships.....	22
Strategies Superintendents Use to Improve Effectiveness of the Board ..	23
Summary.....	25
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	28
Research Questions.....	28
Selection of Participants	29
Instrumentation.....	29
Content Validity.....	29
Data Collection	31
Data Analysis.....	32
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND RESULTS	34
Review of the Study	34
Survey Population	34
Research Question One.....	37

Research Question Two.....	43
Responding to the Federal Mandates NCLB and IDEIA	43
Perceptions and Challenges Related to Special Education.....	47
Strategies Superintendents Utilize to Improve the Board’s Understanding of Mandates	50
Research Question Three:.....	52
Superintendents’ Perception of their Working Relationship with the Board.....	52
Strategies Utilized to Improve the Effectiveness of the Board.....	58
Summary.....	63
CHAPTER V SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	66
Summary of the Study	67
Discussion.....	69
Research Question One.....	69
Research Question Two.....	72
Research Question Three	77
Implications for Practice.....	85
Recommendations for Practice.....	87
Recommendations for Future Research.....	88
Conclusions	88
REFERENCES	90
APPENDIX A CONSTRUCTS OF STUDY	97
APPENDIX B TRUTH TABLES.....	99
APPENDIX C HUMAN SUBJECTS FORM.....	102
Appendix D AASA LETTER	103
Appendix E INTRODUCTORY LETTER.....	104

Appendix F STATE SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE YEAR SURVEY105
Appendix G SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS TO SURVEY QUESTIONS.....115

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Gender Frequencies	37
Table 2 Race and Ethnicity Frequencies.....	38
Table 3 Age Frequencies	38
Table 4 Age Descriptive Analysis	39
Table 5 District Size Frequencies	39
Table 6 District Type Frequencies.....	40
Table 7 Years as a Superintendent Frequencies	40
Table 8 Years as Superintendent Descriptive Analysis	41
Table 9 Number of Dstricts As Superintendent Frequencies.....	41
Table 10 Number of Districts As Superintendent Descriptive Analysis	42
Table 11 Highest Degree Earned Frequencies.....	42
Table 12 Currently a Superintendent Frequencies.....	43
Table 13 Superintendents' Perceptions of the Impact of NCLB on Public Education Frequencies	44
Table 14 Superintendents' Ratings of Challenges Posed by NCLB, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	45
Table15 Changes/Improvement to NCLB, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	46
Table 16 Challenges Related to Special Education, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	48
Table 17 IDEIA and Degree of Challenge to a District, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis.....	49
Table 18 Effectiveness of Strategies for Educating the Board about Performance Level of the District, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	51
Table 19 Characterization of Board's Understanding of Federal Mandates, Frequencies.	52
Table 20 Superintendents Working Relationship with the Board, Frequencies	53

Table 21 Strategies to Build Positive Relationship with the Board, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	54
Table 22 Initiating District Policy, Frequencies	55
Table 23 Board Unethical Behavior, Frequencies	56
Table 24 Effectiveness of Strategies for Promoting Board's Image, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	57
Table 25 Strategies Found Useful to Improve the Board's Level of Effectiveness, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis	59
Table 26 Hours Spent Communicating with the Board	60
Table 27 Strategies for Effectiveness in Communicating with the Board, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis.....	61
Table 28 Frequency of Strategies used in Communicating with the Board, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis.....	62
Table B1 Instructional Leadership.....	99
Table B2 Political Leadership.....	99
Table B3 Communication	100
Table B4 Visionary	100
Table B5 Leadership.....	101

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The superintendency is a position that faces greater criticism and challenges than ever before (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). In addition, it is a position that includes increasing demands and pressures while having little security, greater public attention and fewer position perks than similar jobs in the private sector (Byrd, Drew, & Johnson 2005). Due to the job conditions, current superintendents are concerned about the future ability of school districts to fill superintendent vacancies (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella 2000; Hoyle et. al., 2005).

Superintendents today are in a role very different from their predecessors of a decade ago according to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (2000). Current conditions of the job include pressure from community groups, the never-ending struggle to acquire financial resources to meet educational goals, eliminating the minority-majority achievement gap and state and federal mandates with standards and accountability measures that add stress and complexity to the job (Glass & Franceschini, 2006). These issues and others increase the demands on the superintendency. In a rapidly changing environment superintendents are required to engage in program evaluation, school improvement, create a sense of community and build morale in a time of transition (Levine, 2005).

Improvement of instruction requires consistency of purpose and stable leadership over a sustained period if reforms are to be successful. Successful reforms require five years or more of a superintendent's focus and direction before reaching fruition (Fullan, 2002; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Thus, if tenures of two or three years are as widespread as reported, comprehensive school reforms will be an intangible goal (Natkin, Cooper, Fusarelli, Alborano, Padilla & Ghosh, 2002).

Tenure of superintendents is a concern for all involved with education and is an issue with potentially great significance to school improvement. In urban school systems, tenure has been a topic of concern for a long time (Lutz & Iannacone, 1986). Eighty-eight percent of sitting superintendents responding to the survey by the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) (2003) predicted a shortage of viable candidates due to demands of the job. AASA (1999) noted fewer people are applying for positions and more are leaving the field because of abuse and blame.

Other researchers believe that the tenure is longer than the two or three years as reported by the Council of Great City Schools (GCS) (2003). Supporting earlier findings by Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), Byrd, et al., (2005) concluded that superintendent tenure is between five and six years. Glass et al., 2000 report of tenure is slightly below the prior study, the 1992, *Study of the American School Superintendency: America's education leaders in a time of reform* found tenure to be 6.4 years. Little quantitative research exists detailing the characteristics that contribute to the longevity of superintendents. Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass, (2005) reported that the success or failure of superintendents (length of tenure) is a subject of ambiguity and not thoroughly researched.

Background of the Study

Superintendent tenure has become a growing concern among superintendents and schools boards. CASE (2003) reported that superintendents are dealing with many more rigorous and complex issues than ever before. They describe the factors inhibiting superintendents today include: (a) fiscal resources, (b) meeting state and federal mandates, and (c) too many demands on their time. Orr (2006) reiterated these and other factors that contribute to the superintendent shortage. Despite these challenges, 82% of the superintendents polled said if they had it to do all over, again they would still seek the top position. This result echoed in the AASA *Mid-Decade Study* (2006) with 84% superintendents indicating that they would choose the job again.

According to Cooper et al., (2000), the public perception of the superintendency is that of a job so daunting in demands that few individuals are willing to pursue the challenge. The job has developed over time to encompass many challenges; a role that calls for strength greater than mere human knowledge and experience (Hoyle, 2002).

A great deal of the information for this research was derived from *the Study of the American School Superintendency 2000: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium* (Glass, et al., 2000) which is a study conducted every 10 years by the American Association of School Administrators. Additional information came from a review of the unprecedented *Mid-Decade Study* power point presented at the AASA National Conference in New Orleans, in March 2007. The researcher used data charts and survey questions from these studies to help draft possible research questions for this study.

The National Education Association initially sponsored these national surveys on the American superintendency in 1920 and in 1930. The purpose of the study was to compile

demographic data, profiles of superintendents, and superintendent opinions on issues relevant to the field of education at that time. The studies also served to establish benchmark data to compare the superintendency over time, in order to establish patterns in the position. In 1949, the AASA took over the administration of the study. Since then, the studies have been produced every 10 years and have become known as the *Ten-Year-Studies*; providing a leading source of comprehensive information pertaining to the state of the school superintendency.

In 1999, the data for the AASA 2000 study was gathered. The 2000 sample was the largest of any of the *Ten-Year-Studies* with responses of 2,262 of the estimated possible 13,500 superintendents. During 2006, the *Mid-Decade Study* containing a representative sample of 1,328 superintendents examined superintendents' perceptions of current instructional issues.

The researcher questioned to what degree these data reflected the State Superintendents of the Year. The Superintendent of the Year program honors the contributions and leadership of public school superintendents, who have been selected by their peers. This group of individuals represents highly qualified, successful leadership from rural, urban, and suburban districts, both large and small, who have demonstrated a repeated pattern of success despite the challenges in the position.

Statement of the Problem

The length of superintendent tenure has shortened, suggesting higher turnover in the office (Glass et al., 2000). Research indicates that reforms require five years or more of a superintendent's focus and attention (Fullan, 2002). If strides in education are to be made, it is imperative that leadership is sustained. Several recent studies highlight the growing concern regarding longevity/success of tenure for superintendents (Cooper et al., 2000; CASE, 2003, CUBE 2000, Byrd et al., 2005). Concerns over changing community, school board politics, and Federal and state mandates have school systems looking for the ideal candidate during a time when the pool of qualified, available candidates is shrinking (Cooper et al., 2000, Glass et al., 2000).

Many factors appear to influence the tenure of superintendents. There is a need, therefore, to study superintendents with respect to (a) their personal and professional characteristics, (b) the instructional issues arising from the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA, (c) the strategies utilized by superintendents to meet the challenges of the mandates, (d) the superintendents'

relationship with school boards and (e) strategies utilized to work effectively with their boards to determine if these have a significant effect on longevity of tenure in the superintendency.

This study is designed to explore and determine the relationship of these variables in order to provide insight to future superintendents, current superintendents, school boards, and support associations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the procedures used to conduct this study to ascertain what factors contribute success and longevity of position for State Superintendents of the Year with respect to: (a) their personal and professional characteristics, (b) the instructional issues arising from the federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), (c) the strategies utilized by superintendents to meet the challenges of the mandates, (d) the superintendents' relationship with school boards and (e) the strategies utilized to work effectively with their boards. This study was designed to explore and determine the relationship of these variables in order to provide insight for future superintendents, current superintendents, school boards, and support associations.

The following questions will be researched in this study:

- 1) What are the personal and professional characteristics of State Superintendents of the Year with respect to, age, gender, race/ ethnicity, degree held and years of service as a superintendent?
- 2 A) What are perceptions of State Superintendents of the Year regarding the challenges of the Federal mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and the re-authorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA)?
- 2 B) What strategies do the State Superintendents' of the Year utilize to meet the challenges of Federal mandates?
- 3 A) How do State Superintendents of the Year perceive their working relationship with the board?
- 3 B) What strategies do the State Superintendents' of the Year utilize to improve the effectiveness of the board?

Significance of the Study

Since 1983 the most intense, comprehensive and sustained effort to improve education in the United States history has occurred (Bjork, Keedy & Gurley, 2003). The scope, complexity and rigor of change initiatives promoted by national commissions and the Federal Government during this period have increased the demands on Superintendents (Brunner, Grogan & Bjork, 2002) National attention to superintendent turnover and shortened tenure has created concern in education. This concern pertaining to the length of superintendent tenure is reflected most notably in cities and large urban areas where mean tenure is reported as 2.75 years (GCS, 2003). The possibility of decreased tenure for superintendents is disconcerting considering that the ultimate success of a school division begins with the leadership and vision of this most visible individual.

This research provides information to understand the personal and professional characteristics of State Superintendents of the Year, as well as the instructional issues pertaining to the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA and superintendents perceptions of and strategies utilized to work effectively with the board. This information could be helpful to assist superintendents, especially those new to the position, gain insight into the strategies utilized by this elite group.

This study differed from the AASA (2000) study in that it focused entirely on the State Superintendents of the Year for 2005, 2006 and 2007 and allowed the research to identify and report perceptions and strategies utilized by this highly effective population. These findings will apply beyond the study, shape professional development for superintendents and add to the body of knowledge regarding the position of superintendent and the practices of this select group of professionals.

Glass (2007) stated, Rapid changes in education prompted the need for a mid-decade study to understand the impact of current changes on the superintendency (Electronic Communication, March 2007 with Dr. Glass).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used:

AASA

The American Association of School Administrators is a national education organization that supports and promotes administrators throughout the United States

Characteristics

For the purpose of this study, a characteristic is a quality or feature of a person that is typical or serves to distinguish a person, groups, or an item from others.

Federal and State Mandates

In this study, this refers to The Secondary and Elementary Education Act of 2001, typically referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB is the latest revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Since that, time significant legislation has made large changes in education and have changed the culture of how school districts carry out their mission of educating students. This act was signed into law in January of 2002 with the specific purpose and intent to ensure that each child in America is able to meet the high learning standards of the state where he or she lives.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). On December 3, 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended. The reauthorized statute called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and is known as IDEIA 2004. The new reauthorized law (IDEIA 2004) includes significant changes from the previous authorization in 1997.

Longevity

This term, as utilized throughout this study, defined as the amount of time a superintendent spends as a district superintendent. This term is synonymous with the term tenure in this study.

Rural district

A district serving students in communities of less than 10,000 residents or those in remote areas beyond the geographical boundaries of a specific community.

School Board

The term, school board, refers to the governing unit in a district that serves in partnership with the superintendent managing the business of the district.

School Division

The term, school division, refers to the governing unit established by law through which local school system is administered. The division serves a city, township, or county and is a synonymous term with school districts used in educational literature.

Suburban school district

A district serving an area with a distinct identity within a larger urban community

Successful

In this study, this refers to a superintendent identified as a State Superintendent of the Year, as designated by AASA. The Superintendent of the Year program honors the contributions and leadership of public school superintendents.

Superintendent

State constitutions vary in defining and prescribing the powers and duties of the superintendent. In this study the term, superintendent, refers to the chief executive officer of a local school division in a state. The term division superintendent, school superintendent, and superintendent of schools are used synonymously in this study.

Tenure

The length of time a superintendent spends in a position as chief education officer of a school district.

Urban school district

A district located within all or part of the boundaries of a major metropolitan area.

Variable

Any entity that can take on different values (Trochim, W., 2001).

Assumptions

The following assumptions regarding this study are:

- 1) The personal characteristics relating to the superintendent are identifiable and can be measured.
- 2) Factors contributing to superintendent longevity and success can be analyzed and compared with one another.
- 3) Some factors related to superintendent longevity can have a positive impact and others will have a negative impact.
- 4) All participants will reply to the survey with honesty and objectivity.

Limitations

- 1) False assumptions could result in attempting comparisons of the data beyond the original scope and intent.
- 2) For research question three, the characterization of the school board is based on the perception of the superintendent. It is understood that individual board members may be characterized differently.
- 3) Participation in this study was limited to the superintendents that responded to the survey instrument.
- 4) There was no control as to whether the respondents received on-line assistance while taking the survey.

5) This study was limited in participation to the 97 of the 147 State Superintendents of the Year for the years of 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Delimitations

- 1) This study was limited to the variables that make up the survey instrument.
- 2) The researcher relied on information provided by AASA for identifying the State Superintendents of the Year for the past three years. These superintendents were the subjects of the study.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I includes the setting, background information, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, definition of terms, significance of the study, assumptions, and limitations and delimitations.

Chapter II presents a review of related literature in the area of superintendent tenure (longevity). Specifically, the present state of tenure in our country, as well as theories related to tenure. The second portion of this chapter reviews several factors that may affect tenure.

Chapter III describes the methodology for this study. Included in this chapter is the type of research conducted, population and selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, and the procedures utilized to analyze the data collected, research design and summary.

Chapter IV presents the finding of the research. The chapter provides a comprehensive presentation of the data analysis.

Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations for the study. It also contains implications of the study and recommendations for future studies in the area of superintendent tenure.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following review of the literature is organized into two major sections. The first section of the literature review examines superintendent tenure and its current state in the twenty first century. This section also reviews some of the theories regarding superintendent tenure. The second section reviews different factors contributing to longevity of tenure. These factors include (a) their personal and professional characteristics, (b) the instructional issues arising from the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA, (c) the strategies utilized by superintendents to meet the challenges of the mandates, (d) the superintendents' relationship with school boards and (e) strategies utilized to work effectively with their boards to determine if these have a significant effect on longevity of tenure in the superintendency. This second section also presents both the perspectives of the superintendents and the strategies they utilize to achieve their goals.

Superintendent Tenure Today

Byrd et al., (2005), provide the most recent quantitative study on longevity of tenure in the superintendency. This study focused on superintendents in Texas and highlighted factors contributing to superintendent turnover. The results revealed similar findings to nationwide studies completed on superintendent tenure. Byrd et al., demonstrated that strained relationships with the school board president, not being able to get decisions made at the board level, and superintendent - school board communication and relations were significant factors in determining the length of tenure among Texas public school superintendents. As the level of difficulty increased between the superintendent and school board president's working relationship, the odds of a superintendent staying in the same district decreased by 22.2%.

Natkin, et al., (2002) focused on the longevity of 292 superintendents from North Carolina, and random districts across the United States. These researchers found that superintendent tenure averaged 6 to 7 years, regardless of the district size. Factors significantly related to superintendent longevity were the extent of school board involvement in management, support for needed construction, district poverty level, consolidation of school systems, and a superintendent's post-graduate education. Natkin, et al., did reveal that micromanagement by

school governance, lack of support for construction of new facilities and high poverty of students enrolled in the district lead to shorter longevity of tenure. The researchers found that superintendent tenure had not increased markedly since 1975, and that “revolving-door superintendency” was not as widespread as once perceived.

The Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) (2003) surveyed superintendents to investigate: (a) turnover in the profession, (b) how best to recruit new leaders, (c) relationships with school board members, and (d) factors that detract from their success as leaders. The results of the study represent the viewpoints of about 75%, or 97 of the state superintendents. The results indicated that a shortage of fiscal resources, conflicting state and Federal school reform mandates and strained relationships with school boards impact the effectiveness of current superintendents. Thirty percent of superintendent positions turned over in the past year (2003), significantly higher than in previous years.

Cooper, et al., (2000), in a national survey of 1,719 superintendents, reported superintendents in the study as indicating the shortage of applicants for superintendent jobs is a crisis in American education. Cooper et al. reported that while the current superintendents are “...hanging in there,” they are concerned about the availability of finding qualified leaders to assume the position of superintendent in the future. Many are worried about where the next generation of superintendents will come from and what the position will hold, for the superintendency is one that is becoming more complex (Cooper, et. al.). Cooper and coauthors further noted that current superintendents are aging, and see a crisis on the horizon. The findings of this study reported tenure of superintendents in their current position as 7.25 years. Superintendents indicated holding their previous superintendency for 6.43 years.

In 2003, the Council of Great City Schools (GCS) reported results of a survey conducted with member districts. Average tenure of urban superintendents was reported to be 2.75, up from the 2.5 reported in 2001, but mean tenure for the immediate past GCS superintendents averaged over 4 years. Supporting GCS findings, the Council of Urban Board of Education (CUBE) reported the tenure of urban superintendents to be between 4 and 5 years, (National School Board Association, 2002).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) *Ten Year Study* of the American school superintendent (Glass et al.) sampled 2,262 superintendents. Average tenure of

superintendents was estimated to be between 5 and 6 years; lower than the prior survey in 1992 with mean tenure of 6.4 years. The difference between the two surveys reported to be due in part to new superintendents entering the field. The authors maintain that superintendent tenure has remained relatively static over the past thirty years.

The difference between average tenure for urban superintendents and other superintendents is significant to note. As documented by the literature, urban superintendents have reported shorter tenure than other superintendents have. The role of the superintendent is diverse for various reasons, financial issues, accountability pressure, the performance of sub-groups and board relations are a few areas that influence the superintendency. Each of these has a role to play in affecting the length of tenure. The interpersonal skill of the superintendent is a factor that may facilitate or diminish a superintendent's tenure (Glass, et al.).

Differences in tenure rates of superintendents may be due in part to increased board member turn over which may result increased superintendent turn over. Additionally, the mean age of superintendents entering the field is increasing, leading to an overall shorter tenure (Glass, et. al., 2006). A third difference in tenure rates may be due to the manner that tenure is calculated.

There appears to be debate regarding longevity of tenure in the superintendency as indicated by the findings in the following studies over the past two decades.

