

PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN SCHOOL CRISES

Cynthia C. Williams

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Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Glen I. Earthman, Chair

John R. Gratto

Lewis D. Romano

N. Wayne Tripp

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Perspectives of School Superintendents in School Crises

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Abstract

According to the *PK-12 Public School Facility Infrastructure Fact Sheet* compiled by the 21st Century School Fund in February 2011, there are over 98,706 PK-12 grade public schools and nearly 90% of the entire 55.5 million school age children in the United States attend public schools (p. 1). These school facilities and school spaces are sites of unexpected, critical incidents. Even though schools are generally a safe place for students to learn, a crisis may occur at any given time in any given location.

School superintendents live through these crisis situations and must make critical decisions under extreme stress with limited time, resources, and information involving crisis situations. Leaders must share and learn from their lived experiences relating to crisis situations in order to prepare for future situations. The success and failures of leaders' past experiences provides valuable research as a future reference to help other school superintendents.

In this study, a phenomenological approach was used to document the lived experiences of school superintendents that suffered a loss or damage to a school facility. The loss or damage of each school facility was the result of four separate crisis situations that occurred within a five-month time frame in the Commonwealth of Virginia. School superintendents and facility directors from these four school divisions were interviewed in order to document their perspectives of leadership in crisis.

These school superintendents experienced the loss or damage of a school facility as a result of a tornado, an earthquake, or a fire. Four main themes emerged from their experiences:

(a) communication, (b) leadership, (c) recovery, and (d) support. Triangulation of data sources included interviews with superintendents, interviews with facility directors, and archival data. A horizontalization code mapping procedure was used for data analysis. Two key implications for practice were identified: (a) communication and (b) relationships. Each superintendent emphasized the need for quick, accurate dissemination of information through various modes of communication. Interconnected with communication, the superintendents recognized the importance of key relationships built before, during, and after a crisis. Supportive relationships made a difference in the recovery journey for each school superintendent.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family. To my lifelong companion, friend, and love of my life, Robbie, and to my three amazing daughters, Ginna, Beth, and Grace who sacrificed daily for me so that I could drive to class, study, read, write, and travel to Virginia Tech to complete my research. My parents, Clyde and Patricia Crissman, for encouraging me along the way and raising me in a loving home with high expectations. To Rendy, Amy, and Sara for taking care of my girls when I was in class or completing homework, for always stepping up when I needed help, and for encouraging me to keep the faith, thank you for always being there for me. To all my family and friends, thank you for your patience, understanding, and encouragement during these past few years, I could not have succeeded without your support. And most importantly, this research was made possible because of my amazing God. He created an opportunity for me to go back to school, grow as a school leader, persevere through this process, and finish this journey.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Context of the Research

According to the *PK-12 Public School Facility Infrastructure Fact Sheet* compiled by the 21st Century School Fund in February 2011, there are over 98,706 PK-12 grade public schools and nearly 90% of the entire 55.5 million school age children in the United States attend public schools (p. 1). In addition, there is an estimated 6.6 billion gross square feet of public school building space and school districts manage over one million acres of school building site area. These school facilities and school spaces are sites of unexpected, critical incidents. Even though schools are generally a safe place for students to learn, a crisis may occur at any given time in any given location.

Schools may be directly or indirectly affected by these unexpected situations. Crises occur in one form or another at all schools, and school facilities may be damaged in varying degrees depending on the crisis. Examples of crises that may affect a school community and damage school facilities include tornadoes, fires, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Some crisis situations are resolved immediately and some crisis situations require years of recovery. Leadership during and after crisis a situation is fundamentally different from normal school operation. School superintendents are challenged with the task to work through these situations with students, staff, and their communities to restore a sense of normalcy.

During the past few years, communities across the United States have experienced an increase in weather related crises. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an unusual amount of tornadoes were reported during 2011. An

estimated 1,691 tornadoes were reported in 2011 (NOAA, 2012). One of which was the tornado that ravaged Joplin, Missouri on May 22, 2011. This tornado killed 158 people and was the seventh deadliest tornado in United States history. Homes, businesses, and schools were destroyed. In addition, NOAA (2012) reported that a record number of 758 tornadoes were reported in April 2011 as compared to the average of 161 tornadoes for the month of April over the past decade. Several tornadoes in April 2011 destroyed school communities across the United States. As a result of the destruction of the tornadoes, school leaders were confronted with both short term and long term decisions related to crisis recovery.

In addition to tornado activity, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) recorded an increase in earthquake activity across the nation from 2000 – 2012. According to USGS (2013), the largest numbers of earthquakes were documented in 2010 at 8,496 and the second largest documented in 2011 at 5,237. The largest earthquake in Virginia was recorded in Giles County in 1897 at a magnitude of 5.9. In August 2011, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake was also recorded in Virginia. This earthquake was the second largest in the nation for 2011 (USGS, 2013). These earthquake events presented crisis situations for school communities, required implementation of school emergency plans, and necessitated critical decision making from school leaders.

According to Hardy (2008), crisis situations may range from natural disasters such as fires, hurricanes, or tornadoes to manmade incidents such as a bomb threats or school shootings. These crises cannot be predicted. However, when school crises occur, key school leaders are faced with challenging decisions. Decisions must be made quickly and precisely, and decisions can positively or negatively affect the school community. As stated by Demaria and Schonfeld (2014), a school leader's immediate goal is to "minimize the negative effect, support coping,

accelerate adjustment, and instill confidence” for students to feel safe and reduce anxiety due to the crisis situation (p. 13).

According to Merriam-Webster (2013), the Greek word “crisis” means “decision” and is defined as “an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending, especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome” (para. 3). School superintendents are faced with crisis situations and must make decisions based on their situation at that particular time given specific resources and responsibilities. Northouse (2010) recognized these specific demands on leaders as situational leadership. Situational leadership involves the effectiveness leaders need to adapt and adjust to changing situations. Crisis leadership demands situational leadership. In crisis situations, immediate and accurate decision making is essential. Decisions made both during and after the crises directly influence the education of students and the environments in which they learn.

As stated in the United States Department of Education (USDOE) Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools *Practical Information on Crisis Planning Guide: A Guide for Schools and Communities* (2007), school leaders must make critical decisions during crisis situations that are made under extreme stress with limited time, resources, and information involving crisis situations. The successes and failures of leaders’ decisions and past experiences provide valuable research as a future reference to help other school superintendents. Documenting these experiences through words, actions, and records of the participants offers a qualitative approach to this research (Creswell, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). A qualitative approach “provides a unique window into the thoughts, experiences, and motivations of others” (Remler & Ryzin, 2011, p. 57). Documenting, analyzing, and learning from various perspectives of leadership in crisis can prepare leaders for future unexpected, crisis situations.

Statement of the Problem

As school divisions face destruction from critical incidents or natural disasters such as fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes, school superintendents seek support, guidance, and solutions to sustain their schools during and after these crisis situations (Earthman, 2011; Farazmand, 2009; Glandon, Muller, & Almedom, 2008; Kapucu & Wart, 2008; Love & Cobb, 2012; Slattery, Syvertson, & Krill, 2009). Even though there are numerous articles that describe school crisis events, there is limited research about the lived experiences of school superintendents who have survived a critical incident or natural disaster in which they lost a school facility.

Qualitative methods are especially useful in specific situations such as “understanding important individuals, such as leaders of an organization, or unique cases, such as a government agency reacting to a crisis (this is because statistical techniques offer little advantage when only one or a few cases are involved)” (Remler & Ryzin, 2011, p. 59). Qualitative components to the research are lacking and could offer more understanding into how school superintendents address and work through crisis challenges. “Qualitative research values context sensitivity, that is, understanding a phenomena in all its complexity and within a particular situation and environment” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 13). Limited research, gaps in the literature, and support for overcoming disasters are obstacles for school administrators (Gaillard, 2007; Gouwens & Lander, 2008; Smith & Riley, 2012; USDOE, 2007). Documenting challenges of recovery efforts faced by school divisions, both successes and failures after critical incident or natural disasters, can provide additional evidence and resources for school superintendents and researchers to address future issues.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to record the lived experiences of school superintendents following the loss or damage of a school facility and identify common themes among their stories. A cross-case analysis was conducted to determine emergent themes between their stories. Emergent themes will provide school leaders with a reference to future decision making related to school crises.

Significance of the Study

Researchers seek to understand a larger phenomenon through intensive examination of one specific instance (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). During this examination, researchers gather data to answer questions. Gathering data such as effective and ineffective recovery efforts from crisis situations will document resources and support mechanisms for school administrators. According to Earthman (2011), “Not many school authorities are placed in such painful and exhausting situations where the natural elements ruin the physical structures that have been created ... Yet there are lessons to be learned by observing the misfortunes of other entities” (p. 6-7). The objective is to discover patterns and themes which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

This phenomenological study will serve as a reference for school superintendents who might face the loss or damage of a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster in the future. When a school facility is lost or damaged, the learning environment is compromised and the quality of education can be negatively influenced.

Research Questions

The overarching research question explored in this study was: What common themes emerged across the stories of school superintendents after they experienced a critical incident or natural disaster that resulted in the loss or damage of a school facility? The main research question was supported by the following subquestions: (a) What effect did the loss or damage of a school building have upon the superintendent? (b) Did the leadership role of the superintendent change after the loss or damage of a school facility? If so, how? (c) What resources were available to the superintendent during and after this crisis? (e) What lessons were learned from superintendents' experiences?

Definitions of Key Terms

Several key terms will be used throughout the study and are defined to explain the understanding of their usage:

Crisis. Is born out of natural and human made disasters, catastrophes, revolutions, and rapidly changing emergencies (Farazmond, 2009) and regarded as any urgent situation that requires the school leader to take fast and decisive action (Smith and Riley, 2012).

Crisis Management. Is a continuous process in which all phases of a plan are being reviewed and revised (USDOE, 2007).

Disaster. Is an event that is relatively sudden, highly disruptive, time-limited, and public (Vogel & Vernberg, 1993).

Recovery. Deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis (USDOE, 2007).

Response. Is defined as the efforts devoted to the steps to take during a crisis (USDOE, 2007).

Resilience. Is a process of a positive trajectory of adaptation after a disturbance, stress, or adversity (Norris & Stevens, 2007).

Delimitations

The researcher chose to conduct this phenomenological study involving school superintendents within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Selected school divisions experienced a crisis that involved the loss of a school facility from April 2011 to August 2011. This study was limited to those school superintendents who were willing to participate. Participants were limited to school superintendents.

Limitations

The study was designed to investigate the lived experiences of school superintendents related to the loss or damage of a school facility and challenges faced by school superintendents as they faced this destruction. The research is limited by the small number of participants and the recollection of their personal experiences. The information and stories gathered from in-depth interviews were not intended to represent the views of other superintendents that experienced the loss of a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster. The data gathered from the participants were also limited to how much information the participants chose to reveal. This research may not be viewed as generalizable across the United States due to the use of only four school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Organization of the Study

This qualitative study was organized as a traditional five chapter dissertation. Chapter 1 includes the (a) introduction to the study, (b) statement of the research problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) personal reflection by the researcher, (e) significance of the study, (f) research questions, (g) definitions of terms, (h) delimitations, (i) limitations, (j) organization of the study, and (k) a chapter summary. Chapter 2 contains the review of literature and concludes with a summary of the chapter. Subheadings within Chapter 2 include the structure of the review of selected literature, the literature search and review process, a review of recent commentary and empirical literature related to: (a) leadership, (b) leadership in crisis, (c) leadership failures related to crises, and (d) leadership and recovery after a school crisis as related to the loss or damage of a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster. The chapter concludes with a summary and analysis of the review of selected literature. Chapter 3 includes an introduction and overview of the study, a description of the purposeful sample chosen for the study, a description of the participants and the selection of participants, the development and design of the phenomenological research, and the data collection process. Chapter 4 includes a description of the cohort of participants, summary of findings, data related to research subquestions, discussion of common themes, and a chapter summary. An overview of the study, summary of the findings, overarching conclusions, additional research limitations, recommendations for future research, and reflections are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of challenges faced by school superintendents after the loss or damage of a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster. The main research question was identified: What common themes emerged across the stories of school superintendents after they experienced a critical incident or natural disaster that resulted in the loss or damage of a school facility? Subquestions were documented. Terms were described. Delimitations and limitations were discussed, and the organization of a phenomenological study was presented.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review was to identify challenges faced by school superintendents after a critical incident or natural disaster involving the loss or damage of a school facility. In addition, the literature review also describes how school communities worked through these challenges. Research dealing with school crises and recovery from critical incidents or natural disasters was difficult to locate. As stated in the United States Department of Education (USDOE) Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools *Practical Information on Crisis Planning Guide: A Guide for Schools and Communities* (2007),

The research on what works in school-based crisis planning is in its infancy. While a growing body of research and literature is available on crisis management for schools, there is little hard evidence to quantify best practices. Fortunately, major crises, especially catastrophic events, are rare in our nation's schools. Few cases have been formally evaluated. (p. 1.4).

The literature review focuses on leadership and the recovery process as related to the loss or damage of a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster. The selected literature was chosen for discussion based on the significance of literature to school leaders' experiences (Gouwens & Lander, 2008; Hardy, 2008; Kennedy, 2009; Vogel & Vernberg, 1993; Wright & Lesisko, 2010). The literature review is organized into four sections: (a) leadership, (b) leadership in crisis, (c) leadership failures related to school crises, and (d) leadership and recovery after school crises. Emergent researchers and their work are identified in the literature review.

Literature Search and Review Process

Online research databases were the primary source for conducting an extensive research. Searches were completed through the resources available through the Virginia Tech libraries. Searches were completed from May 2012 through December 2013. Searches were completed using Educational Research Complete from EBSCOhost and Virginia Tech Summon library database with parameters set to include scholarly peer-reviewed journals. Key search terms included education, facility, tragedy, crisis management, school leadership, disaster recovery, community, public school, and resource availability. Selected date ranges focused on a six year time period from 2007 – 2013; however searches were completed back to 1906.

Additional resources were obtained from the Interlibrary Loan (ILLiad) at Virginia Tech. While there is a plethora of scholarly research and writing in the field of educational leadership, almost all of the focus is on the long-term development of leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, xvi). Unlike the extensive research about educational leadership, there is

...a dearth of literature and research that addresses the important role that school leaders must play when confronted by a crisis; those times when the domain of the school leader is the immediate present and the focus is firmly on minimizing harm to individuals and ensuring the survival and recovery of the school. (Smith & Riley, 2012, p. 65)

Research about recovery from critical incident or natural disasters involving school superintendents was limited, and key researchers are developing at this time.

Discussion of the Empirical and Commentary Literature

Section One: Leadership

Research studies throughout the years have focused on leadership. According to Northouse (2010), leadership is a topic with universal appeal that has presented a major challenge to practitioners and researchers interested in understanding the nature of leadership. It continues to be a “highly valued phenomenon that is very complex” (Northouse, 2010, p. 12). National leadership standards for school administrators were developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards were created in 1996 and policy standards were revised by the NPBEA in 2008. These standards list overall themes that serve as a foundation for school leaders to promote the success of every child. The Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC (2008) include:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning;
2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;
4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts. (NPEA, 2008).

Guidance for school leaders faced with crisis situations and a recovery process is detailed in ISLLC (2008) Standard 3. As outlined in Standard Three, school leaders are charged with monitoring, evaluating, managing, and operating the school division. In addition, they must obtain, allocate align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources related to recovery from a school crisis. According to Crepeau-Hobson and Kanan (2014), school leaders play a key role in the recovery process and several basic guidelines should be followed: (a) ensure that the school has an effective crisis plan, (b) be aware of the emotions and needs of the community, (c) give school personnel access to assistance from crisis responders and/or mental health professionals, (d) employ a variety of informal support strategies to support staff, and (e) keep in mind the exhausting nature of the crisis response work (p. 35-36). Superintendents are held accountable for the protection of the welfare and safety of both students and staff while maintaining a focus on quality instruction and student learning.

Maintaining this focus and safety awareness during and after a tragic event is a challenge for school superintendents during the recovery process for a school community. In their research, Smith and Riley (2012) noted leadership to be a critical ingredient in driving change and strategic innovation in which leaders work through challenging situations. School leadership, as regarded by Smith and Riley (2012),

...is about positioning the school for the future, and about supporting and empowering staff and students in the pursuit of teaching and learning excellence...a strategic or forward-looking process that involves the development and communication of a strong vision and attendant goals or objectives, along with a relevant plan for implementation, monitoring and review. (p. 57)

According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), “Change is the province of leaders. It is the work of leaders to inspire people to do things differently, to struggle against uncertain odds, and to persevere toward a misty image of a better future” (p. 1). With change and perseverance, successful school leaders build relationships and work through crisis situations. In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner reiterate the importance of being a role model for leadership, continually relearning and reiterating the fact that leadership is everyone’s business. School leaders must look within themselves. “Accepting the leadership challenge requires practice, reflection, humility, and commitment to making a difference. And, in the end we [Kouzes & Posner] conclude that leadership is not an affair of the head. Leadership is an affair of the heart” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 6). Caring, compassion, and concern for students, staff, and the school community during and after a school crisis is representative of leadership as an affair of the heart.

After analyzing thousands of leadership experiences in their research, Kouzes and Posner (2012) discovered that “regardless of the times or settings, people who guide others along pioneering journeys follow surprisingly similar paths...there were clearly identifiable behaviors and actions that make a difference” (p. 15). These identifiable leadership behaviors are outlined in *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership*. They include: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. According to Kouzes and Posner, The Five Practices have stood the test of time and continue to be relevant today. These Five Practices can be seen in school superintendents as they work through crisis situations, discover creative solutions for difficult problems, and unite people together toward a common goal.

Northouse (2010) acknowledged that leadership may have many different meanings and involve many different behaviors.

Despite the multitude of ways in which leadership has been conceptualized, the following components can be identified as central to the phenomenon: (a) Leadership is a process; (b) leadership involves influence; (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals. (Northouse, 2010, p. 3).

Ultimately, Northouse (2010) defined leadership as a process where an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. During and after crisis situations, school superintendents are challenged to focus staff and community members toward a common goal. Staying focused and restoring a safe, positive learning environment after a school tragedy is instrumental in maintaining a healthy school culture.

