

# SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS: IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON STUDENT LEARNING

by

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Liberty University

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## ABSTRACT

Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind school systems across America have been searching for the answer to increasing student achievement. Researchers have found many methods of increasing achievement through leadership behaviors, however others have found that superintendents have a very small impact on achievement and proficiency. The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between superintendent leadership behaviors and student proficiency rates in school districts in rural West Virginia. This quantitative, correlational study specifically sought to discover how accurately school proficiency rates could be predicted from a linear combination of superintendent instructional leadership behaviors. Fifty-five school districts in rural West Virginia were the target for this study. Of the 55 districts, a convenience sample of 41 superintendents were used for this study. Superintendents self-ranked their level of emphasis placed on leadership behaviors in the Superintendent Instructional Leadership Survey (SILS) using a five-point Likert Scale. A multiple regression was conducted to determine the correlation between the independent variable (superintendent leadership behaviors) and dependent variable (student proficiency) and found a high level of prediction,  $R=.962, p < .001$ .

*Keywords:* Superintendent leadership behaviors, student proficiency rates, correlation, predict.

### **Dedication**

The completion of this dissertation and journey would not have been possible without the love and support of my family. I would like to thank my parents for showing me time and again that hard work pays off. Without witnessing both of you walking that walk daily when I was growing up, I would not have pushed myself to keep working on this degree. To my husband, Frank, and two sons, Patrick and Cole, thank you for your continuous love and support. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me. Thank you for understanding the many times I was at the table writing instead of being outside with you. Thank you for helping me make this dream come true. My life has truly been blessed and I am thankful God allowed and chose me to be your wife and mom. I love you all and dedicate this work to you.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Superintendent Instructional Leadership Survey (SILS)

Standard Deviation (SD)

Mean (M)

Number (N)

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

This study investigated the relationship between superintendent leadership behaviors that may increase student achievement for public school students in high school. Chapter one begins with background information relating to superintendent leadership and how it evolved through the years with regard to high stakes testing, followed by a historical overview of federal student proficiency requirements and how those affect school districts. The researcher then discusses the theoretical framework, instructional leadership theory. This section is followed by the problem statement, purpose, significance of the study, research questions, and definitions.

### Background

Educators throughout the United States are continually asked to increase student learning and proficiency rates. Rudalevige (2003) explained this pattern of testing began with President Clinton's authorization of *Goals 2000* which began the standards-based testing. These requirements begin at the federal level and are now mandated by *No Child Left Behind* in 2001 and the most recent passage of *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015). The *No Child Left Behind Act* required all students to show adequate yearly progress on standardized tests and required that 100% of students meet grade level proficiency rates by the year 2014. While the Department of Education seeks to find methods to increase achievement, researchers have also found that schools in America are low-achieving in mathematics and reading as compared to schools in many countries around the world as measured by international math and science assessments (Tabernik & Williams, 2010).

The role of the superintendent as the leader of the district school system is critical to students, employees, parents, and the community. The effect superintendents have on learning

has often been found to be a minimal relationship. However, little research exists that links leadership behaviors of superintendents with correlating student proficiency rates. With high stakes testing placing additional pressure on county school systems to improve student achievement, the role of the superintendent as the instructional leader is crucial (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). This problem is important to study because previous research has found that superintendents have little effect on student achievement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011); however, there is little research available specifically examining how superintendents can have a positive impact on proficiency rates among students. Research of effective leadership relations of the superintendent will assist districts in selection of the superintendent as the instructional leader which will ultimately improve school achievement rates.

State superintendents first appeared in New York in 1812 (Knezevich, 1984). As the number of students attending school increased, districts grew to where local boards felt the need to hire local superintendents in addition to state superintendents (Houston, 2007). The first local superintendents appeared by 1837 in Buffalo, NY and Louisville, KY (Knezevich, 1984). Over the next 33 years, more districts followed the path set by Buffalo and Louisville. By 1870, thirty larger school districts now had superintendents, according to Knezevich. Superintendents during this time were viewed as father figures who had positive, respectful relationships with their communities.

By the year 1910, the Industrial Revolution had changed the importance of managerial skills in many industries throughout the country. The focus also shifted school superintendent's focus to managerial skills (Knezevich, 2003). These early years showcased superintendents who fulfilled the roles of overseeing budgets, facilities, and day-to-day operations of the school

systems (Houston, 2007). Superintendents during this era fulfilled the roles of managers on a daily basis.

The 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) pushed superintendents to further school reform for educational excellence and increased the pressure on superintendents. This document connected education to the security of the nation and highlighted that the United States of America was in danger due to a failing education system (1983).