- 1) Natkin, et al., indicate that superintendent tenure has not changed significantly since 1975-1979, averaging 6 to 7 years.
- 2) Glass et al., 2000 maintain that superintendent tenure has remained relatively static over the past 30 years.
- 3) Cummings (1994) confirmed superintendents are not staying long in their district. He reported that the average stay in an urban district is 18 months. In May of 1993, 33 of the largest 45 school districts in the United States had superintendencies that were either vacant or filled by superintendents who had been there less than three years (reported in Largent, 2001).
- 4) CUBE, in their study supported by the National School Board Association, 2002, reported that tenure for urban superintendents to be 2.75 years.

5) Bradley, 1990 reported that 14 large urban school district positions were vacant. Carter and Cunningham 1997 reported nearly the same data results (reported in Glass et al, 2000).

6) Cooper, et al., 1999 for AASA, found tenure to be 7.25 years. For the largest districts, the mean tenure was found to be 4.71 years.

7) Byrd, et al., 2006 results supported research indicating superintendent tenure to be 5 years.

School boards frequently turn to search consultants to locate and hire quality superintendents. In his study on superintendent search consultants, Floyd (1995) found almost 95% of the search consultants believed their business had grown. They attributed the growth to two factors, the increasing turnover rate of board members and superintendents and a perceived decrease in the number of quality candidates interested in becoming superintendents.

Theoretical Framework

Theorists have tried to provide explanations for the variation of length in superintendent tenure. Given the nature of power structures the closer an individual is to the top of the structure generally the more vulnerable they become to those that disagree with their positions.

Vulnerability Theory

Callahan's vulnerability theory (1962) has been widely accepted as the major cause of the high mobility experienced by superintendents (Lutz, 1996). Callahan's theory proposes that the superintendent alienates a majority of the school board who in turn demand his resignation or fails to extend his contract, causing the mobility. Callahan's vulnerability theory views the vulnerability of superintendents as the result of local support and local control. He concluded that most educators' decisions are based on survival. When pressure is applied to the superintendent because of public criticism, the superintendent must respond in a manner that will appease the critics. Callahan described the vulnerability pattern as; the board holds a business orientation, the superintendent is trained to be a school executive, the board becomes dissatisfied with the superintendent over a decision or a political change in the board, the board then fires the superintendent.

Callahan wanted to free the superintendent from the job threat that requires deference and replace it with creativity and leadership. He also hoped the political circumstances of the superintendent would change so that stronger leadership could be in place without the superintendent losing position. Lutz (1996) explained that this theory does not account for every superintendent move, but when it does, the result is painful for the superintendent and is a disruption to the education and stability of the district. Superintendent mobility is frequent enough that it can develop a type of paranoia in the superintendency (Lutz, 1996).

Dissatisfaction Theory

Lutz and Iannaccone (1978) asserted that school board incumbent defeat is a factor related to superintendent turnover. They believed most superintendent turnover was a result of public discontent and incumbent defeat in school board elections. Lutz added to Callahan's theory with his "dissatisfaction theory" (1990). Lutz states that superintendents frequently are pushed out or fired due to failure to see changes in community values and ignoring community demands, not due to poor business choices. Lutz, unlike Callahan, viewed the pattern of changes as, the community becomes dissatisfied with school policies, the incumbents on the board lose in the election, the new board fires the superintendent, finally the new policies and programs are established and the district returns to stability (Lutz, 1996).

Cumulative Theory

Eaton (1990) reported that the nature of the superintendency makes a superintendent vulnerable. This vulnerability is cumulative and leads to rapid turnover of the position. Eaton found this vulnerability came between the fourth and sixth year of contract. At the height of vulnerability, the superintendent's contract is not renewed. Various forces can add to this vulnerability and are cumulative in nature. The forces include, but are not limited to, school board members, teacher organizations, and community groups that become frustrated. The superintendent is held accountable for all decisions, past and present, for those he supported and those he did not support but followed due to board policy. This continual pattern leads to termination or non-renewal of the superintendent's contract (Eaton).

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory highlights the importance of situational factors in influencing a leader's behavior. Leaders are made by the situation and events that they encounter and influence the leader's effectiveness (Yukle, 1994). The characteristics of leaders and the situation interact to produce behaviors demonstrated by the leader and determine effectiveness; situational factors directly affect effectiveness. The concept of this theory is that a leader's behavior is shaped and modified based on the work environment.

Research on the superintendent, as a political leader, suggests that the role extends beyond the local community and board of education; frequently involving education agencies, state legislatures, and professional associations. The role is one that over time has become more political in nature (CASE, 2003; Hoyle, et al., 2005). Researchers and practitioners concur that school boards are comprised of political factions or aligned with special interest groups that may make the superintendent's work difficult. The superintendent's ability to work with individual board members and influence education policy decisions not only may determine the success of the district, but also the length of tenure of the superintendent (Kowalski, 1999). Thus, the role of superintendent is one that is close to the top of the power structure and more vulnerable to possible attacks from others. Superintendents will sometimes take a stand and lose their jobs because they decide to stand on a principle or hold to their core beliefs. Survival is not the only path and sometimes taking a risk and taking a stance based on principal may be the right thing to do (Lutz, 1996).

Factors Affecting Tenure

This study focuses on personal and professional characteristics of superintendents, characterization of school boards as perceived by the superintendent, and the current educational issues of the mandates NCLB and IDEIA to determine if they may have some affect on tenure. The literature has noted several factors that may have some affect on tenure. The purpose of this study is to determine what factors, if any, contribute to longevity of position for superintendents with respect to personal and professional characteristics, school board relationships, and state and Federal mandates to determine their significance.

Personal and Professional Characteristics

Just a few decades ago, the superintendency was a position of desirability and prestige. Life appointments were frequent or at least long tenure (Ramsey, 1999). The superintendent was

a pillar of the community, well known around town, lived in the community and raised his family there. While controversies arose, they were not considered significant. The superintendent today does not have the same prestige or unilateral control.

Successful large-scale school reforms require 5 years or more of a superintendent's attention. Natkin et al., (2002) in examining superintendent tenure found a number of factors that were significantly related to survival in office which would contribute to system wide improvement efforts: (a) level of school board involvement in management; (b) support for needed construction; (c) merger of school systems; (d) district poverty level; and (e) superintendent's post graduate education.

The role of superintendent of schools has become even more demanding and contentious in recent years (Elmore, 2000). The role is at once complex, difficult, and laden with potential for failure. Brown and co-researchers (2007) examined the personal traits of superintendents recognized by AASA. These recognized school leaders demonstrated stronger need profiles in the areas of survival, power, belonging, and freedom. The authors reported that these recognized superintendents may be more aware of their behavior choices and the impact those choices have on others. They may also see all behaviors as somehow related to their responsibility to lead by example. The combination of needs extant in the group accounts for their success.

The superintendency is a political office and highly visible. Superintendents often feel that they live in a glass box, with their salaries, performance, social interactions and family lives under scrutiny (Ramsey, 1999). Boards must remember superintendents are human beings with families who need to be respected and treated fairly. They should also be provided the tools and support to do the job expected of them (Glass, et al., 2000, Browne-Ferrigno in Bjork & Kowalski, 2005).

Age

The superintendency is an aging occupation. Between 1950 and 1992, the median age nationally for superintendents remained at approximately 48 to 50 years. In 1992, the median age rose to 52.5 and has continued to increase with the mean age in 2000 and 2006 being 52 and 56 respectively (Glass, et al.). CASE (2003) reported 74% of respondents being over 50 with 49% being over 55.

Race

The superintendents in the nation continue to be predominantly white. During the period of 1930-1950, a small number of African American superintendents in rural, minority areas began to emerge (Glass, et al., 2000). In the *Study of the American School Superintendency 2000* (AASA) 117 of the respondents of the 2,262 population were minorities. This number reflects a 2 percent increase in the number of minorities since the 1992 study. The majority of minority superintendents are located in urban school systems.

The Council of Greater City Schools (GCS, 2003) reported a different view, that of a decline in the number of African American superintendents who lead urban districts (p.2). This study also indicated an increase in the number of White and Hispanic American superintendents who have taken recent leadership positions in urban districts. The number of superintendents that are minorities is limited and not representative of the increasing minority student population in schools.

Gender

In the *Study of the American School Superintendency 2000*, 297 of the 2,262 respondents were women. This study like the study conducted in 1992 and 1982 found that the majority of American superintendents were white, and male. The number of female superintendents has increased from the 1992 study with 6.6 percent being female to 13.2 percent in 2,000. This data shows growth in the number of women in the superintendency but is an under representation in the field of education; an arena dominated by woman working as teachers and principals.

Highest Degree Held

Preparation for a superintendent is essential to the successes of a district. Burnham (1989) found superintendents identified as effective in their roles were more likely to have advanced degrees, such as the doctorate, than their colleagues were. Glass et al., (2000) reported the number of superintendents who possessed doctoral degrees increased from 28% in 1982 to 36% in 1992, and 45 % in 2000. Researchers have addressed the need for advanced degrees and specialized training for superintendents (Glass et al.). Harvard University has instituted a specialized program to train urban superintendents in an attempt to address the needs specific to superintendents serving in cities (Johnson, 1996).

Not all school boards believe a doctorate degree is necessary. Benton (2000) found that board members did not feel that a doctorate in education was important. They felt common sense and professional experience were more important. In rural areas, school board members were skeptical of why someone with a doctorate would desire to be a superintendent in a small, rural district.

Glass et al., (2000) found that the majority of superintendents with doctoral degrees were in schools with enrollments between 300 and 25,000. The districts of that size also had the longest average superintendent tenure.

Educational Issues of Mandates

Superintendent Perceptions of Mandates

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 initiated a period of significant legislative action resulting in a transformation of educational practice. The implementation of Public Law, 94-142, 1975, now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA), guaranteed to all handicapped children a free and appropriate education. At first, this legislation with its lack of funding and confusing guidelines was difficult to implement; over time, this act has been fully implemented (Glass et al., 2006). The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act has brought new challenges. Superintendents are now called to lead district-wide, systemic reform; bringing all children to proficiency, provide “fully-qualified teachers” and ensure “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2000 as cited in Bjork & Kowalski, 2005).

Farkas, Foley, and Duffet (2001) in their study, sponsored by the Wallace Foundation, *Just Waiting to be Asked*, reported that even before the final passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, superintendents were focused on improving student achievement; that more than one half of superintendents listed the most daunting task faced in the job is that of increasing student achievement. Additionally, 41% of school boards identified raising student achievement as a primary mission. In the second study, conducted in 2003 (Farkas, Johnson & Duffett) the researches found that the belief that effective school leadership can turn around individual schools and even an entire system has taken hold among a large majority of superintendents. The

results also show that 93% of superintendents reported that their district had experienced an enormous increase in responsibilities due to mandates without getting the resources necessary to fulfill them. In addition, 86% reported that keeping up with all the local, state and federal mandates handed down to the schools involved time. This concurs with the report, *Rolling Up Their Sleeves: Superintendents and Principals Talk about what's Needed to Fix Public Schools*; Public Agenda polled 925 school leaders and 1,006 district superintendents. Most respondents cited lack of financial support as their greatest concern, more than 80 percent of the administrators indicated at least some agreement that state and Federal mandates are taking up too much time (Farkas, et. al., 2003).

During the end of the 19th century, superintendents were seen primarily as educators. Due to the change in size of districts and increasing complexity of education that occurred by the end of the century, superintendents' role changed to one of managerial leadership. (Callahan, 1962; Gilland, 1935; Reller, 1935 as cited Hoyle, et. al., 2005). Today, superintendents place considerable emphasis on management, but their role as instructional leader is crucial to the successes of school reform (Bjork, 1993, Bredeson, 1996; Peterson & Barnett, 2003 as cited in Hoyle et al, 2005). Superintendents of successful districts adopt a hands-on approach concerning instructional matters (Cuban, 1984). These same superintendents utilize managerial influence over the behaviors of principals and teachers, in turn directly impacting student learning and achievement (Hoyle, et al., 2005).

Strategies Utilized by Superintendents to Meet the Challenges of Mandates

The 2000 *Ten-Year-Study* conducted by AASA noted that superintendents ranked significant challenges facing the profession. Financing schools to meet increasing expenditures and capital outlay was identified as their number one concern, testing for learner outcomes and accountability as the second and third, developing new ways to teach or operate educational programs ranked fourth. Each of these challenges is intertwined – all connected to the surge by the Federal government mandate that demands the elimination of the achievement gap and bring all students to academic proficiency (Glass, et. al., 2000). While expectations of education have increased, financial support has not been commensurate.

The Stupski Foundation worked with urban school systems to gain insight to strategies superintendents utilized to overcome the challenges facing district leaders. The superintendents characterized district reform as difficult work. Superintendents indicated that they were driven by a deep commitment to the belief that all children can learn; a critical motivating factor which builds resiliency for overcoming barriers. Superintendents' also led their charge by articulating a clear and deliberate vision and goals of reform and the culture they envision for the district, utilizing data to guide practice (Portis and Garcia, 2007).

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2000, as cited in Bjork et. al., 2005) identify several strategies that superintendents use to enact change. One is the use of scientifically based research to determine the best actions to pursue. Second, superintendents must be well grounded in the research on effective schools. Additionally, the superintendency is a public role; superintendents must assume the role of public advocate and activist. Murphy and Hawley (2003, as cited in Bjork, et al., 2005) refer to this role as social architect, an interventionist role for superintendents. Superintendents must more effectively market and sell their district to the public. Given the reforms today, they must be proponents of systemic change, willing to use their position to change school structures and practices. Systemic reform is difficult and requires the active involvement of school leaders with community-based and political leaders, with their varied interests, to buy into the district vision and provide the superintendent the resources to obtain the vision. In the 2006, *Mid-Decade Study* by AASA found that 45% of the superintendents surveyed believed that professional development was needed in systemic thinking. This requires the superintendent to be able to bring together groups with the varied interests by providing the benefits to cooperation. Superintendents see themselves as effective district leaders. The most preferred way to improve their effectiveness is through improvement in their skills of communication and human relations. (Glass, et al., 2006).

Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2005) note that the era of educational accountability requires the superintendent have knowledge of testing, data analysis, and interpretation to establish and sustain school improvement. This will require that superintendents work with a large team comprised of principals, curriculum specialists, researchers, and those that can provide knowledgeable input from the district, to observe current practices, review and discuss data and develop plans for improvement. Glass, et al., (2006) indicates that more

superintendents may now be viewing their school district as a system of interrelated functions; that the path to success, in the systemic model, is with effective interpersonal communication.

Community perception of the school district is important in order to obtain needed support. Kernan- Schloss (2004), based on work with numerous state education association and school districts, offers several strategies for superintendents to utilize for educating their community about school performance: (a) be proactive and truthful, developing a strategic plan for communication with the community about school performance (b) help parents and the community understand how the district and schools are performing, spotlighting efforts to provide needed support to students, (c) share a complete picture of performance, (d) develop and share the districts own reports on school performance; more than what is illustrated by NCLB, (e) work closely with the local media, sharing any successes and interventions that schools are employing to improve instruction and student performance, (f) stay positive and balanced, even when sharing less than heartening consequences of NCLB.

Johnson (1996) asserted there were several characteristics of superintendents who won broad support for their initiatives. The study noted that successful and popular superintendents shared the following: (a) they learned about the district's past and current practices, (b) did not enter with fixed visions but used a collaborative team approach, (c) promoted an open exchange of ideas, (d) encouraged others to act in concert, not in a cross direction, (e) furthered purposeful approaches to change, (f) stood for important values, (g) were realistic about the pace of change, (h) took a backseat to the limelight and gave others credit, and (i) provided support to those who took risks.

The review of the literature regarding strategies that superintendents utilize in working with the educational issues pertaining to mandates, highlights several areas: a clear instructional focus, leadership for success, accountability for results, a systemic framework for instituting change and effective communication

The Superintendent and the School Board

Superintendent and School Board Relationships

A potential key to success for the board and superintendent relationship is the establishment of a positive working relationship and a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities (Walter and Supley, 1999; CASE, 2003). Walter and Supley suggest that the board should maintain positive communications with the superintendent, cooperate with other board members, and support the superintendent's plan in respect to setting policy. In short, they suggest boards should set expectations, hire the best person for the job and let the superintendent lead the district. Though instructional leadership is integral to the role of superintendent, the increasingly complex political aspects of the job must be handled well (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Hoyle et al., 2005). Superintendents relationships with school boards were found to be a decisive element of superintendent tenure (Education Writers Association, n.d.). Frequently, conflict with the school board is cited as a common reason for superintendents leaving a district (Rausch, 2001). Political conflict between the superintendent and the board can advance into disequilibrium of school reform (Bjork, 2000a, Kowalski, 1999). Educators have long been socialized to refrain from political activities. Johnson (1996) indicated that superintendents have no choice to enter the political fray; it is a way of life. Board members listed relationships with the superintendent as the major reason for non-extension of the superintendent's contract, while superintendents listed the relationship with the board as a second reason for involuntary non-extension (Allen, 1998). The probability of board conflict is perhaps the biggest deterrent today to attracting qualified superintendents. If a district has a history of board conflict and superintendent turnover and buyout, it is unlikely that they will have a large applicant pool for their next vacancy (Glass et al., 2000).

A study of school boards by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992) declared that school board governance needed drastic reforms to improve board performance. They recommended higher levels of collaboration between superintendents and boards as well as viewing decision making as a shared responsibility. Findings from AASA's *10-Year Study* of 1992 reported 29% of superintendents said they viewed the initiation of district policy as a shared responsibility with the board. In the 2000 study, 37% of superintendents indicated that policy development was shared in their districts.

CASE, (2003), found that 69% of superintendents surveyed indicated that their school boards were very well qualified or qualified for their positions. Yet, many agreed that the biggest challenge facing board members was understanding and fulfilling their role. Additionally, the survey showed that many board members accept their superintendent's recommendations. Focus group participants raised concerns about school board members who try to micromanage the district's day-to-day operations.

Many boards and superintendents described having mutually cooperative relationships (Foley, et al., 2001). Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, and Foleno (2001) reported that 65 % of superintendents believed that school boards simply wanted leaders that the board could control. More than 80% of superintendents reported feeling frustrated with politics and bureaucracy of the job (Farkas). Harvey (2001) reported that a source of frustration for superintendents was the board not understanding their role. Boards were cited as micromanaging or interfering in superintendent's administrative responsibilities, with more than two-thirds reporting that the board meddled in issues not within the scope of its responsibility.

Today, superintendents place considerable emphasis on management, but their role as instructional leader is crucial to the successes of school reform (Bjork, 1993, Bredeson, 1996; Peterson & Barnett, 2003 as cited in Hoyle et al, 2005). Superintendents of successful districts adopt a hands-on approach concerning instructional matters (Cuban, 1984). These same superintendents utilize managerial influence over the behaviors of principals and teachers, in turn directly impacting student learning and achievement (Hoyle, et al., 2005).

Strategies Superintendents Use to Improve Effectiveness of the Board

Effective superintendents are recognized as vital to the success of a district's improvement effort (Forsyth, 2004). Although Byrd's (2001) study revealed no correlation between superintendent leadership style and student achievement, the managerial role of superintendents had a significant effect. Superintendents indicate that boards expect them to be the education and political leader for the district (Glass, et al., 2000; Glass et al., 2006). The board is the superintendent's employer. Most superintendents are aware of their board's expectations and try to meet them through effective leadership practices. The research indicates strategies utilized to develop the relationship with the board.