Similarly, in *The Nature of Leadership*, Gardner (1990) presented leadership as a process in which individuals share common goals and pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers. He recognized that leaders are an integral part of a system and perform functions that are essential if the group is to accomplish its purpose. Gardner (1990) also noted that “leadership requires major expenditures of effort and energy – more than most people care to make” (p. 19). According to Gardner’s (1990) research, leaders distinguish themselves in at least six ways:

- (1) They think longer – beyond the day’s crises, beyond the horizon;
- (2) In thinking about the unit they are heading, they grasp its relationship to larger realities;

- (3) They reach and influence constituents beyond their jurisdictions, beyond boundaries – Leaders' capacity to rise above situations may enable them to bind together the parts that must work together to solve a problem;
- (4) They emphasize vision, values, and motivation and understand the nonrational and unconscious elements during interactions with others;
- (5) They have the political skill to cope with the conflicting requirements of multiple constituencies; and
- (6) They think in terms of renewal and seek the revisions of process and structure required by the ever-changing reality. (p. 20)

Comparably, specific leadership traits and habits are exhibited by leaders that move individuals toward a common goal. Stephen Covey (1989) presented research based on the personality and character ethics in of leaders in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The concept exists in all human beings and groups of individuals as they work together toward a common goal. Covey focused on character ethics and emphasized the response of a leader making a difference. This perspective is relevant when leaders are faced with unexpected crisis situations in which groups troubleshoot, collaborate, and work toward a common goal.

The seven habits outlined in Covey's book include:

- (1) Be Proactive – be resourceful and find solutions to problems rather than wait for others to solve them;
- (2) Begin with the End in Mind – develop a principle-centered mission statement and long term goals;

- (3) Put First Things First – achieve balance by doing what is guided by a personal mission;
- (4) Think Win/Win – reward win/win behavior, do not reward win/lose behavior, and seek agreements that are mutually beneficial;
- (5) Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood – develop interpersonal relationships and listen to others;
- (6) Synergize – work together to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, and
- (7) Sharpen the Saw – build capacity through personal renewal of the physical, mental, social, and emotional dimensions (Covey, 1989, p. 53).

These seven habits could be demonstrated by leaders working through a crisis situation and as they lead staff, students, families, and community members through a crisis situation and a recovery process.

Section Two: Leadership in Crisis

According to the *PK-12 Public School Facility Infrastructure Fact Sheet* compiled by the 21st Century School Fund in February 2011, there are over 98,706 PK-12 grade public schools and nearly 90% of the entire 55.5 million school age children in the United States attend public schools (p. 1). In addition, the 21st Century Fund (2011) estimated a 6.6 billion gross square feet of public school building space and over one million acres of school building site area are managed by school districts. These school facilities and school spaces are sites of unexpected, critical incidents. Crises occur in one form or another at all schools. Some crisis situations are resolved immediately and some crisis situations require years of recovery. Leadership during and after a crisis a situation is fundamentally different from leadership during normal school

operation. School superintendents are charged with the task to work through these situations with students, staff, and their communities to restore a sense of normalcy. According Smith and Riley's (2012) *School Leadership in Times of Crisis*,

Leadership in times of crisis is about dealing with events, emotions and consequences in the immediate present in ways that minimize personal and organizational harm to the school and school community...school leadership must also be about providing certainty, engendering hope, engaging a rallying point for effective and efficient effort (both during and after the crisis), and ensuring open and credible communication to and for all affected members of the school community. (p. 57)

Each crisis is unique and school superintendents must change and adjust according to circumstances. According to Rogers (2013), these leadership skills are not taught in administrative courses...“much of the job of school system leadership entails a ‘plan where you can, improvise when you must’ orientation, particularly during a crisis” (p. 32). Smith and Riley contend that effective school leadership in crisis is more about the attributes of the leader than about the theoretical models to guide leadership responses.

According to O'Brien and Robertson (2009), nine leadership competencies are noted that include authenticity, agility, resilience, foresight, self-mastery, intuition, and creativity. Similarly, Smith and Riley (2012) affirmed that in times of crisis, the critical attributes of effective leadership include:

- (1) the ability to cope with – and indeed thrive on – ambiguity;
- (2) a strong capacity to think laterally;
- (3) a willingness to question events in a new and insightful ways;

- (4) a preparedness to respond flexibly and quickly, and to change direction rapidly if required;
- (5) an ability to work with and through people to achieve critical outcomes;
- (6) the tenacity to persevere when all seems to be lost; and
- (7) a willingness to take necessary risks and to break ‘the rules’ when necessary.

Smith and Riley (2012) recognized that “the challenge is how to develop these leadership attributes and skills in both our present and future school leaders when crises are, by their very nature, mostly unpredictable and inherently unique events” (p. 57). For example, Earthman (2011) stated

Sometimes events occur that place school authorities in a situation where extreme planning measures must take place. These situations are usually caused by external natural forces of some sort that place the personnel of the schools in a vulnerable and unfavorable position with regards to the training and expertise that educators normally possess. (p. 3)

Slattery, Syvertson, and Krill (2009) described how leaders deal with the aftermath of public tragedies and improve leadership skills through *The Eight Step Training Model: Improving Disaster Management Leadership*. The researchers stated that it is “imperative that emergency managers understand the scope and scale of these events and subsequently the depth of planning required to execute coordinated preparedness, response and relief efforts” (Slattery et al., 2009, p. 1). Slattery et al. (2009) outlined steps for leaders to use before, during, and after a crisis: (a) study/teach the literature (certify leaders); (b) certify the training site; (c) develop the training plan; (d) issue the plan; (e) rehearse the plan; (f) execute the training; (g) evaluate the training, and (h) retrain as needed to meet goals (p. 3). The researchers acknowledged leader

development as the ability to develop response professionalism, skills, and knowledge. “This training leads to the development of confidence in response leaders and ultimately leads to their empowerment to make independent, situational-based decisions” (Slattery, et al. 2009, p. 1).

In *Practical Information on Crisis Planning*, the United States Department of Education(2007) identified leadership as the key to crisis preparedness. “An organized management structure will be needed to respond to any crisis – and this structure begins with strong leadership...strong leadership from state, district, school, and community leaders” (USDOE, 2007, p. 6-5). Likewise, in the Virginia Department of Education *Resource Guide: Crisis Management and Emergency Response in Virginia Schools*, recognized the key principles for effective crisis planning. The first key principle addressed effective crisis planning which begins with leadership at the top. “Top leadership helps set the policy agenda, secures funds, and brings the necessary people together across agencies” (USDOE, 2007, p. 4). Leaders organize people and resources to help manage the crisis and recovery of a tragic school event.

Effective leadership attributes documented in research literature can be applied to crisis situations resulting in the loss of a school facility. In a narrative study, Gouwens and Lander (2008) interviewed seven Gulf Coast superintendents following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. These data were collected in 2005 and 2006 to investigate how school leaders responded to the devastation of their school and their community in addition to how they perceived a change in leadership roles as superintendents.

Gouwens and Lander (2008) stated,

At the time of Katrina, there was scant literature about how schools and school districts have coped with any kind of disaster, natural, or otherwise, and there were no published

records of school leaders' success in addressing the challenges they have faced as a result of such disasters. (p. 274 – 275)

As a response to this lack of research, Gouwens and Lander employed a qualitative method of research which highlighted the personal stories including the challenges facing Mississippi school and community leaders.

Due to the lack of literature about the personal and emotional toll a disaster takes on school leaders and the changing roles of responsibilities, Gouwens and Lander (2008) proposed two questions to guide their research. Their purpose was to determine: (a) what challenges do school leaders face in dealing with the aftermath of a devastating natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina, and (b) how have these leaders' roles changed as a result of addressing these challenges? (Gouwens & Lander, 2008, p. 275) Changes in leadership responsibilities in addition to fiscal, social, and community issues were focus factors in this and other Gulf Coast research studies (Alvarez, 2010; Colten, Kates, & Laska, 2008; Glandon, Muller, & Almedom, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Kennedy, 2009).

During the aftermath of Katrina, leaders from school districts faced several challenges (Alvarez, 2010; Colten, Kates, & Laska, 2008; Glandon, Muller, & Almedom, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Kennedy, 2009). Fluctuations in enrollments and the student population were changing daily. According to Gouwens and Lander (2008), approximately 1 in 10 students were new to the Harrison County School District; however, the majority of the new students were not new to the area. Families were displaced and moved to nearby counties.

In addition to enrollment fluctuations, school superintendents faced other issues that challenged daily management of school operations. Challenged by crisis situations, school leaders are faced with creating and effectively managing the use of alternative instructional

spaces (Colten et al., 2008; Earthman, 2011; Kennedy, 2012). Jackson County School District which experienced the least damage along the Gulf Coast reopened with 91 portable classrooms (Gouwens & Lander, 2008). In some situations, portable classrooms were not available, and as repairs were being made, school districts were combined with students from two schools meeting in one building. Instructional leadership challenges involved overcrowded instructional areas. As students faced overcrowded learning environments, the superintendents also faced a shortage of employable staff.

Gouwens and Lander (2008) documented a shift in leadership roles through these experiences; one superintendent stated, "...that no job will be like it was August 26" (p. 281). The change in leadership roles shifted from school centered to community-centered. Superintendents were faced with an "increasingly political and contentious role in negotiating with FEMA and their priorities transferred from student achievement to basic survival mode. This survival mode led to a focus on the welfare of the people in their school districts and communities; 'instead of worrying about student achievement [the superintendent] was 'worried about where people stayed at night' " (Gouwens & Lander, 2008, p. 282). According to another superintendent, Robinson, "schools are made of people and superintendents must be in tune with the needs of children and staff members" (Gouwens & Lander, 2008, p. 282). Superintendents also found themselves relaxing rules and regulations surrounding homework and dress codes. Schools functioned as service units providing places where students could receive two hot meals a day. In the Jackson County School District, the libraries became stores where students could acquire clothing, minor grocery needs, and basic toiletries.

Although the Red Cross provided some resources, the agency was also criticized and created challenges for school leaders. According to Gouwens & Lander (2008), the Red Cross:

(a) did not allow local people to volunteer in shelters, (b) took as long as a week to set up a shelter, (c) only designated buildings as shelters, (d) only designated shelters in safe areas, and (e) wanted to open one shelter at a time. These restrictions were in direct conflict with the leadership decisions of superintendents. Mississippi superintendents expected the Red Cross to respond faster, to be more efficient, and to designate shelters in locations where the citizens needed them the most.

Furthermore, superintendents were frustrated with their changed roles as they were required to work with insurance adjustors, FEMA, and MEMA (Gouwens & Lander, 2008). These experiences involved the loss of school facilities, the loss of school buses, the lack of recovering damages for a three-year time period, waiting for funds to demolish a school that was a safety hazard, and dealing with multiple assessment teams. School leaders dealt with FEMA replacement issues, lack of payment for equipment, and the length of time for replacement. In one instance,

The FEMA team had insisted that the school was repairable, in spite of the mold in the building, and they quoted a price for mold removal that was far lower than what has been estimated by the mold experts that the school district had brought in to evaluate mold removal in the school. Washington decided to send in a team of environmental experts of their own. The head of that team had arrived before his team members. After walking through the school building to prepare for his team's mold evaluation, he was hospitalized because of exposure to the mold. (Gouwens & Lander, 2008, p. 288 – 289)

Findings from this research presented evidence that the stories from these school leaders:

...give evidence that they possess the moral authority that allows them not only to lead their school districts, but also to be viewed as leaders in their communities. Each of them

took on leadership responsibilities beyond those of a typical superintendent during Hurricane Katrina and in its aftermath. (Gouwens & Lander, 2008, p. 292)

These school leaders lived in their communities and cared for the welfare of the people. “Times of great tragedy can bring out the best in the human spirit: ordinary people show extraordinary courage, compassion, and generosity in helping kin, neighbors, and strangers to recover and rebuild lives” (Walsh, 2007, p. 208). These school leaders served as symbols of the values that they professed.

Section Three: Leadership Failures Related to School Crises

As school superintendents are challenged as they work through crisis situations, there are successes, and there are failures. In *Making Matters Worse: An Anatomy of Leadership Failures in Managing Catastrophic Events*, Kapucu and Van Wart (2008) acknowledged that “catastrophic disasters require additional leadership capabilities because extreme events overwhelm local capacities...good leadership either minimizes catastrophes or prevents them altogether, whereas weak leadership makes matters worse, compounding the damage” (p. 711). Kapucu and Van Wart analyzed the effects of the Katrina-Rita hurricanes on New Orleans and identified how poor leadership contributed to the catastrophe.

Kapucu and Van Wart (2008) admitted that in a catastrophic event, leadership is put to the test and there are successes and failures. Leadership in critical incidents or natural disasters are “as much influenced by an individual’s effectiveness in working in networks as it is by their narrower hierarchical parameters....including the various levels of government that must

coordinate effectively (federal/state/local) as well as the other sectors (nonprofit/philanthropic and private” (Kapucu & Van Wart, 2008, p. 714). For example, crisis leadership failures involved the rate of response after Hurricane Katrina (Gouwens & Lander, 2008; Kapucu & Van Wart, 2008). Effectively managing resources and donations was a challenge (Gouwens & Lander, 2008). In addition to Kapucu and Van Wart’s findings, Farazmand (2009) listed several failures related to the Katrina crisis: (a) planning and preparedness, (b) response failure, and (c) leadership and management in response and recovery. In addition to the failures, Farazmand also noted two key lessons learned from the failures from Katrina: (a) professional training and development in crisis and emergency management and (b) capacity building through chaos and crisis management.

As related to crisis leadership in regards to Katrina recovery and response, Kapucu and Van Wart (2008) documented a failure to adjust and implement crisis plans in addition to manage resources effectively. Transportation and communication systems with poor contingency plans were also an area of concern during crisis situations. Additional challenges related to Katrina were: (a) failures in prevention and planning, (b) failure to adapt and expand capacity, (c) failure to restore communications rapidly, (d) inflexible decision making, and (e) weak coordination and lack of goodwill (Kapucu & Van War, 2008).

Section Four: Leadership and Recovery after School Crises

Kennedy (2009) highlighted the inevitability of critical incidents or natural disasters and the subsequent recovery process facing school leaders. Regardless of the tragedy, school communities must be prepared, crisis management plans must be in place, and support mechanisms must be in place to avoid the disruption of school operations. School leaders must be prepared to cope with the crisis and begin the recovery process. The recovery process may

include relocation of displaced students and staff due to the destruction of a school facility. Emphasis was placed on the duty of the school administration to move quickly and to rebound from disasters in order to provide an environment where students can recover and continue to learn. As a challenge for school leaders, Satterly (2012) recognized the recovery phase of crisis management as an area of crisis management that did not receive proper attention especially when resources are limited.

Kennedy (2009) discussed three tragic events, the effects of these events on educational communities, and how the schools and universities rebounded from the tragedies. These events were: (a) Oklahoma City Ice Storm of 2007, (b) Iowa City Flood of 2008, and (c) Hurricane Katrina of 2005. Each disaster was unique with various challenges; however the focus was clear: rebounding from tragedy.

Oklahoma City was struck by an ice storm in December 2007. Power was lost due to downed electrical lines throughout the city. As a result of the downed power lines, a fire started on the roof of Jones High School. The fire alarm was not functioning, and the school was destroyed. Kennedy (2009) noted that no one was injured, but 300 students lost their school. School officials and community members worked together to move students into the back of a gymnasium and in a vocational building. The other schools in the area were out of school for five days for the ice storm, and Jones High School students were back in class within seven days. Students were served lunch in a local church. Immediately, the county government began construction pads for portable classrooms on a temporary site. Traveling between classes in cold, rainy weather posed an inconvenience but voters in the district provided a permanent answer to the difficult situation in April 2008 when they approved a \$12.4 million bond proposal.

Recovering from tragedy, the New Jones High School plan detailed two stories, 26 classrooms, cafeteria, and a new gymnasium with a capacity of 400 students. According to Kennedy (2009), Michael Steele, Jones Superintendent, described the experience as bittersweet. The community lost a school with sentimental value; however “without the fire, Jones never would have passed a bond issue of this magnitude,” stated Steele (Kennedy, 2009, p. 18).

Documenting crisis situations, Kennedy (2009) recognized that one of the critical “missions for an educational institution is to keep its constituents informed of what is happening and how they should respond” (p. 18). School communities used the Internet to keep students, employees, and communities updated as the crisis evolved. In addition to Kennedy, other researchers have documented the use of effective communication during disasters to assist in the recovery process (Earthman, 2011; Hale, Dulek, & Hale, 2005; Kapucu & Wart 2008).

In June 2008, the University of Iowa faced flooding of the Iowa City campus. Stephen Pradarelli, director of news services for the University of Iowa, recognized the need to post crisis updates on a website that was accessible off campus with multiple people having the ability to post information (Kennedy, 2009). The university set up an external blogging tool for flood updates. Unlike a fast moving event such as a tornado or fire, the flooding conditions developed and changed over days and weeks. The blog was used to update road situations, volunteer needs, relocation of classes, cancellation of events, health warnings, mental health resources, and tips for coping with the stress of the crisis. Kennedy (2009) documented that the blog content transformed as the needs of the school community changed. This source of information provided immediate access and updates for the university and for the community. The estimated flood recovery costs for the University of Iowa was \$740 million.

Just as Jones High School and the University of Iowa rebounded from tragedy, the communities in New Orleans continue to recover. According to Kennedy (2009), Hurricane Katrina devastated many school districts in New Orleans and they are still working to recover. The two districts that were hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina were the Orleans Parish and the St. Bernard Parish. The Orleans Parish enrollment was 66,372 students in 2005 and was 35,955 in October 2008, a 45.8% student drop in enrollment after the hurricane. The St. Bernard Parish enrollment was 8,872 in 2005 and was 4,684 in October 2008. This was a 47.2% drop in student enrollment counts. In contrast, districts such as St. John and St. Charles saw immediate enrollment gains due to displaced students in the flooded areas. Kennedy (2009) stated that the Orleans Parish recovery is more complicated due to the state's takeover of the district's education structure. Even though 88 public schools are open in Orleans Parish, 33 were operated by the Recovery District; five are run by the Orleans Parish Board; 34 were charter schools under the Recovery District; 14 were charter schools under the Orleans Parish Board, and two are independent charter schools (2009, p. 19).

Through these three case studies, Kennedy (2009) presented information focusing on how educational communities rebound from tragedies. Successes detailed in the study documented community, business, and local government support systems and how these organizations work together. Kennedy (2012) wrote,

Since the tornado...school district officials have come together with others – city and state officials, community leaders, and volunteers – to develop a plan that will rebuild the damaged school campuses...’Before this happened, [officials, leaders, and volunteers] were cooperative...but since the tornado, it has just been a phenomenal effort.’ (p. 16)

Researchers (Crepeau-Hobson & Kanan, 2014; Kennedy 2009, 2012; Smith & Riley, 2012) recognized the quick response by school officials to provide a safe learning environment for displaced students and return to normalcy. Additional research supported the importance of quick, effective responses by school officials on compressed time frames (Earthman, 2011; Farazmand, 2009; Smith & Riley, 2012). Slattery et al. (2009) stated, “Understanding and implementing effective plans requires ...skilled and knowledgeable leaders that are empowered to make independent, situational-based decisions” (p. 2). Smith and Riley (2012) “contend that responding to a crisis is a mix of experience, time and applied common sense...A crisis is a major test of [organizational] leadership...Leaders need to take responsibility and do what needs to be done” (p. 64). Love and Cobb (2012) noted that the United States Department of Education (USDOE) “endorsed strong leadership at the school and district levels to facilitate a quick response that is effective and efficient” (p. 159).

