

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE OF
SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION IN THE
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

by

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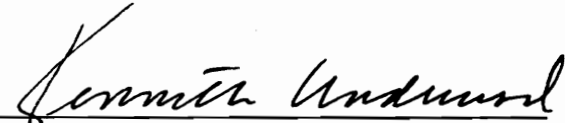
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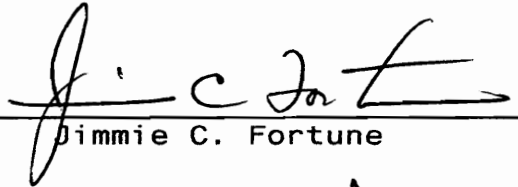
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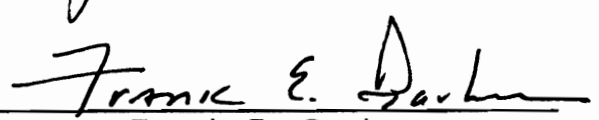
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(ABSTRACT)

The purposes of this study were threefold. The first was to describe the policies and procedures currently in place in the Commonwealth of Virginia for evaluating the superintendent in Virginia's school divisions. The second purpose was to examine and compare the evaluation practices reported by the superintendent with those considered "best practices" nationally as developed from a review of the literature. The last purpose of the study was to determine whether Virginia school superintendent evaluation policies and procedures vary according to the selected variables of size and expenditures per pupil of the school division.

This descriptive study was designed to describe the policies and procedures currently used in the Commonwealth of Virginia to evaluate public school superintendents. A questionnaire was used to survey the public school superintendents to get their perspective on the evaluation policies and procedures utilized by school boards to evaluate their performance. Data were reported in frequencies and percentages.

The results of this study revealed that practices used in Virginia to evaluate the superintendent of schools have improved. A large majority of superintendents are evaluated and almost all of these are evaluated once a year. Most school boards in Virginia have written policies and procedures for evaluation of the superintendent. Evaluation procedures in Virginia for public school superintendents compare favorably with identified best practices for superintendent evaluation. The study revealed that size and wealth of the school division influenced the evaluation process of the superintendent. More formal superintendent evaluation processes are more likely to be used by school boards in larger school divisions than in small or medium size school divisions. School divisions with higher expenditures per pupil are more likely to utilize formal procedures in evaluating the superintendent than divisions identified as having low or average expenditures per pupil.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The performance of the chief executive officer of the school district should be of primary concern to the community and the local school board. Richard Dittloff (1982) indicates that assessing the job performance of the superintendent should be one of the most important tasks in which a school board becomes involved. Unfortunately, Dittloff goes on to say, ". . . only approximately 20 percent of school boards regularly conduct formal performance evaluations of their chief executive officers" (p. 41). Obviously, a significantly high percentage of school boards are not conducting performance appraisals, a responsibility that could have significant impact on their school system.

Superintendent evaluation is an important responsibility which too many boards of education handle poorly, infrequently, or not at all (Braddom, 1986, p. 28). It is inevitable that school boards will no longer be able to escape the responsibility of seriously and competently evaluating the performance of their chief executive officer (Braddom, 1986, p. 29).

Braddom suggests that:

Evaluating your superintendent's job performance is one of the most important but least understood functions of the school board (1986, p. 28).

The significant role the superintendent plays in setting the direction for the school system impacts directly on the quality of education for youth under the care of the school system. "As the person most responsible to the board for carrying out your programs, and for serving as liaison between a board and its employees, your superintendent holds the most important administrative job. But how well is he or she doing? Do you know? . . ."

(NSBA Leadership Reports, 1982, p. 26). Many school boards are not prepared to answer this question and fail to even have a procedure for finding the answer.

Evaluation is performed when a school board selects a superintendent from among several candidates, decides to extend the superintendent's contract, terminate the contract, or provide additional remuneration. There is the increasing interest in setting up procedures for evaluating as a regular and scheduled board activity and against standards agreed to by the evaluatee and the evaluators (Gorton, 1976, p. 415).

Numerous reasons for the lack of evaluation or informal evaluation have been given. Lack of training in evaluation for school board members, the longevity of the superintendent in the position, and the confidence placed in the superintendent by the community and the board lead to neglect of this important responsibility. Snively (1984) points out that school board members must establish a system of assessment of the superintendent if they are going to meet their obligation as board members. Snively goes on

to say, "It appears logical that the superintendent and board of education would want to incorporate a sound and meaningful system of performance evaluation . . ." (p. 3).

Redfern concluded that:

For too long, superintendent evaluation was extremely informal, "So long as everything is okay, you won't hear from us." Never sure how the board viewed his/her performance, the superintendent would ask, "Will I measure up? What if I don't?" Those gnawing questions have caused consternation for many school superintendents (1980, p. 1).

Redfern asked, "What constitutes good performance? How can we measure it? These are vital questions for the school boards" (1980, p. 1).

Good school governance by the school board must include evaluation of the effectiveness of school programs and the leader.

The responsibility of the school board, as representative of the community served, is to ensure that the superintendent has adequately fulfilled all of the responsibilities assigned to the position (Redfern, 1980, p. 3). Conversely, superintendents must know how they will be evaluated by the school board. The importance of the position and the many audiences to whom they are responsible dictate that superintendents be evaluated and procedures developed on how they are to be judged. Numerous skills and leadership qualities are required to fulfill the varied responsibilities of the superintendent.

Fenster (1985) acknowledges the need to evaluate these skills when he states that, "A good school leader will welcome an appraisal of his

leadership abilities and will want to be informed on how well the community feels it is being served, and to consider any adjustments in approach to meet these needs" (p. 1). There is a need for superintendents to recognize the value of regular evaluation and the need for more involvement by school board members in methods of evaluation. In addition to providing suggestions for improvement by the superintendent, the school board can recognize good job performance.

An examination of doctoral dissertation studies related to superintendent evaluation revealed that a majority of the dissertations focused on three topics, or a combination of three topics. The first was criteria used in the evaluation of the superintendent (Powell, 1982; and Liddicoat, 1983). The second was the frequency, procedures and instruments used in superintendent evaluation (Brown, 1977; Gramitt, 1978; Grill, 1978; Sloan, 1982; Sarbaugh, 1982; Anderson, 1992; and Suggs, 1991). A last group of studies focused on the purpose of evaluating the superintendent in addition to determining criteria; procedures and instruments (Gould, 1982; Rogers, 1986; and Weiskittel, 1988).

The findings reported in the dissertations coincided with the results of a 1982 American Association of School Administrators national survey which found that across the nation, informal verbal dialogue was used more often as the method evaluating the superintendent than more formal

approaches (Bartlett, 1991, p. 4). A 1992 survey of the same association reported similar results.

In contrast to reported practice, the literature reported that (a) formalized evaluation procedure, (b) jointly set criteria, and (c) goals and objectives agreed upon by both the board of education and the superintendent at the outset of the evaluation period were recommended by both superintendent and board members (Cunningham, 1982, p. 33).

Frank K. Flora, former Executive Director of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), suggests that:

Actually a written contract between the superintendent of schools and the school board should protect the interests of the public for a sound educational system. A definite understanding between the school board and the superintendent will establish a firm basis for a sound relationship between the two. Spelling out salary and fringe benefit is fairness to the superintendent while spelling out a well developed job description and effective evaluation procedures is fairness to the taxpayers. Good communications and clear understandings between a superintendent of schools and the school board are essential if you are to produce a dynamic public education program for all children and youth (1990, p. 1).

School board members are policymakers and must ensure that policies are carried out (Steinberger, 1994). This task is best achieved by not getting involved in daily operations. When questions or concerns are raised, accurate information needs to be provided the board by the superintendent and evaluation of the adequacy of the information be assessed by the board in the evaluation procedure.

With the awareness that superintendents and school boards need to have in place a method for measuring the effectiveness of the chief executive officer of the local school, it is somewhat surprising that so little attention is paid to this item (Suggs, 1991). According to the Virginia School Boards Association, 35 school divisions within the Commonwealth of Virginia were involved in superintendent searches during the period December 1, 1988, through November 30, 1989. This amounted to a change of superintendent in more than 25% of the school divisions in the state during that period of time. Although this turnover was unusual, turnover in Virginia continues at about an annual rate of about 15 percent. From August 1, 1992, to July 31, 1993, there were 24 superintendent changes in Virginia. During the period from August 1, 1993, to July 31, 1994, there were 19 superintendent changes in Virginia. In their study (1990) of superintendent turnover in California, Giles and Giles found that a significant factor was the poor relationship between the superintendent and his school board. They stated that ". . . board members and superintendents should find more productive ways of dealing with their disagreement . . ." (p. 19). Superintendent turnover must be slowed through an effort of both parties which will improve communication and dialog. Since superintendents have the same goal as school boards, the best possible education for the children in the school division, better communication would improve the

fulfillment of their common mission (Luehe, 1989, p. 43). Evaluation could play a major role in the improvement of communication.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were threefold. The first was to describe the policies and procedures currently in place in the Commonwealth of Virginia for evaluating the superintendent in Virginia's school divisions. This portion of the study utilized information gathered from Virginia's superintendents and updates the information gathered in the 1991 Suggs study. The second purpose was to examine and compare the evaluation practices reported by the superintendent with those considered "best practice" nationally as developed from a review of the literature. The last purpose of the study was to determine whether Virginia school superintendents evaluation policies and procedures vary according to the selected variables of size of the division and expenditures per pupil of the school division.