Communication is key for the success of the district. Superintendents prefer to improve their level of effectiveness through communications and human relations skills (Glass, et al., 2006). A study by Carter, Glass, & Hard, (1994) spent about six hours a week in communication. In Glass (2001), research indicated that highly effective superintendents spend more than six hours a week in communication. This was reiterated in 2003 where superintendents recognized nationally in 2003 spent several more hours a week in direct communication with board members (Glass, 2003).

Relationship building with the board is critical for productivity. Eadie (2007) noted that school boards tend to function more effectively, addressing the critical strategic and policy issues facing their districts when the working relationship between superintendents and their boards as a whole, tends to be positive and productive. Research bears this out, Glass, et al., (2006) found 62.8 % of superintendents reported their relationships with their boards were very good. Historically, in each of the *Ten-Year- Studies*, the majority of superintendents characterized their relationship with the board as excellent or very good.

Perceptive superintendents take the initiative in building the relationship with board presidents. These superintendents meet regularly with their board presidents, following well-developed agendas for working through joint leadership issues. Additionally, effective superintendents recognize that board presidents are high-achieving people with ego needs. Superintendents take the time to understand what will give their board presidents feelings of satisfaction and employ such strategies as making sure their board presidents are invited to sit in on key interviews with the media and are booked to speak on behalf of the district at important events. Successful superintendents make a substantial effort to come to an understanding with their board president about sharing the external role providing opportunities for them to have the podium at public functions (Eadie, 2007). Regular conversations with board members are a proven technique in creating an effective board/superintendent relationship (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

Establishing board policy is one of the major functions of a board of education. The school board sets policy but who initiates policy is changing. In the 1992 AASA study, superintendents indicated that they initiated policy 66.9 percent. In the 2000 study, the percentage was 42.9 percent. Griffith (1990) identified strategies utilized to facilitate

establishment of policy; set clear agendas for meetings with boards, set goals, evaluate progress, and know the background, interests, and vision of each board member.

The board's level of effectiveness has a direct impact on the district's success. In the 1992 and 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency (AASA) found that the majority of superintendents in both studies evaluated their board as "qualified" but not "well qualified". Carter and Cunningham (1997) found that when asked to rate their board member's abilities superintendents gave positive evaluations.

Sharp & Newman (1991) indicated that of the 63 superintendents they interviewed, 33.9 percent, provided in-service training for their new board members. Glass, et al., (2000) reiterates this with 46.2 percent of superintendents provided board members their primary orientation. Griffith (1990) suggested superintendent's should tutor, guide and lead in order that the board can be effective. One means of accomplishing this to provide board members with an agenda that clearly articulates outcomes and has support materials providing information needed to reach the outcomes. The district's teaching and learning mission should drive the agenda. Additionally, the superintendent should "build the team". The roles of the board should be clear and distinct. The superintendent should ensure board members are well informed in order that the board can focus on the mission furthering the board's role to govern (Townsend, Brown & Buster, 2005).

The *Mid-Decade Study* of 2006 (Glass, et al.,) noted that 41% of superintendents felt their boards acted in an ethical manner all of the time and 52.2 percent rating their boards demonstrating ethical manner most of the time. Carter and Cunningham (1997) indicated that in all board conflict the superintendent could please some of the board members and displease others at the same time. Superintendents often find themselves in the midst of the conflict whether the conflicts are illegal or not (Glass).

Summary

Literature related to superintendent tenure has been discussed in this chapter. The literature reviewed many studies regarding tenure in various states and nationally. The literature provides data indicating that the length of tenure of a superintendent is between 18 months and 6 to 7 years. A pattern has emerged that establishes tenure is decreasing for the position of the superintendency (Cummings, 1994, as reported in Largent, 2001; Natkin, et al., 2002).

Tenure of superintendents is a concern for all in education. Successful large-scale school reforms require 5 years or more of a superintendent's attention. There is an implication that excessively short tenures, particularly if experienced in brief spans of time, could prove detrimental to system-wide improvement efforts (Natkin, et al., 2002). Superintendent search consultants are saying the tenure of superintendents is at a crisis (AASA, 1999). Sitting superintendents have strong concerns about where the next generation of superintendents. They are also concerned about the future of the role and finding talented leaders to take their place (Cooper et al., 2000).

The make-up of the school board, and the politics of that body, is a key factor in superintendent longevity. The relationship between the school board, the board president and the superintendent is vital in determining superintendent tenure. The success of the relationship between the board and the superintendent is anchored in establishing good communication. Additionally, the superintendency requires political acuity and highly developed skills in working with a board's power structure. Board relationships are multifaceted, improved understanding of the role and function of the board may lead to longer tenures and possibly a better focus on the importance of what really matters in school, student academic achievement.

In recent years, the increases in state and Federal mandates have pinpointed a laser like focus on education by the school board and the public. Superintendents are accountable and take responsibility for improving student achievement (Farkas, et al., 2003). Deeply concerning are the well-meaning state and Federal mandates that require large amounts of time and paperwork to implement. To add to the challenge is the ambiguity in various laws, NCLB and IDEA, which frequently differ from and conflict with one another. According to Farkas and co-researchers (2003), NCLB and IDEA generate particular resentment. In this study, almost nine in ten superintendents and principals voiced concern that NCLB is an unfunded mandate, and along with IDEA generate considerable costs. Superintendents are concerned with requiring the most challenging populations – such as Special Education students and English Language Learners – to show the same kind of progress as others. Superintendents are concerned that NCLB relies too heavily on standardized tests. The impact of student success has an impact on the success and tenure of a superintendent (Farkas, et al., 2003).

School boards, communities and superintendents must cooperate and have an understanding of the factors that affect longevity of tenure. By examining Superintendents of the

Year, a highly effective group of leaders selected by their peers, this study hopes to gain insight into the characteristics that may be most important in establishing a long relationship with a school district and the community. The following chapter provides information on the sample, the research instrument used for the study, and the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the procedures used to conduct this study to ascertain what factors contribute to success and longevity of position for State Superintendents of the Year with respect to: (a) their personal and professional characteristics, (b) the instructional issues arising from the federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), (c) the strategies utilized by superintendents to meet the challenges of the mandates, (d) the superintendents' relationship with school boards and (e) the strategies utilized to work effectively with their boards. This study was designed to explore and determine the relationship of these variables in order to provide insight for future superintendents, current superintendents, school boards, and support associations. Specifically, this chapter details the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and quantitative and qualitative data analyses used to conduct this study.

Research Questions

The specific questions researched in this study were:

- 1) What are the personal and professional characteristics of the State Superintendents of the Year with respect to: age, gender, race/ ethnicity, degree held and years of service as a superintendent?
- 2 A) What are the perceptions of the State Superintendents of the Year regarding the challenges of the Federal mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and the re-authorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA)?
- 2 B) What strategies do the State Superintendents of the Year utilize to meet the challenges of Federal mandates?
- 3 A) How do State Superintendents of the Year perceive their working relationship with the board?
- 3 B) What strategies do the State Superintendents' of the Year utilize to improve the effectiveness of the board?

Selection of Participants

The population for this study included all State Superintendents of the Year for the years of 2005, 2006 and 2007 as identified by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). This population of superintendents was selected for the study because they had been named a State Superintendent of the Year during 2005, 2006 or 2007 in their respective states. AASA contends that superintendents of the year demonstrate leadership for learning, strength in communication, seek improvement in professionalism and are actively involved in the community, and knowledgeable of regional, national and international issues. This group of superintendents enabled the researcher to gain a broad, rich data set from all parts of the country and abroad and various district sizes. The perceptions and strategies identified from this highly effective group have implications beyond this study and can shape professional development for superintendents and possibly increase longevity in the field.

Instrumentation

An existing survey instrument that could answer all of the research questions of this study was not found. Information related to this study was reviewed on the American Educational Research Association's database, but none of their existing surveys contained the specific combination of questions needed to address the research questions. The researcher reviewed existing instruments from, *The Study of the American Superintendency* 2000 survey and the 2006 *Mid-Decade Study*, both obtained from AASA, the *Review of Literature*. These sources were used to develop the constructs and themes that formed the framework of the survey. A survey instrument was developed focusing on the superintendent, school board relationship and the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA.

Content Validity

To accomplish the investigation three research questions were developed. The researcher examined the current literature related to the superintendency to formulate appropriate constructs or themes representing the knowledge, skills and dispositions of school superintendents. The constructs/themes were then defined and again reviewed for clarity. Many of the original definitions were broad and contained several "stems" that would cause overlap with other constructs and definitions, resulting in weak validity and

reliability. The creation of a single stem for each construct resulted in a more clear and concise definition. An example is provided in Appendix A illustrating the process. Previous work by Creighton (1996), reported that content validity increased with single stem constructs.

To improve the inter-item correlations and the validity of the constructs, truth tables were developed to ensure that the individual constructs were discrete and independent measures and that each descriptor would logically agree with others measuring the same construct. An example is provided in Appendix B (Creighton, 1996). When using truth tables to strengthen correlations between descriptors, two-way agreements are desired. A two-way agreement is best to predict inter-item correlation. The intent of the truth table process was to refine the constructs.

Based on the constructs and truth tables, a list of potential questions that addressed the focus of the study was developed. Staff from AASA reviewed the questions after they were developed. Experts in the field, researchers and district superintendents, provided insight and recommendations regarding the questions and the survey format. The survey was refined several times because of the input of these groups.

The researcher sent an electronic version of the instrument to doctoral fellows in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies of Virginia Polytechnic Institutes and State University in early August of 2007 for field testing, resulting in modification of the survey. Further refinement of the instrument resulted from a second field test in August of 2007. Eight assistant superintendents from the Fairfax County Public Schools and a cohort of superintendents in Texas reviewed the questions and provided suggestions regarding the survey. Finally, to assure content validity, Professors in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program of Virginia Tech reviewed the survey resulting in the final survey.

All questions were designed to be specific to gain insight of the superintendents' perceptions and the strategies utilized in working with the board and pertaining to the Federal mandates. The paper surveys were color coded by year, numbered and coded for identification. Each numbered survey was referenced to a database to cross-reference the information. The final 32-item version

of the survey was printed and a projected administration time of fifteen to twenty minutes, was established based on feedback from various groups that had piloted the survey. The electronic version of the survey contained 33 items, with an additional question asking for the year the superintendent had been selected as *State Superintendent of the Year*. Fourteen of the questions allowed for additional comments that could enrich the study. Respondents were assured that their anonymity would be protected and the list of codes destroyed after completion of the study.

Data Collection

An electronic communication was sent to all the superintendents identified as State Superintendents of the Year using a list provided by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). This communication contained an introductory letter from the researcher, a letter of support from AASA and a link to the survey on *Survey Monkey*, a web based survey administration site. The researcher followed the initial contact with a mailing of the cover letter, a letter of support from AASA, the survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope to all in the sample group. This mailing occurred in mid-November 2007. In this initial mailing, the study group was informed about the purpose of the study, an explanation of the type and number of mailings they would receive, a non-response after the mailings would indicate they did not wish to participate, and how they could obtain information regarding the results of the study once it was completed. Follow-up phone calls were made when a mailing, paper or electronic, came back indicating that the survey had not reached the intended recipient.

Two weeks after the initial e-mail went out a second electronic communication was sent to all the superintendents thanking them for their response and encouraging them to return the surveys if they had not done so already. A database containing the names of all the superintendents in the sample group was designed to keep track of returned surveys. A third and final e-mail message was sent out in mid- December 2007. Approximately thirty-five follow-up phone calls were made to districts to determine if the superintendents listed on the database were still working in that district or if they had gone elsewhere. If they had moved to another district, follow-up contacts were made in an effort to gain as many responses as possible on the survey.

The survey was closed in early January of 2008, approximately seven weeks after the initial mailing, at which time 96 superintendents had responded yielding a 64% rate of return. With 96 of 147 surveys returned, the results of the survey can be generalized with 95% confidence and a confidence interval of +/- 6 percentage points (Macorr, 2008).

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine what factors, if any, contribute to the longevity/success for the State Superintendents of the Year with respect to: (a) personal characteristics of superintendents, (b) the instructional issues arising from the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA, (c) the strategies utilized by superintendents to meet the challenges of the mandates, (d) the superintendents' relationship with school boards and (e) strategies utilized to work effectively with their boards.

By analyzing the data collected using both quantitative and qualitative means; the researcher determined which of these factors would be most reliable in identifying qualities and strategies used by highly effective superintendents with longevity in the superintendency.

The researcher utilized the JMP statistical package developed by the SAS Institute Inc., (O'Rourke & Stepanski, 2005). Data analysis included both quantitative and qualitative measures. Descriptive analyses classify, organize and summarize data about a particular group of observations and were used for analyzing data for each of the research questions. Descriptive analysis was used for reporting information regarding demographic data about superintendents' personal and professional characteristics. In addition, descriptive analysis was utilized to report information pertaining to the superintendents perceptions of and strategies employed in meeting the challenges of the Federal mandates NCLB and IDEIA. Descriptive statistics provided information regarding superintendents perception of their board and strategies used to work with the board. This data is presented in the form of percentages and tables to illustrate patterns and profiles.

Qualitative research seeks to enrich a study by giving descriptions of individuals and their perceptions, that cannot be completely presented by a statistical approach. Open-ended questions provided a rich source of qualitative data. Content analysis was utilized in review of the

qualitative data to identify themes that appeared. Written comments and quotations from the data have been used to substantiate the findings. The researcher examined comments respondents made in the open-ended questions of the survey. These comments were analyzed by questions category and the most common themes of the respondents reported as they relate to each research questions. The researcher used this reporting method to add depth to the quantitative data reported.

This chapter described the procedures utilized to conduct this study with the purpose to ascertain what factors contribute to longevity of position for State Superintendents of the Year. The survey instrument was electronic/paper and mailed to 147 State Superintendents of the Year for 2005, 2006 and 2007 as identified by AASA. After the initial mailing, a number of reminders went out to the superintendents. Approximately seven weeks after its introduction the survey closed with 96 of the 147 superintendents having responded. Descriptive analyses provided information regarding demographic information, superintendents' perception of strategies used to work with the board and to meet the challenges of the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA. This data is presented in the form of percentages and tables to illustrate patterns and profiles.

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings and the results of the study. The first section of this chapter gives a review of the study. The second section reports descriptive data with respect to each of the research questions. The third section presents a summary of the results, highlighting the major findings and generalizations of the study.

Review of the Study

This study investigated what factors, if any contributed to success and longevity in position for superintendents with respect to (a) personal characteristics of superintendents, (b) superintendents' perceptions of the instructional issues arising from the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA, (c) the strategies utilized by superintendent to meet the challenges of the mandates, (d) the superintendents' relationship with school boards and (e) strategies utilized by superintendents to work effectively with their boards.

Survey Population

The population for this study included all State Superintendents of the Year for the years of 2005, 2006 and 2007 as identified by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). AASA contends that State Superintendents of the Year demonstrate leadership for learning, possess strength in communication, seek improvement in professionalism, are actively involved in the community and knowledgeable of regional, national and international issues. These educational leaders are identified as exemplary for their experience, knowledge and expertise in their position as superintendent. This highly effective peer-selected group of superintendents were surveyed to gain their perceptions and strategies related to the research questions of this study.

To accomplish this investigation the researcher developed three research questions. A review of the literature resulted in appropriate constructs representing the knowledge, skills and dispositions of school superintendents. The constructs were defined and reviewed for clarity. Refinement of the definitions ensured that they did not contain several "stems" that would cause

overlap with other constructs and definitions, resulting in weak validity and reliability. Content validity decreases with multiple stem constructs. To improve the inter-item correlations and the validity of the constructs, the use of truth tables ensured that the individual constructs were discrete and independent measures and that each descriptor logically agreed with others measuring the same construct (Creighton, 1996) (Appendix B).

Based on the constructs and truth tables, a list of potential questions that addressed the research question was developed. Staff from AASA reviewed the questions and provided feedback. Experts in the field, researchers and district superintendents, provided insight and recommendations regarding the questions and the survey format.

The researcher sent an electronic version of the instrument to doctoral fellows in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies of Virginia Polytechnic Institutes and State University in early August of 2007 for field testing, resulting in modification of the survey. Further refinement of the instrument resulted from a second field test in August of 2007. Eight assistant superintendents from the Fairfax County Public Schools and a cohort of superintendents in Texas reviewed the questions and provided suggestions regarding the survey. Finally, to assure content validity, Professors in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program of Virginia Tech reviewed the survey resulting in the final survey.

The paper surveys were identified by color-coding for year and numbered for identification. Each numbered survey was matched to names in a database designed to track the contact information of the study group. The final version of the survey was printed and the projected administration time established as fifteen – twenty minutes, based on feedback provided by the various pilot groups. The electronic version of the survey contained an additional question asking for the year the superintendent earned the honor of State Superintendent of the Year. Fourteen of the questions allowed for additional comments that could enrich the study. Respondents were assured that their anonymity would be protected and the list of codes destroyed after completion of the study.

In November 2007, an electronic communication went to all the superintendents identified as State Superintendents of the Year for 2005, 2006 and 2007. This communication

contained an introductory letter from the researcher, a letter of support from AASA and a link to the survey on *Survey Monkey*, a web based survey administration site. The researcher followed the initial e-mail with a mailing of a letter of introduction, a letter of support from AASA, the survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope to the study population. The mailing occurred in mid-November 2007. In the initial mailing, the study group received information about the purpose of the study, an explanation of the type and number of mailings they would receive, that a non-response after the mailings would indicate they did not want to participate, and how to access information regarding results of the study. Follow-up phone calls provided additional information when a mailing, paper or electronic, came back indicating that the survey had not reached the intended recipient.

Two weeks after the initial e-mail message went out, a second electronic communication went to all the superintendents thanking them for their response and encouraging them to return the survey if they had not submitted one. A database containing the names of all the superintendents in the study population kept track of returned surveys, allowing for ease in determining superintendents for follow-up communication. A third and final e-mail went out in mid- December 2007. In approximately thirty-five cases, where the superintendent had not responded, follow-up calls to the listed district provided additional information regarding the superintendent. The phone calls allowed the researcher to gain as many responses as possible on the survey.

Approximately seven weeks after the initial mailing, the survey closed with 96 of the 147 superintendents responding, a 64% rate of return. Because not all respondents answered all questions on the survey, some results reported showed more respondents for some questions than others. The option to not respond provided respect for superintendents' views or sensitivity pertaining to a particular question(s) or the possibility the question did not apply to their particular district. In addition, superintendents had the option not to respond to the survey if they did not wish to participate.

In this section of the chapter, the results related to each research question are reported separately. The results of each survey question appear under the research question to which it

pertains. A short summary section highlighting the major patterns that emerged, appears at the end of this chapter.

Research Question One

The first research question explored the personal and professional characteristics of the State Superintendents of the Year in regard to gender, race/ethnicity, age, size of district, type of district, years of experience, number of districts as superintendent, highest degree earned and if they were currently serving as a superintendent in a school district. Tables one through twelve reflect superintendents' responses to personal and professional characteristics; these tables correspond to questions twenty-four through thirty-two on the survey.

Table one presents descriptive analysis by gender aggregated across 2005, 2006 and 2007: 21 (70%) male, 9 (30%) female; 24 (85.7%) male, 14 (14.2%) female and; 27 (75%) male and 9 (25%) female (Table 1).