In contrast to quick response by leaders, Kennedy (2009, 2012) addressed the slow process of recovery which occurs in many situations where there is extensive damage and lack of resources to support the rebuilding process. Some researchers attribute a slow response as a barrier to recovery and an ongoing frustration related to FEMA (Glandon et al., 2008; Johnson, 2008). Analyzing case studies such as those presented by Kennedy (2009; 2012) in which schools and communities rebound from tragedies will serve as a research base for solutions to challenges faced by school leaders.

In a related article, Hardy (2008), recognized that “disasters come in many forms, both natural and manmade, but school districts that are prepared for the worst are better able to get back up and running in the aftermath” (p. 29). Hardy described the destruction from Hurricane Ike in September 2008. He focused his research on a small, rural school district in Galveston,

Texas. The Anahuac Independent School District is a 1,350-student district made up of five small communities (Hardy, 2008). Superintendent Linda Barnhart stated that a majority of this area was “pretty much flattened” (Hardy, 2008, p. 31). Even though the homes of 30 staff members had been severely damaged, 96% of the staff returned to greet students on September 26, 2008. Superintendent Barnhart acknowledged the work of the custodial and maintenance staff who worked long hours to prepare the school facilities. The school website proclaimed, “We are on the road to recovery!” (Hardy, 2008, p.31). Hardy documented that as the school community moved into the recovery phase, everyone did his/her part to follow the disaster plan.

According to Hardy (2008),

The theme of the school year is making the most of ‘the dash’ that appears between the endpoints of one’s own life, namely birth, and death...with the challenges ahead, ‘we have the perfect opportunity to make our dash count, ‘Superintendent Barnhart said. ‘We can show strength. We can show perseverance. We can show strength and compassion. (p. 31)

Additional recovery efforts documented by Hardy (2008) included the nearby Barbers Hills Independent School District (BHISD). According to Superintendent Greg Pool, this district housed about 4,000 students, with three of eight major buildings sustaining significant damage. Pool estimated the damage at about \$10 million (Hardy, 2008). BHISD was closed for only nine school days. Superintendent Poole acknowledged the need to resume school as quickly as possible to be a key factor in the recovery process. Poole verified that returning to school quickly was critical because ‘if you miss school for a month, kids are going to leave’ (Hardy, 2008, p. 31).

In addition to documenting the challenge to return students quickly to school, Hardy (2008) also addressed the instructional concerns related to recovery. Missing school days affects instructional time (Gouwens & Lander, 2008; Hardy, 2008; Kennedy, 2012). Kennedy (2012) noted the importance for school communities to move forward and to provide learning environments where students can continue to learn and grow after dealing with a crisis situation. Kennedy (2012) affirmed that after a critical incident or natural disaster, administrators evaluate the useable and unuseable facility spaces and recognize that “their first duty is to quickly find a place for student to continue their schooling” (p. 16). Relocating the learning environment can be one of the greatest challenges faced by school superintendents.

When school buildings were not useable for instruction, Kennedy discussed the options of relocating students to other schools, utilizing temporary modular facilities, renovations to existing facilities, or construction of new facilities. For example in Texas, the 45,000-student Alief Independent School District was not affected by Hurricane Ike but absorbed 6,000 students after Hurricane Katrina (Hardy, 2008). According to Hardy (2008), Texas Education Commissioner, Robert Scott, urged districts to make up instruction days missed by either shortening the December break or by adding days to the end of the school year. Commissioner Scott maintained the need for students not to fall behind on the state tests, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), given each spring.

After the loss of a school facility, school leaders are challenged with the relocation of students to another school setting and/or the rebuilding of a school (Colten et al., 2008; Earthman, 2011; Kennedy (2009), (2012). The rebuilding process of a rural school can present stress and challenges for school superintendents. The process is different for rural school superintendents due to lack of resources. Wright and Lesisko (2010) addressed the profound

effects of school construction and renovation on students, staff, and administration. The purpose of their research study was to “learn the impact of rural school reconstruction on student learning, school climate, teacher and administrator morale, and stress levels, and the schools’ cocurricular activities (Wright & Lesisko, 2010, p. 2). They compared the effects of school construction on rural, suburban, and urban school administrators and the negative impact on the educational programs. In addition, they identified a lack of instructional areas as a stressor for rural school division administrators. Smaller schools have fewer options and spaces to relocate students during the construction process.

Wright and Lesisko (2010) surveyed principals in Pennsylvania schools. The study consisted of two parts: (a) a pilot study involving 24 random schools and (b) the main study with 190 principal surveys. Six topics were addressed: student learning, student discipline, school curriculum, co-curricular activities, staff morale, and the stress level felt by the administrator. After the analysis of the pilot study, Wright and Lesisko revised the questionnaire in which they included a seventh dependent variable: school climate. The revised questionnaire was electronically distributed to a sample of 943 schools. This sample was drawn by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The sample was from a list of state-approved construction projects from the previous five years. The principals of the 943 schools were sent an online survey during September 2009; 214 data forms were retrieved and 190 forms were useable for the analysis. There were 72 rural, 92 suburban, and 26 urban respondents. These useable forms represented a 20 % return rate.

Wright and Lesisko (2010) conducted a Cronbach’s Alpha to check for reliability of their opinion based questionnaire. The total scale of six items (without the school climate combined item) constituted a reliable measure, $\alpha = 0.80$. The questionnaire items included cocurricular

programs, faculty morale, curriculum flexibility, personal stress level, student discipline, and student achievement. A One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test the differences between the perceptions of principals in rural schools and suburban and urban schools with regard to the impact of school construction. Wright and Lesisko (2010) reported a significant difference was found for the personal stress level variable between the responses of rural versus suburban and urban administrators ($F = 10.1$; $df = 2, 187$; $p < 0.001$). There was not a significant difference found between the stress level of the suburban and urban school administrators who were involved in renovation or major construction projects (2010). The second significant differences between rural and urban principal responses were discovered when a standard ANOVA was employed when surveying about curriculum flexibility ($F = 20.6$; $df = 2, 187$; $p < 0.001$). Thirdly, an ANOVA also found significant differences between the perceptions of the administrators of those schools that were undergoing renovations or reconstruction as related to issues with discipline ($F = 4.51$; $df = 2, 187$; $p < 0.01$).

Wright and Lesisko (2010) hypothesized that rural school administrators are likely to experience more stress during school reconstruction due to a lack of resources. Reliability tests were used to verify their findings and the large sample size provided a basis for generalizability. The documented increased stress levels of rural school administrators, in addition to the increased demand of the administrator's time on job tasks and lack of resources to overcome hardships, and disruptions that occurred during construction were all findings that verified the hypothesis of the research.

Beyond the fiscal and rebuilding challenges, school superintendents were confronted with the human aspect of recovery from the disaster. In many disaster situations, staff, students, and families required intensive counseling and support (Alvarez, 2010; Openshaw, 2011; Ursano,

Fullerton, & Terhakopian, 2008). As stated by Gouwens and Lander (2008), school administrators reported an increase in the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among both students and staff members. School personnel and the local medical community provided counseling for PTSD. Other services provided by school districts included: (a) out-of-state counseling teams that visited on a regular basis, (b) local psychologist, (c) access to mental health services, (d) a New York volunteer agency, and (e) Mercy Corps (2008). School leaders continue to face PTSD as an on-going issue after disaster strikes and must continue counseling support for the school community (Norris & Stevens, 2007; Ursano et al., 2008; Walsh, 2007).

Many research studies addressed this stress variable on not only adults but also children (Alvarez, 2010; Norris & Stevens, 2007; Openshaw, 2011; Ursano et al., 2008). As school superintendents, supporting and assisting children are primary concerns after a critical incident or natural disaster. Vogel and Vernberg (1993) reviewed research addressing children's psychological responses to disasters and what factors influenced their responses. Data were compiled by the Task Force on Psychological Responses of Children to Natural and Human-Made Disasters. The Task Force was created to address the limited data available to psychologists called on to respond to children's needs after disasters. The Task Force restricted its definition of disasters to the events "that are relatively sudden, highly disruptive, time-limited (even though the effects may be longer lasting), and public (affecting children from more than one family)" (Vogel & Vernberg, 1993, p. 465). In this Task Force Report, Vogel and Vernberg (1993) provided an historical overview beginning in the 1950s detailing: (a) parent descriptions of short-term reactions of their children after a disaster, (b) emergence of evidence for more severe and long term symptoms, (c) diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and (d) increasing research and direct examination of children. The researchers based their historical

review upon, “the most common disaster responses for children are specific fears, separation difficulties, and symptoms that are on a continuum of stress response syndromes and PTSD” (Vogel & Vernberg, 1993, p. 468).

Vogel and Vernberg (1993) identified trends in children’s responses to disasters and factors that influence their responses. An early trend in the 1950s concluded that children’s responses to disasters were relatively mild and transient. Another trend showed that by the 1970s and 1980s effects for some children after disasters could be more severe and longer lasting. Next, research findings introduced the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder. Finally, a current research trend involved a shift from reliance primarily on parent report to more direct examination of children.

This direct examination of children followed diverse disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, accidents, floods, tornadoes, and shootings. Standardized problem behavior checklists were used to determine the overall levels of behavior problems of children experiencing disasters. According to Vogel and Vernberg (1993), the checklists were designed to detect parent or teacher perceptions of behavior problems. Checklists included the: (a) Rutter Teacher Scale, (b) Child Behavior Checklist, (c) Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, (d) Rutter Parent Scale, (e) Richman/Graham Behavior Screening Questionnaire, and (f) Quay/Peterson Behavior Problem Checklist. As a limitation, Vogel and Vernberg (1993) noted that the checklists are designed to measure the types of disorders that most frequently lead to clinic referrals; however after disasters, measures of anxiety and depression sometimes reach clinical significance (p. 468). Nine studies from 1986 to 1991 were analyzed using various checklists measuring the level of child behavior problems reported by parents and teachers after disasters.

Specific fears, fear of reoccurrence, separation difficulties, and clingy, dependent behaviors were noted as behaviors of children affected by disasters (1993).

Posttraumatic stress disorder and stress-response related symptoms were documented by Vogel and Vernberg (1993) in the aftermath of disasters. This evidence was collected in primarily three measures: (a) Horowitz's Impact of Events (HIE), (b) Frederick's Posttraumatic Stress Reaction Index, and (c) the Diagnostic Interview for Children and Adolescents. The most commonly used instrument is the Posttraumatic Stress Reaction Index. The Task Force cross referenced seven studies and evaluated the PTSD Reaction Index. Specific PTSD and stress-response related symptoms included: (a) reenactment in play, (b) sleep problems, (c) increased irritability, (d) regression, (e) somatic complaints, and (f) guilt. Increased anxiety levels, depression, and changes in school performance may also result in the aftermath of a disaster. Not only do the factors affect children based on their reactions to disasters, but also "strong disaster reactions may be associated with general susceptibility of the family to stressors" (Vogel & Vernberg, 1993, p. 479). Researchers recognized that children's level of symptoms and symptom persistence tend to be correlated with those of their parents after natural disasters (Vogel & Vernberg, 1993, p. 480).

Vogel and Vernberg (1993) reported time course findings in their research. They noted that a limited number of studies have examined the time course of children's reactions to disasters; however, a typical follow up ranges from six months to three years. Vogel and Vernberg reported that children's disaster-related symptoms decreased over time.

Although many studies focusing on children's psychological responses to disasters have been completed, there are gaps in the research. Information and knowledge is limited.

According to Vogel and Vernberg (1993),

Two prominent gaps exist related to information about (1) children's cognitive appraisals of disasters and coping mechanisms after disasters, and (2) influence of having experienced a disaster on subsequent development (including the belief systems as to what controls events and optimism or pessimism about the future). (p. 481-482)

Research studies analyzed by Vogel and Vernberg (1993) verify children's psychological responses to disasters and factors that affect these responses. Vogel and Vernberg's findings provide a foundation for future research studies in which school leaders, staff, and community members could prepare and plan before disasters occur. An awareness of symptoms and factors before, during, and after disasters would help school officials meet the needs of children immediately following these critical incidents or natural disasters, ensuring a decreased recovery period for students (Openshaw, 2011; Walsh 2007).

In a related article, *After the Storm*, Stephen Satterly examined the effects on children after a crisis and how school leaders are charged with caring for children after a disaster. Satterly (2012) stated, "As an educator, your primary focus is on the students in your care. They are vulnerable to not only the physical danger but to psychological trauma as well" (para. 8). He described his experience as an elementary school administrator in which an EF3 tornado struck a middle school located directly behind his school. The tornado came within 50 yards of his school, ripping off the roof ventilators and exposing the children to the elements. They were out of school for a week.

Satterly (2012) emphasized the need for a recovery plan that includes a system to help students deal with the incident in order to return to normalcy. In his article, he quoted Dr. Sonaya Shepherd, a recovery specialist with Safe Havens International. Shepherd asserted,

After a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, traumatic stress reactions can occur. Reactions in children such as regressive behavior, separation anxiety and fatigue may be indicators of emotional trauma and require crisis intervention or sometimes long-term care from a professional. (Satterly, 2012).

According to Satterly (2012), “a child’s risk of psychological trauma from an incident is normally based on four risk factors” (para. 9). These factors included: (a) direct exposure to the disaster, (b) loss or grief of losing family, friends, or pets, (c) secondary stress from temporary displacement or major life changes, and (d) prior exposure to a disaster or other traumatic event (Satterly, 2012).

Love and Cobb (2012) studied the development and implementation of a statewide initiative addressing mental health issues within schools post crisis. Their research study focused on the state of Tennessee. The purpose of their study was to address support for students after a crisis. “After a crisis, schools are practical, logical, and effective places to help students recover from a tragedy. If crisis-related trauma is not addressed adequately, it can impact academic outcomes such as reading achievement, grade point average, and overall academic performance” (Love & Cobb, 2012, p. 158).

Like Satterly’s risk factors, Love and Cobb (2012) maintained that “adding to children’s burdens after a community-wide crisis is the fact that most have already experienced traumas”

(p. 158). Love and Cobb (2012) asserted that because schools provide a sense of security, they offer a safe haven in which students can regain normalcy.

Love and Cobb's (2012) study focused on the situation in Tennessee; "the impetus for this work stemmed from a series of unfortunate traumatic events which affected many schools throughout the state" (p. 159). There were 13 high profile community events involving shootings and massive tornadoes during a 13-year time frame. These events brought together collaboration between the Tennessee Department of Education and the Vanderbilt Community Mental Health Center. "Both entities recognized school safety and recovery as a community issue that requires collaboration between the schools, emergency response agencies, mental health agencies, parents, and other community partners" (Love & Cobb, 2012, p. 159). According to Love and Cobb, the initial research found that most schools had well-developed emergency management plans, but the plans lacked a consistent post crisis recovery piece.

The Ottawa Model of Research Use was the foundation of this project. According to Love and Cobb (2012), this model allowed researchers to target diverse groups of stakeholders, including practitioners, policymakers, victims, and the community. This research-based model was further refined to describe the knowledge to action process framework which is called the Knowledge To Action (KTA) process. This program consisted of three phases: (1) knowledge creation in which a literature review of evidence-based practices and consensus models were utilized, (2) community assessment in which three focus groups were conducted, each lasting 90 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed, and (3) a response in which a program titled the Tennessee Schools PREPARE (TSP) with PREPARE standing for Providing support, Reaching, Educators, Parent/students, And Restoring community with Effective interventions was created.

Love and Cobb (2012) stated that approximately 2,000 school counselors, school social workers, student resource officers, school administrators participated in the TSP program in 2007 and 2008 throughout 12 regions in Tennessee. Lectures, videos, training manuals, group discussion, and team building topics covered in the TSP program included: leadership before crisis, postintervention plans, restoring community, counseling skills, typical trauma reactions, and building resilience (2012). According to Love and Cobb (2012),

Another key point was the emotional needs of the school personnel. School personnel should be educated on trauma reactions and encouraged to participate in their own postcrisis recovery. Time and resources should be allotted to support the educators attending to their own psychological needs postcrisis. (p. 161)

After evaluating the program and Tennessee's initiative to respond to a community crisis, Love and Cobb (2012), asserted several successes of the program. Successes included: (a) partnerships between the Tennessee Department of Education and the Vanderbilt Community Mental Health Center; (b) focus groups from the state that offered the project leaders' insight into the local response to crisis, and (c) an individualized manual that provided clarity in a time of stress and is available as a future reference (Love & Cobb, 2012, p. 162). Challenges in this process were defined as availability of school personnel for all day trainings and cost for travel or overnight expense related to trainings. Researchers continue to study the ongoing program implementation across the state of Tennessee, and the TSP team has begun to collect data to share in the near future.

In a related example, students at a high school in Virginia were displaced due the collapse of a gym roof. On Saturday, February 13, 2009, the roof at Blacksburg High School collapsed

after a weekend snowfall (Graham, 2010). This critical incident left school leaders to make a decision within a week to relocate students to another school within the division (Earthman, 2011). According to Earthman (2011), students were relocated to the nearby middle school where the instructional day was divided into short sessions for the remainder of the school year. Middle school students attended classes from early morning until 1:00 p.m. and high school students attended classes from 1:30 p.m. until 7:15 p.m. each evening (Earthman, 2011). School leaders explored five alternatives for the upcoming school year. Throughout the planning process, there were many concerns.

Planning in a crisis must begin immediately and be done in a compressed time frame.

Most importantly, educationally sound solutions or alternatives must be developed by the school staff as quickly as possible...as always, the wellbeing of the students and staff should be foremost in the planning efforts of the school authorities. (Earthman, 2011, p. 9)

Many researchers (Hale, et al., 2005; Hardy, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Kennedy, 2012; Smith & Riley, 2012; Walsh, 2007) identified important key concepts of recovery as outlined in the United States Department of Education *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. These key concepts related to recovery focus on returning to learning and restoring the infrastructure as quickly as possible. They include:

(a) strive to return to learning as quickly as possible, (b) restore the physical plant, as well as the school community, (c) monitor how staff are accessing students for the emotional impact of the crisis, (d) identify what follow up interventions are available to students and staff, (e) conduct debriefings with staff, (f) access curricular activities that address

the crisis, (g) allocate appropriate time for recovery, (h) plan how anniversaries of events will be commemorated, and (i) capture “lessons learned” and incorporate them into revisions and trainings (USDOE, 2007).