Significance of the Study

Public education in Virginia is a state function. This function has been delegated to the localities through school boards and superintendents to establish and maintain a free public education. Although the superintendent

and the school board have equally important roles in providing leadership for the educational community, they have different roles (Bartlett, 1991, p. 5).

Nunnery has stated that:

In the execution of their respective duties, it is incumbent upon both the board of education and the superintendent to develop unity and harmony in dealing with school problems, to agree on the particular duties of the board and of the superintendent, to grow in understanding of the educational community being served, and to develop respect for each other and for the contribution each member makes to the total effort (1984, pp. 20-21).

Tension is generated between the superintendent and the school board due to constant attention needed on school issues and problems. This tension punctuates the need for understanding and evaluation of the superintendent by the school board.

Conflicts and tensions in school divisions could be reduced if an effective superintendent's evaluation procedure is in place. There is no established statewide standard or procedure for evaluating the local superintendent in Virginia.

This study, which reports the current status of superintendent evaluation in Virginia, can provide information for action by superintendents and school boards. It should be of primary interest to local school boards interested in methods to improve their superintendent evaluation process. The value of having an evaluation system which has an approved policy, established procedures, a set of criteria, and jointly determined goals and objectives against which their superintendent's performance can be

measured, is being recognized. The evaluation process lets superintendents know where they stand and it lets board members know how well the division is progressing toward its predetermined goals (Redfern, 1980, pp. 4-5).

Definition of Terms

Superintendent: The chief executive officer of a school system. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, superintendents are appointed by the school board, and serve at the discretion of the school board.

School Board: An appointed or elected body of local government possessing legal power to govern a local school division. The school board of a public school division in Virginia is created by the state legislature with the principal functions of policy-making, appraising, legislating, financing, and authorizing.

School Board Member: An individual member of a school board.

Evaluation: The appraisal of results, events, or behaviors in terms of predetermined goals or objectives. A measure of effectiveness or efficiency or the act of comparing desired outcomes with actual outcomes.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one contains the purposes of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of terms.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature on evaluation of public school superintendents.

Chapter three discloses the methodology used to conduct the study. Included are the design of the study, population, instrumentation, and how data were analyzed.

Chapter four reports the superintendents' responses to the survey. Variables of school system size and expenditures per pupil were analyzed to determine impact on superintendent evaluation practices.

Conclusions and recommendations are reported in chapter five.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of the literature related to evaluation methods of Superintendent of Schools performance is presented in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to gain a better understanding of the current knowledge on superintendent evaluation. It is organized in four sections:

1. Reasons for Evaluating the Superintendent of Schools;
2. Superintendent and Board Relations;
3. Methods of Evaluating the Superintendent of Schools; and
4. Factors which Influence the Evaluation of School Superintendents.

Reasons for Evaluating the Superintendent of Schools

Evaluating the Superintendent of Schools is one of the most important and difficult challenges facing school boards today (Genck, 1983, p. 210).

Redfern summarized the important reasons for evaluating the Superintendent of Schools:

Evaluation plays many roles. It is motivational. It is an aid to planning. It is developmental. It aids in communication. And ultimately, effective evaluation helps to assure a good education for students in our nation's schools (1980, p. 71).

The National School Boards Association and the American Association of School Administrators noted that, "a sound evaluation program serves the best interests of both the superintendent and the board. At its best, cooperative evaluation builds a strong bond of mutual interest in superintendent-board relation" (1994, p. 18).

The American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association stated that the evaluation process will provide:

1. An annual written assessment of the current status of the superintendent's performance.
2. A continuing record of the effectiveness of the superintendent.
3. Tangible evidence upon which to base the decision to renew the superintendent's contract and set his/her salary.
4. Documentation to be used when the superintendent's contract may be renewed or termination action is under consideration.
5. Opportunity for the superintendent to discuss the results of his/her evaluation with the board (1994, p. 24).

The school board must be concerned with accountability in the school system. As the demand for accountability in education increases, evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools is a logical first step (Bartlett, 1991, p. 11). The evaluation of the superintendent is the procedure utilized by the school board to meet this concern for accountability.

Murphy (1994), in an examination of Kentucky's restructuring of its educational system, found the superintendent's role expanding in developing community involvement. As viewed by Kentucky's superintendents,

accountability for systematic change is shaping the role of the superintendent and how evaluation is performed by school boards.

Stufflebeam (1994), in his work to provide a general model for evaluation of the superintendent, studied the on-the-job performance of superintendents as they implemented school board policies. A sound conceptualization of the superintendent's duties can enhance communication between the superintendent and school board and provide a basis for more effective evaluation.

Accountability concerns may also be addressed through standards for the superintendency. Standards based on a review of significant literature as well as dialogue among those serving as superintendents, those working for them, and others involved in the preparation, licensure, and hiring can serve as a basis for evaluation and accountability (Hoyle, 1994).

Gerald Glaub shared this view of benefits to be derived from effective superintendent evaluation practices:

1. Helps the board and superintendent agree on what is expected of each other, enabling the board to function as policy maker and the superintendent as chief executive.
2. Helps the board perceive its own performance more closely.
3. Encourages improved performance, helping the superintendent grow as demands of the job grow.
4. Allows the board and superintendent to deal with differences other than during a crisis.
5. Forces the board and superintendent to plan for the future.

6. Enables the board to make informed decision about contract renewal and compensation.
7. Provides a defense against the superintendent's critics (1983, p. 7).

Seay (1995) reported that school board chairmen and superintendents agree that compensation of the superintendent should include incentive and merit pay and that both should be driven by evaluation. However, disagreements arise when superintendents and school board chairmen are asked to rank criteria for use in evaluation. Chairmen rank administrative items higher in importance while superintendents rank student oriented items higher.

Graves (1995) reported that school superintendents lose pay in some districts if student achievement does not improve. Efforts are increasing to tie salaries to results as budgets tighten and taxpayers demand more accountability from schools and their leaders.

Dlugosh (1994) revealed in his 10-year study of Nebraska superintendents that their tenure was a year less than the national average. He believes timely and appropriate evaluation of superintendents by school boards could slow the turnover in superintendents.

Many school districts evaluate their superintendents for legal reasons. Some states require it, or it may be part of the superintendent's contract (Peterson, 1992). An evaluation protects the superintendent from lawsuits and criticisms. More importantly, evaluation defines what is expected of the

superintendent and provides a communication process between the board and the superintendent.

Effective evaluation benefits the superintendent by providing an early assessment of how the school board feels about the job being done by their chief executive officer. It can offer encouragement, praise, and suggestions for overcoming shortcomings.

The superintendent's contract must provide for annual evaluation (O'Hara, 1994). This evaluation is critical to school boards and superintendents, and if undertaken properly, can build a good working relationship between the parties.

The school board must communicate clearly its expectations to the superintendent, and only then can it accurately determine whether the superintendent has lived up to those expectations. In ideal relationships, the superintendent's contract will require frequent evaluations and provide that the procedure and criteria to be used will be agreed jointly by both parties. O'Hara (1994) found that this is typically accomplished in a joint goal setting session with the superintendent and the school board (p. 21).

Johnson (1994) found that usual school board and superintendent relationships are inconsistent with collaborative leadership and building autonomy which often carry over into evaluation of the superintendent. School boards should develop clearly defined standards for performance, accountability, and authority to be used in evaluation of their superintendent.

McCloud (1994) found school boards and superintendents are aware of their mutual problems. Understanding and evaluation of roles, communication, and trust are at the heart of influencing good relationships and success. Role confusions and poor communication are major factors that must be overcome.

O'Hara (1994) found that a carefully developed contract which includes evaluation issues is essential to a successful relationship between the school board and superintendent. A contract which defines roles, establishes deadlines, and provides for the evaluation of the superintendent, is a good start for a good working relationship and success for both parties.

The opportunities offered by an evaluation are subtle, yet important (Hyland, 1993, p. 48). Information obtained from a candid professional evaluation may include information the superintendent otherwise may not be able to obtain. The evaluation often includes a checklist of responsibilities that can be the basis of subsequent evaluation.

Canoli (1994), in his synthesis of current research and practice in superintendent evaluation, examines a need to develop a new model for superintendent evaluation. He proposes evaluation should be performed based on the context of the work, superintendent's input in school board matters, processes put in place by the superintendent, and a review of products produced by the superintendent.