Marzano and Waters (2009) found the role of the superintendent during the 1990's looked different from previous years. This time period is known for the increased pressure to use student test data to set district goals for improvement. The district accountability measures became specified and made the role of the superintendent more demanding than ever before. As the superintendency became more complex, the community became more dissatisfied with public education systems and removed superintendent authority (Houston, 2007). Teacher unions furthered the opposition toward superintendents, as union membership continued to increase, furthering the blame on superintendents for district shortcomings (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

According to the *Eighth Survey and Report of Urban School Superintendents* (2014), of the 53 superintendents surveyed, the average tenure was 3.18 years, with 21% having been in office for five or more years. Of those surveyed, 57% had less than five years experience in their current position. Of those superintendents, 92% are held accountable by the school board and 4% are held accountable by the mayor or other form of government official. Seeing that the greatest majority of superintendents are held accountable by the school board and that most superintendents' have limited tenure, it is vitally important to seek those characteristics that help both superintendents and boards be successful and tenure to be increased. Although the role of

the superintendent has drastically changed over time and the requirement for schools to meet proficiency benchmarks has drastically increased, the study of the effect superintendents have on these proficiency rates is lacking.

### **Historical Overview**

Public education systems originated in the 1600's and have evolved and transformed over the decades since the time of origination (Kowalski, 2013). The achievement of public schools in the United States first became under fire with the 1957 launch of Sputnik by the Russian government (Houston, 2007). This event created a public outcry for improvement of the public school system and created the need for legislative changes. Sputnik was followed by the Civil Rights movement, Women's Rights movement, and Disability Rights movement (Houston, 2007), all of which shaped educational policies into what they are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

George W. Bush, President at the time of enactment, was passionate about the importance of educating the youth and raising expectations, as had previous leaders of the country. His ideals of strong federal policy on education came about as he sought to invest in the leaders of tomorrow (Rudalevige, 2003). Federal administration felt children are the future of the country and some of the neediest children were being left behind, according to *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015). This legislation provided more information for parents on their child's learning and also provided reports for the community, allowing them to know how the schools are performing.

Since the enactment of this legislation, districts and schools have been searching for the answer to meeting the stringent requirements. According to the U.S. Department of Education *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015), the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 requirements can be waived in exchange for the state's documentation of providing plans to "improve educational

outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction”.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 came about as a result of the nation’s continued dissatisfaction with public education systems (Houston, 2007). *No Child Left Behind* placed emphasis on hiring highly qualified teachers and narrowed the accountability of student learning, increasing the burden on the already complex roles fulfilled by district superintendents. Superintendents then and today are charged with ensuring all pieces of the complex jigsaw puzzle of public education are working together, providing education for students. Kowalski (2006) further found today’s superintendents must be skilled in making continuous improvement decisions based student data received throughout the course of the school year. Houston found that the success of current superintendents requires collaboration and maintenance of community relationships, while Moody (2011) found the greatest challenge of today is renewing community and national commitment to education.

### **Social Overview**

School systems are under accountability pressure to improve student learning (Thompson, Templeton, & Ballenger, 2013). Districts, however, are often unable to show improvements in student proficiency due to the culture created through the apprehensive leadership relationship between the board and superintendent (Moody, 2011). Communities are continuously affected by the high stakes testing and reporting of proficiency data. The large amounts of time spent on testing students was reported as one of the factors parents consider when determining what school system their children will attend (Fusarelli, 2006).

McCarthy (2002) conducted a nationwide survey and found that community influences the school board and superintendent relations. McCarthy (2002) also found that communities

impact superintendent roles in the district. The survey was meant to examine the power configurations of boards and how superintendents perceived them. The top three roles for superintendents were acting as a professional advisor, working collaboratively with the board and adapt to changes in board politics, and decision maker.

Federal Department of Education requirements to states directed state leaders to make decisions for public education that has high-stakes consequences (Cantu, 2000). Cantu also found that when tests are not used appropriately for students, it creates disconnect with high standards for learning and voids equal opportunity. Superintendents then must find the balance between making the correct decisions to meet state and federal requirements, meeting the needs of students, and meeting the demands of communities (Fusarelli, 2006).

The expected superintendent characteristics were studied by Copeland (2013) as were the community expectations for superintendents of small districts and found superintendents wear five hats and those are manager, planner, communicator, and community involvement. Community involvement includes attending service organization meeting and events, church attendance, and attending parent events, in addition to ballgames and school events, according to Copeland (2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study will be guided by the instructional leadership theory which came about in the 1970's in poor school districts when despite the circumstances at the schools, student achievement was high. An instructional leader is one who removes distractions from the culture, sets clearly understood teaching objectives, and increases teacher expectations of students (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). When compared to transformational leadership, instructional leadership was found to have four times a larger effect on student achievement, according to



Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe. An instructional leader remains focused on teaching and learning, devoting the most time to this area within the school. Assumptions of this leadership theory are that the leader remains informed of effective instructional practices and monitors their implementation (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This leader also focused on a continuous process of aligned curriculum and instruction based on standards and assessments aligned to the standards. Data analysis and professional development for teachers based on the data analysis are important to the instructional leader.

In a study conducted by Grohoski (2009), superintendents ranked instructional leadership more important to student achievement than did school board presidents. Waters and Marzano (2006) found five effective leadership behaviors for the instructional leader that include: collaborative goal setting, non-negotiable achievement and instruction goals, support from the school board for district goals, continual student achievement progress monitoring, and the necessity for aligning resources to accomplish goals. Superintendents who are instructional leaders must interpret data and explain achievement as compared to other districts for boards to interpret student achievement (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005).