Together, school leaders must focus on the immediate and future needs of students, staff, and the school community in order to move forward in the recovery process.

Summary and Analysis of the Review of Selected Literature

School crisis situations and recent tragedies present leadership challenges for school administrators. “Crises scramble plans of action and surprise everyone in and out of the field, as the dynamics of a crisis constantly change and unfold on daily and hourly basis, with unpredictable outcomes” (Farazmand, 2009, p. 402). Tragedies such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, and fires have challenged school superintendents to refocus their priorities. Farazmand (2009) stated, “In most catastrophes -- where leadership is put to an extreme test -- there is normally a mixed response of success and failure” (p. 712). Researchers must examine these successes and failures to prepare for future situations.

In addition, researchers (Gouwens & Lander, 2008; Kapucu & Van Wart, 2008; Smith & Riley, 2012) have examined changes in school leadership roles as related to tragedies affecting school populations. Shifts in school leadership priorities, political and fiscal responsibilities, and community relationships are inevitable during crisis situations (Earthman, 2011; Smith & Riley, 2012). Leadership in crisis, logistics of relocating the learning environment, instruction, internal and external support resources, criticisms, psychological effects of the loss of a school, and community resilience are variables facing school officials.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 2, the structure of the review of literature and the search methodology was discussed. Commentary and empirical research related to the loss or damage of a school facility was presented. The review is organized into four sections: (a) leadership, (b) leadership in crisis, (c) leadership failures related to school crises, and (d) leadership and recovery after school crises as related to the loss or damage of a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster. The chapter concluded with an analysis of the review of the selected literature and a chapter summary.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research about leadership in crisis and the recovery process is limited. To date, very few qualitative studies have given a voice to leadership in crisis. This study focused on gathering the stories of experiences of school superintendents after the loss or damage to a school facility. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological studies focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. The loss or damage to a school facility is an example of a phenomenon. “It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). Common themes described in the stories of leaders were analyzed to establish their place in future literature related to leadership in crisis.

Overview of the Study

The research was designed to: (a) document the lived experiences of school superintendents after the loss or damage to a school facility due to a critical incident or tragedy and (b) identify common themes that emerged across the stories. This study had a phenomenological design that was used to examine the stories of school superintendents to determine how they managed the loss or damage to a school facility. Emphasis was placed on understanding challenges faced by school superintendents, how they dealt with these challenges, and lessons learned. The narrative of each leader was developed and highlights were used to capture the essence of their experience.

Research Design

The research design is a logical plan that serves as the blueprint for the research (Patton, 2012; Yin, 2009). “A qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry” (Patton, 2012, p. 255). This study was a phenomenological study using a narrative research approach. According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), a phenomenological study focuses on research “through which the lived experiences of a small number of people is investigated...in which the researcher seeks to understand the deep meaning of a person’s experiences and how he articulates these experiences” (p. 96).

Creswell (2007) stated that phenomenological researchers “collect data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals” (p. 58). Moustakas (1994) defined the aim of phenomenological research as “to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). When using this narrative approach, “the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals. The important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (Creswell, 2007, p. 131). Data were generated from the stories of the lived experiences of the participants resulting from crafted questions related to the loss or damage to a school facility.

Moustakas (1994) established a series of methods and procedures that satisfy the requirements of an organized, disciplined, and systematic study. These procedures were used in this phenomenological study:

1. Discovering a topic and question involving social meanings and significance;
2. Conducting a comprehensive review of professional and research literature;
3. Developing a set of questions or topics to guide the interview process;
4. Conducting and recording a lengthy person-to-person interview that focuses on a bracketed topic and question;
5. Organizing and analyzing the data to facilitate development of individual textural and structural descriptions, and a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104)

This study was organized into terms of: (a) Methods of Preparation, (b) Methods of Data Collection, and (c) Methods of Organizing and Analyzing Data (Moustakas, 1994). Data quality procedures are also outlined to access the rigor of the research process.

Methods of Preparation

Moustakas (1994) recognized the first challenge of the researcher to prepare to conduct the phenomenological study was to identify a topic and a research question. The topic was perspectives of school superintendents in school crises. The main research question for this study was: What common themes emerged across the stories of school superintendents after they experienced a critical incident or natural disaster that resulted in the loss or damage of a school facility? The main research question was supported by the following subquestions:

1. What effect did the loss or damage of a school building have upon the superintendent?

2. Did the leadership role of the superintendent change after the loss or damage of a school facility? If so, how?
3. What resources were available to the superintendent during and after this crisis?
4. What lessons were learned from the experience of the superintendent?

In addition to identifying a topic and research questions, Moustakas (1994) identified another method of preparation that included a review of professional and research literature connected to the research topic and question. This review of literature was included in Chapter 2 and addressed relevant studies, methodologies, and findings relative to this study.

Role of the Researcher

The qualitative researcher serves as the key instrument that collects data through examining documents, observing behavior, and conducting interviews (Creswell, 2007). The researcher interviewed participants, collected documents, and maintained field notes within an audit trail. Evidence collected was the ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences that have been expressed by the participants.

Currently, the researcher is a doctoral student in the Education Leadership and Policy Studies Department at Virginia Tech. After teaching for 10 years in grades five, six, and seven, the researcher decided to pursue a career in public school administration. The researcher worked as an elementary principal for six years and then accepted a position at the central office level.

As part of the researcher's experience as a central office administrator, she served as a member of the division leadership team. On August 13, 2011, the division leadership team was devastated by an emergency call stating that an elementary school was engulfed in fire.

Immediately, the leadership team organized, evaluated the crisis, met with local officials, and implemented the school disaster plan. Throughout this process, the leadership team faced several challenges. These school leaders are currently working through the recovery and rebuilding process of the elementary school.

These experiences have shaped the researcher's approach to this research topic. The researcher will be conscious of these experiences and bracket out, or set aside these experiences, as much as possible to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The researcher was objective and set aside any biases. Stories of the participants will be documented precisely as they recalled their experiences.

Bracketing and Reflexivity

The researcher acknowledged these experiences and bracketed out personal experiences as related to the fire that destroyed a local elementary school. According to Moustakas (1994), personal judgments and bias by the researcher must be set aside or suspended. He stated, "In the Epoche [bracketing], we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things. The world is placed out of action while remaining bracketed" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). In addition, the researcher employed reflexivity methods. Patton (2012) described reflexivity "as a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective" (p. 64). The researcher continued to self-question, be attentive to her own perspective, to acknowledge biases, and to include reflexive field notes throughout the research process.

Methods of Data Collection

Data Sources

Three primary data sources were used for this study: (a) interviews of superintendents, (b) interviews of facility directors or designee, and (c) archival data. Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated that “qualitative researchers often supplement observing and interviewing with studying aspects of material culture produced in the course of everyday events” (p. 196). Documents were obtained for each school division, and they included board minutes, news articles, and division correspondence materials. “Documents represent an important and widely useful form of existing qualitative data for more contemporary issues and problems as well” (Remler & Ryzin, 2011, p. 62). These three sources were used to triangulate the data in order to determine credibility and rigor of the study.

According to Creswell (2007), triangulation of data sources “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 208). Likewise, Rossman and Rallis (2012) explained triangulation as a strategy for enhancing the credibility and rigor of the study: “multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods are used to build the picture that you are investigating” (p. 65). Triangulation was attained by comparing the superintendent interview transcripts and the facility director interview transcripts to each other and then again to the documents to ensure consistency of the stories over time as told by the participants.

Documents such as school board minutes, division correspondence, and news articles from each school division relating to the loss or damage of the school facility were collected and reviewed. According to Rossman and Rallis (2012),

The analysis of documents often entails a specialized approach called content analysis. Best thought of as an overall approach, a method, and an analytic strategy, content analysis entails the systematic examination of forms of communication to objectively document patterns. A more objectivist approach than other qualitative methods, traditional content analysis allows the researcher to obtain a quantitative description. (p. 196)

The researcher worked with a representative from each school division by phone, by a face-to-face meeting, or by email to determine the appropriate method to gather the documents. These documents were acquired by visiting the school division or by electronic mail. School board minutes from each school division were downloaded from each division website and reviewed. Each document was organized into an electronic folder which was secured by the researcher throughout the study. Data were maintained for the research committee to review.

Conflicting information was presented in the results of the study. In addition, the researcher documented ideas, thoughts, key highlights, and emergent themes in field notes as part of an ongoing comprehensive audit trail.

Selection Process

This phenomenological study focused on collecting the lived experiences of school superintendents that have suffered loss or damage to a school facility as a result of a disaster. Creswell (2007) stated that a narrow range of sampling strategies for a phenomenological study is essential. In addition, Creswell (2007) added, “It is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 128). Rossman and Rallis (2012) recognized

purposeful sampling for phenomenological studies when “you have reasons (purposes) for selecting specific participants, events, or processes” (p. 138).

This research explored a phenomenon of the loss or damage of a school facility that was a result of one of the four disasters that occurred within a five-month time frame in the Commonwealth of Virginia. According to a Virginia Department of Education (2006, September 6) press release, Virginia State Superintendent, Patricia I. Wright stated, “I can’t think of another time during my 35 years as an educator when the public schools of Virginia have faced so many unexpected challenges in so short a period of time.” This phenomenological study focused on the four school divisions listed in the press release:

- School Division A – Tornado destroyed a middle school.
- School Division B – Tornado destroyed roof of a middle school gym.
- School Division C – Fire destroyed an elementary school.
- School Division D – Earthquake caused structural damage to a high school.

School superintendents and facility directors were purposefully selected based on the four tragedies documented in a Virginia Department of Education press release. Names of the superintendents were accessed from the Virginia Department of Education website. Names of the facility directors were accessed by contacting each superintendent.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Because qualitative research takes place in the field with real people who live and work in a particular setting, the researcher must be diligent in protecting the identity of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Protecting the identity of the participants may offer rich, in-depth responses about his/her experiences. From the beginning of the research process, each

participant was issued a participant code. Participant codes were used to identify participants in all written evidence. Original documents such as contact information, informed consent forms, transcripts, and audiotapes were kept in a secure area by the researcher to guard against the names of the participants being accidentally revealed (Seidman, 2006).

Gaining Informed Consent

In order for each candidate to participate, the researcher must obtain informed consent (Patton, 2012; Seidman, 2006). “Gaining the informed consent of participants is crucial for the ethical conduct of research” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). According to Creswell (2007), informed consent from each participant requires specific elements such as: (a) the right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, (b) explanation of the central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in the data collection, (c) comments about protecting the confidentiality of the respondents, (d) a statement about known risks associated with participation in the study, (e) the expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study, and (f) the signature of the participant as well as the researcher (p. 123) (see Appendix A). These elements were included as part of the informed consent form for this study. Full disclosure of the complete study, including the purpose, guiding questions, risks, and benefits were provided to participants to obtain informed consent for the research study.

Informed consent from each participant served as a protection of identities and privacy of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Required documentation was submitted for approval to the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval was obtained on April 29, 2013. Each participant was contacted by phone, in person, or by electronic mail. Access to each superintendent was gained through an initial identification of name and telephone number listed on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Each informed consent form was reviewed orally with the participant, and each participant received an electronic copy of the signature form. If the participant chose to participate in the study, he or she signed the form and facsimiled or emailed it to the researcher. After securing signatures for informed consent, a copy of the consent form and the interview protocol were provided to each participant to keep. Each signed consent form was secured in an electronic portfolio for each school division.

Interviewing

The primary method for collecting data in a phenomenological study is through a series of in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Seidman, 2006). For this study, superintendents and facility directors from each of five school divisions in Virginia were interviewed. Moustakas (1994) stated that “typically in the phenomenological investigation the long interview is the method through which data are collected on the topic and question....involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (p. 114). Interviewing participants gave them the opportunity to share their stories based on their individual lived experiences. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explained that qualitative research looks at understanding these lived experiences;

The qualitative research attempts to capture what people say and do...words are the way that most people come to understand their situations. The task of the qualitative researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect. (p. 18)

Rossmann and Rallis (2012) documented that data collected in a phenomenological study “are clustered around themes that are portrayed in the interview text” (p. 186). Polkinghorne

(2005) recognized the primary purpose of qualitative research was to “describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness...language is our primary access to people’s experiences” (p. 138-139).

The researcher provided the questions prior to the interview for each participant to review. The researcher began the interview with a social conversation, created a relaxed and trusting atmosphere, and allowed the participant to focus on the experience. Moustakas (1994) noted the importance for the participant to feel comfortable and to feel he or she can respond honestly and comprehensively.

Prior to interviewing, a set of open-ended questions were developed. Interview questions were based on the general interview guide outlined by Mousakas (1994) and were based on findings of the literature review. Broad questions facilitated the obtaining of rich, vital, substantive descriptions of the experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The interview questions were aligned with the research questions, approved by the dissertation committee, and were field tested. The field test was conducted with an assistant superintendent who had experienced the loss of a school facility due to a tragic event.

Table 3.1
Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Question
#1 What effect did the loss or damage of a school building have upon the superintendent?	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12
#2 Did the leadership role of the superintendent change after the loss or damage of a school facility?	Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17
#3 What resources were available to the superintendent during and after this crisis?	Q18
#4 What lessons were learned from the experience of the superintendent?	Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22

Interview participants were contacted in person, by phone, or by electronic mail. A telephone script was used for participants contacted by phone (see Appendix B). Interviews were conducted by telephone, video conference, or face-to-face depending on the preference of the participant. Each participant was asked the same questions (see Appendix C). Participants were asked follow up questions depending on their responses to the interview protocol.

Follow up questions were used as needed to gather richer data. Each participant was audio-taped, and each interview was transcribed as quickly as possible after the interview in order to obtain accurate information. A comparison matrix was developed to analyze key notes made after completion of the seven interviews. The matrix also included observational notes recorded during each interview. Observations of the participants were documented in the field notes both during and after the interview.

Polkinghorne (2005) recognized that qualitative researchers use multiple participants to provide accounts from different perspectives about an experience. “By comparing and contrasting these perspectives, researchers are able to notice the essential aspects that appear across the sources and to recognize variations in how the experience appears” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). The use of multiple participants strengthened the understanding of the investigated experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). In this study, the researcher interviewed four school superintendents, three facility directors, and an assistant superintendent that experienced the loss or damage to a school facility. Triangulation of the data was not possible in every school division. Due to nonparticipation of a facility director in School Division A, data for this division included the superintendent interview and archived documents. The data collected from a horizontalization coding process was cross referenced to identify common patterns and themes

among school divisions and between the four school divisions. The goal of the research was to identify perspectives of leadership in crisis and capture the essence of the phenomenon.

Field Notes

The researcher maintained field notes throughout the study. These notes contained descriptions of what has been observed, setting, direct quotations from participants, insights, interpretations of what is happening in the setting (Patton, 2012). Field notes contained ongoing data that were being collected and were the functional database for carrying out qualitative research (Patton, 2012). Reflexive notes were included in the field notes document. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) acknowledged that ongoing descriptive reports such as field notes have their value because they are the means by which the researcher “makes the implicit (the subsidiary) explicit (articulate). Articulated information increases our ability to understand what we observe and also aids our ability to use our tactic knowledge” (p. 33). Specific words highlighted in the participants’ stories and thick descriptions of observations and experiences were included in the researcher’s field notes as part of a comprehensive audit trail.

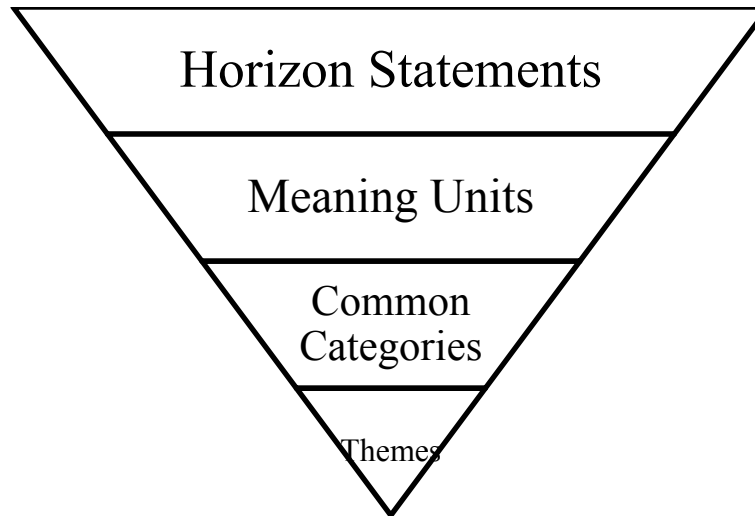
Methods of Organizing and Analyzing Data

Researchers emphasize the importance of organizing data in files as they are compiled (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). For each participant, an electronic folder was created. Each folder contained the following documentation: informed consent, interview transcripts, research documents, contact information, division correspondence, news articles, and correspondence log.

A method of horizontalization was utilized to organize and analyze the interview data. Merriam (2009) explained horizontalization as a process of laying out all the data, treating the

data as having equal weight, and examining the data to identify patterns and themes. Data were coded by (a) highlighting horizon statements on each transcript, (b) clustering horizon statements into meaning units, (c) organizing meaning units into common categories, and (d) organizing common categories into emergent themes (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Coding Hierarchy



Themes were organized into textural descriptions of the superintendent's experience. A composite description that captured the essence of the phenomenon in a narrative format was created. This step in the process focused on the common experiences of the participants and outlined the underlying structure of all the experiences (Creswell, 2007). The goal was to convey an overall essence of the experience just as if the reader had experienced the phenomenon.

Data Quality Procedures

Qualitative researchers regard the importance of validation of their research and procedures for establishing it (Creswell, 2007). Throughout the research process, credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the methodology strategies were employed as outlined by Anfara, Brown, and Mangiore (2002).

Credibility

The credibility of qualitative inquiry requires honesty and truthfulness during the research process. Credibility related to data quality depends on three distinct elements: (a) rigorous methods, (b) credibility of the researcher, and (c) philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2012). To ensure the credibility of the interview documentation, member checking was employed after the interview transcription process. After completing interview transcripts, each transcript was sent by electronic mail to the participant to validate. In this manner, the participant had an opportunity to elaborate, correct, extend, or argue the script. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) found that member checking is very valuable and helps the researcher to see or emphasize something that may have been missed during the transcription of the interview.

Qualitative researchers who work alone are sometimes criticized for biases in their research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). To increase credibility in this research study, a peer debriefer was utilized. Peer debriefing involves sharing of research ideas, practices, and procedures with a knowledgeable colleague. This critical friend, also known as a peer debriefer, “serves as an intellectual watchdog [who helps the researcher] modify design decisions, develop possible analytic categories, and build an explanation for the phenomenon of interest” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 65). The dissertation chairperson served as the peer debriefer throughout the research process.