Superintendent and Board Relations

An important issue to examine in superintendent evaluation is the relationship between the superintendent and the school board. This relationship is important since a good one could provide for improvement while a poor one could create a lack of vitality in the school system. Roberts (1987), in her research of California school superintendents, recommended that school boards remember the importance of their relationship with the superintendent and its effect on the instructional programs in the school system.

A favorable impact on the school division is generally a result of the positive relationship between the superintendent and the school board. In his research involving superintendent turnover in Illinois, Thomas (1985) found that a negative relationship had the opposite effect. His research concluded that the change in superintendent often occurs not because of a superintendent's performance, but because of a negative relationship with the school board. Problems created by the poor relationship were cited as a prominent cause of the superintendent leaving the school system. These problems are amplified by the void in leadership in the school system while the school board goes through a search and hiring of a new superintendent.

Straley (1987) revealed in his study that the more open a school board and superintendent are, the greater the loyalty by both. In addition, he states that the stronger the relationship between the superintendent and the

school board, the less likely role conflicts will exist in the school system. He recommended open lines of communication that improve the confidence level between the superintendent and school board.

Establishing a viable relationship with the school board and his approach to working with them is the first critical task of a superintendent. Without a positive working relationship, the superintendent cannot not impact the direction of the school system and will likely not remain in the position long enough to improve the quality of educational services. Self (1986), in his Ohio study of school superintendents, suggested that different approaches could be needed to work effectively with various members of the board. He stated that superintendents must determine how he will approach each member of the board with careful consideration being given to the interests of the individual member. Self indicated that the formal education levels of individual board members were considered by the superintendents in his study when determining methods of establishing relationships with board members. Individual board members tend to evaluate the superintendent more closely on topics in which they have a strong interest.

School boards often fail to have a formal job description on which they can base the evaluation of the superintendent. Lane and Dixon (1989) state that school boards are often in for a nasty surprise when they begin the superintendent evaluation process without a formal job description. Superintendent and school board need to agree that both parties are better

off in their relationships with a job description that actually describes the duties and the evaluation process of the superintendent.

In 1980, the National School Boards Association joined the American Association of School Administrators in publishing a pamphlet, Roles and Relationships: School Boards and Superintendents (Redfern, 1980). That document cited the importance of establishing a communication system and of stating the nature of the board-superintendent relationship in writing. In addition, it outlined a general framework which lists specific responsibilities for boards. One of those responsibilities is:

To hold the superintendent responsible for the administration of the school through regular constructive written and oral evaluations of the superintendent's work. Effective evaluation is an ongoing effort and should be linked to goals established by the board with the assistance of the superintendent (1980, p. 3).

In his April, 1985, article in the American School Board Journal, Bippus stated the value of creating a trusting relationship between superintendents and school boards. He declared that this trusting relationship is primarily built through the use of a formal evaluation process. He indicated that by setting up a clear, logical evaluation system, the potential for conflict and breakdown in communication can be lessened. He stated that "a process by which you can identify what your board expects of the superintendent and then monitor his progress in meeting those expectations" (p. 42), can help avoid conflicts caused by breakdown in communication.

Intriss (1985), in research regarding superintendents in Wisconsin, indicated that both superintendents and school boards believed that communication between them improved when a formal evaluation system of the superintendent was established. Wisconsin school boards and superintendents felt that the time spent in evaluating the superintendent was well invested and had positive impacts on the school system.

Weiskittel (1988) found in her research that the relationship between the superintendent and the school board was important in the superintendent longevity. She found in her study in Burlington County, New Jersey, that the majority of superintendents who had left their position had not had a written evaluation system in place at the time of their leaving. She stated that "These findings give support of the claim that a written policy for evaluating the superintendent fosters better working relationship between the superintendent and his or her board . . ." (p. 59).

Braddom (1986) states, "By doing regular evaluations, your board can improve its relationship with the superintendent, clarify its outlook on the superintendent's role and duties, and develop a cohesive outline of the superintendent's future goals in priority order" (p. 29). She suggested that in addition to improving this relationship, the school division will have a much better chance of reaching its desired goals. She stated that the school board's participation in a formal evaluation process of the superintendent leads to a better working relationship between the two.

Roeder's (1986) study of Michigan superintendents supported the position that superintendents are more likely to be dismissed when they fail to develop a strong positive relationship with their school board. He found that actual job performance of the superintendent is not the most important factor in determining his continued service within a school system. The primary cause for dismissal was not traits normally associated with the job description of the superintendent but dealt with relationship with the school board.

Methods of Evaluating the Superintendent of Schools

The literature suggests that school board use a variety of formats and instruments to evaluate superintendents. These methods range from informal discussions between the school board and superintendent to a formal procedure to evaluate and appraise the performance of the superintendent (Lewis, 1982, pp. 7-8).

Contracts should include three specifics pertaining to the evaluation process: an accurate job description, precise timelines for evaluation, and a performance-evaluation instrument based on the job description (Lucy, 1993, p. 39). Before evaluation begins, the board and the superintendent should agree on these three critical elements.

Evaluation of the superintendent tasks must be assigned and scheduled in accordance with the board's annual agenda. No particular

sequence and format will meet all needs due to the diversity represented in school districts (Stufflebeam, 1994). In most instances the superintendent provides data and advice to the board, and the board uses the input as part of their evaluation of the superintendent. Jointly, the board and superintendent can develop a collaborative plan for improvement of the superintendent's performance.

Robinson, in an Educational Research Services study, suggests that:

Superintendents are typically evaluated by one or more of the following methods: checklists and rating scales; management by objectives; written statements; or informal evaluation procedures. Each of these methods has advantages and potential pitfalls. Local boards of education and superintendents should examine the pros and cons of each approach before selecting the method of methods that best suit their specific districts' needs (1990, p. 6).

Judith D. Silver in her Spring, 1991, article in Education Canada, stated "the importance of a well-developed and current job or role description deserves attention" (p. 30). Since the school board has the authority and the responsibility to determine what the job of the superintendent entails, it has the responsibility to be fair and reasonable in its actions of evaluation. The board's expectations must be known to the superintendent.

One of the most popular methods with school boards, which has been used less extensively in recent years, is the written statement or essay method. This method allows each individual school board member to write a statement to assess the superintendent's strengths and weaknesses based

upon previously agreed upon criterion. Each board member may report his individual statement or the board may choose to compile the statements into a composite appraisal. The school board, as a unit, then confers and allows the superintendent to respond to the evaluation statements (Redfern, 1980, p. 9).

The superintendent's performance can be done in a commentary fashion through the use of far-ranging statements from board members. Comments on specific aspects of the superintendent's performance are stated and can be used to plan for improvement. Statements which provide commentary provide descriptive detailed information not available from checklist evaluation instruments or rating scales. Each evaluator should be cautioned to construct their comments to contain specific conclusions and not to be unfocused or too lengthy (Braddom, 1986, pp. 28-29).

In a study of new-to-site superintendents in Kansas conducted by Anderson and Lavid (1985-88) it was found that most boards created their own instruments. In 1987, 48 percent said that specific, measurable goals were used, up from 33 percent in 1986 and 21 percent in 1985. Most school boards discussed the evaluation with the superintendent in executive session.

Performance appraisal helps the superintendent clarify the school board's expectations, duties, and the goals of the school system. In addition, the evaluation process helps the school board to better understand

the operation of the school system and the leadership style of the superintendent. Progress toward pre-determined goals can be assessed when procedures and criterion for assessment are established prior to evaluation.

Although many persons observe the performance of the superintendent, the school board cannot assume casual observations of others to be an objective and valid evaluation of the superintendent. The review of the literature indicates the need for formally evaluating the superintendent, even though school boards are reluctant to perform this important duty.

In summary, the literature is clear that the evaluation of the superintendent should be formal, be outlined in written procedures, have previously agreed upon goals, and be conducted within a specific time period. Formal conferences with the superintendent, both pre-evaluation and post-evaluation, are needed to set goals and objectives and to deliver feedback. Dillon and Halliwell (1991) found that experience in evaluation, or training, is needed for the school boards before attempting to evaluate their superintendent. Specifying these components in the superintendent's contract would provide the formal structure for use by the school board in performing this important responsibility.

Factors Which Influence Evaluating the Superintendent of Schools

The literature shows that formal and jointly agreed upon evaluation systems benefit the school board, and more importantly, the superintendent and the community served by both. Despite agreement on the former statement, there remain many factors which influence the type and quality of evaluation that is performed by school boards at the local district level. In his research of superintendents and school board members in Texas, Lutz (1988) found that several items affected the perception school board members had of the job responsibilities of the superintendent of schools. Items included were the size of the school system, experience of the school board, and their education level. He found that the smaller the school district, the more responsibility the school board assumed in the operation of the system. Lutz also found that Texas school board members perceived the relationship between the superintendent and school board as one in which they work as a team thus linking the superintendent's evaluation to their own effectiveness.