Table 1
Gender Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Male	72	76.6
Female	22	23.4
Total	94	100.0

2 respondents did not indicate gender when responding to the survey

Table two presents race/ethnicity identified data of superintendents in this study. 92.6 percent of superintendents indicated White as their ethnicity. Only seven of the ninety-four respondents identified themselves in a race other than White

Table 2
Race and Ethnicity Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Asian	0	0.0
Black	4	4.3
Hispanic	2	2.2
Native American	0	0.0
White	87	92.6
Other	1	1.0
Total	94	100.0

2 respondents did not indicate race/ethnicity on the survey

Table three illustrates the data pertaining to age of the superintendents. The youngest respondent working in the position of superintendent was 42, the oldest in the survey is 71 while the oldest currently working, was 69. The largest reporting group for the survey ranged in age from 55-59 years of age (43.2 %). The second largest reporting group was aged 60-65 with 21% of superintendents responding. Combining the two largest reporting groups, 55 - 65, comprise 78% of the State Superintendents of the Year. Only three superintendents were 49 years old or younger. The average age for the surveyed population was 57.5 (Table 4).

Table 3
Age Frequencies

Age Ranges	n	Percentage
40 - 44	1	1.1
45 - 49	2	2.1
50 – 54	20	21.1
55 – 59	41	43.2
60 – 64	25	26.3
65+	6	6.3
Total	95	100.0

1 respondent did not indicate age in this survey

Table 4
Age Descriptive Analysis

M	SD	Mdn
57.5	4.78	58

In this study of the State Superintendents of the Year, the majority of the superintendents (54.2%) reported that they worked in a district with 3,000 – 24,000 students. No superintendents in the survey reported being in a district with an enrollment of fewer than 300 pupils. Table 5 provides information pertaining to district size.

Table 5
District Size Frequencies

District Size	n	Percentage
300 – 2,999	28	29.7
3,000 – 24,999	51	54.2
Over 25,000	15	15.9
Total	94	100.0

2 respondents did not indicate district size on this survey

The superintendents participating in the survey identified the school district type in which they worked. In responding to this survey, 35% of superintendents reported their district to be suburban. Nearly 50% (49.9%) reported their district as rural or small town and 14% indicated urban (Table 6).

Table 6
District Type Frequencies

District Type	n	Percentage
Rural	27	28.7
Small town	20	21.2
Suburban	33	35.1
Urban	14	14.8
Total	94	100.0

2 respondents did not indicate district type on this survey

Table 7 shows that 71.6% of superintendents surveyed have 5-14 years of service. Those superintendents with 15 to 25+ years of service comprise 28.4 % of the respondents. The mean tenure rate for this group is 13.24 years with a standard deviation of 6.6. The data reported for “Years as Superintendent” is inclusive of all superintendents, those that are currently working, and the sixteen individuals that reported as retired from position of superintendent in a district (Table 8).

Table 7
Years as a Superintendent Frequencies

Years	n	Percentage
0 -4	-	-
5 – 9	22	23.2
10 – 14	46	48.4
15 – 19	12	12.6
20 – 24	8	8.4
25+	7	7.4
Total	95	100.0%

2 respondents did not indicate years as a superintendent on the survey.

Table 8
Years as Superintendent Descriptive Analysis

M	S D	Mdn
13.24	6.60	10

Table 9 responds to the question regarding the number of districts served as superintendent. In review of the data for all respondents, 41.1 % are working, or worked in only one district. One respondent noted that they have worked in seventeen districts. Only one superintendent has worked in five districts. Ten superintendents have worked in four. The mean number of districts served for all superintendents is 2.15 districts. The median is 2.0 (Table 10)

Table 9
Number of Districts as Superintendent Frequencies

Number of Districts	n	Percentage
1	39	41.1
2	27	28.4
3	17	17.9
4	10	10.5
5	1	1.1
17	1	1.1
	95	100.0

2 respondents did not indicate number of districts in their survey responses

Table 10
Number of Districts as Superintendent Descriptive Analysis

M	SD	Mdn
2.15	1.87	2.0

In this study of The State Superintendents of the Year, a majority of superintendents, 64.8 % indicated that they earned a doctoral degree, 34 % hold a Masters Plus, while only 1% indicated that a Masters was the highest degree earned. Table 11 displays data pertaining to degree.

Table 11
Highest Degree Earned Frequencies

Degree	n	Percentage
Bachelors	0	0
MA/MS	1	1.0
Masters Plus	32	34.0
Doctorate	61	64.8
Total	94	100.0

2 respondents did not indicate degree earned on this survey

The last question in the survey pertaining to personal and professional characteristics asked if the superintendent was currently working in a district. The majority of the respondents are currently working as a district superintendent, 85.1%. The remaining 14.8 %, 14 superintendents, have left a district position (Table 12).

Table 12
Currently a Superintendent Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Yes	80	85.1
No	14	14.8

2 respondents did not indicate if they were currently working as a superintendent

Research Question Two

The second research question in this study examined the State Superintendents of the Year perceptions and responses to two Federal mandates. The first mandate, The Secondary and Elementary Education Act of 2001, typically referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the latest revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The second mandate examined in this study was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). On December 3, 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended, the reauthorized statute was named the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and is known as IDEIA of 2004. This two-part question examined the impact and challenges of these Federal mandates as perceived by the superintendents in this study and the strategies they employed to meet the challenges associated with them. Questions thirteen through nineteen in the survey provided data pertaining to the superintendents' views of these mandates.

Responding to the Federal Mandates NCLB and IDEIA

Table 13 illustrates that 72% of superintendents' report that NCLB has had "Great Impact" on education, with 97.8 % indicating "Great Impact" to "Some Impact". Only two superintendents, 2.1% of the superintendents surveyed, indicated "Little to "No Impact" on education due to NCLB. Superintendents' hand written comments in response to the survey question are of particular interest. Not all aspects of NCLB are negative. However, the majority of comments indicate that that the impact is detrimental to education. Superintendent comments appear in Appendix G.

Table 13

Superintendents' Perceptions of the Impact of NCLB on Public Education Frequencies

Level of Impact	N	%
Great Impact	67	72.0
Some Impact	24	25.8
Little Impact	2	2.1
No Impact	-	-
Total	93	99.9

3 respondents did not respond to impact of NCLB

Superintendents face challenges posed by the mandates associated with No Child Left Behind. Table 14 shows the perceptions of superintendents regarding these challenges. Seventy-two percent of superintendents perceive a lack of funding as a “Significant Challenge”; 88% consider *Lack of funding* a “Significant” or “Somewhat of a Challenge”. A second challenge perceived by the superintendents in implementing the law is ensuring academic proficiency levels for each of the sub-groups, 66% noted meeting proficiency level as a “Significant Challenge”.

In evaluating improvements respondents want made to NCLB (Table 15), the State Superintendents of the Year selected *Use of a growth model* for measuring yearly academic progress as “Very Effective” and “Effective”, 97%. The superintendents rated the need for funding and a growth model as a “Very Effective” change desired to improve the law. Superintendents (97%) selected *Better or more adequate funding* as “Very Effective” and “Effective” change that would bring about improvement in the law. The third most useful change in the law selected by the State Superintendents of the Year was the use of *Multiple measures* to assess students in regards to NCLB with a 93.6% rating of “Very Effective and “Effective”. Use of a *Local assessment* received the lowest rating with 30.3% “Very Effective”.

Table 14

Superintendents' Ratings of Challenges Posed by NCLB, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

Strategies	Have not Encountered		Minimal Challenge		Some what of a Challenge		Significant Challenge		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%			
Confusion about State and Federal authority	10	10.8	38	40.9	36	38.7	9	9.7	93	100	2.47	.81	2.0
Data limitations and challenges	4	4.3	26	26.0	41	44.1	21	22.6	93	100	2.88	.84	3.0
Ensuring proficiency level or above for all groups of students (e. g. special education, English Language Learners, and socio-economic groups)	4	4.3	9	9.5	18	19.5	61	66.0	92	100	3.47	.84	4.0
Implementing School Choice	39	42.4	31	33.7	-	-	-	-	-	100	1.89	.94	2.0
Lack of a growth model to demonstrate progress	28	30.4	28	30.4	28	30.4	8	8.7	92	100	2.17	.96	2.0
Sanctions for not making adequate progress	43	46.2	18	19.4	16	17.2	-	-	93	100	2.05	1.1	2.0
Finding highly qualified teachers	14	15.1	26	26.0	32	34.4	21	22.6	93	100	2.64	.99	3.0
Lack of funding to support mandates	5	5.4	6	6.5	15	16.1	66	72.0	93	100	3.54	.84	4.0

Table 15

Changes/Improvements to NCLB, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	Very Effective		Effective		Limited Effectiveness		Not Effective		Total		M	S D	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%			
Use of local assessment	28	30.4	40	43.4	16	17.3	8	8.6	92	100	2.9	.91	3.0
Use of multiple measures	57	61.3	30	32.3	5	5.4	1	1.1	93	100	3.53	.65	4.0
Use of growth model to measure adequate yearly progress	69	74.2	21	22.6	3	3.2	-	-	93	100	3.7	.52	4.0
Better or more adequate funding	69	74.2	21	22.6	3	3.2	-	-	93	100	3.7	.52	4.0
Changes to sanctions for not making AYP	39	41.9	36	38.7	15	16.1	3	3.0	93	100	3.3	.80	4.0

Perceptions and Challenges Related to Special Education

Special Education guarantees an appropriate education for all handicapped children and may be perceived as a challenge to a superintendent. In this survey, the *State Superintendents of the Year* rated challenges related to Special Education. Table 20 illustrates the superintendents' responses pertaining to the challenges of Special Education. These challenges included legal costs, finding qualified special education teachers, transportation costs, race and ethnic disproportionality, extended school year services, audits regarding compliance and consultation with private school officials. The areas reported as a "Medium Challenge" or "Difficult Challenge", finding *qualified special education teachers*, 84.5%, *legal costs*, 70 % and *transportation costs*, 63 %. The area noted as the most "Difficult Challenge" was, *Finding qualified special education teachers*, 51.5%.

Three areas receiving the greatest number of responses as "No Challenge" or "Minimal Challenge" included: *consultation with private schools*, 83.5%, *race and ethnic disproportionality* with 59.6, and *audits regarding compliance*, 56.4% superintendents reporting this area as, "No Challenge" or "Minimal Challenge".

The State Superintendents of the Year rated the areas of IDEIA according to the degree of challenge that they provide a district (Table 21). Respondents identified *School Discipline* as the most "Difficult Challenge", with 22.6 superintendents rating it as difficult. When the areas of "Medium Challenge" and "Difficult Challenge" are viewed together, the percentage is 56.1%. Reported, as a "Difficult Challenge" is the area of, *Least Restrictive Environment*. This area received a rating of 14%, and when combined with "Medium Challenge" the rating was, 57%. The superintendents responding to the question perceived tuition reimbursement as "No Challenge" or "Minimal Challenge" 59.1%.

Table 16
Challenges Related to Special Education, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	No Challenge		Minimal Challenge		Medium Challenge		Difficult Challenge		Total		M	S D	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%			
Legal Costs	8	8.5	19	20.2	36	38.2	31	32.9	94	100	2.95	.93	3.0
Finding Qualified Teachers	2	2.1	12	12.8	31	33.0	48	51.5	94	100	3.36	.80	4.0
Transportation Costs	7	7.4	27	28.7	40	42.6	20	21.3	94	100	2.77	.86	3.0
Audits regarding compliance	9	9.6	44	46.8	29	30.9	12	12.8	94	100	2.46	.83	2.0
Extended school year services	5	5.3	31	33.0	49	52.1	9	9.6	94	100	2.65	.72	3.0
Race and ethnic disproportionality	27	28.7	29	30.9	21	22.3	17	18.1	94	100	2.29	1.07	2.0
Consultation with private schools	42	45.1	36	38.7	11	11.8	4	4.3	93	100	1.75	.82	2.0

2 respondents did not respond to challenges related to Special Education

Table 17

IDEIA and Degree of Challenge to a District, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	No Challenge		Minimal Challenge		Medium Challenge		Difficult Challenge		Total		M	S D	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%			
Free and Appropriate Education	20	21.5	30	32.3	36	37.6	8	8.6	93	100	2.33	.91	2.0
Least Restrictive Environment	6	6.5	34	36.6	40	43.0	13	14.0	93	100	2.64	.80	3.0
School Discipline	6	6.5	33	35.5	33	35.5	21	22.6	93	100	2.74	.88	3.0
Related Services	7	7.5	41	44.1	38	40.9	7	7.5	93	100	2.48	.74	2.0
Tuition Reimbursement	21	22.6	33	36.5	30	32.3	8	8.6	93	100	2.48	2.2	2.0
Due Process	18	19.4	29	31.2	40	43.0	6	6.5	93	100	2.36	.86	2.0

3 respondents did not respond to areas of IDEIA degree of challenge to a district

Strategies Superintendents Utilize to Improve the Board's Understanding of Mandates

The State Superintendents of the Year rated their board's understanding of Federal mandates as "Very Good" or "Good", 94.5%. Only five superintendents responding to the survey rated their board's understanding of mandates as "Poor" or "Very Poor".

Table 18 shows the results of the strategies evaluated according to their effectiveness in educating the board about the performance level of the school district. Each of the five strategies received a "Very Effective" and "Effective" rating of 86.9% or better. Two strategies evaluated more highly than the others were by the superintendents. The first strategy, *develop and share a complete picture of school performance; supplementing the federally mandated data with additional information that provides a more accurate picture of school performance*, received a rating of "Very Effective" by 65.9% of the respondents; when the ratings from "Very Effective" and "Effective" were combined the percentage was 94.6%; only five superintendents rated this strategy as "Limited Effectiveness" or "Ineffective". The second strategy receiving high ratings from the superintendents was, *be proactive and forthright when communicating with the board about choice; supplemental service options and teacher quality*. Superintendents rated this strategy as "Very Effective" by 64.5%. When combined with "Effective" the rating of this strategy was 91.4 %. Table 18 reports the superintendents' ratings of the effectiveness of strategies for educating the board about the performance level of the district.

Table 18

Effectiveness of Strategies for Educating the Board about Performance Level of the District, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

Strategies	Very Effective		Effective		Limited Effectiveness		Ineffective		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%			
Develop a strategic plan for communicating with the board about school performance throughout the board's term	52	55.9	31	33.3	9	9.7	1	1.1	93	100	3.1	1.30	3.0
Provide opportunities for board members to visit schools and see first hand learning opportunities, programs and teaching	45	48.9	35	38.0	12	13.0	-	-	92	100	4.1	.80	4.0
Develop and share a complete picture of school performance, supplementing the federally mandated data with additional information that provides a more accurate picture of school performance	62	65.9	27	28.7	3	3.1	2	2.1	94	100	3.8	.93	4.0
Develop tools that put AYP performance in context. (Example, schools cannot make AYP due to testing 95% of their students	39	41.9	43	46.2	10	10.8	1	1.1	93	100	4.6	.52	5.0
Be proactive and forthright when communicating with the board about choice, supplemental service options and teacher quality.	60	64.5	25	26.9	6	6.5	2	2.2	93	100	3.4	1.45	4.0

Superintendents characterized their board’s understanding of the Federal Mandates as “Very Good” or “Good” 94.5% (Table 19). Only five superintendents characterized their Board’s understanding of the mandates as “Poor” or “Very Poor”.

Table 19

Characterization of Board's Understanding of Federal Mandates, Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Very Good	33	35.4
Good	55	59.1
Poor	4	4.3
Very Poor	1	1.0
Total	93	100.0

3 respondents did not respond to the question in the survey

Research Question Three:

A third area examined in this study investigated the superintendents’ perceptions of the working relationship of the board and the strategies used to improve their effectiveness. Survey questions twenty through twenty-eight provided data to answer this research question.

Superintendents are vital to the success of a district’s improvement effort (Forsyth, 2004).

Superintendents indicate that boards expect them to be the educational and political leader of a district (Glass et. al., 2006). The board is the superintendent’s employer, thus the relationship is of critical importance to the district.

Superintendents’ Perception of their Working Relationship with the Board

The third research question sought to discern the perceptions superintendents had of their board’s level of effectiveness and the strategies utilized to improve its level of effectiveness.

State Superintendents of the Year characterized their working relationship with their board “Very Good” or “Good” 97.5%, (Table 20). Only two responding superintendents rated the relationship as “Fair” and none rated the relationship as “Poor”. Despite the demands of

accountability and the political nature of the position, these superintendents perceive their relationship with their board as positive.

Table 20

Superintendents Working Relationship with the Board, Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Very Positive	83	87.3
Good	10	10.5
Fair	2	2.1
Poor	-	-
	95	100.0

1 superintendent did not respond to this question on the survey

The State Superintendents of the Year rated strategies as to their effectiveness in building a positive relationship with the board. Table 21 illustrates the results of superintendents' responses to the question. The strategy with the highest rating of "Very Effective", *take the initiative in building partnerships with your board and board president/chair*, was 74.5%. The rating of "Very Effective" when combined with "Effective", the rating for this strategy was 95.8%. Superintendents also rated, *develop a Board information packet on a regular basis* very highly, 53.7% "Very Effective", 92.6%, when combined with the "Effective" rating.

Table 21

Strategies to Build Positive Relationship with Board, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	Very Effective		Effective		Limited Effectiveness		Ineffective		Not Used		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Call all board members on a regular basis	24	25.5	34	36.2	27	26.7	1	1.1	8	8.5	95	100.	3.6	1.12	4.0
Develop a board information packet on a regular basis	51	53.7	37	38.9	5	5.3	1	1.1	1	1.1	95	100.	4.4	.73	5.0
Gather board member questions prior to meetings and provide answers	38	40.0	41	43.2	11	11.6	-	-	5	5.3	95	100.	4.1	.99	4.0
Pursue regular in-depth communication focusing on the board/superintendent relationship	30	31.9	41	43.6	15	16.0	2	2.1	6	6.4	94	100.	3.9	1.07	4.0
Take the initiative in building partnerships with your board and board president/chair	70	74.5	20	21.3	4	4.3	-	-	-	-	94	100.	4.7	.54	5.0
Follow a well developed agenda for working through joint leadership issues with the board president/chair	28	42.4	27	40.9	6	9.1	1	1.5	4	6.1	66	100.	4.7	.54	5.0

In initiating district policy, 66.3% of the State Superintendents of the Year selected the *Superintendent* as generally initiating ideas and making recommendations for developing policy. 25.3 % indicated that initiating district policy was a *Shared Responsibility*. No superintendent selected the *School Board* as his or her choice for initiating policy. Table 22 reports the results of this question.

Table 22
Initiating District Policy, Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Superintendent	63	66.3
School Board	-	-
Central Office	6	6.3
Small group or Board committee	2	2.1
Shared responsibility	24	25.3
	95	100.0

1 superintendent did not respond to the question

When recommendations by the superintendent are not accepted the first time they come before the board, the reason most cited identified is, *the board has not received enough background information about the topic* (59.6%). Other reasons noted in the responses to the question were, *pressure from special interest groups or community groups* (13.8%) and, *several board members are philosophically opposed to the idea* (8.0%). In reviewing superintendents' comments for, *other*, (12.0%), the only theme noted in superintendents' comments regarding this question was that in their district, district policy requires two or more readings before a vote on a recommendation can proceed.

When asked, *how frequently do board members act in an unethical manner?* The majority (51.6%) indicated that their board "Seldom" acted in an unethical manner. Those that rated unethical behavior as "Frequently" or "Sometime" comprised 21.4% or 20 of the respondents to the question. Table 23 illustrates the results of this question.

Table 23

Board Unethical Behavior, Frequencies

	n	Percentage
Frequently	5	5.3
Sometimes	15	16.1
Seldom	48	51.6
Never	25	26.8
Total	93	100.0

3 superintendents did not respond to this question on the survey

Superintendents utilize a variety of strategies in their effort to promote and improve the board's image in its public role. The strategy rated as the top choice by the respondents to the question was, *ensure the president/member is well briefed on the issues to be discussed at meetings with constituency groups* with 97.8% of superintendents rating the strategy as "Very Effective" or "Effective". Receiving a rating of 86.6% as "Very Effective" or "Effective" was, *arrange for president/member to speak on behalf of the district on important occasions*. The strategy identified as least effective in promoting and improving the board's image in its public role was, *invite president/member to sit in on key interviews with the media* Table 24 illustrates the results for this question.