Transferability

Anfara et al. (2002) acknowledged that transferability of research findings includes two key elements: (a) providing thick descriptions and (b) purposeful sampling (p. 30). Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated that the foundation of analysis and interpretation is thick descriptions. Thick descriptions for this study were included throughout the field notes documenting the setting, word usage, and actions used by the participants. To enhance the transferability of the study, a total of seven purposefully identified participants whose stories will provide rich, thick descriptions were interviewed.

Dependability

Dependability relates to the reliability of the research process. Anfara et al. (2002) listed four strategies documenting criteria for assessing research quality and rigor as related to dependability. These strategies included: (a) creating an audit trail, (b) code-recode strategy, (c) triangulation, and (d) peer examination (p. 30). The researcher maintained a comprehensive audit trail throughout the study to include thoughts, ideas, choices of categories and coding, creation of themes, developing interpretations, and meanings. Rossman and Rallis (2012) suggest documenting decisions at every step in an audit trail. The interview coding was completed as described by Moustakas (1994) for data analysis. Triangulation of data was used to ensure dependability. As a fourth strategy to ensure dependability of the research, the dissertation chairperson served as a peer debriefer, examined research methods, reviewed results of the data analysis, and provided constructive feedback to support the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the objectivity of assessing the research quality and rigor. Anfara et al. (2002) presented two strategies; confirmability was achieved through (a) triangulation of the data and (b) reflexivity of the researcher (p. 30). Triangulation was used to strengthen the study by combining methods (Patton, 2012). Interviews, documents, and field notes were used for triangulation. In addition, practicing reflexivity supported confirmability within the research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter included research methodology utilized in this study. The research design was described. The role of the researcher was defined. In addition, the participant selection criteria and process, the setting for the inquiry, the inquiry process, and the participants were listed. The informed consent procedures were explained in conjunction with the measures taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Lastly, the data collection process, analysis procedures, and the method of results representation were explained. The results and findings of the research are presented as narrative descriptions in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to record the lived experiences of school superintendents following the loss or damage of a school facility and to identify common themes among their stories. A thorough understanding of this phenomenon was captured through personal dialogue that described these personal experiences. The goal was to collect data to illuminate the essence of their experiences after the school crisis. Interviews, news articles, and board minutes were sources of data gathered for this phenomenological study.

The Cohort of Participants

Five school superintendents in school divisions where a crisis occurred that resulted in the loss or damage of a school facility were contacted and asked to participate in the research study. To secure triangulation of the data, a second participant from each school division was contacted and asked to be interviewed. This second contact person for each division was a colleague that worked closely with the school superintendent during the crisis situation. Depending on the role of this second person in each school division, the second participant was either the facility director or the assistant school superintendent.

Participants from four school divisions were interviewed: four school superintendents, two facility directors, and one assistant superintendent. Three superintendents were interviewed during May 2013 at the Virginia Association of School Superintendents Conference in Roanoke, Virginia. One superintendent was interviewed in his school division. Conference call interviews were held for one facility director and one assistant superintendent. One face-to-face interview was held for another facility director in his local school division.

The fifth superintendent was contacted but chose not to participate. Because the superintendent chose not to participate, the facility director from this particular school division was not contacted. This school division experienced damage due to a tornado. The damage involved repairing a metal roof and two windows overnight; students returned to school the next day without missing instructional time (Davis, 2011).

For assurance of confidentiality, each participant in the study was assigned a code.

Table 4.1
Participant Codes

School Division	Superintendent	Facility Director/Assistant Superintendent
A	A1	A2 – Did not participate
B	B1	B2
C	C1	C2
D	D1	D2
E – Did not participate	E1 – Did not participate	E2 – Did not participate

Findings are reported by (a) School Division A, B, C, and D, (b) corresponding School Superintendent A1, B1, C1, and D1, (c) and corresponding Facility Director or Assistant Superintendent B2, C2, and D2. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, data were analyzed to determine parallel or contrasting themes that emerged across divisions and within divisions. Each division had two participants for comparison except School Division A. School Division A was represented by School Superintendent A1. Several attempts were made to contact A2 through phone calls and emails; however, A2 did not respond to the request to participate in the study.

Interview data collected from the seven participants were thoroughly analyzed through a hand coded processes. Horizon statements were highlighted, clustered into meaning units, organized into categories, and grouped into major themes. In addition, transcripts were uploaded to NVivo, qualitative analysis software. Transcripts were electronically coded which

provided an opportunity to create coding categories, flexibly edit or rearrange categories as the analysis proceeds, combine codes together into themes, track and visualize the qualitative data in graphs and models (Remler & Ryzin, 2011, p. 79). Electronic coding provided an additional opportunity for the data to be evaluated and analyzed.

From both the manual and electronic coding process, emergent themes were identified and organized into matrices. Quotes from each participant were included in a matrix listed by theme. These four theme matrices provided another representation of the data in order to verify patterns and themes. Using the matrix, themes were evaluated. Categories for each theme were identified based on the interview data. Twelve months of news articles and board minutes were reviewed beginning from the date of the crisis for School Division A, B, C, and D. Documents were also organized in a themed matrix for further analysis. The data collection and evaluation process was documented in a comprehensive credible audit trail.

Lived Experiences

School Division A

Late one Saturday evening in April 2011, a tornado ripped through a coastal community in the Eastern United States. According to Hulette and Kimberlin (2011), the EF-2 (Enhanced Fujita Scale 2) tornado damaged or destroyed an estimated 430 structures including extensive damage to a middle school in School Division A. An estimated \$7.7 million in damages to the community structures, school facilities, and homes were reported (Hulette & Kimberlin, 2011).

School Superintendent A1 received a call at approximately 7:05 p.m. on April 16, 2011, reporting damage to a middle school. Trying to call staff members and obtain as much information possible while traveling to the site, A1 stated, “It had taken out a portion of the middle school, and at that point and time, I wasn’t sure what happened and how much damage

had been done but I knew something bad had just happened with this particular school” (personal communication, May 6, 2013). A1 struggled getting to the site due to debris and traffic with uncertainty, not knowing what he would see when he arrived. As he traveled through the damaged community and attempted to access the school campus, he recalled

I had called my support personnel, and I actually asked them initially to report to the school. When I made it to the school and began to access the damage, I immediately called those people back and I said, ‘Go back home.’ I don’t want people wandering around this site with these power lines down. We don’t know if there are any hazardous materials over there where we had propane tanks on the site. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

Safety for his staff and community members was a priority. A1 recollected, “I eventually got on the phone and told the sheriff that I had to have someone cordon off this site. I didn’t want anyone to get hurt” (personal communication, May 6, 2013). After his initial assessment, he determined that “we had lost at least 40-50% of the school, and we were fortunate no one was hurt” (personal communication, May 6, 2013). Verbyla (2011) stated that the situation could have been worse, but fortunately, the tornado struck on a Saturday evening while no one was in the building. Hulette and Kimberlin (2011) reported that

The 50-year-old school suffered the worst of the tornado. Brick walls collapsed, roofs caved in and debris was strewn across a nearby wheat field... Fences were crumpled and buses flipped over. One lay upright on its frame, without its undercarriage. The storm had ripped off its tires and axles and torn out its engine and radiator.” (para. 7)

Following his initial assessment, A1 realized that communication with parents and community members would be a critical element in working through this crisis situation. People were seeking information.

Once we made an assessment and lives were not in danger, we would have to secure the site. Then the next step would be that people were thirsty for information. They just wanted to know.... I became the face of information because I was the only one on the site besides the news reporters. Citizens knew me; they knew my face, and so many, many people came up to me later and said, 'You don't realize how important you were that night by being in front of the camera and allowing us to see you talk about the damage.' (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

A1 recognized that even though he did not have an extensive amount of information to share in the initial stages of the crisis, the community wanted to know what he knew. He implemented the AlertNow communication system to communicate with staff and parents (Wavy10, 2011, April 18). The school community wanted to know "that something good is going to come out of it...we can replace the bricks and mortar. We are fortunate that no one was hurt, and it happened at a time when the school was not occupied." (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

Knowing that he was the face of communication, A1 also recognized that he had a role in how the message about the crisis and recovery would be conveyed. He acknowledged this responsibility and the importance of honesty and accuracy.

I was the voice that night. I am thinking to myself that I need to convey a certain image. I need to convey honesty and truth, but I can't mislead....make sure you get this right, not knowing what right was at the time. But I wanted to at least be calm because I knew if

people saw me anxious, excited, and uncertain that would not be the message that I wanted to convey to my community. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

A1 also discussed the inability to follow normal protocol by providing information to the school board prior to releasing it to the public. School board members were receiving the same, initial crisis information through the media. According to A1,

I was unable to communicate even with my school board members. The school board members were out there getting the same information that the average citizen was getting by television, but later that night, I was able to give them a call and give them my assessment. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

During the next few days, A1 conducted many assessments and meetings with crisis teams, leadership teams, community leaders, and political leaders. Governor Bob McDonnell declared a state of emergency for the area in order for recovery to begin (Lohmann, 2011; Weber, 2011). Meetings involved brainstorming sessions, problem solving discussions, and collaborative decision making. Discussions involved short-term and long-term solutions, resource management, and recovery proceedings. A1 stated,

It didn't take us long...bounced it around the room and got ideas and part of the ground work. The framework I suggested was that we have a short term solution to get children back in school, and I would like to have children back in school...We were not going to miss school for more than two days, so I needed a short term solution. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

A1 utilized his critical staff which he identified as the central office personnel which included the Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services, Safety Manager, Construction Manager, Energy Manager, Facility Manager, and Grounds Manager. These critical staff

members were familiar with the infrastructure which encompassed buildings, grounds, and utilities. A1 recalled this collaborative process and dialogue,

My role at that point I needed these people to have open minds and focus on next steps because they were my brain trust...we were collectively going to decide how we were going to move forward. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

Moving forward, School Division A implemented a short term solution which involved relocating middle school students to the other middle school and implementing a split schedule (Vaughn, 2011). Students from one middle school would have class during the first part of the day; they would be bussed out, and the students from the devastated middle school would be bussed in for class during the second part of the day. Teachers and staff would share instructional spaces and other schools and community facilities would offer shared athletic spaces. A1 recalled this decision:

On Sunday morning, we looked at our options. Who has capacity, and asked how we were going to do this? Can we create a split schedule? Can we do this can we do that? Literally, every scenario was put on the table, and we looked at all of them and said okay that is what we like but at some point and I don't know how much time had passed but we had two middle schools about the same size so we reached the conclusion that we needed to take the 580 children who were at [the devastated middle school] and move them to the other middle school and that would prevent us from disrupting the high school and disrupting the elementary schools. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

The short-term solution lasted until the end of the school year (Sabo, 2011, April 18). Next, a decision had to be made concerning how to serve students in August. The timing of the decision was critical. In order to secure resources, board members faced a decision of installing modular

units in May 2011. Eighth grade students would become a part of the high school population housed in modular units. A1 presented the information to the school board:

[A1] discussed with the Board the issue of designation of names for the middle school facilities for the transition period. It was the consensus of the Board to designate the 8th grade modular facility [on the high school campus]. (School Division A Board Minutes, 2011, May 10).

In moving the division forward, A1 recalled frustrations throughout the decision making process. He identified the importance of short term solutions and long term solutions. He also recognized the need for input from a committee, but also the need to make immediate decisions in the recovery process. For example, A1 shared his thoughts about this process:

All of those logistics were being dealt with, but there always a tendency when people get away from the crisis to delay critical decisions because they feel like they need more time. So as the superintendent or the leader in that particular crisis, they have to be able to look beyond the moment and kind of see that I've got this amount of time, and I got to get x and z done; therefore, in your mind, you have got to map out or do some backward mapping. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

During the decision making process, A1 recognized specific recovery efforts by school personnel, the community, and various agencies. People worked together to help each other (Parsons, 2011). A1 recalled a collection of various people that stepped forward:

I would have to say the people that stand out are the ones who came forward the next day and over the weeks ahead...we had such an outpouring of support from churches, from businesses, from county personnel, from school districts throughout Virginia offering support and assistance and condolences...there is not one person or group of people. It

was a collection of everybody that really came through [to help]. (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

School supplies were gathered for students. A church basement served as the receiving center for school supplies. According to A1, “when the students came into school on Wednesday, all of the classrooms were outfitted. They [volunteers] had put together a set of materials for each child” (personal communication, May 6, 2013).

During the July 12, 2011, school board meeting, A1 and school board members thanked local businesses and volunteers for their continued support during the recovery process. A thank you letter was disseminated to the community for their “fortitude, generosity, and ‘can-do’ attitude” (School Division A email correspondence, 2011). According to the recorded board minutes, “Board members expressed their personal appreciation to the individuals, businesses, and organizations who had generously donated time, services, goods, and monetary contributions to assist in the recovery and ongoing educational process following the devastation” (School Division A Board Minutes, 2011, July 12). A list was posted to the division website in July 2011 recognizing 254 donators that assisted with the recovery efforts of the school division (School Division A website, 2011, July). A1 summarized his thoughts by stating, “[In] the times of tragedy is when the best comes out in people and so the politics and the petty differences and the ideology that might exist prior to all that goes by the way side. People are basically good people that want to help others” (personal communication, May 6, 2013).

According to A1, in the following months, there were several community meetings, discussions about plans, and committee recommendations for a new middle school (School Division A Committee Minutes, 2011, August). A1 answered questions and addressed concerns from community members and from the local Board of Supervisors (School Division A, Duke

TV47, 2011, October 27; Sabo, 2011, October 13). Input was received from community groups through outreach activities. “The Board reached a consensus on establishing a public forum for community input and the Board of Supervisors would be invited to attend so they could hear suggestions and strategies from the community and parents for the development of a long-term plan” (School Division A Board Minutes, 2011, May 10). The school division and the local board of supervisors met and discussed cost comparison report to guide the decision making process (School Division A, Joint Meeting Minutes, 2011, October 27). School Division A ultimately decided to build a new middle school in the community (Sabo, 2011, December 14). A1 noted the anticipated completion date of the new middle school is August 2014.

School Division B

On the evening of Wednesday, April 27, 2011, bursts of storms intensified in a rural school division in Southwest Virginia. The weather was progressively getting worse according to School Facilities Director B2. B2 recalled the atmosphere changing; “my fear was...all night long they [storms] kept getting worse. If another one comes worse than the one that just left...it would get really bad” (personal communication, May 22, 2013). On Thursday, April 28, 2011, a tornado struck the community and destroyed much of the town, leveling businesses and homes on both sides of the school (McCown, 2011; TriCities, 2011, April 28).

School Superintendent B1 was awakened by a call from the transportation director around 5:30 a.m. informing him that there was extensive damage in the area surrounding the school. According to Grebe (2011), the Enhanced Fujita Scale 3 (EF-3) tornado had winds that reached 130 mph in the middle school area; the path of the tornado was two and a half miles wide and four miles long. Tornadoes are ranked on a scale from E0 to E5 with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour; the death toll from the April 2011 tornados climbed to 329 across the South as

seven tornados hit Virginia making it the deadliest day for twisters since The Great Depression (Meola, 2011).

B1 recalled leaving his home and driving to the school campus. Traffic and debris became an obstacle and delayed his access to the school facility. As he tried to get to the campus, B1 remembered seeing

...tractor trailers that had been taken from one side of the interstate and literally moved to the other side...18 wheelers with the cab attached were piled up beside the interstate and some of them were sitting on their end with the cab hanging up in the air. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

B1 remembered that he “felt a little helpless...when you are driving down the streets there, and you have to go around trees and zigzag around trees and then when we got to the school another thing that really was unbelievable, they were searching for people” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). According to McCown (2011), “the tornado ripped off the roof of the middle school gymnasium and set it back down” (para. 6). Upon his arrival, B1 immediately noticed

...a whole army of people that was patching the roof where the roof had been damaged. They literally saved the building. We had at least 20 people on the roof patching the holes before the rains came again. If they hadn’t, we would have lost computers. We would have lost ceilings. We would have had major damage and would have had to close down. As it turned out, we were able to quarantine the gym, and we didn’t have to close down except for two days. We lost two days of school. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

B1 recognized the exceptional efforts by B2 and the maintenance crew for their immediate response. B2 had already contacted the insurance company and claims adjustor.

They were unable to get to the school immediately; however, B2 took pictures and video and initiated the recovery process to help preserve the facility. “His [B1’s] leadership to me [B2] was that he knew that I knew what I needed to do, and I told him what my plan was. He said get it done. He [B1] did not try to micromanage the process. He left me to do what I needed to do,” stated B2 (personal communication, May 22, 2013). As B1 watched the recovery process and was amazed by focused efforts of the staff:

It was amazing to see that many people there, and I think it was 7:30 that morning, and they were already patching that roof, and they really saved the building. That was very, very impressive... The roof was crucial, and we had it back on in nine days with our maintenance crew and this roofing company, but it was quite phenomenal.” (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

In November 2011, the school division maintenance department was recognized at the Virginia School Board Association conference for the support provided in the aftermath of the tornados earlier in the year (School Division B Board Minutes, 2011, December 5).

While the recovery process began immediately with the repair of the gym roof, B1 identified another important challenge. Following the tornado, communication services were down. Both B1 and B2 struggled with the loss of communication. B1 stated,

...cell phones at this time were out, land lines, most of them were out, and so the communication was face-to-face because you had to go there to see what was going on. I couldn’t even call my office from where I was at all. I had to go all the way into my office to let my staff know exactly where I was and so forth that day. (personal communication May 7, 2013)

Even though there was a lack of communication by cell phones and land lines, B1 noted that this loss did not cause an additional crisis nor make the current situation more drastic, but it isolated the recovery efforts. B2 stated, “In a bad storm, where everybody is on in a small area and wanting to talk on their cell phone. You couldn’t get out. It was hard to communicate with folks and get folks where you needed” (personal communication, May 22, 2013).

As the school division personnel addressed immediate and short term challenges, B1 remembered reaching out to his staff for input and empowering the staff to accomplish necessary tasks. As recovery efforts began, B1 saw his role as a facilitator. B1 would “... get key input from players as to their thoughts on what they think needs to be done next.... I became a facilitator of necessary contacts and so forth” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). As a facilitator, B1 assisted the staff in organizing local support. The staff rallied to help:

Our teachers were very engaged. We looked for ways to help and simply at times it was just money for food and clothing. In two of our schools, we...had clothes closets because they [families] lost everything.... We had essential hygiene type of items, and we would just let the families, not only families of students that were affected, but families in the area they could come by [and get what they needed]. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

He facilitated the support of many agencies such as the Red Cross, Social Services, and various churches from the area and from Tennessee. He remembered different communities formulating recovery teams to assist with support.