Rogers (1986) in her study dealing with school board training in the Commonwealth of Virginia, found that superintendents had concerns related to orientation programs for school board members. Rogers found that superintendents ". . . were concerned with their evaluation by the school board. Superintendents were requesting that school boards be more

knowledgeable in the area to ensure that they were treated fairly" (p. 87). Each year, a large number of experienced school board members appears to impact the superintendent's evaluation, often resulting in the lack of training in evaluation for school board members and reluctance to formally evaluate the superintendent.

School district size was also found to be a major influence of the type of evaluation that the superintendent received. Snavely (1984) found that superintendents are more likely to receive a formal evaluation from the school board in a large school system. He concluded that "A statistically significant relationship was found to exist between that type of superintendent evaluation and the student enrollments of the districts . . . districts with greater student enrollments were more likely of having their superintendents formally evaluated" (p. 83).

Dillon and Halliwell (1991) found that 43% of superintendents and over 16% of school board presidents believe a weakness of formal evaluation procedures for superintendents exists. Their study found that formal evaluation of superintendents require evaluation skills most board members do not possess. Training in these skills is recommended if adequate evaluation of superintendents is to occur.

Bippus (1985) in his article in The American School Board Journal dealing with the evaluation of superintendents identified the need for training school board members in evaluation. He stated that the lack of confidence

in the area of evaluation often lead to the failure to formally evaluate the superintendent. He stated,

Unfortunately, school board members aren't always the best at personnel evaluation. Lacking the courage, perhaps, to confront the superintendent directly, some school boards put off talking about problems they have with the superintendent's on-the-job actions. Then under heightened pressure of a crisis, board members and the superintendent grow defensive or even hostile (p. 42).

The motives some school board members may have for moving toward a formal evaluation process have been expressed by superintendents as a concern. This apprehension, coupled with the concern over the lack of evaluation skills possessed by some board members, serves to further deter a formal evaluation process.

Barbot (1986) in his California study found that superintendents and school board members supported more training for school board members in the area of superintendent evaluation. Superintendents reported that they felt a responsibility for assisting the school board in educating them in the evaluation process. In her research involving Indiana school boards, Murray (1986) reported that Indiana superintendents supported the call for additional training for school board members in superintendent evaluation. In addition to supporting state conferences for this training, superintendents and local school boards indicated a need to assume some of this responsibility at the local level.

Van Keuren (1985) suggested adding another step in the training of boards. In his Ohio study of school board members and superintendents he found a need for improving the skills of school board members in evaluation. He suggested that participating school board members receive continuing education credits for their training. He recommended that this practice be adopted nationwide.

Banach (1989) stated that "Building a winning team is not easy, but it should be every school board's goal. The board president and the superintendent can begin building a team with a strong orientation program" (p. 23). He observed that school boards tend to have a constant change of members. The "team" must be kept in place by bringing new members in place by giving them training.

Summary

The review of the literature supports the concept that if school boards and superintendents are to work together for the improvement of the school system, some method of formal evaluation is needed (Suggs, 1991, p. 30). Although school boards and superintendents have some reservations on the best methods, both parties appear to support the move towards establishing a formal method of evaluation of the superintendent.

Superintendents and school boards agree that if an evaluation system is implemented properly, it can have significant positive impact on their

relationship. They also agree that if evaluation is based on goals, which define the superintendent's responsibility, relationships are improved and there is a decrease in superintendent turnover.

The literature indicates that board members and superintendents have to be actively involved in the development of the evaluation system if it is to be successful. Local expectations and goals must be built into the evaluation since a generic evaluation instrument for all superintendents is not appropriate to use in differing situations.

Certain "best practices" are identified in the literature and should be included in local superintendent evaluation procedures. Formal procedures, written policies and procedures, and regular evaluation are needed for effective superintendent evaluation. Locally developed evaluation instruments, based on goals of the school system, and a job description for the superintendent are elements which should be included in an effective evaluation system. Input from constituents must be considered in superintendent evaluation along with training of the school board which conducts the evaluation. Formal discussion of the results of the evaluation with the superintendent is recognized as an important element in evaluation.

How school boards and superintendents work together can mean the difference between frustration and exhilaration for both parties. More importantly, it can mean the difference between success and failure for students in the schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study. The purposes are stated, the development of the study traced, the population is described, and the process by which the instrument was developed is outlined. In addition, the data collection techniques and the methods of analyzing the data are discussed.

Design of the Study

This study was conducted to provide answers to questions dealing with the evaluation of public school superintendents within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study was conducted utilizing input from public school superintendents with the intent of focusing on their perspective of the evaluation process within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Descriptive research was used in this study:

Descriptive research describes what is. It also involves the description, recording, analysis, and interpretation of conditions that now exist. It often involves some type of comparison or contrast and may attempt to discover cause-effect relationship that exist (Best, 1970, p. 15).

The purpose of descriptive research is to collect data from a sample or population in order to answer questions regarding the relative incident,

distribution, and interrelation of variables identified for study (Wiersma, 1980, p. 6).

The study dealt with three areas or purposes. The first was to describe the policies and procedures currently in place in the Commonwealth of Virginia for evaluating the chief executive officer in Virginia's school divisions. A survey was used for gathering the required information from all active public school superintendents in Virginia. This portion of the study utilized questions developed by Suggs for a study conducted in 1991.

Each superintendent of a public school division in Virginia, except for the researcher and the superintendent of Fairfax City, was asked to respond to a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on policies and practices of superintendent evaluation in Virginia.

The second purpose was to explain and compare the evaluation practices reported by the superintendents with those considered "best practices" identified in the literature. Data collected were analyzed and compared with "best practices" as identified through a review of the literature.

Several authors and publications were reviewed to determine national "best practices" which should be included in superintendent evaluation. These practices were selected to be reviewed and analyzed in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including who should be involved in the development of the process, which items should be included in the

evaluation, and who should be involved in the actual evaluation process.

The national "best practices" cited by Suggs (1991), from Educational Research Service (1989), George Redfern (1980), the National School Boards Association (1994), and the American Association of School Administrators (1994) were used as a benchmark against which to compare practices of superintendent evaluation in Virginia.

The seventeen attributes or "best practices" are listed in the evaluation matrix included in Appendix C. This matrix reflects national trends in superintendent evaluation. The matrix was used to develop questions on the survey of superintendent evaluation practices in Virginia. It is assumed that evaluation practices in Virginia should be based on these seventeen attributes identified in the literature as desirable for inclusion in superintendent evaluation.

The last purpose was to determine whether those procedures, and policies varied in accordance to the selected variables, of size and wealth of the school division. The size of the school division was determined by using the average daily membership. Wealth of the school division was measured by expenditure per child of the school division. Small divisions were identified as those having a membership of 0-2500 students, medium as 2501-5000, and large as 5001 and up. The 1993-94 Virginia Department of Education publication, Superintendent's Annual Report for Virginia, was used to establish the groups for the expenditure per child and average daily

membership. Divisions were identified as low expenditure if less than \$4604 were spent per child, average from \$4604-\$5025, and high expenditure if more than \$5025 per child was expended. The variables selected for review were based on previous research findings by Suggs (1991) which indicated that larger districts and those that spend more per child were more likely to have formal, structured evaluation procedures in place.

Population

The population consisted of the administrators serving as division superintendents within the Commonwealth of Virginia during the 1994-95 school year. A list of all superintendents and their addresses was secured from the Virginia School Boards Association and compared with the list of superintendents from the Virginia Association of School Superintendents. A list of all public school systems was secured from the Virginia Department of Education to confirm that all school divisions were included in the study.

The entire population was surveyed except for the school division where the researcher was employed (New Kent County), and the superintendent of Fairfax City, a school division which does not operate its own schools. No limitation was placed on the minimum or maximum amount of time any of the superintendents had served in their current position. Some superintendents were new appointees in their position while others had served for an extended period of time.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire which would provide the data needed to achieve the purposes of this study was developed. This questionnaire was developed after a review of the literature on superintendent evaluation and a review of national comprehensive studies conducted by the National School Board Association, American Association of School Administrators, Educational Research Service, and Redfern (Appendix C). "Best practice," as identified by these studies, was incorporated into the survey. These best practices, which appear most often in the literature, served as benchmarks against which current practice in Virginia was compared.

In his book on survey research, Babbie (1973) stated that failure to pre-test a questionnaire used in survey research is only asking for additional problems. It is important to determine the strengths of the questionnaire and the items which need to be improved. Pre-testing was accomplished through a panel of retired superintendents.

The questionnaire was pilot tested by a panel of five retired superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each panel member was asked to complete the questionnaire as if he were still an active superintendent of schools. The input from the panel of superintendents was incorporated into the instrument. Participants were asked to determine if the questions on the survey were clear, easy to follow, had clear directions, whether the meaning of each question was understood, whether there were

adequate response options, absence of bias on the part of the researcher, appropriate length, and not misleading to the individuals who would be completing it.

The questionnaire was printed on 8¾" X 11¾" standard, high quality, white paper. Eleven questions were of short answer responses (yes, no, do not know), and five questions allowed for open-ended responses.

Each superintendent was mailed a questionnaire which described the purpose of the study (Appendix A) and requested their assistance in the study. Each was requested to return the completed questionnaire within ten days of receiving it.