Table 24

Effectiveness of Strategies for Promoting the Board's Image, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	Very Effective		Effective		Limited Effectiveness		Ineffective		Not Used		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Invite president/member to sit in on key interviews with the media	10	10.9	34	37.3	25	27.4	2	2.1	20	21.9	91	100	3.1	1.30	3.0
Arrange for president/member to speak on behalf of the district on important occasions	33	36.6	45	50.0	10	11.1	-	-	2	2.2	90	100	4.1	.80	4.0
Arrange for president/member to meet with critical constituencies	24	26.3	41	45.0	21	23.0	2	2.1	3	3.2	91	100	3.8	.93	4.0
Ensure the president/member is well briefed on the issues to be discussed at meetings with constituency groups	61	66.3	29	31.5	2	2.1	-	-	-	-	92	100	4.6	.52	5.0
Divide the external role, for example share the podium at a chamber of commerce dinner	27	29.6	26	28.5	19	20.8	-	-	19	20.8	91	100	3.4	1.4	4.0

Strategies Utilized to Improve the Effectiveness of the Board

The majority of State Superintendents of the Year perceive their board as “Very Effective” or “Effective”, with 84 (88.4%) superintendents responding positively to the question. To determine how the State Superintendents of the Year worked with their board superintendents identified strategies that they utilized to improve the effectiveness of the board. When the categories of “Very Effective” and “Effective” are combined, the three most highly rated strategies included: *provide continued professional development throughout the board’s term* 86.4%, *provide induction learning opportunities for the board* 83.8%; and *provide activities for the board to develop long range planning*, 79.8%. Superintendents responding to this survey identified strategies in which they had direct role as the most utilized in improving the board’s level of effectiveness. Table 25 shows the results pertaining to the board’s level of effectiveness by the State Superintendents of the Year.

Table 25

Strategies Found Useful to Improve the Board's Level of Effectiveness, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	Very Effective		Effective		Limited Effectiveness		Ineffective		Not Used		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Provide induction Learning opportunities for the board	39	41.9	39	41.9	14	15.1	-	-	1	1.1	93	100	4.2	.78	4.0
Provide continued professional development throughout the board's term	41	43.2	41	43.2	13	13.7	-	-	-	-	95	100	4.2	.69	4.0
Provide activities for the board to develop long range planning	40	42.6	35	37.2	17	18.1	1	1.1	1	1.1	94	100	4.1	.84	4.0
Collaborate with state school board association to foster opportunities to develop skills of the board	14	14.7	36	37.9	36	37.9	3	3.2	6	6.3	95	100	3.5	.99	4.0
Seek professional development through an association of school administrators, such as AASA	7	7.4	24	25.5	45	47.9	3	3.2	15	16.0	94	100	3.0	1.11	3.0
Training or preparation through an independent agency or consultant	6	6.5	28	30.4	27	29.3	8	8.7	23	25.0	92	100	2.8	1.28	3.0

More than half of the superintendents (52. %) spend up to four hours a week in communication with the board (Table 26). Direct communication in this survey means an information packet, phone conversation, e-mail, small group meeting or face-to-face conversations. Forty-seven percent of the State Superintendents of the Year spend between five to twelve hours each week in communication with board members. Table 27 shows the results of the strategies used according to effectiveness in communication with the board members.

Table 26

Hours Spent Communicating with the Board

Hours	n	Percentage
0-4	50	52.6
5-8	38	40.0
9-12	7	7.3
13+	0	0
Total	95	100.0

Survey question three asked, *which strategy do you use with the greatest frequency with the Board?* The responses available asked superintendents to rate the strategies based on “Effectiveness”. This error in the survey item language did not appear to influence responses of superintendents. It appears that superintendents responded based on the response choices and the pattern is similar to other items with this scale. Three strategies for communicating with the board emerged as being used most frequently, *face-to-face conversations* with 67.6 %, *regular Board information packet*, 65.1%; and *phone conversations*, 54.4%. Table 28 reflects the superintendents’ ratings of the strategies based on frequency.

Table 27

Strategies for Effectiveness in Communicating with the Board, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	Very Effective		Effective		Limited Effectiveness		Ineffective		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Regular Board information packet	51	53.7	40	42.1	4	1.2	-	-	95	100	3.4	.58	4.0
Phone conversations	62	65.3	29	30.5	3	3.2	1	1.1	95	100	3.5	.60	4.0
Small group committee meetings	36	38.2	40	42.5	16	17.0	2	2.1	94	100	3.1	.78	3.0
E-mail messages	22	23.1	43	45.2	27	28.4	3	3.1	95	100	2.8	.79	3.0
Face-to-face conversations	84	88.4	11	11.5	-	-	-	-	95	100	3.6	.32	4.0

Table 28

Frequency of Strategies used in Communicating with the Board, Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

	Very Frequent		Frequent		Limited Frequency		Not Frequent		Total		M	SD	Mdn
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Regular Board information packet	54	65.1	27	32.5	1	1.2	1	1.2	83	100	3.6	.58	4.0
Phone conversations	43	54.4	30	38.0	3	3.8	3	3.8	79	100	3.4	.74	4.0
Small group committee meetings	20	28.2	27	36.0	19	26.8	5	7.0	71	100	2.8	.10	3.0
E-mail messages	37	47.4	20	25.6	18	23.1	3	3.8	78	100	3.1	.91	3.0
Face-to-face conversations	50	67.6	17	23.0	6	8.1	1	1.4	74	100	3.5	.70	4.0

Clear understanding of the roles of the superintendent and school board can minimize difficulties between these two groups. Role conflict is often the reason superintendents have trouble with their boards and move on to other positions (McCurdy, 1992). In this study of the State Superintendents of the Year, superintendents responded that the roles of the superintendent and the school board were “Very Clear” and “Clear” 90.3%. Eight superintendents categorized the role as “Somewhat Clear” with only one indicating the role was, “Not Clear”.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the findings for the three research questions guiding this study. The first research question examined the personal and professional characteristics of Superintendents of the Year with respect to age, gender, race/ethnicity, degree held and years of service as a superintendent. Descriptive analyses classify, organize and summarize data about this population to better understand the characteristics of this group of individuals selected for their knowledge, skills and abilities in the position. The majority of State Superintendents of the Year are white males, with a mean age of 57.5 years. The youngest superintendent that participated in the survey was 42, while the oldest was 71, while the oldest currently working was 69 years old, with 36 years in the position of superintendent. The mean for number of districts served in is 2.15, with a mean for years of service as 13.54. The majority (64.8%) earned a doctorates degree and only one respondent to the survey has a Masters. No one in the position of district superintendent reported a Bachelor’s as their highest degree. The majority of State Superintendents of the Year work in a district identified as rural 28.7% or small town 21.2% and 35% worked in a district identified as suburban. No State Superintendents of the Year work in a district with a student population under 300 students.

The second research question focused on the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA; the superintendents’ perceptions regarding the mandates and the strategies that they use to meet the challenges. Descriptive analyses provide percentages and tables to organize and summarize the data.

The NCLB legislation is rated as having a “Great Impact” or “Some Impact” by 97.8 % of superintendents participating in this study. Superintendents face many challenges related to NCLB including a lack of funding, which is reported in the findings of this study as the most difficult challenge by 88% of the superintendents. A second difficulty is ensuring that all groups meet proficiency levels, 85.5%, indicating that having all sub-groups meet requirements for AYP is a “Significant” or “Some What” of a challenge. Superintendents rated the use of a growth model and additional funding as the most effective changes to be made to NCLB, both receiving a rating of 97. %.

Highlighting the information from the study regarding challenges related to Special Education, finding “highly qualified” teachers presents the most difficult challenge (84.5%) for those superintendents responding. State Superintendents of the Year identified Legal costs associated with Special Education as a challenge with 71.1% of superintendents rating it as a “Medium” and “Difficult Challenge”. In reviewing results pertaining to IDEIA, school discipline presents the greatest challenge for a district with 58.1%. Other areas cited as difficult for a district by the superintendents responding, *least restrictive environment*, (57%), and *due process* (49.5%).

Research question three explored how the superintendents perceive their working relationship with the board and the strategies they utilize to improve board effectiveness. The majority of superintendents responding to the survey have a “Very Good” or a “Good” relationship with their board, 97.8% and rated their board as being “Very Effective”, 88.4%. State Superintendents of the Year report that roles of the superintendent and the school board are “Very Clear” or “Clear” (90.3%) and 78.4% of superintendents responded that their boards “Never” or “Seldom” act in a manner that is unethical. Though boards are charged with creating policy, it is the superintendent that typically initiates ideas and makes a recommendation for district policy (66.3%), or the responsibility is shared (25.3%). Data indicates that superintendents believe it is important to provide opportunities to develop the effectiveness of the board. Three strategies, *provide continued professional development throughout the board’s term* (86.4%), *provide induction-learning opportunities* 83.8% and *provide activities for the board to develop long range planning* 79.8% require the superintendent to take an active

role to improve the board's level of effectiveness. In contrast, the strategies in which the superintendent did not play as active a role received a less favorable rating. To promote and improve the board's image in its public role, Superintendents of the Year rated, *ensure the president/member is well briefed on the issues to be discussed at meetings with constituency groups*, (97.8%) as "Very Effective" and "Effective". In addition they rated, *arrange for president/member to speak on behalf of the district on important occasions* (86.6%) "Very Effective" and "Effective". Superintendents responding to the survey rated, *Arrange for the president/ member to meet with critical constituencies* as "Very Effective and "Effective" 71.9%. When State Superintendents of the Year were asked to rate strategies according to their effectiveness in educating the board about the performance level of the school district, all strategies received a rating of 88.1% or higher in the combined "Very Effective and Effective". The two highest rated strategies were, *develop and share a complete picture of school performance, supplementing the federally mandated data with additional information that provides a more accurate picture of school performance* and *be proactive and forthright when communicating with the board about choice, supplemental service options and teacher quality* 94.6% and 91.4% respectively.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter V addresses the discussion of the findings for each research question, implications and recommendations for practice and further research. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a summary of the study including an overview of the problem, the research questions, and review of methodology and discussion of each research question with findings. The second section presents the implications based on the findings pertaining to the three research questions, possible uses of the data and suggestions to future researchers interested in the topic of the superintendency. In the third section, the conclusions describe benefits that this study contributes to the field of knowledge.

Summary of the Study

Examined in this study were the perceptions of and strategies utilized by the State Superintendents of the Year with respect to the mandates of NCLB and IDEIA and the school board. The specific research questions guiding this study were: 1) What are the personal and professional characteristics of the State Superintendents of the Year with respect to: age, gender, race/ ethnicity, degree held and years of service as a superintendent? 2 A) What are the perceptions of the State Superintendents of the Year regarding the challenges of the Federal mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and the re-authorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA)? 2B) What strategies do the State Superintendents of the Year utilize to meet the challenges of Federal mandates? 3A) How do State Superintendents of the Year perceive their working relationship with the board? and 3B) What strategies do the State Superintendents of the Year utilize to improve the effectiveness of the board?

The population for this study was the State Superintendents of the Year as designated by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) for the years of 2005, 2006 and 2007. This population enabled the researcher to gain information from superintendent leaders identified as highly skilled and representative of all areas of the United States and various district sizes; capturing their insights, perceptions and the

strategies they utilize in responding the Federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and in working with their boards.

As presented in this study's review of the literature, there is little doubt regarding the complexity of the factors affecting superintendent longevity of position concerning the personal and professional characteristics, the educational issues of mandates and board relationships. Further complicating this issue are the perceptions of the superintendents regarding these matters and the strategies that they elect to use to meet them.

This study's purpose was, in part, to add to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and the perceptions and strategies that may affect the ability of a superintendent to stay in the position of superintendent. The three research questions guiding the study targeted the State Superintendents of the Year each of whom received a survey comprised of thirty-two items that addressed the three research questions.

The survey was conducted using an on-line survey constructed on *Survey Monkey*, a web based survey maker, that was designed to compile demographic and professional information as well as to measure superintendents' perceptions of mandates and board relationships. In addition, each superintendent received a mailed paper survey with a letter of introduction, a letter of support from AASA, and a self-addressed envelope. The survey closed in early January of 2008, approximately seven weeks after the initial mailing, at which time 96 superintendents had responded yielding a 64% rate of return. With 96 of 147 surveys returned, the results of the survey can be generalized with 95% confidence and a confidence interval of +/- 6 percentage points (Macorr, 2008).

Descriptive statistics permitted the researcher to classify, organize and summarize the data used for reporting demographic data about the superintendents, their perceptions of challenges associated with the mandates, perceptions of the board and strategies utilized in both areas. This data is presented in the form of tables and includes frequencies and descriptive analysis for each of the research questions. Fourteen of the survey questions allowed for open-ended response. Written comments by superintendents

to the questions provided additional information analyzed as they relate to each research question.

Discussion

Research Question One

The first research question explored the personal and professional characteristics of the State Superintendents of the Year in regard to gender, race/ethnicity, age, size of district, type of district, years of experience, number of districts as superintendent, highest degree earned and if they were currently serving as a superintendent in a school district.

The demographic data of the responding State Superintendents of the Year indicated 76.6% were male and 23.4% female. This data is reflective of data reported in The American Associations of School Administrators 2006 *Mid-Decade Study*, which reported 78.3% male and 21.7% female and the 2000 study with 86.6 % male and 13.2% female.

The mean age for this study population was 57.5 years. The AASA reported the national average age of school superintendents was 52.5 years in 2000 and 54 years of age in 2006. In this study 78% of all the respondents are older than 55. A relatively small percentage of superintendents in this study (3.2%) are under 50. This may be reflective of a pattern that superintendents are staying longer in the position or it could be that people are coming to the position later in life. This opinion is shared by the research of Largent (2001). Another possible explanation may be the selection process for the State Superintendent of the Year candidates. According to information provided by AASA, Superintendent of the Year candidates are recognized by their peers for exemplary service to their district and the profession. It may take superintendents years of service to gain the credibility and recognition of their peer group. This would affect the average age of the respondents.

The race/ethnicity of superintendents participating in this study was predominately White at, 92.6%. Seven of the ninety-four respondents to this question identified themselves as members of ethnic groups other than White. The combined percentage of

respondents in the other ethnic groups was 7.4%. This number is relatively close to the results of the latest AASA national study conducted in 2006 where 6.2% of the respondents reported being members of ethnic groups other than White. The AASA study conducted in 2000 reported that 5.1% of superintendents were members of ethnic groups other than White. Since the State Superintendents of the Year are a smaller sub-group of all superintendents representing all areas of the country, it is natural that the ethnic make-up of both groups is similar.

Superintendent tenure was the next demographic factor examined. The mean number of districts served by superintendents in this study was two. The largest individual response category for this question was one district, 41.1% compared to 52% of respondents in the *State of the American Superintendency Mid-Decade Study* (Glass, et al., 2006). In looking closer at the data, the range of districts served varies from one to seventeen. The majority of the State Superintendents of the Year have served in more than one district, 58.9%. Being a superintendent in multiple districts may help these superintendents to gain the skills and experience required to be a State Superintendent of the Year. Research (Glass et al., 2000, Largent 2001) reports that superintendents tend to move from smaller districts to larger districts gaining in compensation and experience with the move.

The mean tenure for the State Superintendents of the Year was 13.24 years. Of the superintendents responding to the survey question, 71.6 % have 5-14 years of service. Those superintendents with 15 to 25+ years of service comprised 28.4 % of the respondents. Closer inspection of the data revealed that 22 of the currently working superintendents were 60 years old or older with the oldest currently working superintendent being 69 years of age and having served 36 years in the position of superintendent.

The Superintendents of the Year that responded to this study seem to fall into two distinct groups, those that are in the beginning of their superintendent career or those that have been superintendents for an extended period. In the *Mid-Decade Study* (2006), 22.5% of superintendents had 15+ years of service. The vast majority of superintendents in this study, 73, have ten or more years of service and stay in the position of superintendent for many years. Twenty-two (23.2%) of the respondents are relatively

new with less than ten years of service. In the 2006, *Mid-Decade Study* 15.3% of superintendents had less than ten years of service; in 2000, 11.3% had less than ten years of service as a superintendent. This difference may be attributed to superintendents entering the field later, (Glass, et al., 2000) or perhaps the criteria that AASA use to measure nominees. The State Superintendents of the Year must demonstrate leadership for learning – creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system. Improvement of instruction requires consistency of purpose and stable leadership over a sustained period if reforms are to be successful. Successful reforms require five years or more of a superintendent's focus and direction before reaching fruition (Fullan, 2002; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Thus, these highly effective superintendents identified for their excellence in leadership and professionalism may be committed to staying longer.

Another aspect related to the State Superintendents of the Year examined in this study was the size of the districts they serve. The majority of superintendents (54.2%) responding to this survey characterize their district size as between 3,000 and 24,999 students. Nearly 16 % (15.9%) identified their district as over 25,000 students. Nearly 30 % (29.7 %) of State Superintendents of the Year work in a district with 300 – 2,000 students. None of the State Superintendents of the Year works in a district with less than 300 students. This is interesting in that district size data shows the numerical dominance of small district superintendencies in the United States (Glass et al., 2006). Yet none of the State Superintendents of the Year, in this study is from a small district, serving in a system with less than 300 students. These numbers differ sharply from national studies where in 2000 the *Ten-Year- Study* (AASA) 18% of superintendents worked in a district with less than 300 and only 1.7% worked in a district of 25,000 or more. This difference may be due in part to qualities this group of superintendents must demonstrate to be nominated as a State Superintendent of the Year: leadership in learning, personal and organizational communication, and community involvement, including active participation in local community activities and an understanding of regional national and international issues are some of the criteria required (AASA, 2008). The difference may also be due to the elimination/consolidation of school districts or because superintendents may receive greater compensation in a larger district. Glass, et. al., (2006) reported that

many superintendents, especially in larger districts, now have benefit packages with values in excess of 50% of the base salary.

The level of education of the State Superintendents of the Year was the next characteristic analyzed. Nearly 64.8% of the superintendents responding to the survey indicated that they possess an earned doctoral degree. This percentage is 13 percentage points higher than was indicated in the 2006 study, *The State of the American School Superintendency a Mid- Decade Study* (Glass et. al., 2006), and 19.5 percentage points higher than the results reported in the 2000 study *The Study of the American School Superintendency 2000* (Glass, et al., 2006). Largent (2001) provided evidence that a large number of superintendents reported a doctorate is becoming more and more important for moving into larger jobs. This may be a factor in this study, given the population of superintendents that participated have been recognized for the leadership, professionalism and successful practice that would make them an attractive candidate to a school district. Approximately 50 % (49.9%) of superintendents in this study characterized their district as suburban and (35.1%) or urban (14.8%), which are typically larger districts.

The results of the descriptive analyses for research question one find that State Superintendents of the Year are White, in their late fifties, predominately male, and work in suburban districts. Additionally they have earned a Doctorate Degree, have served as a superintendent in two districts with a total tenure of approximately thirteen years. One item, district size indicated that none of the superintendents in this study worked in a small district; a district described as having less than 300 students. Additional research may determine what factors attract superintendents to a smaller district. Additionally, it may prove beneficial to examine the recruiting practices of small town and rural district superintendents to attract more experienced and highly qualified candidates to the position of district superintendent.

Research Question Two

The second research question in this study examined the State Superintendents of the Year perceptions and strategies utilized to meet the challenges of two Federal mandates. The first mandate, The Secondary and Elementary Education Act of 2001, typically referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the latest revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The second mandate

examined in this study was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). On December 3, 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended. The reauthorized statute named the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and is known as IDEIA of 2004.