In addition to meeting basic needs and providing ongoing resources for the community, the school division found ways to celebrate through the crisis. B1 estimated that the school was 98% recovered and the staff and community have taken pride in their efforts. According to B1,

We have planted a lot of trees-hundreds and hundreds of trees and there is a lot of pride in that. The governor has been down and actually visited last year...the last April 27...he was at some of the celebrations and so forth to celebrate the recovery. So the recovery itself has been quite phenomenal really without federal funds. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

The school division did not receive FEMA funding, but even without federal funds, the local community provided monetary relief for the school division. Generosity “has [been] expressed in many ways of the three months or the last two months; it was a tremendous blessing because they raised a lot of money to pull the town back together,” stated B1 (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Another example of local support included the school board accepted many donations such as “...checks on behalf of the Desert Sands Shrine Club in the amount of \$250 to the Assistant Principal at the Middle School, to help displaced children as a result of the April tornado” (School Division B Board Minutes, 2011, June 27). B1 recognized monetary donations of checks for \$500 - \$1500 sent to the school principal for up to a year following the crisis. B2 explained, “You get to see the best in people in the worst of times” (personal communication, May 22, 2013).

School Division C

The phone call came around 3:46 a.m. The school was on fire. Thoughts of uncertainty and fear were what School Superintendent C1 remembered in the early hours of Saturday, August 13, 2011. As he raced to the school and saw a glow as he crested the hill, C1 remembered the school engulfed in flames. At first glance, approximately one-third of the building was on fire and flames moving fast toward the adjacent cafeteria structure. “I think I will never forget the first time that I saw the fire the devastation and the feelings that I had,”

stated C1 (personal communication, May 28, 2013). Fifty-four fire fighters from 17 different departments responded to the blaze around 4 a.m. (FoxNews, 2011). As the director of facilities, C2, arrived on the scene, he remembered

...as I was cresting the hill the sky was glowing orange. I remember that it was just...I had a such an empty feeling, so by the time I got there it was already fire departments in action and a lot of people already on site, a lot of direction was already in place. (personal communication May 23, 2013)

C2 also recalled seeing the people in awe, in disbelief, and in grief. He felt that is was a big loss since the 1939 school building had undergone a large renovation. “We just got on board with our whole county on the debt or the cost of building each school [renovation] and now here we sit with no school. I think you could see that if you took time to look at people’s eyes or expressions” (personal communication, May 23, 2013).

As the initial recovery phase began, C1 communicated with the emergency coordinator and fire chief and emphasized the immediate need to save the new gym which was a separate facility that stood on the hill behind the burning school. C1 called members of his division leadership team: assistant superintendent, facilities director, central office staff, division administrators, and school board members. He began organizing his team to meet later that morning. As the sun was rising, C1 recognized that

...most of the building was gone and a little after 6:00 o’clock, I did know that or was very aware that the media was going to be coming very soon. Obviously, there were people that were going to put things on Facebook. (personal communication, May 28, 2013)

C1 also called the local radio station and provided information about the school fire so the DJ could communicate with the public. Television reporters arrived and C1 talked with them throughout the morning to keep them updated (WXII12, 2011, August 15) . In addition, C1 immediately recognized that

...we knew very early, that we were going to have to establish a plan to first get the kids back in school and that was one of the first reasons we initially had decided to try and preserve the gym and the cafeteria. Because if we could preserve those two things, because they were sort of semi separate facilities, then we could easily have school at some point. That was my thinking from about 6:00 o'clock on, and we immediately established the headquarters out of the fire department temporarily. (personal communication, May 28, 2013)

The division team met in the local community church fellowship hall. Teachers, parents, and community members arrived to help. Everyone appeared to be in shock. C1 reassured staff and community members during this gathering at the local church:

I told the staff and teachers...they were all crying, so I told them we needed to come together to be together, and we needed to ensure that we were going to open school back up. So, I asked them to start working to ensure that we were going to have instruction resuming on Monday. (personal communication, May 28, 2013)

As C1 gathered his leadership team, C2, the director of facilities for the school division, remembered that

...we met in the local church reception hall or fellowship hall. We all met there and were broken into groups, very well directed, in my opinion, from the superintendent's office. He [C1] got to arrange this thing and got it headed in a positive direction. When positive

is hard to see, it was heading in a positive direction. (personal communication, May 23, 2013)

After meeting and brainstorming with his staff, C1 met with the two school board members that had arrived. A called school board meeting was held later that day. At the meeting, C1

...declared the fire as very serious and recommended the school board declare an emergency, in accordance with the Virginia Public Procurement Act...[the board] declare[d] that an emergency exists in accordance with the Virginia Public Procurement Act, enabling [C1] to take the necessary measures to ensure that an educational program continues for the children [in the] community. (School Division C Board Minutes, 2011, August 13)

Together, C1 and the school board representative from this community engaged the local church, community center leaders, and local government officials (School Division C, website news, 2011). Resources such as food and water for the workers were delivered. People wanted to help. C2 recalled,

...we saw local contractors contributing; we saw all businesses, churches. I don't if there was anybody that wasn't involved. Everybody, you name it and they were involved. Of course in a situation like this you have politicians, they were involved, you get the leaders of the county and the leaders of the school, and everybody was basically there on site that morning. (personal communication, May 23, 2013)

C1 and his leadership team were now faced with several decisions such as where to physically locate the students in order to get them back into school as soon as possible. There were several options presented during the brainstorming sessions. C1 recollected the possibilities:

We really had several options. One, we could have it at a church. We weren't sure about that; we thought about having them shipped to other schools. We thought about if we could salvage the gym and cafeteria, which was in doubt at the time, what we could do as far as having some semblance of school somewhere, but what I needed the staff to do is to concentrate on opening school back up. (personal communication, May 28, 2013)

There were issues with busing students to other schools such as (a) traveling distances up and down the mountains to reach the closest school, (b) the lack of space and other schools within the division, and (c) the morale issue of relocating students. C1 and the school board representative reiterated that it was important to keep the students together and not separate them into other schools within the division. They ultimately decided to keep the students in their own community and to have school in the gym located on the hill behind the original school facility.

This decision

...presented a lot of problems, and it also presented a lot of opportunities. We had water there. Water was still available, by that time several prominent members of the community had come by and offered to help, and so we started developing a plan where we would have whatever it took in the gym to have weeks to have school in the gym and possibly up above the school in the baseball field we would have some mobile units if we could find some. (personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Beginning Sunday, August 14, 2011, staff from across the division collected supplies from other schools within the division and transported them to the gym (Jackson, 2011). "Since we lost all the books, chairs, paper, pencils, etc. we begged, borrowed, and stole from every school [within the division]," remembered C1 (personal communication, May 28, 2013). In addition, community members and local organizations provided supplies lost in the fire (WHEO, 2011,

November 11). Classrooms were set up on Monday. Partitions were delivered Monday night. Staff worked through the night to ensure that the gym would be ready for students on Tuesday morning (WXII12, 2011, August 16). Students were shuttled to the local community center each day for breakfast and lunch (Donnelly, 2011). Students in this small, rural, close knit community only missed one instructional day after the devastating fire.

After relocating the students to the gym, school officials began working on a long term plan. State officials were contacted and many surrounding school divisions offered assistance. One division offered to supply 13 educational mobile units (EMUs). Delivery and set up were arranged. C1 recalled

We spent six weeks in the gym, well actually, spent less than six weeks in the gym. We moved after Labor Day and moved into mobile units, which we procured from [another school division]. The state superintendent and the state secretary of education help[ed] us with that...reliance on other school divisions really helped a lot...[they] came through and all those superintendents are friends of mine and they came through and helped a lot.

So it is good to have friends. (personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Students were moved from the gym to the semi-permanent EMUs on the hill behind the school. The school division and the community decided to rebuild the school on the original campus. The focus for the division was established from the beginning by C1 and the school board: "We Will Rebuild!" (personal communication, May 28, 2013). According to recorded board meeting minutes, the school board and the board of supervisors issued

...a statement that both boards are committed to working together on this project as a symbol of cooperation between the two governing boards. Based on the structural engineer reports from both insurance services and the school division, and a report from

RRMM Architects, it has been determined that the school building will have to be demolished. (School Division C Board Minutes, 2011, September 8)

The school division building committee met with the insurance company and interested parties on November 4, 2011, to reach a settlement in order to move forward with the building project (WHEO, 2011, November 2; WHEO, 2011, November 8). Demolition of the school occurred in August 2012 and the new construction began in October 2012 (School Division C website photos, 2012). C1 and C2 estimated a completion date for the new community school in November 2013.

School Division D

It was the seventh day of school in August 2011 for the students in School Division D. School Superintendent D1 was routinely visiting schools and had stopped by a Spanish classroom at the high school. Suddenly, there was a rumble. First, D1 thought the sound and vibrations were a local train. Second, D1 thought the shaking originated from recent roof repairs. Then, the fire alarm sounded. Students and staff entered the hallway as ceiling tiles fell (WVIR-TV, 2011, September 1). Next, D1 thought a bomb had exploded where the ceiling tiles had fallen. D1 recalled "...still we had no idea it was an earthquake, and so students were leaving quickly, and we ensured everyone got out and then some people started talking earthquake" (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

At approximately 1:15 p.m. on August 23, 2011, an earthquake that measured 5.8 on the Richter scale shook this rural community for over 45 seconds (Strauss, Pesce, & Vergano, 2011). Homes and buildings from Georgia to Canada rattled from the earthquake. The earthquake caused damage to Washington's National Cathedral and the Washington Monument. According to Strauss, et al. (2011), the disruption prompted the "shutdowns of 10 nuclear plants in

Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey in addition to the evacuation of the Pentagon and the U.S. Capital” (para. 8). Even though there were no major injuries or deaths, six students and one staff member from the local high school were injured; one was hospitalized (“5.8-magnitude,” 2011).

Looking back on that day, D1 recalled immediately trying to call the central office. Cell service was down; communication was an obstacle. D1 left the school and headed back to her office in her vehicle. When she arrived, she discovered that “our transportation and emergency services director was already there trying to get in touch with bus drivers by way of two way radio ...with police” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Central office administrators were sent to assist at the local elementary schools. Next, D1 realized that they needed to send out a message to parents, but with the phone service disabled, the public information officer and the technology director

...got into the car...and they drove around to see if they could get a signal [so] she could send a message out, and she did by 3:14 in the afternoon. Remember, the earthquake happened at 1:51 p.m., and at 3:14 p.m. in the afternoon she sent out a message saying that we were going to send students home on time today. Of course everyone was shaken but we still wanted parents to know that we were sending students home on time.

(personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Thinking back, D1 was “very proud of that because that... [It] is one thing that we want to do, is get parents information. That is one of the most critical things you have to do is to communicate” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). D2, the assistant superintendent, remembered that

We tried to connect immediately with communication of an all call to all parents stating that all the kids were safe, and they would be leaving and arriving near or on time that

day, and then we usually communicated by all call, email, mass emails, social media.

(personal communication, May 21, 2013)

After checking on students and staff and communicating with parents, the division leadership team began recovery mode. The insurance agent came to the central office. D1 stated, “We already had a contract with an engineering firm, so my facilities director had been in touch with the structural engineer because we had to come up and determine if we could use any of the buildings” (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

After students were sent home, the community and school personnel were startled by aftershocks. D1 remembered taking a reporter, school board members, and a board of supervisor back to the high school to assess the damage. Aftershocks hit at 6:46 p.m., 7:20 p.m., and at 8:04 p.m., a 4.2 magnitude surprised the community (“5.8-magnitude”, 2011). D1 decided to close schools to evaluate the situation: “I said we are closing school for two days, and our teachers were heroes. They acted responsibly and your children are safe” (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

During the next few hours and days, D1 and her staff faced challenges such as managing the abundance of media, talking with the insurance adjusters, learning about earthquakes from a Virginia Tech earthquake scientist, and reminding the public that “we were a tight knit, close community and a strong community and we will come through this” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Scientists from Virginia Tech answered questions and shared a PowerPoint presentation with the community (Bloom, 2011). People from many communities throughout the state offered support to this school division that suffered extensive damage. According to Kruez (2011), officials estimated the damage from the earthquake to cost approximately \$60 million worth of damage to a high school and an elementary school. Over 1,400 high school students

would need a learning space and 570 students at the elementary school would be displaced (Krueez, 2011).

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assisted the school division after the crisis and throughout the recovery process. The Office of Governor Bob McDonnell issued a press release stating that FEMA approved federal disaster assistance for Louisa County Schools on November 10, 2011 (School Division A website news, 2011). D1 stated that both VDEM and FEMA

have been so supportive...they came and were on site. We really felt they led us in a plan in rebuilding and not just rebuilding but reconstructing temporary facilities too.

They led us through all the paperwork that it takes and that is key for us to have that kind of support. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

According to D1 and D2, additional recovery supporters were elected officials including the governor, congressmen, and the local board of supervisors. Visits of government officials included Peter Farrell, Delegate, on December 19, 2011, Laura Fornash, Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Education for Virginia, on March 12, 2012, and Marla Decker, Virginia Secretary of Public Safety, on April 2, 2012 (School Division A website news, 2011). Delegate Farrell issued a press release declaring extra financial support for School Division D (Farrell, Press Release, 2012, January). These supporters not only offered individual support, but also they were willing to meet together in teams to troubleshoot issues due to the aftermath of the earthquake.

The next few days included meetings and brainstorming sessions. D1 recalled that ...all of us worked solid for 12 to 15 hours every day-Monday through Sunday until we opened school again. We came up with a plan to reopen schools, and we reopened in 19 days because we figured out how to have school to make a place for 40% of our students

almost half of our kids and to be able to get in and clock hours that we needed. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Both the elementary school and the high school were condemned due to the extensive structural damage. So, D1 called a meeting of her administrators; various ideas were presented. In the end, they collaboratively decided for the middle school and high school students to alternate days. The high school students attended school on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday while middle school students attended school on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays (ABC7, 2011, August 30). D1 noted that the middle school teachers offered tutoring sessions for students on the alternate days at the local fire departments, rescue squads, even the Best Western motel.

Looking back, D2 recognized that “our community really, really rallied around to make our schedule work; you know they had to send kids to school on Saturdays, 9 hour days every other day. It really took the community to come together to make that work” (personal communication, May 21, 2013). People worked together; “collaborative teamwork is a must” (D2, personal communication, May 21, 2013). Decisions were made to help students and staff return to normalcy as soon as possible. D2 recollected

...the folks coming together, trying to come up with ideas to make it work. I didn't hear a lot of excuses, I just heard people saying what they wanted to do to make it work. This was parents, teachers, and administrators, people that wanted to be a part of the solution, and that really stands out. (personal communication, May 21, 2013)

The logistics were challenging. The staff was determined to make this work for the students. D1 praised her staff:

...it is amazing how positive the teachers were when we told them the whole plan. The children were resilient and we gave them our priorities and said we have decided this

because we want to keep every student and teacher the same with who they started with seven days ago and that was the best thing we ever did because they all were so shaken by these aftershocks. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

For the elementary school students, temporarily

...both schools squeezed into the one by doubling up classrooms and many classrooms had 40 kids, so you really disrupted both schools. They also shared the cafeteria so in the cafeteria it was not designed for 500 students and a kitchen that size we are now feeding 1000 kids and the two kitchen staffs working together that is a miracle in itself. (D1, personal communication, May 7, 2013)

By October 2011, modular units were installed at the nearby elementary school. This temporary solution presented challenges. For example, D1 described,

...the downside for them is that there is no public water and sewer for them there so they used portable restrooms which is not the most comfortable thing to use and they do and they made it. They have to walk up and down the hill a lot to get to the other school and to go to lunch and the other gym, but it is amazing how positive the teachers were when we told them the whole plan. The children were resilient, and we gave them our priorities and said we have decided this because we want to keep every student and teacher the same with who they started with seven days ago and that was the best thing we ever did. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Moving forward through the recovery phases, D1 state that she was grateful for volunteers and for donations. School Division D and Superintendent D1 posted thank you notes on the division website to recognize community support (website news, 2011). From school supplies to athletic facilities, people and agencies provided what her students needed.

I mean we had church gyms, parks and recs gyms, and that is where we practiced athletics... [another school division] gave us one of their gyms on and off night for basketball.... I can't tell you how generous people are from all over everywhere. They have sent us school supplies, umbrellas for the kids being in the trailers and walk in the rain to class. It is hard on a kindergartener, but ponchos, it's just unbelievable what we have received. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Students will attend class in modular units until their new school is opened during the 2014-2015 school year.

Moving from the short-term solution to the next phase in the recovery process for the high school, D1 and the school board contracted with a firm to evaluate possible modular sites. The firm reviewed and evaluated two options (a) site area #1 – in front of the existing high school and (b) site area #2 – behind the existing middle school (School Division D Board Minutes, 2011, September 7). Pros and cons were presented and based on the analysis, the firm recommended site are #1. In February 2012, high school students were relocated to their own mobile campus (Patterson, 2012). This campus was located in the parking lot near the school (ABC7, 2012, August 15). Twenty-two mobile buildings, including several large modular pods, housed classrooms, a cafeteria, a library and even a fitness area (Fox, 2012). School officials plan for students to learn in the mobile campus for at least three years.

Throughout the recovery, the D1 and the school board included staff in the decision making process. The school board awarded the contract for architectural services at a called meeting on October 9, 2012. After this selection, input from staff was an integral component of the process. For example, the school board and the architecture firm set up facility planning work sessions with teachers and staff. These meetings were held on January 14, 2013 and

January 15, 2013 and included certificated and support personnel (School Division B Board Minutes, 2012, December 4). As they began the planning phase, D1 noted that the school and community learned to celebrate throughout this process. D1 emphasized that

...together we learned to celebrate things so when we have a ground breaking or a closure when we had to close the schools and demolish them, we had a closing ceremony. The community could come, and we talked about the school...then we were there when they took the first bite out of the school. You know we have made those things, those occasions...stand out for me because the community comes, and we mourn together but then we look to the future together and so those stand out for me. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Collaboration and resiliency were vivid recollections during the recovery phase. D1 was “amazed at the resilience of people and of the generosity of people just from every corner of the country people have wanted to help, and so I am very grateful to them...I think I am struck by the goodness and how as human beings how positive and resilient we are” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). The rebuilding of the elementary school and the initial planning stages of the high school created a spirit of unity in the community as described by D1.

Research Subquestions

The overarching research question explored in this study was: What common themes emerged across the stories of school superintendents after they experienced a critical incident or natural disaster that resulted in the loss or damage of a school facility? The main research question was supported by the following four subquestions: (a) What effect did the loss or damage of a school building have upon the superintendent? (b) Did the leadership role of the superintendent change after the loss or damage of a school facility? If so, how? (c) What

resources were available to the superintendent during and after this crisis? (e) What lessons were learned from superintendents' experiences? Qualitative data acquired during this study addressed these questions.