The questionnaire was mailed in April of 1995 to one hundred thirty division superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Superintendents were requested to complete the questionnaire according to the instructions given and return it as soon as possible. A timeline was given to all participants to provide for the timely returns of the questionnaire. Each questionnaire was coded with the Virginia Department of Education three digit code assigned to each public school division in the Commonwealth.

In addition to the questionnaire, included in the initial mailing was a cover letter of explanation of the study. This letter encouraged a prompt response and promised confidentiality (Appendix B).

Each superintendent received a package containing a cover letter, one questionnaire, and a return-addressed, stamped envelope, mailed in a 9" X

12" clasped envelope. The participant's name, school division, division code number, and address as listed on files at the Virginia Association of School Administrators and Virginia School Boards Association was affixed to the outside envelope.

Participants not responding to the questionnaire in fifteen days after initial mailings were sent a second request. The second contact consisted of a duplication of the initial mailing except that bold letters stating "SECOND REQUEST" were stamped across the letter. If no survey was received in fifteen additional days, the researcher conducted a telephone interview.

Analysis of Data

This study was designed to identify and describe current practices in the Commonwealth of Virginia regarding the evaluation of public school superintendents. The intent was to describe the current status of superintendent evaluation within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Another purpose of the study was to compare current practices in superintendent evaluation in Virginia with the "best practices" as identified in the literature. Finally, the study attempted to determine if selected variables of size and expenditure per pupil of the division impacted on the evaluation process of the superintendent. These purposes represented a follow-up of a study conducted by Suggs (1991) on the status of superintendent evaluation in Virginia.

Returned surveys were reviewed and coded to identify the school system and the superintendent. The survey was used to code selected variables for each of the school systems and superintendents. Tables were constructed to report the data collected from the questions on the survey in numbers and percentages. Crosstabulations were done to analyze the impact of the variables of size and expenditure per pupil on the existence of "best practices" on superintendent evaluation.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the data collected from the survey of superintendents and is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the demographics of size and per pupil expenditure of school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. These data were collected from information available through the Virginia Department of Education in order to determine if superintendent policies and procedures of evaluation in Virginia vary based on the variables of wealth and size.

The second section deals with the data collected from the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to each public school division superintendent serving in the Commonwealth of Virginia in May of 1995. In this section, the practices used to evaluate superintendents in Virginia are reported based on the superintendents' responses to the survey questions. These data are presented through the use of frequencies and percentages.

The third section compares practices and procedures used in the Commonwealth of Virginia to evaluate superintendents. These practices are compared with practices and procedures which have been identified as "best practice" through a review of the research.

The last section of this chapter examines the relationships between two selected demographic characteristics (size and expenditures per pupil) of the school division and the processes reported used in the evaluation of the superintendent.

Demographics

Demographic information about the school divisions are reported in this section. These data were gathered from the Virginia Department of Education publication 1993-94 Superintendent's Annual Report for Virginia and a survey questionnaire mailed to one hundred thirty superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. All superintendents were sent surveys except the superintendent of Fairfax City, whose students are served by another school division, and the author of this study who served then as superintendent in New Kent County.

Each superintendent of a public school division was mailed a booklet containing a cover letter explaining the survey, the directions for completing the survey, and the nineteen survey questions. One hundred twenty-three of the one hundred thirty superintendents responded. Superintendents in seven divisions, Fairfax County, Henry County, Isle of Wight County, Norton City, Manassas City, Richmond City, and Virginia Beach City were unavailable to answer the survey questions.

Three contacts were made with the population in an effort to obtain the data required for the survey. Forty-four percent (N = 57) of superintendents responded to the first mailing. An additional forty-seven percent (N = 61) replied to the second request. Data from four percent (N = 5) of superintendents were gathered by telephone. Five percent (N = 7) did not respond to the survey.

The one hundred twenty-three responding superintendents were distributed into three groups representing different size school divisions in Virginia. The groups were defined as small (0-2600), medium (2601-5100), and large (5101 and up). Forty-two percent (N = 51) of the respondents were from small divisions; twenty-five percent (N = 31) from medium divisions; and thirty-three percent (N = 41) from large school divisions. These groupings are reported in Table 1.

School divisions were also placed into three different groups according to expenditures per pupil in average daily membership (ADM) as a measure to describe wealth. For the purposes of this study, school divisions that spent up to \$4,699 per pupil were considered poor; those that spent from \$4,700 to \$5,199 were considered average; and those that spent \$5,200 and above were considered wealthy. Thirty-three percent (N = 41) of the school divisions were considered poor in terms of expenditures per pupil; thirty-three percent (N = 40) were considered average; and thirty-four

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of School Divisions
in Virginia by Size
(N = 123*)

Size	N	%
Small (0-2600)	51	42
Medium (2601-5100)	31	25
Large (5101 and up)	41	33
TOTAL	123	100

* Respondents only.

percent (N=42) were considered wealthy. These data are presented in Table 2.

Superintendent Responses to Survey

The first question on the survey "**Are you evaluated by your school board?**" was basic to the study. A total of ninety-three percent (N = 115) of the responding superintendents stated that they were evaluated by their school board. Seven percent (N=8) indicated that they were not evaluated by their school board. This question required a yes or no response and did not ask for a description of the evaluation. These results are recorded in Table 3.

The second question on the survey was "**Does your division have a written policy for evaluation of the superintendent?**" Seventy-one percent of the superintendents (N=87) reported their school board has an adopted policy which requires the school board to evaluate the superintendent of schools. Twenty-nine percent (N=36) responded that they do not have a policy that requires the school board to evaluate the superintendent. These results are recorded in Table 4.

In response to the question "**Does your division have written procedures for evaluating the superintendent?**" Eighty-four percent of the superintendents (N=97) responded that they have written procedures for evaluation. These results are recorded in Table 5.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of School Divisions
in Virginia Based on Expenditures
Per Pupil in Average Daily Membership (ADM)

Expenditure Per Pupil	Respondents (N = 123)		Non-Respondents (N = 7)	
	N	%	N	%
Low (\$0-\$4,699)	41	33	3	42
Average (\$4,700-\$5,199)	40	33	2	29
High (\$5,200 and up)	42	34	2	29
TOTAL	123	100	7	100

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents in Virginia
Who are Evaluated by Their School Board
(N = 123)

Response	N	%
Yes	115	93
No	8	7
TOTAL	123	100

Table 4

Frequencies and Percentages of School Divisions in Virginia
That Have a Written Policy for Evaluation
of the Superintendent
(N = 123)

Response	N	%
Yes	87	71
No	36	29
TOTAL	123	100

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Virginia Superintendents
Who Reported Written Procedures for Evaluation
of the Superintendent
(N = 123)

Response	N	%
Yes	90	73
No	33	27
TOTAL	123	100

The first three questions on the survey were foundational to the study since they asked (a) if the superintendent was evaluated by the school board and (b) if written policy and (c) procedures were used to guide the evaluation. Over ninety percent of superintendents (N = 115) responded that they were evaluated by their school board and a majority indicated that both policy (71%) and procedures (84%) are in place to guide the evaluation process.

The foundational questions of the study (questions 1, 2, and 3), asking (a) if the superintendent was evaluated by the school board and (b) if written policy and (c) procedures were used to guide the evaluation were followed by questions as to how the evaluation was designed and conducted. Analysis of responses to the questions dealing with how the evaluation is designed and carried out is based on the 115 responses of superintendents who indicated an evaluation process was in place in their school division.

Superintendents in ninety-seven percent of school systems (N = 111) responded "yes" to the question **"Is there an evaluation instrument that is used?"** in the evaluation process by their school board. No instrument was reported being used by the school board in three percent of the systems (N = 4) responding. These data are included in Table 6.

When asked the question **"Is a formal conference held with the superintendent to establish goals and the evaluation criteria at the beginning**

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents in Virginia
Reporting Having an Evaluation Instrument Used by Their
School Board
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	111	97
No	4	3
TOTAL	115	100

of the evaluation cycle?", the majority of the superintendents reported that they hold a pre-evaluation conference with their school board. Sixty-six percent reported (N = 76) they have a pre-conference regarding establishing goals and the criteria on which they would be evaluated. Thirty-four percent of superintendents (N = 39) reported that they and their school board do not establish evaluation contents in this manner. The responses to this question are reported in Table 7.

A large majority of superintendents who are evaluated, seventy-five percent (N = 86), responded "yes" to the question **"Is the superintendent's evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals?"** Twenty-five percent of the superintendents (N = 29) reported mutually agreed upon goals with their school board are not a part of the evaluation of the superintendent. These results are reported in Table 8.

The responses to question seven **"Are the procedures for the superintendent evaluation outlined in the superintendent's contract?"** are reported in Table 9. Sixty-three percent of superintendents (N = 73) reported that the procedures are outlined in their contract. Thirty-seven percent of superintendents (N = 42) responded that the evaluation process was not included in their contract. Several superintendents reported they did not have a contract with their school board other than what was required by the Code of Virginia.