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act has brought new challenges such as district accountability and systemic reform to ensure “adequate yearly progress” (AYP). Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2005) noted the era of educational accountability requires the superintendent have knowledge of testing, data analysis, and interpretation to establish and sustain school improvement. Superintendents must now lead district-wide, systemic reform; bringing all children to proficiency, provide “highly-qualified” teachers and ensure AYP (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2000 as cited in Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). Farkas, et al., (2003) found that the belief that effective school leadership can turn around individual schools, and even an entire system, has taken hold among a large majority of superintendents.

An aspect analyzed in this survey was the superintendents’ perception of the boards understanding of the Federal mandates. The survey asked the State Superintendents of the Year to characterize how well their board understood the Federal mandates of NCLB and IDEIA. The majority of superintendents, 94.5% perceived that their Board had a “Good” or “Very Good” understanding. Only five of the 96 respondents identified their Board as having a “Poor” or “Very Poor” understanding of the mandates. This may be due to accountability measures, by their very nature, attempt to influence from the outside what goes on inside the school district (Farkas, et al., 2003). Additionally, such policies may assume that the external pressure can play a significant role in changing the functioning of the school district. Thus, given the implications that NCLB may have on a school district, superintendents may ensure that their board has a clear understanding of the law and its mandates. The finding that these superintendents perceive the impact of NCLB as having “Great” or “Some Impact” by 94 of the 96 respondents (97.8%) may lend some support to this idea. With mandates having impact on districts, it is important that superintendents are effective in communicating with their boards a clear picture of the district’s performance (Kernan-Schloss, 2004). Community and board perception of the school district is influential in obtaining needed support.

This study examined strategies according to their effectiveness in educating the board about the performance level of the school district. The survey incorporated strategies similar to those identified by Kerman- Schloss (2004). Each of the five strategies received a “Very Effective” or “Effective” rating of 86.9% or better. Superintendents rated two strategies more highly than the others, the first, *develop and share a complete picture of school performance, supplementing the federally mandated data with additional information that provides a more accurate picture of school performance*, (94.6%), “Very Effective” and “Effective” and the second strategy, *be proactive and forthright when communicating with the board about choice, supplemental service options and teacher quality*, (91.4%), was rated as “Very effective” and “Effective”. The work of Kernan- Schloss (2004), who worked with numerous state associations and school districts support these findings to utilize in educating their community about school performance.

Examining the next factor, there are several areas of challenge pertaining to NCLB including funding to meet the mandates, hiring “highly-qualified teachers” and ensuring all sub-groups meet proficiency levels (Cohn, 2005; Glass, et al., 2006; Byrd, et al., 2006). This study asked the superintendents to evaluate the changes or improvements they would like to see made to the law. Superintendents rated two strategies more highly than the others, *better or more adequate funding*, (96.8%), and *use of a growth model to measure adequate yearly progress*, (96.8%). Two superintendents noted in their comments that the United States Department of Education granted their states permission to measure adequate yearly progress using a value-added model. Funding of the law has only covered a small percentage of the cost of compliance. Superintendents in this study noted that as a result, programs have been cut and money diverted from other areas that the district views as a need. Superintendent quotes appear below:

“We have had to continue to eat into our local operational budget. Reduce our reserve fund and have had limited opportunity to replicate services.”

“Funds to fully implement state and Federal mandates are extremely inadequate. We increased local funding significantly to provide quality education for our

children the mandates far exceed the revenue allocated for the state and Federal mandates.”

Superintendent comments appear to indicate that NCLB legislation is a burden to school districts by Federal government. The legislation, with mandates, appears to have influenced school districts’ manner in which the business of education is carried out.

The next set of survey questions analyzed examined superintendents’ perceptions and challenges regarding Special Education law. The implementation of Public Law, 94-142, 1975, now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA), guaranteed to all children with disabilities a free and appropriate education. At first, this legislation with its lack of funding and confusing guidelines was difficult to implement; over time, this act has been fully implemented (Glass et al., 2006).

In reviewing the responses from the State Superintendents of the Year, Special Education still provides areas of difficulty for school districts. Among the challenges facing districts in Special Education are, *legal costs*, finding “*highly qualified*” special education teachers, *transportation costs*, *race and ethnic disproportionality*, *extended school year services*, *audits regarding compliance* and *consultations with private school officials*. These superintendents specifically rated as the most difficult challenges, *finding qualified teachers* (84.5%) and *legal costs* (70. %). These findings are supported in the literature, Glass, et al., (2000) and Fusarelli & Fusarelli, (2000 as cited in Bjork & Kowalski, 2005) noted that finding “highly-qualified” teachers was a significant factor inhibiting superintendent success. Some districts have difficulty finding qualified teachers with dual certification, special education and a content area certification, as noted in the literature (Greene-Bryant, 2002). Regarding litigation in Special Education, Zirkel (1997) reported that while education litigation in general declined in the 1980’s and 1990’s, Special Education litigation has increased dramatically with the increase in the students being served.

State Superintendents of the Year examined the superintendents perceptions of the challenges associated with IDEIA. The challenges superintendents rated in the survey included *free and appropriate public education*, *least restrictive environment*, *school discipline*, *related services*, *tuition reimbursement* and *due process*. Respondents to this

question identified *school discipline*, with a rating 22.6% superintendents rating it as “Difficult Challenge” and 35.5% as a “Medium Challenge”, yielding a result for both areas of 58.1%. *Least restrictive environment* was noted by this group of superintendents as the second greatest area providing challenge, with 57% of superintendents rating this area as “Difficult” or a “Medium” challenge. Only two superintendents made comments in reference to IDEA:

“Spending local public funds/tax dollars to serve out of district private school children is yet another unfunded mandate.”

“Out of district tuition.”

These comments are reflective of individual district and superintendent concerns and may be due to district size, district type, available funds and the degree of Special Education services required in the district.

Superintendents responding to the survey reported concerns regarding Special Education; highest rated concerns identified included finding “*highly qualified*” teachers and *funding*. Only two superintendents elected to provide an additional comment to the questions related to Special Education, unlike NCLB for which many comments were reported. This may be due to superintendents seeing the benefits of special services being provided to the students requiring them. It is certainly true that Federal mandates require more funds than those provided by the Federal government, thus diverting limited district resources to implement mandates.

The descriptive analysis suggests that State Superintendents of the Year perceive that NCLB has had significant impact on education, especially with the financial obligations that the mandates require of school districts. A second challenge associated with NCLB was ensuring all sub-groups meet academic proficiency levels. Further research in the use of a growth model as a means of measuring student progress may prove to be beneficial for all children, but more specifically sub-groups. Superintendents support the use of a growth model to measure student academic growth. This finding aligns with national

studies that reflect superintendents selecting a continual progress model, a method of measuring yearly academic progress. Several states have received permission from the United States Department of Education to measure AYP using a value-added measure that would show where a student started and ended the academic year. No superintendents participating in this study represented districts that contain less than 300 students. Small districts comprise the majority of districts in this country. Further research in this area on the impact of NCLB is warranted to determine if small district superintendents share the same perceptions and strategies in meeting the challenges of mandates. Superintendent perceptions of difficulties associated with Special Education find that finding “highly qualified teachers” is a superintendent’s primary concern followed by legal costs.

Strategies superintendents employ to meet NCLB and IDEIA superintendents include being proactive and forthright when communicating with the board about choice, supplemental services and teacher quality. Additionally superintendents identified developing and sharing a complete picture of performance supplementing the federally mandated data with additional information that provides a more accurate picture.

Research Question Three

The third research question examined how superintendents perceive their working relationship with the board and the strategies they utilize to improve board effectiveness

The first aspect analyzed related to the superintendent’s working relationship with the board. The State Superintendents of the Year perceive their working relationship with their board as “Very Good”, (87.3%) or “Good” (10.5%), yielding an aggregate of 97.5%. Only two responding superintendents rated the relationship as “Fair”, and none perceived the relationship as “Poor”. Despite the demands on and the political nature of the position, these superintendents rate their relationship with their board as positive. This is reflective of the 2006 *Mid-Decade Study* (AASA) were 62.8% of superintendent reported a *very good* relationship with their board. Another 30.2% indicated *good* relations existed. This perception by superintendents toward their board may be associated with the board’s evaluation of the superintendent.

The second perception of the board by superintendents analyzed was frequency of a board member to act in an unethical manner. Some 26.8% of State Superintendents of

the Year indicated that their boards “Never” act in an unethical manner. The majority (51.6%) believed that their board or a member had “Seldom” acted in an unethical manner. Superintendents selected “Sometimes” 16.1% and “Frequently” by 5.3% of the superintendents responding to the question. In comparison, those superintendents responding to the 2006 *Mid-Decade Study* (AASA) reported on a scale consisting of, *all of the time, most of the time, seldom and never*. In the 2006 study 41% of superintendents reported that their boards acted in an ethical manner *all of the time* while 52.2% reported their boards acted in an ethical manner *most of the time*. 5.3% of superintendents perceived their board as acting in an ethical manner *seldom* and 1.4% indicated that their board *never* acted in an ethical manner. Boards are political by nature and susceptible due to pressure exerted upon board members especially if members may have been sponsored by a special interest group (Glass, et al., 2006). Superintendents and board members may have different views of what is or is not ethical (Carter, et al., 1997). The Superintendents provided personal comments pertaining to unethical behavior by a board or member. Their answers vary but all superintendents’ comments reflect the decision to act in a direct manner to resolve the concern.

“Meet one-on-one with the board member.”

“Direct communication and clarity.”

“Discuss with Board chair to decide joint strategy to deal with behavior.”

“Explain potential consequences, including damage to the reputation of the District or Board member.”

“Confer with the board president or general counsel in areas of concern.”

The next area in the study analyzed superintendents’ perceptions of the board pertaining to who initiates ideas and makes a recommendation when developing district policy. In this study 66.3% of superintendents reported the *superintendent* initiated ideas

and recommendations for new policy. 25.3% considered policy initiation a *shared responsibility*. None of the 96 respondents to this study selected the *school board* as initiating policy. In the 2000, *Ten-Year- Study* (AASA) 42.7 % indicated the *superintendent* initiated policy, 36.7% of superintendents indicated that initiation of new policy was a *shared responsibility*. The results of the 2006 study reflect an increase from the *Ten –Year- Study* one decade earlier, (AASA, 1992) where only 28.5% considered initiation of policy a *shared responsibility*. In this study of the State Superintendents of the Year 25.3% considered policy initiation a shared responsibility. This is less than reported in national studies. This may be due to the superintendents themselves; these are individuals that have years of experience and are viewed as leaders in their field. Perhaps this group of superintendents work in districts that view them as more knowledgeable of the needs of the district.

The degree that the school board accepts policy recommendations on the first reading was the next characteristic analyzed. The majority of superintendents report that the school board accepts the policy recommendation “Always” or “Frequently” (75. %). Several superintendents added comments to this question clarifying the process in their district. Superintendents commented that the practice in their district required policy recommendations to have two readings prior to accepting any policy, yet their boards’ frequently accepted policies at the first available opportunity. A second question that worked in tandem with this was, *when policy is not accepted the reason most frequently given is*, of the four possible responses the reason selected most often by superintendents (59.6%) was, *the board has not received enough background information about the topic*. The second most selected response (13.8%) was, *pressure from special interest groups or community groups*. The third and follow-up question to this series asked, *What do you do when the board does not ultimately accept your (superintendent’s) recommendations?* State Superintendents of the Year, generally, take the board feedback and rework the initiative or “*move on*”. This question allowed for open responses from the superintendents. Several of their responses appear below.

“Wait till the next meeting and re-submit with slight modifications, so they feel it is their idea.”

“Truthfully, this has never happened. I am willing to modify my recommendation.”

“Usually, simply move on. On matters of moral imperative, discuss further in terms of future relationships. If the board is going somewhere I cannot, we would part ways, amicably, I would hope.”

“Move on. I have a system to run and children to educate. Rejection is just part of this job.”

The success of the district depends in part on the success of the relationship the board, and the superintendent (Townsend, et al., 2006). The next area pertaining to the board, asked superintendents to rate six strategies for their effectiveness to build a positive relationship with the board. These strategies included, *call all board members on a regular basis*, *develop a board information packet on a regular basis*; *gather board member questions prior to meetings and provide answers*; *pursue regular in-dept communication focusing on the board/superintendent relationship*; *take the initiative in building partnerships with your board and board president/chair* and *follow a well developed agenda for working through joint leadership issues with the board president/chair*. In this study, the strategy found to be most beneficial in building a positive relationship with the board with a rating of 95.8% was, *take the initiative in building partnerships with your board and board president/chair*. The second highest rated strategy with a rating of 92.6% was, *develop a board information packet on a regular basis*, 92.6%. Support for these two strategies appears in the literature. According to Eadie (2007), successful superintendents make a substantial effort to build the relationship with the board president, meet regularly with the board and follow well-developed agendas for working through joint leadership issues. The State Superintendents of the Year is a prestigious honor for excellence in the superintendency (AASA, 2008). It may be that the strength in personal and organization communication

along with their commitment to professionalism, qualities that have allowed them to be identified for the excellence in position, assists them in working with their board.

The next area analyzed the strategies superintendents found effective in promoting and improving the board's image in its public role. Literature supports that superintendents view part of their role as developing their relationship with others (Townsend, et al., 2005). Glass et al., (2000) reported that superintendents are hired primarily for their leadership. Board members also have needs and one aspect is their image in the public. The superintendents in this study rated strategies according to their effectiveness in promoting and improving the board's image in its public role. The strategy that received the highest rating, (97.5%) was, *ensuring that the president/member is well briefed on the issue to be discussed at meeting with constituencies*. Also rated highly, *arrange for the president/member to speak on behalf of the district on important occasions* (86.6) followed by, *arrange for the president/member to meet with critical constituencies* (71.3%). Superintendents are highly skilled professional educators working in harmony with dedicated local boards to meet the challenges facing districts today. The image that this team portrays to the public is essential for the success of the district.

The majority of State Superintendents of the Year viewed their boards as effective, 88.4%. Superintendents evaluated strategies according to their ability to increase board effectiveness. The three choices selected most frequently were *provide induction-learning opportunities for the board* (83.8%); *provide continued professional development throughout the board's term* (86.4%) and, *provide activities for the board to develop long range planning* (79.8%). The three strategies selected allow superintendents to have direct input on the professional development of the board. AASA (2008) reported that professionalism, constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team, is one of the criteria established for nominees for State Superintendent of the Year. It may be that this group of superintendents seeks opportunities to help other grow professionally. It may also be a reflection of the State Superintendents of the Year wanting to shape the professional learning of their board to meet the needs of the district.

Time spent in direct communication with the board was the next area analyzed. More than half (52%) of superintendents spend four hours or less per week in direct communication with board members. 40% spend five to eight hours a week in communication with the board and 7% spend nine to twelve hours in communication with the board. Communication in this study included, regular board information packet, phone conversations, small group committee meetings, e-mail messages and face-to-face conversations. Nearly half (47%) of the State Superintendents of the year spend between five to twelve hours each week in communication with board members. Research by Glass (2003) supports the finding that superintendents designated as exemplary in 2003 spent more than three hours in direct communication. In the *Mid-Decade Study* by AASA (2006) 49.3 % of superintendents indicated that they spend three or more hours per week in communication with the board. In this study, 47% of the superintendents spend five or more hours per week in communication with their board. This may be explained in the literature, AASA provides regarding State Superintendents of the Year. These superintendents are highly effective in leadership, professionalism and have a deep commitment to children and education.

Effective superintendents are consummate communicators, collaborators, consensus creators. Perhaps, because these highly effective leaders are skilled in communication, they realize the importance in spending time communicating with their board. In reviewing the strategies utilized for communication with the board, the superintendents rated them according to effectiveness and then according to frequency of use. Superintendents viewed, *face-to-face* conversation as the most effective strategy (99.9%) followed by *phone calls* and *regular board information packet*, both rated 95.8%. In reference to frequency, superintendents selected the *regular board information packet* as the most frequent means of communicating with the board (97.6%). This may be due to this strategy allowing superintendents the opportunity to plan the packet and ensure that it contains all pertinent information that they deem necessary. This is supported in the research. Griffith (1990) suggested superintendent's should tutor, guide and lead in order that the board can be effective. One means of accomplishing this is to provide board members with an agenda that clearly articulates outcomes, has support

materials and provides information needed to reach the outcomes. The district's teaching and learning mission should drive this. Additionally, the superintendent should "build the team". *Phone calls* were the second most frequent strategy superintendents used to communicate with the board. Superintendents rated *E-mail* the least favorable in respect to effectiveness and frequency. This may be surprising given the reliance on electronic communication and the increasing role of this mode of communication in our world today. Possibly, this group may see electronic communication as a less desirable strategy or perhaps superintendents see negative implications for putting information in an electronic communication.

Clarity of roles assists the board and superintendent to understand the expectations of their respective positions. Lack of clarity may cause confusion and lead to disharmony in the relationship. The majority (51.6%) of superintendents in this study indicated that the roles of the superintendent and the board are clear and distinct. When combining the categories of "Very Clear" and "Clear" into one group the rate is 90.3%. Role conflict may cause difficulty resulting in the superintendent leaving the district. The roles of the board should be clear and distinct. This strategy is supported by earlier research by Townsend et al., (2005) indicating that the superintendent should ensure board members are well informed in order that the board can focus on the mission furthering the board's role to govern. When roles are not clear, disequilibrium can occur, resulting in superintendents having trouble with their boards, which may ultimately be the reason a superintendent leaves a district. Comments provided by the State Superintendents of the Year reiterated that the roles of the board and superintendent are inherently different – the board makes policy, the superintendent advises and carries out policy.

It is worthy to note that nearly all State Superintendents of the Year (97.5%) rated their relationship with the board as positive (very good or good). A majority also reported that they find their boards understand mandates and the challenges that they present.

More than 50% believed that their board acted in an ethical manner all of the time. Interestingly about 20% of superintendents believe that their board has displayed unethical behavior seldom or frequently. Traditionally, school systems have been perceived as being nonpolitical (Glass et al., 2006), but during the past few decades, they have become more political with special interest groups exerting pressure. However, board ethics warrant further study to determine areas where the board or a board member displays such behavior. In addition, the degree to which special interest groups influence board member behavior and decisions merits further study.

Strategies State Superintendents of the Year ranked as effective in working with the board show strong congruence. The strategies rated as most effective in the areas of building a positive relationship with the board, promoting and improving the board's image in its public role and increasing board effectiveness all reflect a preference for the superintendent as having a direct role in the out come. The most frequently selected strategy in building a positive relationship with the board was, *take the initiative in building partnerships with your board and board president/chair*. The second strategy selected was, *develop a board information packet on a regular basis*, both strategies reflect the role of a decision maker. In the area of improving board effectiveness State Superintendents of the Year selected, *provide induction-learning opportunities for the board provide continued professional development throughout the board's term and, provide activities for the board to develop long range planning*. Each of these three strategies allows the superintendent to have direct influence on the professional development of the board. Thus, when working with the board it appears that State Superintendents of the Year prefer the role of decision maker or advisor rather than assuming a "functionary role" that might be a more politically astute path to take in working with the board (Glass, et al., 2000). Furthermore, this adds credence to the contingency theory, discussed earlier in the literature review, which explains leadership behavior based on the characteristics of the leader and the situation interact to produce leader behaviors and determine effectiveness. Additionally the situational factors have a direct influence on the level of effectiveness.