Each superintendent remembered and shared his or her individual experience related to the loss or damage of a school facility. Responses were transcribed, hand coded, and electronically coded. While exploring the interview data, the researcher ran coding queries in the NVivo software program. Source content was coded into categories. Interview content was utilized to address each research subquestion explored in the study.

Research Subquestion 1: What effect did the loss or damage of a school building have upon the superintendent?

Superintendents were affected in different ways; however, a commonality among responses related to relationships and collaboration throughout the crisis situation and recovery process. Dealing with the crisis situation and the recovery journey was a learning process for the school superintendents. Learning from the experience, gathering input from staff, and working together as a team were key thoughts generated from A1, B1, and D1. C1 noted that he was affected by how the crisis situation changed his approach as a leader.

Table 4.2
Effects on Leaders

Superintendent	Reflection
A1	You don't have a life experience that doesn't profound you in some way in time and so I find myself even now recalling things that occurred and conversations that took place during that time frame that they are with you forever.
B1	It made me realize what kind of fantastic staff we had, especially maintenance folks, in the great care and concern that was innate with all of our staff, principals, and central office personnel. Did it alter [me as a leader]? No it really didn't alter my thinking other than my appreciation.
C1	I think this changed me in a lot of ways because the event forced me to become of an autocratic leader and something that I am really not akin to. Now as time has moved on it has led me to believing that I am more of a situational leader and sometimes you have to have different skills in different situations. I think as superintendent, we had crises before, but none like this. And this one tested a lot of that.
D1	I learned a lot as a leader. I am a type of leader that likes to get a lot of the input and in this situation it took everyone to bring us through this crisis and I found that people rose to it. Everybody did-every teacher, custodian, bus driver, everyone rose to the occasion and so I think it just ensured for me that if you give everybody the opportunity to be leaders themselves they will and I was the one that got to stand out front and do the news reports but I am thinking it is all these people behind me that is making it happen every day.

B2 noted that he was not sure the crisis affected B1; however, he appreciated B1's leadership style. B2 recognized that B1 did not try to micromanage the efforts of the maintenance crew.

B1 also recognized the extraordinary job of the staff during these difficult times (division correspondence, May 1, 2011). C2 remembered the effects of the tragic event on C1 and how he was focused and provided guidance to his staff:

He was taking charge and directing his people in the directions they needed to go and get situations under control or get the process of repair under control. He never backed down and I recall that very clearly. (personal communication, May 23, 2013)

D2 also discussed the effects of the tragic event on D1 and emphasized her resilience throughout the tragic event and recovery process:

She is a strong person anyway and her resilience, and her positive leadership through it all and she may have gone home at night and fell apart, I have no idea, but when she was here with us she was rock solid, and I think she really held it all together. (personal communication, May 21, 2013)

Research Sub-Question 2: Did the leadership role of the superintendent change after the loss or damage of a school facility? If so, how?

In their responses, three superintendents stated that their role after the tragic event did not change. In each response, A1, B1, and D1 referred back to the importance of helping and working through the crisis.

Table 4.3
Change in Leadership Role

Superintendent	Reflection
A1	I don't think I changed as a person outside of just learning....I am having to adjust as well because I have just lost a school.
B1	No, no it did not....I just had more things I was following up on in making sure we had all of our things covered.
C1	Absolutely, it changed. I had to become a quick decision maker on my feet, yes, I consulted with a lot of people.
D1	No, I don't think it really did I just listened and worked together with my staff.

B2 agreed with B1's response. D2 disagreed with D1's response. D2 stated that D1's role changed more from an instructional leader to facilities management. D2 also noted that D1 was the face of communication for their division and this was a change from the daily instructional focus. In contrast to A1, B1, and D1, Superintendent C1 believed his role did change. C2 did not see a change in the leadership role of C1, but he noted an increased assertiveness in dealing with the situation.

Research Subquestion 3: What resources were available to the superintendent during and after this crisis?

The key resource identified by each superintendent, facility director, and assistant superintendent was people. This commonality resounded throughout the interview transcripts. People made a difference. Materials, supplies, and monetary donations were sent from community and state organizations; however, people took ownership and helped school leaders work through the tragic event. A collective effort from staff and community was recorded in the superintendents' experiences.

Table 4.4
Resources Provided

Superintendent	Resources
A1	I would have to say the people that stand out are the ones who came forward the next day and over the weeks ahead... there is not one person or group of people-it was a collection of everybody that really came through.
B1	We had all of our community agencies, really assisting, not only with schools, but everything in the community. The overall experience really just in general our communities together.
C1	Well, certainly the people power. I won't forget the outpouring of support from the community...just an enormous outpouring of support...There is no play book for this and I think our community resources are the peak of the people...and there were resources coming in by trucks-donations by as far away as California.
D1	I can't tell you how generous people are from all over everywhere. They have sent us school supplies, umbrellas for the kids being in the trailers and walk in the rain to class. [In addition,] FEMA and VDEM [came] through the state again, from the governor, all of the elected officials, and both school board and supervisors have met numerous times so it was great to have all those resources available.

B2, C2, and D2's responses corresponded with their respective superintendent's comments.

Supportive staff and community members along with state and federal agencies provided necessary materials, supplies, and funding to help with the recovery process.

Research Subquestion 4: What lessons were learned from superintendents' experiences?

In each of their experiences, the superintendents referenced two commonalities (a) the importance of collaborative teamwork and (b) the importance of communication in regards to lessons learned. Within their individual stories, each superintendent presented additional lessons learned: A1 noted collaborative decision making, and B1 highlighted revision of the division crisis plan. C1 recognized the need for legal counsel early in the recovery process. D1 mentioned the resilience of people and the importance of working together through the crisis situation. Each superintendent provided a unique perspective for lessons learned.

Table 4.5
Lessons Learned

Superintendent	Lessons Identified
A1	Well, certainly communication is [the] key. Communicating with all stakeholders and being upfront and transparent from the start so people build that trust in you is important. Collaborative team work is a must. It takes everybody working together and as far as the communication piece, part of that is listening and hearing what people have to say and making them feel a part of what is happening is crucial in our decisions. I mentioned earlier the connections that need to be made upfront and personal and professional relationships with people so if you have got those in place whatever crisis.
B1	We went back, looked at our crisis plan, and revised our crisis plan. We became much more sensitive to how to communicate during this time....The communication was face-to-face because you had to go there to see what was going on. I couldn't even call my office from where I was at all. It was a lesson for us because if all your telephones go and all your electricity is out there is no communication and so one thing that we tried to do is to put something in place that helped us communicate in the future. That was real learning experience for us.
C1	If I had to go back and do it differently, in a disaster, you have someone that manages the media. Get a lawyer early on....We should have gotten a lawyer, months before did.
D1	I learned that when people work together you can achieve anything and I learned about the generosity and goodness of people and that again that human beings are very resilient and will doing anything to get back to normal or what we consider normal. I am very proud of that [communication] because that is one thing that we want to do is get parents information. That is one of the most critical things you have to do is to communicate.

In 2013, D1 also presented lessons learned at the National Earthquake Program Managers (NEPM) meeting in Seattle, Washington. In her presentation, D1 emphasized communication procedures and accuracy, coordination with state and federal organizations, expression of gratitude for donations, and awareness of the psychological toll of the earthquake (NEPM, 2013).

In addition to superintendent responses, B2 also mentioned that school officials and the community learned to respect the weather and patience when working through the recovery process. D2 agreed that

Certainly, communication is key. Communicating with all stakeholders and being upfront and transparent from the start so people build that trust in you is important. Collaborative team work is a must. It takes everybody working together and as far as the communication piece, part of that is listening and hearing what people have to say and making them feel a part of what is happening is crucial in our decisions. (personal communication, May 21, 2013)

Common Themes

The main research question focused on what common themes emerge across the stories of school superintendents after they experienced a critical incident or natural disaster that resulted in the loss or damage of a school facility? In this study, four common themes emerged from the cross-case analysis of participant narratives relative to their personal experiences. After (a) highlighting significant horizon statements, (b) clustering horizon statements into coded meaning units, (c) reorganizing the meaning units into categories, and (d) merging the categories into emergent themes, four main themes were identified. Main themes included: (a) communication, (b) leadership, (c) recovery, and (d) support.

Communication

A common theme emerged from three categories related to communication. These categories included (a) communication challenges, (b) media interactions, and (c) communication successes. Each superintendent emphasized the need for immediate communication and the importance of their role as the face of the tragic incident for their communities. Face-to-face communication was the primary sources of communication through media interviews, called board meetings, and press conferences. Each superintendent emphasized the need for the staff and community to see their face during the crisis. In addition to face-to-face communication, superintendents identified the significance of accurate information disseminated through emails, memos to staff, alert messages, social media notifications, letters to parents, and public meeting notifications.

A1 activated AlertNow messaging system to keep staff and community of facility updates, meetings, change in scheduling, and reminders (division email communication, 2011, April 28). Emergency information was also released to the community through a series of tornado announcements (A1 emergency services email announcement, 2011, April 18; A1 emergency service email announcement, 2011, April 19; A1 emergency services email announcement, 2011, April 20). Special forum meetings were also communicated to the staff and community to inform and gather input for the recovery process (A1, email communication, 2011, May 2). B1 also utilized a school message system to communicate school closings, bus transportation changes, and recovery updates (division email communication, 2011, April 28; division email communication, 2011, April 29; division email communication, 2011, May 1).

C1 communicated recovery progress, emergency information, and press releases through face-to-face interactions and through email correspondence (division email communication,

2011, August 13; division email communication, 2011, August 16; division email communication, 2011, August 18). C1 also participated in a phone conference was also held with the Virginia Department of Education Secretary on Sunday, August 14, 2011, to coordinate necessary resources to relocate students and to resume school (division email correspondence, 2011, August 14). In addition, C1 released a November 7, 2011, press release which informed the community of the significant progress made at the school and updates on fire claim negotiations (WHEO, 2011, November 8).

D1 implemented an all-call announcement service the day of the earthquake: “All-calls were made....to notify parents of what had taken place; keeping people informed was the first priority” (School Division D Board Minutes, 2011, August 29). Flyers were also disseminated by School Division D to alert the staff and community of an informational meeting focused on decision-making priorities and important upcoming dates (division email communication, 2011, August 29). In addition to all-call announcements and flyers, the division website was updated with news and events (School Division D website, 2011). Ongoing communication with staff, parents, and community members was an integral element of leadership in crisis.

Leadership

Leadership in crisis emerged as a theme. Within this common theme, several categories were identified in the coding process. They included (a) challenges, (b) characteristics, (c) collaborative decision making, (d) criticisms of decisions, (e) feelings generated from the experience, (g) professional support, and (f) relationships. The most coding references in the study related to the leadership characteristics in crisis. Key characteristics identified by the school superintendents included:

Table 4.6*Characteristics of Leadership in Crisis*

Superintendent	Characteristics
A1	Calm demeanor, under control, facilitator, problem solver, manager
B1	Calm under stress, facilitator, seeks input from staff, supportive
C1	Directional, encourager, providing guidance, positive, focused
D1	Calm, logical, motherly image, strong, positive, collaborative, respected

B2, C2, and D2 interviews supported the perspectives of the corresponding superintendent.

Leaders acknowledged efforts of leadership in crisis. For example, A1 was thanked at a school board meeting for his leadership role during the crisis (School Division A Board Minutes, 2011, May 10). C1 acknowledged “that everyone had done an outstanding job getting students back in school and that support of the school has been unbelievable” (School Division C Board Minutes, 2011, September 8). In addition, leadership extended from the school division to the local county government in efforts to manage this crisis. Documented in a joint press release, the local board of supervisors and the school board issued a statement that they “are committed to working together on this project as a symbol of cooperation between the two governing boards (School Division C Board Minutes, 2011, September 8). School Division D School Board congratulated D1 for being awarded 2012 Region V Superintendent of the Year: “Through her leadership, the school division had survived the earthquake together and [they] thanked her for her timeless efforts to keep the school division in operation during this year” (School Board Minutes, 2012, June 5).

Recovery

Recovery after the tragic event was the third theme identified through coding of participant interviews. Participants extensively discussed the recovery process, plans, and people involved in the process. Categories identified within this theme were (a) celebrations, (b)

connectedness, (c) emotions, (d) normalcy, (e) keeping students together, (f) post trauma stress, (g) preservation of facility, (h) resilience, (i) safety, (j) scheduling, (k) staff contributions, (l) temporary or modular facilities, (m) timing, and (n) uncertainty. The category with the most number of coding references for the recovery theme was staff contributions. Within each interview, superintendents, facility directors, and the assistant superintendent recognized the willingness of the staff to work above and beyond the call of duty for the students, school, and community. People made a difference in the recovery process. Participants praised staff that worked to recover the lost learning environment and to help students return to normalcy after the tragedy (B1, email correspondence, 2011, May 1; C1 email correspondence, 2011, August 8; D1 website announcement, 2011, August 30). In a joint meeting with the local board of supervisors, a school board member for School Division D recognized D1 and school staff for “how they handled the situation with the students noting that there were only minor injuries...and were able to get students home safely” (School Board Minutes, 2011, August 29).

Support

Relating to the recovery, support during this process was another emergent theme. This theme emerged from several categories: (a) challenges, (b) collaboration, (c) community, (d) funding, (e) insurance, (f) people, (g) resources, and (h) schools helping the community. The category with the most coding references within this theme was community. The community provided immediate and long term supplies and resources for the students and staff. In addition, communities served as a unifying component. Each superintendent acknowledged the outpouring of support from the community.

Table 4.7*Community Support*

Superintendent	Community
A1	In the times of tragedy is when the best comes out in people
B1	The overall experience really just in general our communities together. There was a tremendous amount of support from the immediate community there and lots of outside support from communities.
C1	That community loves that school...that school made the community of... It is the center of activities. We will rebuild.
D1	We were a tight knit, close community and a strong community and we will come through this.

In their interviews, B2, C2, and D2 confirmed the community support as described by their corresponding superintendent. In addition, B2 stated, “You get to see the best in people in the worst of times” (personal communication, May 22, 2013). C2 affirmed that “All of our schools are community driven and if you want to say ‘safe haven’ for the community that is where they go if they need to get help” (personal communication, May 23, 2013). D2 stated, “And then just overall, the community, just really rallied around the entire event” (personal communication, May 21, 2013). At a joint board of supervisors and school board meeting, local officials recognized that the community was “fortunate to have two strong leaders, (the Superintendent and County Administrator), working and planning together” to support recovery efforts (School Division D Board Minutes, 2011, August 29).

Community support was recognized by each school division. For instance, “Board members expressed their personal appreciation to the individuals, businesses, and organizations who had generously donated time, services, goods, and monetary contributions to assist in the recovery and ongoing educational process following the devastation” (School Division A Board Minutes, 2011, July 12). School Division B accepted donations to assist with the displaced students as a result of the April 2011 tornado (Board Minutes, 2011, June 27). School Division C accepted a \$5,000 donation from the local education foundation to assist with

recovery efforts due to the school fire (School Division C email communication, 2011, August 15). School Division D accepted a donation from students, employees, and parents who helped raise funds to help with the earthquake relief fund coordinated by a local elementary School Council Association (SCA) (School Division D Board Minutes, 2012, June 5). The National Education Association presented a \$10,000 and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) presented a donation of \$550 to the local education association to assist with the earthquake relief efforts in the division (School Division D Board Minutes, 2011, November 1).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to record the lived experiences of school superintendents following the loss or damage of a school facility and to identify emergent themes from their stories. The goal was to collect data to illuminate the essence of their experiences after the school crisis.

The cohort of participants consisted of four superintendents, two directors of facilities, and one assistant superintendent. Each participant responded to research subquestions regarding (a) the effects of the tragic event on school superintendents, (b) a change in the superintendent's leadership role, (c) resources available to superintendents during and after the crisis, and (d) lessons learned from the superintendents' experiences. Similarities and differences were discussed among the superintendents across divisions and within his/her division as compared to responses from the director of facilities or assistant superintendent. Four emergent themes were identified across their stories: communication, leadership, recovery, and support. Coding categories for each theme were also identified.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

This chapter includes an overview of the study, discussion of the findings, overarching conclusions, research limitations, and recommendations for future research. The emergent themes from the cross-case analysis of the interview data are discussed. A thorough understanding of this phenomenon was captured through personal dialogue that described these personal experiences. A section incorporating the researcher's reflections concludes the study.

Overview of the Study

School superintendents are faced with crisis situations and must make decisions based on a situation at a particular time, given specific resources, and available personnel. Decisions made both during and after the crises directly impact the education of students and the environments in which they learn. Documenting these experiences through the participants' words, actions, and records offers a qualitative approach to this research (Creswell, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In addition, the objective was to discover patterns and themes which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) related to the loss or damage of a school facility.

Learning from the various perspectives of leadership in crisis can prepare leaders for future unexpected, crisis situations. According to Earthman (2011), there are lessons to be learned from other school leaders that have experienced a situation involving the ruin of a school facility due to the natural elements. Likewise, Harvey (2013) and Regan (2013) recognized that school leaders must learn from past experiences of those who have faced school crises.

The purpose of this study was to record the lived experiences of school superintendents following the loss or damage of a school facility and to identify common themes among their stories. Ten school administrators were asked to participate and seven chose to share their stories in this study. Seven interviews were conducted; interviews were transcribed and analyzed. For credibility, the data were compared within each school division through interviews with superintendents and facility directors or assistant superintendents, with a focus on perspectives of school superintendents. Supporting and contradicting responses were identified. In addition to interviews, documents from a 12-month time frame beginning with the critical event were reviewed and substantiated the stories shared by the participants. Furthermore, a cross-case analysis was used to determine similarities and differences within their stories.

Summary of Findings

Four common themes emerged from the cross-case analysis of participant narratives relative to their experiences during and after the damage or loss of a school facility. These emergent themes were: (a) communication, (b) leadership, (c) recovery, and (d) support. Themes were also documented in news articles, division correspondence, and board minutes. These supporting documents were detailed in a comprehensive audit trail.

Communication

Each superintendent emphasized the importance of accurate, personal communication with staff and community members. Superintendents recognized communication as a high priority both to provide facts and to correct false rumors. Correcting false rumors, misinformation, and gossip plays a vital role in the superintendents' role during a school crisis

(Demaria & Schonfeld, 2014). According to Harvey (2013), school leaders “need to put out a statement as soon as [they] have definitive information to provide” (2013, p. 24). Face-to-face communication and interviews with the media proved to be an effective method of working through the crisis situation. Each school superintendent became the face of the crisis to their school communities. Leadership qualities detailed in their lived experiences related to the leadership attributes documented by Smith and Riley. In 2012, Smith and Riley recognized that school leadership during and after a crisis is about providing certainty, engendering hope, and ensuring open and credible communication to affected members of the school community. Additional researchers have also documented the need for effective communication during disasters (Earthman, 2011; Hale, Dulek, & Hale, 2005; Kapucu & Wart 2008; Kennedy, 2009, 2012).