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of All Virginia Superintendents
Who Reported Conference Held with Board
to Establish Goals and Evaluation Criteria
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	76	66
No	39	34
TOTAL	115	100

Table 8

Frequencies and Percentages of All Virginia Superintendents
Who Reported Evaluation Based on Mutually
Agreed Upon Goals with Their Board
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	86	75
No	29	25
TOTAL	115	100

Table 9

Frequencies and Percentages of Virginia Superintendents
Who Reported Evaluation Procedures Outlined
in Their Contract
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	73	63
No	42	37
TOTAL	115	100

In response to the question **"Do you have a job description?"** ninety-two percent of superintendents (N = 106) answered "yes." Eight percent of superintendents (N = 9) responded that they did not have a job description. These data are included in Table 10.

To the question **"Is your evaluation based on the job description?"** sixty percent (N = 69) of the individuals responded that their job description is used in their evaluation. The remaining forty percent (N = 46) reported that their job description is not used to evaluate their performance. Data reporting the use of job descriptions in evaluation of the superintendent are included in Table 11.

Question ten asked **"Did your school board receive training prior to conducting your evaluation?"** Fifty-three percent of the superintendents (N = 61) indicated their school board had been trained in evaluation procedures. The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) provided the majority of the training for the sixty-one school boards who had received training. Forty-seven percent of superintendents (N = 54) responded to the question on training indicated that their school boards have not been trained in evaluation procedures. Data dealing with school board training in evaluation are reported in Table 12.

Question number eleven on the survey requested a response to the statement, **"Your evaluation was developed by: (Check all that apply)**
Superintendent, Chairperson of the School Board, Members of School Board,

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Virginia Superintendents
Reporting They Have a Job Description
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	106	92
No	9	8
TOTAL	115	100

Table 11

**Frequencies and Percentages of Virginia Superintendents
Having a Job Description Used as Part of Their Evaluation
(N = 115)**

Response	N	%
Yes	69	60
No	46	40
TOTAL	115	100

Table 12

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents Reporting
Their School Board Received Training Prior to Conducting
the Superintendent's Evaluation
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	61	53
No	54	47
TOTAL	115	100

Consultants, Parents, Teachers, Others (specify)". Multiple responses were given to the question to indicate all who participated in the process. A large majority of superintendents, eighty-nine (68%) reported they were involved in the development of the evaluation procedure used to evaluate them. School Board Chairpersons were reported to be involved in the development of the evaluation by nineteen percent of the respondents (N = 25) and school boards were involved with the development of the evaluation procedure in sixty-two percent (N = 81) of the number responding. Consultants assisted the school board and superintendent in developing the evaluation procedure in eight percent (N = 10) of the instrument development. Consultants from the Virginia School Boards Association and the National School Boards Association were cited most often in development of the procedures. Just five percent responded (N = 7) that others such as parents, school personnel or community members were involved in the development process. These data are displayed in Table 13.

Respondents were asked to **"Check all who provided input into the evaluation of the superintendent and rank the importance of each."** These data, displayed in Table 14, indicated that one hundred percent of superintendents (N = 115) who reported being evaluated reported that their school board members had direct input into the evaluation. Seventy-seven percent of superintendents (N = 89) who stated that they were evaluated reported having direct input in their evaluation. Principals were reported to

Table 13

Frequencies and Percentages of Virginia Superintendent Responses Identifying Those Involved in the Development of the Superintendent Evaluation (N = 115)

Participation in Development	Frequency*	Percent*
Superintendent	89	68
Chairperson	25	19
School Board	81	62
Consultant	10	8
Others	7	5

* Note: Totals could exceed 115 and percentages could exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

Table 14

Frequencies and Percentages of Virginia Superintendent Responses Identifying Individuals Who Provide Input Into the Superintendent's Evaluation
(N = 115)

Participants in Evaluation Process	Frequency*	Percent*
School Board	115	100
Superintendents	89	77
Principals	9	8
Central Office	7	6
Teachers	4	3
Students	2	2
Consultants	2	2
Community	4	3

* Note: Totals could exceed 115 and percentages could exceed 100% because of multiple responses.

have input into the evaluation by eight percent of the superintendents (N = 9) responding. Six percent (N = 7) reported that their central office personnel had input into their evaluation. Teachers had input in four (3%) of the instances in evaluation of the superintendent. Other groups that were reported by the superintendents as having input into the evaluation were represented by smaller percentages. Students were reported to have input by two percent of superintendents (N = 2); two percent reported consultants (N = 2) involved; three percent (N = 4) reported teachers involved; and three percent of the superintendents (N = 4) reported community members involved in the evaluation of the superintendent.

Question twelve also dealt with the superintendent's perception of the importance of input from each group who had input in the evaluation. Of the one hundred fifteen superintendents (100%) who indicated that they are evaluated, only one ranked the school board other than first in importance. This superintendent ranked the superintendent as first in importance in the evaluation process. Seventy-seven percent (N = 89) ranked the superintendent as second in terms of importance in the evaluation process. In the nine systems where principals participate in evaluation of the superintendent, principals were ranked as second in importance in four systems. In the four systems where teachers participated, two superintendents ranked them as second in importance and two superintendents ranked them as third in importance. In the four systems

where superintendents reported central office personnel as participants, only one superintendent ranked central office personnel as high as third in importance. Four superintendents reported the community as participants in their evaluation process and all four ranked the community as second to the school board in importance. Several superintendents commented that persons or groups other than the school board and superintendent participated in an informal manner in the evaluation process but failed to rank their importance in the process. These data are listed in Table 15.

Question thirteen asked **"Is self-evaluation part of the process?"** Fifty-six percent of superintendents (N = 64) reported self-evaluation as part of the evaluation process by their school board. A large number of superintendents, forty-four percent (N = 51) reported not having self-evaluation as part of their evaluation process. These data are listed in Table 16.

The responses to the question of **"In some school divisions a superintendent's evaluation may include the review of products/artifacts (e.g. newsletters, publications and/or presentations to the board or community). Are such data formally included in your evaluation procedures?"** were the most evenly distributed among all questions. Fifty-one percent (N = 59) of the superintendents responded that their school board reviewed artifacts or products in the evaluation process. Forty-nine percent of superintendents (N = 56) responded that these products are not

Table 15

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents in Virginia
Reporting Ranking of Importance of Evaluation
Input From Various Constituencies
(N = 115)

Importance Rank	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
School Board	114	1		
Superintendent	1	89	16	9
Principals	0	4	0	5
Central Office	0	0	1	3
Teachers	0	2	2	
Students	0	0	0	
Board of Supervisors/City Council	0	0	0	
Consultants	0	0	0	
Community	0	4	0	
Others	None Ranked			

Although the above groups were reported as having input, superintendents did not report rank of importance except as shown.

Table 16

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents in Virginia
Reporting Self-Evaluation as Part of the Evaluation
Process by Their School Board
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	64	56
No	51	44
TOTAL	115	100

reviewed and included in their evaluation. These data are included in Table 17.

Respondents to the question "**Are on-the-job observations of the superintendent a part of the evaluation process?**" reported that fifty-nine percent of superintendents (N = 68) have on-the-job observations as part of their evaluation. Forty-one percent (N = 47) reported on-the-job observations were not included as part of their evaluation. These data are included in Table 18.

The responses to question sixteen "**The superintendent's evaluation procedure is conducted: semi-annually, annually, biannually, other**" are charted in Table 19. A large majority, ninety-four percent of superintendents (N = 108) reported they were evaluated once each year. Semi-annual evaluation by their school board was reported by three percent (N = 4). Bi-annual evaluation was reported by two percent of the superintendents (N = 2). One superintendent reported varying periods of time.

The data in Table 20 show the responses to the question "**Is a formal conference held with the superintendent after the evaluation cycle has been completed?**" All one hundred fifteen superintendents responded they have a formal conference with the school board after the evaluation cycle had been completed.

Table 17

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents in Virginia
Reporting the Review of Products/Artifacts as Part of
Evaluation by Their School Board
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	59	51
No	56	49
TOTAL	115	100

Table 18

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents in Virginia
Reporting on the Job Observations as Part of
Evaluation by Their School Board
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	68	59
No	47	41
TOTAL	115	100

Table 19

Frequency and Percentages of Virginia Superintendents
Who Reported Frequency of Evaluation
(N = 115)

Response	N	%
Annually	108	94
Semi-Annually	4	3
Bi-Annually	2	2
Other	1	1
TOTAL	115	100

Table 20

Frequencies and Percentages of Superintendents Reporting Their School Boards Conduct a Formal Post-Conference as Part of the Evaluation Cycle (N = 115)

Response	N	%
Yes	115	100
No	0	0
TOTAL	115	100

Relationships Between Selected Demographic Characteristics of School Systems and Evaluation Practices

This section examines the relationships between selected demographic characteristics of school systems and the processes used in the evaluation of the superintendent. The variables used to cross-tabulate the data obtained from the survey were size of the school system in Average Daily Membership (ADM) [small 2600 ADM and below; medium 2601-5100 ADM; large 5101-up ADM], and expenditures per pupil in Average Daily Attendance (ADM) [low \$4699 and below; average \$4700-\$5199; high \$5200 and up]. These crosstabulations produced reportable differences when using ten percent as a measure of reportable variance.