Implications for Practice

Findings of this study support relevant data and supplement the existing knowledge base relative to superintendent longevity in the position of district superintendent. Previous studies on superintendent longevity have described superintendent tenure as in a “state of crisis” and a job so daunting that few individuals are willing to pursue the position (Cooper et al., (2000). This concern is reflected most notably in cities and large urban areas and with the changing nature of the superintendents’ position, which has become increasingly complex and political (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Byrd, Drews & Johnson, 2006; Cuban, 1976; Iannacone & Lutz, 1970; Kowalski, 1999). This most visible position encompasses many challenges; a role that calls for a power greater than mere human knowledge and experience (Hoyle, 2002). Data from this study show that for this particular group of superintendents; a mean tenure rate for the State Superintendents of the Year currently in position of superintendent is 13.54 years. For all superintendents that participated in the study the mean tenure is 13.24 years. This research demonstrates that this group of superintendents select strategies that enable them to be successful in the position of superintendent, remain in the position, and be recognized as successful by their peers. The strategies these superintendents select to meet the challenges faced by Federal mandates and in working with the board, demonstrate a preferred leadership style of decision maker, employing a “hands-on” approach.

It has been noted in this study that the strategies that the State Superintendents of the Year select as being effective in working with Federal mandates and the board, require direct involvement on the part of the superintendent. Contingency theory supports the notion that leaders’ behavior is influenced by contexts and suggests that superintendents may adapt to changes in their environment. This would account for the superintendents ability to stay in position despite shifts in board or the board power structure. It may be that this elite group of superintendents is predisposed to a leadership style that is consistent with the profession and their personalities yet possess the ability to pick up on social cues and adapt when the circumstances require them to do so to accommodate the board.

The mean age of superintendents in this group is 57.5 years and clearly follows the national trend of increasing superintendent age. Early retirement may not be in the plans of many State Superintendents of the Year for the majority of superintendents in this

study (75.8%) are 55- 65+. This group of superintendents seems to be staying longer and retiring later than superintendents did a decade ago. These findings and others reported in this study may be due to the highly effective nature of this particular group of leaders.

AASA (2008) contends that the superintendents identified as State Superintendents of the Year are representative of education's outstanding leaders recognized for their demonstrated leadership for learning, strength in communication, seek improvement in professionalism, are actively involved in the community, and knowledgeable of regional, national and international issues. The very nature of this group may predispose them to working successfully in the position of superintendent.

The population of State Superintendents of the Year is an elite group. The process AASA uses to select the State Superintendents that composed the population are highly successful in terms of their working relationship with the boards, their communication skills and their perceptions of challenges posed by NCLB and IDEIA. Moreover, the majority are not from urban areas where the perception of challenges posed by Federal mandates may be different. It is possible that the selection process that identifies these individuals as State Superintendents of the Year encompasses a means of selecting individuals with high interpersonal skills and a positive presupposition to challenges they face in the superintendency, neither of which is measured here but may come in to play to some extent.

The system that AASA employs in selecting these individuals resulted in the respondents to this study having very similar perceptions and selecting similar strategies resulting in little variation among the group when responding to the survey instrument. The system that AASA uses is reliable, valid and dependable as evidenced in the similar results over the population that comprised this study with respondents that extended over a three-year period, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

This population is a highly effective group and their perception and strategies with respect to leading a school district apply beyond this study and should shape professional development for superintendents. Participation of superintendents in professional associations provides opportunities for information sharing and the opportunity to interact with others in the same role. One of the most important opportunities provided by professional association membership is the ability to network; this may be an opportunity

for this elite group to share their expertise and their thinking regarding professional and organizational socialization.

Recommendations for Practice

The opportunity to the profession is how best to prepare the next generation of superintendents and how to support those currently in the position. Whether the training is based in a university program or within the framework of a professional association, the need is to understand the leadership behaviors of superintendents and how they adapt to work effectively with a board that can change due to political or community circumstances. University programs typically are the first step in the development of school administrators. University based leadership programs possess a wealth of knowledge and experience. There exists tremendous possibilities in extending what universities do well; that is, develop thinking and learning. Universities and public school systems (and states) share responsibility in preparing aspiring and current school leaders. Creating sites that could support aspiring and current leaders and include practice based and problem based learning would foster continuous support to the superintendency.

Universities, in developing the next generation of superintendents may consider the opportunity for individuals in educational leadership programs to participate in guided hands-on experiences in the field in critical district functions of finance, facilities, personnel and board relations. In doing so universities would provide a link between course content and demands of the position.

Associations and state agencies have in the past made efforts to standardize the preparation and licensing of superintendents. Both of these groups could consider in-service or development opportunities that would allow individuals aspiring to the superintendency to have experiences working with boards.

Recommendations for Future Research

The goal of this research was to examine the current state of longevity (success) of tenure for the State Superintendents of the Year and determine what factors, if any, contribute to tenure for State Superintendents of the Year with respect to personal characteristics, the current instructional issues of NCLB and IDEIA and the school board

relationship to determine which if any, have significance. This research produced a large amount of data and a positive response rate. Together, they give an accurate and representative description of factors that contribute to longevity/success of this highly effective group of leaders. The data collected and the findings of this study provide suggestions for further studies that would focus attention on issues concerning the field. Further research may focus on:

- 1) The scarcity of women and people of color in the superintendency.
- 2) The difficulty of recruiting individuals to serve in our small town and rural district superintendencies, which make up the majority of our nation's school districts.
- 3) A comparison study examining the strategies State Superintendents of the Year employ when working with a new board and those utilized when working with a more experienced board.
- 4) A study examining the frequency of State Superintendents of the Year in exemplary districts with less experienced superintendents.

Universities, associations and state education agencies share in the responsibility prepare educational leaders to meet the challenges facing education. Knowledge of the issues facing superintendents is an important element in meeting this challenge. Data should be used to identify the needs of these leaders and the personal and professional qualities that enable them to be successful.

Conclusions

The findings resulting from this study could help foster the development of those seeking a position of superintendent. Professional development for superintendents has traditionally occurred in two domains. The first domain is in the university setting with the completion of an educational administration graduate program. The second domain occurs more infrequently. This domain typically consists of participation in professional development at the state or national level and is associated with an association or a state agency. Superintendents would benefit from an organized and sequenced professional development program.

The superintendents in this study are highly effective in their practice and identified by the peers for their leadership and skill in the profession. The American Association of School Administrators is an association known for its leadership in supporting superintendents and school leaders across the country with conferences, workshops, and periodicals to name but a few items. For the past several years AASA has tapped the strengths of the State Superintendents of the Year, having them participate in the National Superintendent of the Year Forum. This is an opportunity for this group to attend a forum and discuss successfully overcoming the daily challenges of the superintendency. It may be beneficial for the expertise of this highly effective group to share the knowledge, skills and abilities that they have developed from their experiences with a broader audience. This might take the traditional route of a workshop or perhaps another form may allow for the expertise of this group to be shared more broadly.

Ultimately, this study enabled greater focus on the State Superintendents of the Year and the qualities that enable them to be successful in the position of superintendent and as such contributed, to the literature regarding their perceptions pertaining to Federal mandates and their boards and strategies they select to meet the challenges associated with these areas. The awareness and identification of State Superintendent of the Year characteristics should be integral considerations for program development and support offered to those seeking to enter this most visible leadership position. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* (2001) asserted that the organizational culture is determined by a “level 5 leader, an individual who blends extreme personal humility with intense personal will” (p.21). This statement reflects the commitment that these highly effective leaders bring to the field of education.

REFERENCES

- Allen, P. K. (1998). Reasons for involuntary non-extensions of Missouri public school superintendent contracts in 1996. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59(9), 3292A.
- American Association of School Administrators. (2000). *The Study of the American school superintendency 2000*. Arlington, VA.
- American Association of School Administrators. (1992). *The study of the American school superintendency: America's education leaders in a time of reform*. 1992. Arlington, VA.
- American Association of School Administrators. (1999, April). Districts large and small searching for superintendents. *Leadership News*, 1-3.
- American Association of School Administrators. (1982). *The American Superintendency* (2nd ed.). Arlington, VA.
- Bjork, L. (1993). Effective schools-effective superintendents: The emerging instructional leadership role. *Journal of School Leadership*, 3(3), 246-259.
- Bjork, L. (2000). Personal characteristics. In T. Glass, L. Bjork, & C. Brunner (Eds.). *The study of the American superintendency 2000: A look at the superintendent in the new millennium* (pp. 15-32). Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Bjork, L. (2000b). Professional preparation and training. In T. Glass, L. Bjork, & C Brunner (Eds.), *The study of the American school superintendency 2000: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium* (pp. 127-309). Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Bjork, L., Kowalski, T., Y Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2005). Learning theory and research: A framework for changing superintendent preparation and development. In L. Bjork & t. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.
- Bradley, A. (December 12, 1990). "Rapid Turnover in Urban Superintendents Prompts Calls for Reform in Governance." *Education Week*, 1-2.

- Bredeson, P. (1996). Superintendents' roles in curriculum development and instructional leadership: Instructional visionaries, collaborators, supporters, and delegators. *Journal of School Leadership*, 6(3), 243-264.
- Burnham, J. G. (1989). *The career development experiences and career patterns of superintendents in the United States*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.
- Byrd, J. K. (2001). Effective superintendent leadership strategies and management techniques for improving student performance as perceived by superintendents in selected school districts in Texas. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 62(7), 2294A
- Byrd, J., Drews, C., & Johnson, J. (2006). *Factors Impacting Superintendent Turnover: Lessons from the Field*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 493287).
- Callahan, R. (1962). *Education and the cult of efficiency: A study of the social forces that have shaped the administration of the public schools*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Carter, G. & Cunningham, W. (1997). *The American schools superintendent: Leading in an age of pressure*. San Francisco: Jossey - Bass.
- Carter, G., Glass, T., & Hord S. (1994) *Selecting preparing, developing the school district superintendent*. In G. Hall & D. Carter, *International Perspectives on Educational Reform and Policy*, London: Falmer.
- Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE). (2003). *The view from the insides: A candid look at today's school superintendent*. Engelwood, CO. Retrieved April 7, 2007, from www.co-case.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=&subarticlenbr=191%20.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great*. New York: HarperCollins
- Cooper, B. S., Fusarelli, L. D., & Carella, V. A. (2000). *Career crisis in the superintendency? The results of a national survey*. Arlington, VA. American Association of School Administrators. Retrived April 1, 2007 from http://www.eric.ed.gov/zeus.tarleton.edu:81/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01_0000000b/80/21/e3/aa/pdf

- Cooper B. S., Fusarelli L. D., Jackson B. L., Poster J. (2002). Is “superintendent preparation” an oxymoron? Analyzing changes in programs, certification, and control. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 1(3), September, 242-255 (14).
- Council of Great City Schools. (2003, October). Superintendents: Characteristics, tenure, and salary. *Urban Indicator*, 7(1). Retrieved March 30, 2006, from <http://www.cgcs.org/reports/>.
- Creighton, T. (2005). *Schools and data the educator’s guide for using data to improve decision making*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.
- Cuban, L. (1984). Transforming the frog into a prince: Effective schools research and practice at the district level. *Harvard Educational Review*, 54(2), 129-151.
- Cummings, J. R. (1994). Becoming the successful candidate. *The School Administrator*, 2(51), 28-35.
- Danzberger, J. P., Kirst, Y., & Usdan (1992). *Governing public schools: New times, new requirements*. (ED353654).
- Eadie, D. (2007). A Healthy Relationship for a Presidential Relationship. *The School Administrator*
- Eaton, W. E. (1990). *Shaping the superintendency: A reexamination of Callahan and the cult of efficiency* (11-35). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Education Writers Association. (n.d.). *Effective superintendents, effective boards: Finding the right fit*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved April 5, 2007, from www.ewa.org/library/2004/leadership.pdf
- Farkas, S., Foley, P., & Duffett, A. (2001). *Just waiting to be asked*. New York: Public Agenda. Retrieved April 1, 2007, from http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdf/just_waiting_to_be_asked.pdf
- Farkas, S., Johnson, J., & Duffett, A. (2003). *Rolling up their sleeves*. New York: Public Agenda. Retrieved April 1, 2007, from http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/rollin_up_their_sleeves.pdf
- Farkas, S., Johnson, J., Duffett, A., & Foleno, T. (2001). *Trying to stay ahead of the game*. New York: Public Agenda. Retrieved April 1, 2007, from http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/ahead_of_the_game.pdf

- Floyd, D. (1995). *National superintendent search consultants' perceptions concerning their role in the selection of school superintendents*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, East Texas State University, Commerce.
- Forsyth, J. (2004, December). Does district leadership really matter? *School Administrator*. Retrieved April 7, 2007, from <http://searchepnet.com.zeus.tarleton.edu:81/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&an=15199836>
- Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-20.
- Fusarelli, B., & Fusarelli, L. (2003). *Reconceptualizing the Superintendency: Superintendents as applied social scientists and social activists*. In L. Bjork and T. Kowalski, *The Contemporary Superintendent: Preparation, practice and development*, Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Gilland, T. (1935). *The origin and development of the powers and duties of the city-school superintendent*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Glass, T. (1992). *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency. America's education leaders in a time of reform*. Arlington, VA. American Association of School Administrators.
- Glass, T., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. (2000). *The study of the American school superintendency 2000. A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*. Arlington, VA. American Association of School Administrators.
- Glass, T. (2000). The shrinking applicant pool: Why the superintendency has become less attractive-and what can be done about it. *Education Week*, 20(10), 68, 50-51.
- Glass, T. (2001). *Superintendent leaders look at the superintendency, school board and reform*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Memphis.
- Glass, T. (2003). *Superintendent leader: Look at the superintendency, school boards and reform*. Denver: Education Commission of the States.
- Glass, T. & Franceschini L. (2006). *The study of the American school superintendency; A mid-decade study*. Arlington, VA. American Association of School Administrators.
- Goodman, R. H., & Zimmerman, W. G., Jr. (2000). *Thinking differently. Recommendations for 21st century school board/superintendent leadership, governance, and teamwork for high student achievement*. Washington D.C.:

- Education Commission of the States. Retrieved April 3, 2007, from <http://www.nesdec.org>.
- Griffith, R.(1990). When board relations are smooth, success is a breeze. *The Executive Educator*, v 12, n 5 p14-16.
- Harvey, J. (2003, February). *The urban superintendent: Creating great schools while surviving on the job*. Orlando, FL: Council of Great City Schools: Retrieved April 3, 2007, from www.cgcs.org/pdfs/UrbanSuptReport.pdf.
- Hoyle, J. (2002, September). The highest form of leadership. *The School Administrator*. Retrieved March 31, 2007, from <http://stagi.hg.aasa.rd.net/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=1785&snItemNumber=950&tnItemNumber=95>
- Hoyle, J., Bjork, L., Collier, V., Glass, T. (2005). *The superintendent as CEO*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.
- Johnson, S. M. (1996). Turnover in the superintendency. *Education Week*, 15(25), 60-74.
- Kelly, M.T. (1993). Profile of the Virginia Superintendent. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 54, 08A, (1993):2827.AAG9400761.
- Kernan-Schloss, A. (2004). Fighting NCLB's 'Failure' Label. *The School Administrator*, V61, n 3, p. 18-21.
- Kowalski, T. J. (1999). *The school superintendent: Theory, practice, and cases*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Kowalski, T. (2005). Evolution of the school district superintendent position. In L. Bjork & T. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Largent, J. (2001). Superintendent tenure: Characteristics of Texas superintendents, the school community, and their effect on tenure. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63 (7), 2302A.
- Lutz, F. W. (1996). Vulnerability of the vulnerability thesis. *Peabody Journal of Education* 71(2), 96-109.
- Lutz, F. W. & Iannaccone, L. (1978). *Public participation in local school districts: The dissatisfaction theory of American democracy*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- MaCorr Inc. (2008). Retrieved February 20, 2008 from, http://www.macorr.com/ss_calculator.htm

- McMillan, J. H., & Fiore, D. (2003). Report on the Virginia Superintendents' Professional Development Survey. Richmond, VA: *Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute*, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Murphy & Hawley. (2003). The AASA "leadership for learning" master's program. *Teaching in Educational Administration Newsletter*, 10(2), 1-5. In L. Bjork and T. Kowalski, *The Contemporary Superintendent: Preparation, practice and development*, Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Meara, M. S. (1984). The status of the Virginia superintendency (Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1984). *Dissertation Abstracts International* 45, 3501.
- Newell, M. B. (1997). Factors affecting superintendent tenure in Missouri (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International*. 59, 07A.
- National School Boards Association CUBE [Council of Urban Boards of Education]. (2002). Survey Report: *Superintendent Tenure*. Alexandria, VA: Retrieved March 30, 2007, from <http://search.epnet.com.zeus.tarleton.edu:81/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&an=E D460201>.
- Natkin, G., Cooper, B., Alborano, J., Padilla, A., & Ghosh, S. (2002, April). *Predicting and modeling superintendent turnover*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved March 30, 2007, from http://www.eric.ed.gov.zeus.tarleton.edu:81/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/27/8e/5b.pdf.
- Orr, M. T. (2006). Learning the superintendency: socialization, negotiation, and determination. *Teachers College Record*, 108(7), 1362-1403. <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>, May 12, 2007.
- Peterson, G., & Barnett, B. (2003). *The superintendent as instructional leadership History, evolution, and future of the role*. In J. Hoyle, L. Bjork, V. Collier, & T. Glass. *The Superintendent as CEO*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

- Ramsey, K. (1999, November 20). Sometimes, superintendents just can't win [Opinion Article]. *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1-2.
- Rausch, L. M. (2001). Factors contributing to exits from the superintendency in Indiana. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62(4), 1290A.
- Reller, T. (1935). *The development of the city superintendency of schools in the United States*. Philadelphia: Author. [Online].
- Townsend, R., Brown, J., Walter L. (2005). *A Practical Guide to Effective School Board Meetings*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002, January 8). *No child left behind act of 2001*. Washington, D C: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. [Online]. Available <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110pdf>.
- Walter, J. K. & Supley, M. L. (1999) A revolving door? *Texas Lone Star*, 17 (3), 14-15.

APPENDIX A

Constructs of Study

Instructional Leadership: Understands the impact of state and federal mandates on education.

- ◇ Identifies the level impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on public education
- ◇ Identifies the challenges in implementing NCLB
- ◇ Identifies the means to improve the manner in which NCLB impacts a district.
- ◇ Identifies methods to improve the impact of NCLB on the district to improve
- ◇ Identifies greatest challenge related to Special Education.
- ◇ Identifies are of IDEA that provides district with the greatest challenge.

Political Leadership: Understands the socioeconomic, legal and political context of schools

- ◇ Identifies who is taking the lead in developing district policy
- ◇ Can characterize the working relationship of the board
- ◇ Identifies school board's level of effectiveness
- ◇ Identifies the school board's acceptance of superintendent policy recommendations.
- ◇ Identifies medium most successful to develop positive community relationships develop positive community relations.
- ◇ Able to characterize (fragmentation) of the board
- ◇ Operates from a clearly defined role for the superintendent and the school board.