Leadership

Leadership qualities of leaders working through a crisis and recovery identified by each school superintendent were listed in the study. They included being calm and in control while also being a facilitator, problem solver, and encourager. In contrast, C1 noted an autocratic leadership style during the crisis. This leadership style may be necessary in the short-term response to a school crisis when decisions must be quick and efficient.

Each superintendent acknowledged the importance of soliciting input from staff and community leaders during the decision making process. In addition to qualities listed by the four superintendents, Smith and Riley (2012) recognized qualities of leaders in crisis that were supported in the stories of the superintendents which included: (a) coping with ambiguity, (b) thinking laterally, (c) questioning events in insightful ways, (d) responding quickly and flexibly, (e) working through people, (f) persevering, and (g) taking necessary risks when needed.

Perseverance is a key attribute (Hardy, 2008) and was evident throughout the superintendents' lived experiences. Love and Cobb (2012) and Kennedy (2009) also emphasized the importance of leadership in crisis as the ability to respond quickly and manage resources effectively. Resource management was a challenge noted by each superintendent related to the school crisis. Regan (2013) described leadership in crisis as a marathon that has both physical demands and mental challenges. Each of the four school superintendents expressed these leadership challenges as they worked through the crisis event and recovery process.

Recovery

Management of resources and contributions of school staff were two key components of the third theme, recovery. Recovery is a long process and is determined by how many people are affected during a crisis. Recovery from a school crisis is also a journey that requires a disciplined follow-up (Kennedy-Paine, Reeves, & Brock, 2014). According to Kennedy (2012) and Satterly (2012), recovery involves moving forward and working through a recovery plan. In addition, recovery does not occur in a linear fashion (Crepeau-Hobson & Kanan, 2014, p. 37). In the study, four superintendents reviewed how they moved forward from the date of the critical incident, how they struggled through challenges, and how they worked collaboratively with other school and community leaders to develop short term and long term recovery plans.

Intentional planning in the four school divisions involved both short-term and long-term strategies. The goal of short term recovery is to mitigate damage, regain control, and re-establish security; whereas, the goal of long term recovery is to return to learning and instruction (Kennedy-Paine, et al., 2014; Regan, 2013). In each documented story, superintendents delegated responsibilities and managed an organized response effort. Each superintendent

emphasized the significant role that staff played in the recovery process and the importance to returning to normalcy. Normalcy provided security and stability for students and staff.

School staff in each school division helped students and communities move forward in the recovery process through emotional, physical, and financial support. According to the four superintendents, staffs were resilient and were willing to work above and beyond their day-to-day responsibilities to help the school division return to normalcy. In the research, Crepeau-Hobson and Kanan (2014), Demaria and Schonfeld (2014), Kennedy (2012), and Satterly (2012) acknowledged how staff contributed to the recovery process and the importance of staff contributions in assisting the school community in a return to normalcy. Each superintendent agreed that staff and students needed the security of regular routines and focused on returning to school as soon as possible. Kennedy-Paine et al. (2014) stated that “in the long term, schools and communities experiencing a crisis must work together to realize recovery and their ‘new normal’” (p. 43).

In addition to staff contributions, the USDOE (2007) identified similar key concepts relating to the recovery process that were also outlined in the superintendents’ responses. These commonalities from the literature and data included (a) returning to learning as soon as possible, (b) restoring the school community, (c) identifying follow up interventions, (d) conducting debriefings with staff, (e) allocating time for recovery, (f) celebrating through the recovery process, and (g) analyzing lessons learned to incorporate them in future trainings (p. 5.1 – 5.6).

Support

The fourth emergent theme was support. Support during and after the crisis was a key component for each of the four superintendents. Categories identified within this theme included

collaboration, community, funding, insurance, people, and resources. Category within this theme with the greatest number of references was people. Once again, people made the difference during and after the crisis. People were there to help with supplies, to relocate students to alternate learning environments, to provide counseling, to give input, and to support students. “Times of great tragedy can bring out the best in the human spirit: ordinary people show extraordinary courage, compassion, and generosity in helping kin, neighbors, and strangers to recover and rebuild lives” (Walsh, 2007, p. 208).

Challenges were also presented within the support efforts for each school division. As outlined in the research (Regan, 2013), superintendents were forced to prepare for immediate donations, create staging areas for those offering assistance, and manage charitable donations. Regan (2013) stated,

As strange as it may seem, a crisis of significant magnitude also means preparing for the generosity of others. Don’t underestimate the volume of community members, mental health providers, government agencies, and state and national organizations that will be clamoring to help. Managing these human resources can quickly turn into a logistical nightmare if done incorrectly. (p. 29)

A1, B1, C1, and D1 reiterated continued support through their challenges. However, B1 and C1 acknowledge frustration with a lack of state and federal funding. These frustrations were also noted by superintendents in New Orleans (Kapucu & Van Wart, 2008).

Implications for Practice

The research findings in this study have implications for future practice for superintendents experiencing the loss or damage of a school facility due to a crisis event. School

superintendents will face crisis situations. Emergency situations arise without warning and superintendents need to be prepared. How school leaders deal with the crisis and the recovery process will determine how the school community is able to move forward.

Combining the relevant literature and the data collected in the study, two key implications for practice are evident: (a) communication and (b) relationships. Effective, accurate communication with both staff and the community is a vital element in the crisis recovery process. In addition to communication, relationships built before, during, and after the crisis situation made a difference. These two key implications for practice emerged from the synthesis of the voices of the seven participants.

Communication

Communication was a critical aspect of the superintendents' experiences. Both the message and how the superintendents communicated the message through their leadership style in these research findings made a difference. Externally, the staff and the community needed to see the face of the superintendent. The people looked to the superintendent for reassurance and hope. How the superintendent reacted and the manner in which communication took place throughout the process was important.

In addition to external communication, ongoing internal communication with staff was essential. Staff needed to know the facts of the crisis situation in order to prepare for the next phase of recovery. Facts were communicated through interviews, meetings, emails, memos, and press releases. It is critical to maintain effective internal and external communication. Regan (2013) stated, "Communication is integral in the overall effectiveness of a crisis response" (p. 28). Effective, accurate communication was essential in the recovery process.

As documented in the findings, each superintendent agreed that it was important to remain calm, in control, and focused during and after the crisis while communicating with the staff, community, and media. However, there are times in crisis situations in which leadership roles change. Leadership roles depend on the situation and needs of the school division. School superintendents adapt and adjust while working through crises. Reviewing communication procedures is essential in crisis planning. Revisiting crisis procedures, engaging staff in tabletop exercises, and updating school crisis plans can help school leaders prepare for these adjustments.

Relationships

In addition to communication, relationships developed before, during, and after a crisis made a difference for the participants. Superintendents need to build these relationships early in their administration and continue fostering positive relationships throughout their service to their school division. In this study, both monetary and material resources were provided to each school division. However, relationships with people created a unity within the individual school divisions after the crisis. As D1 stated, “I learned that when people work together you can achieve anything and I learned about the generosity and goodness of people” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). B2 explained, “You get to see the best in people in the worst of times” (personal communication, May 22, 2013). The staff, students, parents, and community rallied together for a common cause in order to take care of their children. They were connected by a common cause.

From the participants’ voices, positive relationships built before the crisis helped school leaders work through challenges during and after the tragic situation. School superintendents connected with their community. They formed relationships with staff, community members, businesses, and state officials that supported their school divisions through the recovery process

and provided invaluable support. This invaluable support is based on established relationships with trusted community providers.

Partnerships with community organizations are key support element in the recovery process. As a challenge during the recovery process, superintendents worked to build relationships with previous community partners and newly established partners such as insurance adjusters to provide a focus for moving forward for the school community. Effective relationships made a difference in the recovery journey for each school division. Building and maintaining effective, positive working relationships is a key element in managing and working through a crisis. For both current and future school superintendents, the process of forming, cultivating, and fostering positive school and community relationships is essential when working thorough crisis situations.

Additional Research Limitations

This study was designed to document experiences of five school superintendents and five facility directors. Seven out of the ten agreed to participate in the study: four superintendents chose to participate, three supporting facility directors, and one assistant superintendent. Additional data from other nonparticipants could have added credibility to the study. Face-to-face interviews were preferred by the researcher, but two interviews were conducted by conference call due to scheduling conflicts. Rich data were collected from the face-to-face personal interviews. Observing participants during the interview process added to the ability to capture the essence of the experience.

In addition to the interviews, various archival data were collected for each division. Data were different based on different documents and varied across school divisions. Documents

were informative, but comparison across divisions was difficult due to the variety of documents collected from four school divisions. Documentation was limited in School Division B due to the change in superintendent leadership during the data collection process. The new superintendent for School Division B provided two documents. In addition, the communications officer for School Division D changed from the time of the crisis until the time of the data collection and forwarded items from the previous communications officer.

Several news articles from local, state, and national media outlets added support and verification of the lived experiences by the superintendents. Photographs from news articles illustrated their stories and validated the destruction of the various school facilities.

Lastly, the variation of crisis in each school division created different responses. Each participant experienced a different crisis with various circumstances. Depending if the weather caused down power lines throughout the community, made a difference in how communication was affected. If only the school was affected, in the fire, external communication was not a challenge. Total devastation of the school facility occurred in school division A, C, and D. School division B suffered less damage.

In addition to the amount of damage to the school facility, the type of crisis varied the participants' responses. Participants experienced a variety of crisis situations: earthquake, fire, and tornado. Depending on the type of crisis and the severity of the crisis, some school divisions experienced more damage than others. Both the school and the community suffered from damage in three out of four divisions. School divisions experiencing more damage, required more support, more resources, and a longer recovery process. In addition, state and federal recovery funds were available to some divisions and not others based on the degree of damage.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings in this qualitative study may have implications for other research in the area of leadership in crisis. The following recommendations emerged from the research and are proposed by the researcher:

- Conduct a study about the importance of relationships as related to school leadership in crisis.
- Conduct a study focused on short-term versus long-term leadership roles after a school crisis.
- Conduct a study of the perceptions of leaders in crisis throughout the United States.
- Examine various methods of communications as they are implemented for different crisis situations.
- Research the recovery progress of one specific school division and how instruction was affected during this time.
- Replicate this research study with only one type of crisis.
- Conduct a case study of one school division in which several school facilities were damaged or lost due to a crisis.
- Examine the relationship between academic achievement of schools that are not affected by the damage or loss of a school facility to another school that suffered damage or total loss of the school facility.
- Examine various leadership traits associated with crisis situations that result in the loss or damage of a school facility.
- Conduct a study focused on school safety before, during, and after a school crisis.

Reflections

After receiving a phone call at 4:00 a.m. on August 13, 2011, from a distraught school principal because her school was on fire, the experience of a school tragedy became very personal to me. I remember driving to the school campus, seeing the school in flames, watching the community cry, and seeing the devastation in the faces of children. It will be a memory that I never forget.

Working through the recovery process with the school division leadership team created a desire to share this story with others and to provide research to help future school leaders faced with the destruction of a school facility. Yes, losing the school building was a tragedy. An historic school was lost and could never be replaced; however, there were successes and celebrations that we can share. We can learn from each other's experiences and help future school leaders that may face such a challenging experience.

With this passion and idea to help others, I began this research study. Quickly, I realized the gap in literature involving leadership in crisis. What do we do? That is what we asked ourselves as we watched the school burn. There were no answers. There was not a reference manual for this experience. According to Rogers (2013), these skills are not taught...“much of the job of school system leadership entails a ‘plan where you can, improvise when you must’ orientation, particularly during a crisis” (p. 32).

But, through reading relevant literature, interviewing other school superintendents that had experienced similar challenges, analyzing their stories, and reflecting about the perspectives of school leaders that experience damage or loss to a school facility, I realize that there is more research to be done. We, as school leaders, must continue to share our experiences and build the

body of research surrounding leadership in crisis. We can learn from each other and find ways to successfully recover from a tragedy that damages or destroys a school facility.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Appendix A

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants
In Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Perspectives of School Superintendents in School Crises
Investigator(s): Cynthia C. Williams, Doctoral Student at Virginia Tech
Advisor: Dr. Glen Earthman, Professor and Advisor at Virginia Tech

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this study is to record and to analyze the lived experiences of school leaders following the loss of a school facility. The purpose of the research is: (a) to document the lived experiences of school leaders as related to the loss or damage to a school facility due to a critical incident or natural disaster; (b) to identify challenges faced by school leaders documented in their stories, and (c) to identify common themes that emerge across their stories. This research will be used to complete my dissertation.

The researcher will conduct one-on-one interviews with five school superintendents and five facility directors who meet specific inclusion criteria for the study.

II. Procedures

You will be interviewed for about 90 minutes about your experiences as related to leadership in crisis. The interview will be recorded and notes will be made about the interview. You will only be asked to sit for one interview. You will be provided a list of questions related to the purpose of the study prior to the interview.

After each question, you will be given the opportunity to respond in as much detail as you like. All of your responses will become part of the data be used for research purposes. The information collected will allow the researcher to investigate the experiences of superintendents and their perspectives of leadership in crisis. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. You will be invited to read the transcript and make comments.

Interviews will take place by phone, video conference, or at a location that is conducive to mutually agreed upon by you, the participant, and the researcher. The researcher will provide you with a copy of the informed consent form and the researcher will retain a copy.

III. Risks

Your participation in this study should pose minimal risks to you. The researcher will ask you to describe experiences related to leadership in crisis. You will have the right to stop the interview or line of questioning at any point without penalty.

IV. Benefits

The possible benefits of participating in this study may include the opportunity to reflect upon your own experiences and/or to clarify and define specific stories. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

School leaders may benefit from the information gathered as a result of the study to assist them in future school crisis situations involving the loss or damage of a school facility.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to protect your identity and confidentiality. Only the researcher will know the identity of each participant. Pseudonyms will be used at all times and every effort will be made not to reveal any personally identifying characteristics in this study. The researcher will try to minimize the possibility of identifying other people you may mention.

Tapes of interviews, transcriptions of interviews, interview notes and field notes will be stored in a secure location. Only the researcher and the research committee will have access to the tapes and transcriptions of the interviews. The audio tapes will be destroyed once the research has been completed and the results disseminated. It should be noted that despite every effort to mask all identifiers, it may be compromised. All possible care will be taken to protect your identity.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study’s collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

As a participant, you will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

As a participant, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You are free to refuse to answer any question. There may be circumstances under which the researcher may determine that you, as the participant, should not continue to be involved in the study.

VIII. Subject’s Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- I agree to answer questions honestly. Initial _____
- I agree to allow the researcher to record the interview on tape. Initial _____
- I agree to allow the researcher to use a non-identifying direct quote. Initial _____

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Informed Consent Form and conditions of this project I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Subject's Signature	Date
Cynthia C. Williams Investigator	276-694-5453/ cwms3@vt.edu Telephone/email
Glen Earthman Faculty Advisory/Department Head	540-231-9715/ earthman@vt.edu Telephone/email

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact:

Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review	(540) 231-4991/moored@vt.edu Telephone/e-mail
--	--

[Note: Subjects must be given a copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.]

Appendix B: Telephone Script

Perspectives of School Superintendents in School Crises
Telephone Script to Request Study Participation

Hello (Superintendent's name). My name is Cyndi Williams. I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech and the Coordinator of Federal Programs for Patrick County Public Schools. I would like your assistance. I am currently working on a study focused around five school superintendents that experienced a tragic event from April 2011 – August 2011 in the Commonwealth of Virginia. I would like to learn about what happened to their school(s), their leadership challenges during this time, and what they learned from their experiences. This research may help superintendents in the future that face a similar situation. Your story is very important, and I would like the opportunity to share it with other people.

Before I continue, do you think you might be willing to participate? (If the superintendent says no, I will thank him or her for her time. If the superintendent says yes, I will continue with the remainder of the script.)

Thank you for being willing to participate. But before you agree completely, would you like to know a little more about the study?

I would like to set up a time with you when you are available to be interviewed for about 90 minutes. We will agree on a time and place for the interview. Once we meet, we will review an informed consent form which explains the study, and I will need to obtain your signature for participation. The informed consent form and interview questions will be emailed to you prior to our meeting. During the interview, we will discuss your experience, how you worked through the crisis situation, and what you learned from your experience.

Everything you say will be completely confidential. You will not be identified in the study. If at any time you are uncomfortable with the questions or the situation, you may stop the interview. After the interview has been transcribed, you will be able to read and review the information and make any corrections.

Do you have any questions? Would you be willing to participate?

Is there any particular day or time that would be best for you for the interview?

Thank you so much! I truly appreciate your participation!

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

The following protocol will be used in each interview:

Demographic Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What is your current position in your school division?
3. How many years have held this position?
4. What other positions have you held in public education?
5. Have you experienced more than one situation that involved the loss or damage of a school facility?

Standardized Open-Ended Questions

6. Will you describe the tragic experience that led to the loss or damage of one of your schools?
7. What incidents connected with the experience stand out for you?
8. What feelings were generated by this experience?
9. What thoughts stood out for you?
10. What people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you?
11. How did the experience affect you [superintendent] as a leader?
12. Are there particular events in your life that have influenced how you dealt with the crisis?
13. Did your [superintendent's] leadership role change after the loss or damage to your school facility?
14. If so, please explain.
15. Did your [superintendent's] leadership style change during this crisis experience?

16. If so, please explain.
17. What do you see were your prevalent leadership attributes during this experience?
18. What resources were available to you [superintendent] during and after this crisis to assist in the recovery process for your school community?
19. What lessons were learned from your experience?
20. How would you describe leadership in crisis [as the superintendent] after experiencing the loss or damage to your school?
21. How do you think other school superintendents could benefit from you sharing your experience?
22. Is there anything that you would change about your response to the crisis?
23. What else should I have asked you about your experience related to the loss or damage to your school facility?
24. What other thoughts would you like to share?

Appendix D: IRB Approval



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
 300 Turner Street NW
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0969
 email irb@ut.edu
 website <http://www.irb.ut.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 29, 2013
TO: Glen I Earthman, Cynthia Crissman Williams
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Perspectives of School Superintendents in School Crises
IRB NUMBER: 13-383

Effective April 29, 2013, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7**
 Protocol Approval Date: **April 29, 2013**
 Protocol Expiration Date: **April 28, 2014**
 Continuing Review Due Date*: **April 14, 2014**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future