Large school systems (5101 ADM and up) used more "best practices" than both small and medium-size systems in nine of the twelve characteristics compared. However, reportable differences between large and both medium and small divisions (based on ten percent variance) were found in only four practices: "a formal pre-conference is held"; "evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals"; "job description used in evaluation"; and "review of artifacts/ products in evaluation." In addition, large school divisions were also more likely (> 10%) to have "job descriptions" and "superintendent self-evaluation" than small school divisions and more likely to use "on-the-job observation" procedures than medium school divisions. These data are found in Appendix D.

Medium size school systems on average did not use as many "best practices" as large systems. Medium sized systems used seven more "best practices" than small systems in characteristics compared. Only one reportable difference of ten percent or greater, "a formal pre-conference is held", was found in crosstabulating medium size with small systems. Small systems reported higher utilization of best practices than medium size systems in three areas. None of these differences were reportable at ten percent variance. These data are found in Appendix D.

Expenditures per child in Average Daily Attendance (ADM) was the measure used as a proxy for wealth of school systems in this study. Crosstabulation of the survey results revealed that higher expenditure school systems were more likely to employ "best practices" evaluation procedures. Although the high expenditure systems reported a higher percentage of best practice procedures (in nine of twelve characteristics compared), only three items met the test of "reportable difference" of ten percent variance. Over ten percent variance was reported in "job description used in evaluation," "review of artifacts/ products in evaluation," and "on-the-job observation part of evaluation." In addition, high expenditure divisions reported two best practices, "formal pre-conference" and "evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals", used more frequently (>10%) than medium expenditure school divisions and in one case, "Superintendent has a job description", compared to low expenditure school divisions. These data are found in Appendix E.

A higher percentage of average per pupil expenditure school systems reported using "best practices" than poor systems. Average expenditure systems had a higher percentage reported in four practices. Two of these four practices, "evaluation procedures outlined in contract," and "superintendent has a job description," were reported at above the ten percent level. Average per pupil expenditure systems had no reportable variances over high expenditure systems. Low expenditure systems reported a higher incidence than average wealth systems in three practices. Two were reportable: "a formal pre-conference is held" and "evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals." Low expenditure systems had no reportable differences when compared with high expenditure systems.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to present a summary of the study and concluding statements. This summary is provided in four sections. The purpose of the study is outlined in section one. The research methodology used in the study is presented in section two. Section three contains a summary of the findings of the study. Concluding statements are found in the fourth section.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study were threefold. The first purpose was to describe the policies and procedures currently in place in the Commonwealth of Virginia for evaluating the superintendent in Virginia's school divisions. The second purpose was to examine and compare the evaluation practices reported by the superintendent with those considered "best practices" nationally as developed from a review of the literature. The last purpose of the study was to determine whether Virginia school superintendent evaluation policies and procedures vary based on the selected variables of size and wealth of the school divisions. Finally, a purpose was to determine

whether there had been changes in superintendent evaluation in Virginia since 1991.

Methodology

The study population consisted of the one hundred thirty public school superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study was conducted by reviewing the literature, constructing a survey instrument for data collection, acquiring responses from the population, and reporting and interpreting the data.

Ninety-five percent (N = 123) of Virginia's superintendents participated in the study. The high participation rate was achieved by mailing all one hundred thirty superintendents the survey form (Appendix A), a cover letter (Appendix B) explaining the study, and a self-addressed return envelope. A second contact was made by sending another survey form fifteen days later containing the same contents to non-respondents. These two contacts resulted in a ninety-one percent (N = 118) return of the survey. Non-respondents to the second request were contacted and interviewed by telephone. The calls resulted in adding four percent (N = 5) of the population to the data base. Frequencies and percentages were calculated and reported for all respondents. Seven superintendents were unwilling or unavailable for participation in the study.

Summary of Findings

A review of the literature reveals that the public has increasing interest in education and is demanding more accountability from school boards and superintendents. Evaluation of the superintendent on a regular basis is one of the critical tasks which must be performed by school boards to address accountability to the public.

"Best practice" in superintendent evaluation is founded on the principle that superintendents are evaluated by their school boards on a regular and formal basis. The evaluations are guided and conducted by school boards using written policies and procedures designed specifically for the purpose of superintendent evaluation.

A comparison of the recommended best practices with Virginia superintendents' responses to the survey and the 1991 Suggs survey follows:

1. Superintendents in Virginia report that they are evaluated at a relatively high rate and a large majority report annual evaluation of their performance. Ninety-three percent (N = 115) report that they are evaluated and ninety-four percent (N = 108) of superintendents who report performance evaluation were evaluated at least once a year. Suggs found that eighty-five percent (N = 110) were evaluated and seventy-eight percent (N = 86) were evaluated on an annual basis.

2. Virginia school boards conduct evaluations of the superintendent based on written policies that give structure and direction to the process. Most school boards have written policies governing evaluation of the superintendent. Seventy-six percent (N = 87) of the one hundred fifteen superintendents who reported that they are evaluated stated that their evaluation is based on written policies.

3. Evaluation procedures are outlined in the contract of most superintendents. Eighty-four percent (N = 97) of superintendents in Virginia who reported that they are evaluated reported these procedures are included in their contract. Suggs (1991) reported only forty-five percent (N = 59) of the one hundred thirty superintendents had procedures outlined in their contract.

4. An evaluation instrument is used in the evaluation process of ninety-seven percent (N = 111) of superintendents in Virginia.

5. A job description was reported by ninety-two percent (N = 106) of superintendents yet only fifty-two percent (N = 60) reported the job description used in their evaluation. Suggs reported eighty-four percent (N = 93) of superintendents had a job description and sixty-four percent (N = 60) reported its use in the evaluation process.

6. School boards in Virginia are still lacking in training in evaluation of the superintendent. Almost half of superintendents (N = 54) reported that their school boards had no training in evaluation prior to performing

evaluation of the superintendent. The Suggs survey reported twelve percent (N = 13) of school boards had received training in evaluation.

7. Superintendents who serve in large school divisions or serve in a division with higher per pupil expenditure are more likely to have best practices used in their evaluation. These results are similar to the Suggs survey.

Conclusions

Public school superintendent evaluation conducted by school boards in Virginia is perceived as good when compared with recommended best practices. The data collected from the survey confirm that school boards in Virginia in the majority of school divisions evaluate the superintendent and the number of divisions who evaluate the superintendent is increasing. The majority of superintendents in Virginia are evaluated at least annually and the number is increasing.

The majority of school boards are using a high percentage of best practices when evaluating the superintendent. The quality of superintendent evaluation by school boards in Virginia in 1995 is perceived as good as opposed to moderate in 1991 Suggs study. The existence of written policies and procedures that govern the evaluation process gives direction for this important responsibility of the school board.

If effective and meaningful evaluation of the superintendent is to be conducted, school boards must have training in evaluation. School boards who have received training in superintendent evaluation represent slightly more than half of the school divisions.

Recommendations

1. Since a similar study was conducted in 1991, best practices in superintendent evaluation in Virginia have increased. A study should be initiated to ask school boards the questions asked superintendents in this survey for verification.

2. Research should be conducted to determine the relationship between the use of best practices in superintendent evaluation and the success of the school division using established criteria.

3. Virginia school boards and superintendents need to be provided the following services:

a. Cooperatively developed criteria by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) for superintendent evaluation in Virginia.

b. Training for school boards in Virginia in the proper use of criteria and procedures in superintendent evaluation.

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APPENDIX A

Division Code _____

Superintendent's Evaluation Policies and Procedures
in the Public School Divisions in Virginia

Instructions: Please respond to each of the questions by checking the best answer. Use the space provided to explain answers where applicable. Please answer all questions and do not obtain assistance from a school board member. Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

1. Are you evaluated by your school board?

Yes _____
No _____

2. Does your division have a written policy* for evaluation of the superintendent?

Yes _____
No _____

*If you have a written policy, please send it to me with the return of the survey.

3. Does your division have written procedures* for evaluating the superintendent?

Yes _____
No _____

*If you have written procedures, please include a copy with the return of the survey.

If the answers to question 1, 2, and 3 are no, or do not know, please stop here and return the questionnaire.

4. Is there an evaluation instrument that is used?

Yes _____
No _____

5. Is a formal conference held with the board and superintendent to establish the goals and the evaluation criteria at the beginning of the evaluation cycle?