Communication:

- ◇ Communicates with the board
- ◇ Communicates a shared vision with board
- ◇ Communicates a positive presence in public forums
- ◇ Communicates from a clear understanding of role

- ◇ Communicates with the media
- ◇ Responds to, and influences the larger political and social context of school district

Visionary:

- ◇ Identifies future challenges of the profession
- ◇ Identifies factors that contribute to effectiveness as superintendent
- ◇ Identifies factors that inhibit effectiveness as superintendent
- ◇ Identifies districts top future service needs
- ◇ Knowledge of the availability of candidates for the superintendency
- ◇ Identifies instructional and curricular goals

Moral/Ethical Leadership:

- ◇ Rates personal level of preparedness for the superintendency
- ◇ Participates in informal preparation options (mentoring, associations) programs to support professional growth
- ◇ Identifies preparation and support new superintendents need to meet the challenges of the profession
- ◇ Participates in state association, national associations, or graduate program to develop skills
- ◇ Identifies practices to improve graduate preparation programs for the superintendency
- ◇ Identifies areas of training that would increase effectiveness as a superintendent
- ◇ Provides leadership to meet the boards expectations
- ◇ Identifies means to improve the effectiveness of the board
- ◇ Identifies benefits of membership in professional associations
- ◇ Serves as a coach for other aspiring superintendents

APPENDIX B

TRUTH TABLES

Table B 1

Instructional Leadership

	1	2	3	4	5
Identifies impact of NCLB on district education	X	A	A	A	A
Identifies challenges of implementing NCLB	A	X	A	A	A
Identifies means to improve the manner in which NCLB Impacts district	A	A	X	A	A
Identifies greatest challenges related to Special Education (finding teachers, legal costs, resources)	A	A	A	X	A
Identifies areas of IDEA that provide district with the greatest challenge (LRE, tuition reimbursement, related services)	.	.	.	A	X

Table B2

Political Leadership

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Identifies who takes lead to develop district Policy recommendations	X	A	A	A	A	A
Can characterize (superintendents) working Relationship of the board	A	X	A	A	A	A
Identifies school board's level of effectiveness	A	A	X	A	A	A
Identifies school board's acceptance of Superintendent policy recommendations	A	A	A	X	A	A
Can characterize the relationship of board (between members)	A	A	A	A	X	A
Operates from clearly defined role of the superintendent and the school board	A	A	A	A	A	A

Table B3

Communication

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Communicates with the board (knowing audience)	X	A	A	A	A	A	A
Communicates a shared vision with the board	A	X	A	A	A	A	.
Communicates from a positive presence in public forums	A	A	X	A	A	A	A
Communicates from a clear understanding of role	A	A	A	X	A	A	A
Communicates with media	A	A	A	A	X	A	.
Responds to and influences the larger political and social context	A	A	A	A	A	X	A
Identifies medium most successful to develop a relationship with the community	A	A	A	A	A	A	X

Table B4

Visionary

	1	2	3	4	5
Identifies future challenges of the profession	X	A	A	A	A
Identifies factors that contribute to effectiveness as a superintendent	A	X	A	A	A
Identifies factors that inhibit effectiveness as a superintendent	A	A	X	A	A
Identifies districts top future service needs	A	A	A	X	A
Knowledge of the availability of candidates For the superintendency	A	A	A	.	X

APPENDIX D



American Association of School Administrators

October 11, 2007

Robin S. Mentzer,
36685 Whispering Oaks Court
Purcellville, Virginia 20132

Dear Robin:

The American Association of School Administrators, AASA, is pleased to grant permission to you to use questions and data from our State of the American School Superintendency study. The questions you chose to follow up on from the study and the adaptations of questions from our study in many cases will shed new light on the superintendency.

We hope that you will be willing to share your data with us and perhaps write an article for one of our publications or a presentation at some future AASA meeting. Good luck with your research and the remainder of your doctoral program.

Yours Truly,

Bruce Hunter
Associate Executive Director
American Association of School Administrators

APPENDIX E
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

November 14, 2007

Dear

Congratulations on being selected as an AASA State Superintendent of the Year. You are a member of an elite group of educators whose knowledge, experience and insight provides valuable information for your fellow educators. This is a special request for your help.

I am a May 2008 candidate for a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. My dissertation is titled *State Superintendents of the Year: Reflections of Successful Practice*. To complete my study, I am requesting your input on a survey, a copy of which is enclosed. This survey asks State Superintendents of the Year for their perspectives on factors that contribute to their success as a superintendent. The enclosed survey includes questions on issues faced by superintendents on a daily basis. There is also a demographics section, which is pertinent to the study.

Each survey, including yours, impacts my study as a whole. Your participation is essential to the success and validity of the research I have identified your survey with a code number. The sole purpose of the code number is to allow follow-up letters to be sent to those who do not respond. Surveys are color-coded based on the year for which the information is being gathered. No individual data will be identified in the results, and all codes used for identification will be destroyed after the study is complete.

Your responses are of value to our profession. They will help identify areas pertaining to superintendent board relations, state and federal mandates and the strategies superintendents use in addressing these areas. Your insights and information will help support those currently holding the position of superintendent and those who will be filling this most visible and critical role in education. The results of this study will produce a profile of the most successful superintendents who are leading our nation's schools, as well as the boards that are supporting them.

If you have, any questions please feel free to call me at 703-262-7408, or e-mail me at robin.mentzer@fcps.edu. I am deeply indebted to you for finding the time to assist me in conducting this research. The results of the study will be publicly available on the internet after its completion. If possible, please complete and return the survey before November 30, 2007.

Sincerely,

Robin S. H. Mentzer
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX F

STATE SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE YEAR SURVEY

State Superintendents of the Year: Reflections of Successful Practice

Board/Political Leadership

1. Outside of Board meetings how many hours do you formally or informally spend in communication with a board member in a week?

- 0 - 4
- 5 - 8
- 9-12
- 13 +

2. Rate the following strategies according to effectiveness in communicating with Board members.

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Ineffective
Regular board information packet				
Phone conversations				
Small group committee meetings				
E-mail messages				
Face-to-face conversations				

Other (please specify): _____

3. Which strategy do you use with the greatest frequency with the Board?

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Ineffective
Regular board information packet				
Phone conversations				
Small group committee meetings				
E-mail messages				
Face-to-face conversations				

Other (please specify): _____

continued

4. How would you characterize your working relationship with the Board?

- Very Positive
 Good
 Fair
 Poor

5. Rate the following strategies for effectiveness to build a positive relationship with the Board.

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Ineffective	Not Used
Call all board members on a regular basis					
Develop a board information packet on a regular basis					
Gather board member questions prior to meetings and provide answers					
Pursue regular in-depth communication focusing on the board/superintendent relationship					
Take the initiative in building partnerships with your board and board president/chair					
Follow a well developed agenda for working through joint leadership issues with the board president/chair					

Other (please specify): _____

6. Generally, who initiates ideas and makes a recommendation when developing district policy?

- Superintendent
 School Board
 Central office
 Small group or board committee
 Shared responsibility

7. How frequently do the school board accept your policy recommendations on the first reading?

- Always
 Frequently
 Sometime
 Seldom

continued

8. When your recommendation are not accepted the first time they are brought before the Board, what do you think is most often the cause what do you think is most often the cause?

(Please select one).

- The board has not received enough background information about the topic
- Several board members are philosophically opposed to the idea
- Pressure from special interest groups or community groups
- Political posturing by board members
- Other (please specify): _____

9. What do you do when the Board does not ultimately accept your recommendations?

10. What is your perception of the school Board's level effectiveness?

- Very effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not effective
- Please explain: _____

11. Rate the strategies you have found useful to improve the Board's level of effectiveness?

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Ineffective	Not Used
Provide induction learning opportunities for the board					
Provide continued professional development throughout the board's term					
Provide activities for the board to develop long range planning					
Collaborate with state school board association to foster opportunities to develop skills of the board.					
Seek professional development through an association of school administrators such as AASA					
Training or preparation through an independent agency or consultant					

Other Suggestion (please specify): _____

continued

12. How clearly defined are the roles of the superintendent and the school Board regarding their relationship?

Select one

- Very clear
- Clear
- Somewhat clear
- Not clear

13. How frequently do Board members act in an unethical manner?

Select one

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

14. Describe how you have or would respond to unethical behavior by a Board member. (Please write response).

15. Rate the following strategies according to their effectiveness in promoting and improving the Board's image in its public role?

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Ineffective	Not Used
Invite president/member to sit in on key interviews with the media					
Arrange for president/member to speak on behalf of the district on important occasions					
Arrange for president/member to meet with critical constituencies					
Ensure the president/member is well briefed on the issues to be discussed at meetings with constituency groups					
Divide the external role, for example share the podium at a chamber of commerce dinner.					

Other (please specify): _____

continued

State and Federal Mandates

16. How would you rate the impact of the NCLB on public education?

Select one

- Great impact
- Some impact
- Little impact
- No impact

17. Rate the following strategies according to their effectiveness in educating the Board about the performance level of the school district.

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Ineffective
Develop a strategic plan for communicating with the board about school performance throughout the board's term				
Provide opportunities for board members to visit schools and see first hand learning opportunities, programs and teaching				
Develop and share a complete picture of school performance, supplementing the federally mandated data with additional information that provides a more accurate picture of school performance				
Develop tools that put AYP performance in context. (Example, schools cannot make AYP due to testing 95% of their students).				
Be proactive and forthright when communicating with the board about choice, supplemental service options and teacher quality.				

Other Suggestion (please specify): _____

18. How would you characterize your Board's understanding of state and federal mandates?

Select one

- Very good
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor

continued

19. Rate the following challenges posed by No Child Left Behind?

Challenges	Have not Encountered	Minimal Challenge	Somewhat of a Challenge	Significant Challenge
Confusion about State and Federal authority				
Data limitations and challenges				
Ensuring proficiency level or above for all groups of students, (e.g. special education, English Language Learners, and socio-economic groups)				
Implementing school choice				
Lack of a growth model to demonstrate progress				
Implementing supplemental services				
Sanctions for not making adequate progress				
Finding highly qualified (teachers)				
Lack of funding to support mandates				

20. Please describe how you responded to the challenges rated as a "significant challenge" in question 19.

continued

21. How useful would the following changes to No Child Left Behind be to a district?

Strategies	Very Effective	Effective	Limited Effectiveness	Not Effective
Being able to use local assessment				
Being able to use multiple measures				
Being allowed to use growth model to measure adequate yearly progress				
Better or more adequate funding				
Changes to the sanctions for not making adequate yearly progress				

Other (please specify): _____

22. Rate the following challenges related to Special Education?

Challenges	No Challenge	Minimal Challenge	Medium Challenge	Difficult Challenge
Legal costs				
Finding qualified special education teachers				
Transportation costs				
Audits regarding compliance				
Extended school year services				
Race and ethnic disproportionality				
Consultation with private school officials				

Other (please specify): _____

continued

23. Rate the areas of IDEIA 2004 as to the degree of challenge they provide a district.

Challenge	No Challenge	Minimal Challenge	Medium Challenge	Difficult Challenge
Free and Appropriate Public Education				
Least restrictive Environment				
School Discipline				
Related Services				
Tuition Reimbursement				
Due Process				

Other (please specify): _____

Demographic Information

If you are uncomfortable responding to any of these questions, please leave them blank.

24. What is your gender?

Male _____

Female _____

25. What is your race/ethnicity?

Asian _____

Black _____

Hispanic _____

Native American _____

White _____

Other (please specify): _____

26. What is your age? _____

continued

27. What is the size of your district?

- Over 25, 000
- 3,000 – 24,999
- 300 – 2,999
- 01 – 299

28. How would you characterize your district type?

- Rural
- Small Town
- Suburban
- Urban

29. How many years have you been a superintendent?
(Include current year)

30. In how many districts have you been the superintendent?

31. What is the highest degree you have earned?

- Doctorate
- Masters Plus
- MA/MS
- BA/BS

32. Are you currently a superintendent in a school district?

APPENDIX G

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

Question 2:

Rate the following strategies according to effectiveness in communication with Board members.

Weekly memos mailed to board members.

Weekly memo to each member is effective.

Question 3

Which strategy do you use with the greatest frequency with the Board?

Weekly letters/updates

Agenda planning session in person with the board president and alternating other board members on a bi-weekly basis

Weekly memos mailed to the board members

Question 5

Rate the following strategies for effectiveness to build a positive relationship with the Board.

No superintendents provided comments to this question

Question 7

How frequently does the school Board accept your policy recommendations of the first reading?

Our policy calls for two readings.

Our policy is to have two readings.

We have a two meeting rule.

Board requires two readings for all policies new or old unless an emergency.

Question 8

When your recommendations are not accepted the first time they are brought before the Board what do you think is most often the cause what do you think is most often the cause?

Our policies are to read twice. My policies are accepted and then approved after the first reading.

Our policy is the board need three readings to pass.

We have a four step process with a rich exchange of ideas.

The board likes to review the idea once before voting on it

Boards should be allowed two readings of proposed policy before a vote.

Our policy is to introduce one month and adopt the next.

Board policy is to have two readings

Policy requires more than one reading.

Question 9

What do you do when the Board does not ultimately accept your recommendations?

Review the policy and adjust for new changes. Educate the board and if it is important bring back for reconsideration.

Move on to other issues

I have not had this experience in eight years.

Make changes suggested by the board when reasonable. Policy is not a conflict face off it is joint planning and direction

Pout! No must gracious and not take things too seriously.

Continue learning and doing collaborate. Back up and approach from another angle move on and do not take it personally.

It happens very seldom. If it is not a core value conflict I accept it.

Accept their decision

Accept the outcome and move on

Regroup

Make adjustments from the board feedback and resubmit

Move on to the next priority

Say fine, not a problem

Go to plan B

Discuss their issue to determine if it can be adequately addressed. Provide whatever additional information they need. If they still choose not to accept, move on.

Understand that I did not do my homework to convince members of the importance of the policy or I misread the board and put it on the back burner for another day.

Rework recommendation or provide additional information

Work through with dialogue

Accept it and I threatened to quit!

Never happened.

Pick my battles – character and integrity prevail

I would withdraw the recommendation and move on.

It has not happened. I would accept, drop or come back from another approach. You have to “plant seeds” over time.

Determine if there is a way to achieve the desired outcome or abandon the idea

Work with them to make changes that will be agreeable to both sides

Nothing

Support their decision

Take the feedback and rework, move on to the next project

By communicating ahead of time a superintendent can avoid having things vetoed or voted down.

Develop a clearer rationale. Supply comparative data with districts of similar size

Accept the decision and develop other strategies to address the policy issue

Question 10

What is your perception of the school Board's level of effectiveness

Too many special interest groups

Local boards have lost power/role with the shift to state funding accountability. Since 1999 property tax limitations hurt initiative

Question 11

Rate the strategies you have found useful to improve the Board's level of effectiveness?

No superintendent provided comments to this question.

Question 14

Describe how you have or would respond to unethical behavior by a Boards member.

I would speak with the board president and ask that he speak with the individual in question. If it was the chair I would talk with him directly.

Directly address the issue. Discuss with board chair to develop joint strategy to deal with behavior.

Meet privately with the member. Ask the board chair to meet with the member. Ask the attorney to intervene. Report the situation to state agency.

Work with board president on board intervention

Face – to-Face

Meet with the board chair and ask him/her to handle the issue according to policy

Contact the President and have him/her address the issue. If the board president is the perpetrator, work with the VP.

Direct confrontation

Investigate and discuss with attorney.

I would work with the board president and plan to approach the member. It is full boards responsibility to monitor this behavior not the superintendents.

I would speak with the board chair and suggest strategies that the chair would use to address the behaviors and help the board member understand why the behavior is unethical.

Explain the potential consequences including damage to the reputation of the District or Board member.

Address the infraction wither with the Board President or by yourself if it is the President.

I would have a conversation with the board chair who would have a conversation with the member in question.

I would bring the issue to the board president.

We have had one case in 22 years in the district (8 as supt.).

Bring the issue first to the board to discuss sanctions.

Contact board president

With the support of the board chair confront the unethical behavior and teach so it does NOT happen again. If it continues the total board should censer the individual.

Call them on it – explain why, help extricate them.

Bring the issue to the board president

Provide data to chair, converse with legal staff

Usually the board chair talks to the person

Refer to the board chair. If necessary call for a face-to-face one-on-one with me. Ethics is a board governance issue/not a superintendent/board issue.

When you first develop a solid relationship and even friendship you can be candid and things are fine. Same thing with board member and board member relationships.

Generally they straighten on another out

Meet with the chair, school lawyer and tell them.

Ask the president to discuss with board member and allow me to follow up to make sure we are all on the same page.

I would speak with the board President and he or we together would address the issue with the board member. If the errant one were the President I would speak to him myself.

Question 15

Rate the following strategies according to their effectiveness in promotion and improving the Board's image in the public role.

My board are lone ranges – don't sit with each other. Chair feels he can speak with out concern.

As superintendent I am the spokesperson for the district

Question 17

Rate the following strategies according to their effectiveness in educating the Board about the performance level of the school district.

Be honest and strait forward. Anticipating the question – concerns before they arise

Question 20

Please describe how you respond to the challenges rated as “significant challenges” in question 19.

The schools are over crowded and “choice” is a difficult option.

Develop a district growth model

Comprehensive plan for AYP – extended day – extended year.

Make sure the board is well informed.

More FUNDING.

Professional development – funding from private donors and budget.

Devise strategies for low performing groups.

Legislature for additional financial.

Constant communication with all groups

It would take pages and hours to complete this question.

Subgroups (LEP/SPED are obvious, Extra funding for the subgroups is WAY too short.

Few have reach 1005. It is understood that such a goal may never be reached

Lobbying FED, lobbying representative

Funds to fully implement state and federal mandates are extremely inadequate! We increased local funding significantly to provide quality education for our children.

The mandates far exceed the revenues allocated at the state and federal (level).

The significant challenges of helping children achieve high levels was our goal long before NCLB. We have many programs in place to support struggling learners including literacy coaches, math coaches Jolly Phonics, before and after school tutoring, summer remedial and enrichment programs, parent universities to help our parents help their children

Additional reading/literacy support increases burden on local tax payers fund our own assessments which provide immediate feedback.

We have a large ELL population at our elementary level. We also have a significant SPED population at our middle school which is a challenge

More use of general funds to support summer school and at risk learners

Targeting both the general fund and fed dollars (Title funds) to new programs – training for ELL/SPED/TitleI significant investment at local level. Lobby state to develop infrastructure regarding data access and use.

We live in a high poverty area that translates into more than the average number of students in special programs. We communicate that to our voters and they have passed supplemental levies to fund it.

Advocate for changes in the state and federal policy. Use local resources to support NCLB requirements. Educate the staff and the public. Targeted support and strategies to improve student performance.

We have had to continue to eat into local expenditure budget reduced reserve fund and have had limited opportunity to update services.

Not well, Put the best face possible.

Develop with the board district leadership outside consultant and local private foundation a comprehensive system-wide school reform effort that address all the above issues (and all others, particularly student achievement and building relationship).

Develop small work groups to develop plan for board leadership team (including board member) to direct activities academically to reach AYP. Develop teacher academy to recruit and train highly qualified teachers. Lobby state and federal legislators to reduce/eliminate unfunded mandates.

Proficiency - Invest money in staff development – monitor regularly and consistent expectations for academic success for all students. Be involved and supportive.

Regarding funding – be proactive with legislative organize school /business/board constituents to attend funding rallies. Monitor and budget items closely.

Individual growth model. Track and provide prescription for differentiating instruction.

Looking over data and making curriculum changes. We have a high poverty rate (40%) on free and reduced lunch. We have to offer remediation and have limited funds to do so.

Special education can not all perform to level that is why they are SPED. NCLB is the most significantly, unfunded mandate in education history.

Action plan for special need students to refine effectiveness.

Creative recruitment to compensation strategies to attract and retain teachers.

Lack of funding from our state. If we need additional we have to “opt-out” of the tax. We have lost two of those votes. Therefore we have cut staff and programs.

Question 21

How useful would the following changes to No Child Left Behind be to a district?

No superintendents provided comments to this question

Question 22

Rate the following challenges related to Special Education

Out of district tuition costs

Spending local public funds/tax dollars to serve out of district private school children is yet another unfunded mandate

Question 23

Rate the areas of IDEIA as to the degree of challenge they provide a district.

No superintendents provided comments to this question