Yes _____
No _____

6. Is the superintendent's evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals?

Yes _____
No _____

7. Are the procedures for the superintendent evaluation outlined in the superintendent's contract?

Yes _____
No _____

8. Does the superintendent have a written job description?

Yes _____
No _____

9. If the answer to question 5 is YES, is your evaluation based on the job descriptions?

Yes _____
No _____

10. Did your school board receive training prior to conducting the superintendent's evaluation?

Yes _____
No _____

If yes, explain _____

11. Was your evaluation developed by: (Check all that apply.)

- Superintendent _____
- Chairman of School Board _____
- Members of School Board _____
- Consultants _____
- Parents _____
- Teachers _____
- Others (specify) _____

12. Check all who provided input into the evaluation of the Superintendent and rank the importance of each. (Most important to least important: (1 is most, 10 least))

	<u>Provides Input</u>	<u>Rank Importance</u>
School Board Members	_____	_____
Superintendent	_____	_____
Principals	_____	_____
Central Office Personnel	_____	_____
Teachers	_____	_____
Students	_____	_____
Bd of Super/City Council	_____	_____
Consultants	_____	_____
Community	_____	_____
Others	_____	_____

13. Is Self-Evaluation part of the process?

- Yes _____
- No _____

14. In some school divisions a superintendent's evaluation may include the review of products/artifacts (e.g. newsletters, publications and/or presentations to the board or community). Are such data formally included in your evaluation procedures?

- Yes _____
- No _____

If yes, explain: _____

15. Are on-the-job observations of the superintendent a part of the evaluation procedures?

Yes _____
No _____

16. The Superintendent's Evaluation procedure is conducted:

Semi-Annually _____
Annually _____
Bi-Annually _____
Other (Explain) _____

17. Is a formal conference held with the superintendent after the evaluation cycle has been completed?

Yes _____
No _____

18. Length of time in your PRESENT position as superintendent.

Number of years _____

19. Please provide other comments you would like to make which would be helpful in describing the superintendent's evaluation process in your school division. Please use the back of this page for your comments.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Comments:

APPENDIX B

R. Joseph Adams, Jr.
3324 Ridge Road
Quinton, VA 23141
May 12, 1995

Dear Superintendent:

As part of my doctoral program at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech), I am researching the topic of "Superintendent Evaluation." This research has the support of Virginia Department of Education, The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), and Virginia Tech.

The attached questionnaire will provide valuable data about superintendent evaluation procedures across the Commonwealth of Virginia. It should take approximately ten (10) minutes to complete the survey.

The information you provide will be used solely for the purposes of this study. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses are assured. The code number in the upper right corner of the survey is for purposes of this study or follow-up only.

Please return the questionnaire with your comments by **May 29, 1995**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is included for your convenience.

Thank you in advance for your assistance, time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

R. Joseph Adams, Jr.
Superintendent
New Kent County Schools

Enclosure

APPENDIX C

Superintendent Evaluation Matrix

A Crosstabulation Matrix of the nationally selected fourteen (14) attributes considered "best practice" from nationally published authors and writings.

"Best Practices"	ERS 1989	Redfern 1980	NSBA 1982	AASA 1982	Levine 1991	Anderson 1990	Myers 1989	Weiskittel 1988
The board evaluates	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The board has written policy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
There is a formal pre-conference	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Goals are mutually agreed upon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
There is a written job description	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluation is based on the written job description	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The board trained prior to evaluation	X	X	X	X		X		X
Evaluation occurs at least annually	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development of evaluation based on input by the board	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development based on input by chairperson	X	X	X	X				X
Development based on input by superintendent	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development based on input by parents			X	X			X	X
Development based on input by teachers			X				X	
Development based on input by consultants		X		X		X		X

"Best Practices"	ERS 1989	Redfern 1980	NSBA 1982	AASA 1982	Levine 1991	Anderson 1990	Myers 1989	Weiskittel 1988
Evaluation input includes:								
members of the board	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
chairperson	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
superintendent	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
teachers		X	X					
students	X	X	X				X	
community			X				X	
consultants	X		X	X				
Evaluation includes a formal post-conference	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX D

Percentages of Virginia Superintendents Who Reported Yes Responses to Questions on Survey Based on Average Daily Membership (ADM)

Survey Questions	Students in ADM			
	Below 2601	2601-5100	5100 and up	Average
(N = 123)*	(N = 51)	(N = 31)	(N = 41)	
The board evaluates	86	93	100	93
Board has a written policy	65	66	83	71
Board has written procedures	60	67	93	73
(N = 115)**	(N = 46)	(N = 28)	(N = 41)	
Board uses an evaluation instrument	92	98	100	97
A formal pre-conference is held	50	68	81	66
Evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals	72	69	83	75
Evaluation procedures outlined in contract	59	63	66	63
Superintendent has a job description	85	91	100	92
Job description used in evaluation	56	53	72	60
School board trained in evaluation	49	53	58	53

Survey Questions	Students in ADM			
	Below 2601	2601-5100	5100 and up	Average
Superintendent evaluation developed by				
Superintendent	63	67	75	68
Chairperson	12	21	23	19
School Board	69	59	58	62
Consultants	5	6	13	8
Others	3	6	6	5
Input into superintendent evaluation				
School Board	100	100	100	100
Principals	5	11	9	8
Central Office	4	8	6	6
Teachers	2	4	3	3
Superintendent	71	79	81	77
Students	2	0	2	2
Consultants	1	3	2	2
Community	2	4	3	3
Self-evaluation superintendent	49	56	62	56
Review of artifacts/products in evaluation	44	49	61	51
On-the-job observation part of evaluation	59	53	65	59
Evaluation frequency:				
Annually	93	98	92	94
Semi-annually	2	1	6	3
Biannually	5	1	0	2
Other	0	0	2	1
Formal post-conference	100	100	100	100

* Total respondents

** Respondents who evaluate

APPENDIX E

Percentages of Virginia Superintendents Who Reported Yes Responses to Questions on Survey Based on Expenditures Per Pupil in Average Daily Membership (ADM)

Survey Questions	Expenditures Per Student in ADM			
	Below \$4699	\$4700-5199	\$5200 and up	Average
(N = 123)*	(N = 41)	(N = 40)	(N = 42)	
The board evaluates	93	86	100	93
Board has a written policy	65	66	82	71
Board has written procedures	63	68	88	73
(N = 115)**	(N = 37)	(N = 37)	(N = 41)	
Board uses an evaluation instrument	95	95	100	97
A formal pre-conference is held	70	51	78	66
Evaluation based on mutually agreed upon goals	77	64	83	75
Evaluation procedures outlined in contract	54	68	66	63
Superintendent has a job description	82	94	100	92
Job description used in evaluation	56	56	69	60
School board trained in evaluation	53	50	55	53

Survey Questions	Expenditures Per Student in ADM			
	Below \$4699	\$4700-5199	\$5200 and up	Average
Superintendent evaluation developed by				
Superintendent	60	68	77	68
Chairperson	12	18	25	19
School Board	66	58	62	62
Consultants	3	5	16	8
Others	2	7	6	5
Input into superintendent evaluation				
School Board	100	100	100	100
Principals	5	11	9	8
Central Office	4	8	6	6
Teachers	2	4	3	3
Superintendent	71	79	81	77
Students	2	0	2	2
Consultants	1	3	2	2
Community	2	4	3	3
Self-evaluation superintendent	49	56	64	56
Review of artifacts/products in evaluation	44	49	61	51
On-the-job observation part of evaluation	55	55	67	59
Evaluation frequency:				
Annually	95	93	95	94
Semi-annually	2	4	3	3
Biannually	3	1	0	2
Other	0	2	2	1
Formal post-conference	100	100	100	100

* Total respondents

** Respondents who evaluate

VITA

R. Joseph Adams, Jr., was born in Valdosta, Georgia, on August 29, 1942. He is the second son of five sons and one daughter born to R. Joseph Adams, Sr., and Maggie Burnett Adams. He was raised in Madison County, Florida, and graduated from Madison High School in 1960.

Adams attended Mississippi Delta Community College and Mississippi College and received his Bachelor of Science Degree in 1964. He began work in the Stafford County, Virginia, Public School System in 1964 as a teacher and coach. In 1967, he received his Master of Science Degree in school administration from the University of Virginia.

After serving four years as a teacher and coach, Adams became an elementary school principal in Stafford County, a position he held for one year before becoming a middle school principal in Stafford for ten years. In 1979 he accepted the principalship at Franklin County High School in Franklin County, Virginia, where he served eight years. He was named associate superintendent for instruction for Amherst County Public Schools in Amherst, Virginia, in 1987, where he served for one year before being named Superintendent in Nelson County Public Schools in 1988, a position he held for three years.

Adams was appointed Superintendent of Schools in New Kent County, Virginia, in 1991, the position he held until his retirement from public schools in June 1995. He was appointed Academic Dean at Fork Union Military

Academy in Fork Union, Virginia, in July 1995, and currently holds that position. He completed his Doctor of Education Degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1996.

Adams is married to Royce Hall Adams and they have two sons, Kent and Joe, and a daughter, Amy. They live in New Kent County, Virginia.

R. Joseph Adams, Jr.