This study will focus on the theory of the superintendent as the instructional leader. The instructional leader's goal should be to create a system that is effective for student learning (Crankshaw, 2011). One of the most difficult tasks for the instructional leader is removing distractions from the schools (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). It is often difficult for superintendents to be effective instructional leaders due to being far removed from the classroom and instruction environment (Grohoski, 2009). As the chief instructional leader, school superintendents should focus on the vision and cultures that increase achievement (Butcher, 2014).

This study attempts to determine those leadership characteristics of superintendents that correlate to increased school proficiency among public school districts in West Virginia. The focus of research in the area of superintendent leadership behaviors can lead to a better understanding of how superintendents can assist schools with increasing student proficiency, thus increasing the school proficiency rating.

### **Problem Statement**

Previous research has focused solely on school principal leadership and the relation to student proficiency rates for the school. There is little research available specifically examining how superintendents can have a positive impact on proficiency rates among students. The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between superintendent leadership behaviors and student proficiency rates. Specifically, this study will seek to determine what leadership behaviors correlate to increased student proficiency rates. Kowalski (2006) found that while there are superintendents who have become successful in fulfilling the demands of the position, many have not which creates a continuous search for the right superintendent for many districts.

Wilson (2006) found little research exists on leadership behaviors of superintendents, while Butcher (2014) recommended a national research study to study superintendent leadership behaviors. With little research existing on the actual leadership behaviors of superintendents, even less research is available on how those superintendent leadership behaviors affect student proficiency. There is limited research in the area of leadership behaviors among superintendents that predict increases in proficiency rates. Continued research in the area of superintendent leadership behaviors that correlate to increased proficiency rates can clarify requirements for superintendent training programs and hiring requirements for school boards. Findings from this study will also be beneficial to both school boards and superintendents as they work to determine

how to increase proficiency rates. The problem is there is a lack of research that has examined the correlation between superintendent leadership behaviors and student proficiency rates in West Virginia.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to determine if superintendent leadership behaviors could predict increased school proficiency rates among the 55 public school districts in West Virginia. The independent variable being studied was the superintendent leadership behaviors and the dependent variable is student proficiency rates. Leadership behavior is defined as individual elements of the expectations of the superintendent as they relate to job performance (Callan & Levison, 2011). School proficiency, the dependent variable, is defined as schools receiving a ranking of *Meets Standard* or higher on the West Virginia Accountability System (*West Virginia Department of Education, 2017*). The target population are superintendents from the 55 school districts in West Virginia, with a convenience sample of those 41 superintendents who responded to the request to participate in the study.

This study seeks to determine if there is a difference between the leadership characteristics of the superintendent and student proficiency rates by completing a multiple regression study. This quantitative correlational study was created to measure leadership behaviors of superintendents (independent variable) that predict increased school proficiency rates (dependent variable). Superintendent leadership behaviors will include items self-ranked on a Likert Scale in the areas of instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction. This study will involve collecting data from each superintendent on the top leadership behaviors, comparing that to

district rankings, and determining differences between superintendent leadership behaviors that affect student proficiency.

### **Significance of the Study**

Prior research related to leadership behaviors has often focused on principal leadership that affects student proficiency. This study is significant to the field for superintendents, board members, and professors leading courses for superintendent certifications. It is also a significant study to the field of student learning. Much research exists on leadership skills (Hackman & Johnson, 2009). Wilson (2006) studied effective leadership behaviors for superintendents while Butcher (2014) studied the perception of effective leadership behaviors as viewed by superintendents and board presidents. Although numerous studies have been conducted on leadership behaviors, little research has been conducted correlating these behaviors to school proficiency.

In addition to benefitting organizations that train superintendents, this study may provide a better understanding of leadership traits boards should look for in candidates that increase student proficiency. Findings from this study can enhance current research by studying the required leadership behaviors superintendents need to be successful instructional leaders (Butcher, 2014). Butcher also found this type of research can assist school boards in filling chief instructional leader vacancies and properly evaluating superintendents.

Most importantly, this study is significant for superintendents and boards who are already in the profession. A better understanding of what successful boards should seek in a superintendent can increase the superintendent's ability to meet the demands of the board, thus remaining in the profession for an extended time. After all, Callan and Levison (2011) found

superintendents fail due to a lack of preparation and appropriate leadership behaviors to be successful.

### **Research Question**

This quantitative study sought to discover what superintendent leadership behaviors predict increases in school proficiency and answer the following question:

**RQ1:** How accurately can school proficiency rates be predicted from a linear combination of superintendent instructional leadership behaviors?

### **Definitions**

Key terms pertinent to this study are listed and defined below.

1. *District School Board* – The official body established in state code and elected by the citizens of a school district to serve as the governing body of a local school district (Butcher, 2014).
2. *School District* - The single district of public schools located within a given county; there are 55 county school districts in West Virginia (Butcher, 2014).
3. *Superintendent* - The chief executive of a school district employed by a district board of education to lead the day-to-day operations of a school district (Butcher, 2014).
4. *Leadership* – The ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of an organization or group (Bass, 1985).
5. *Leadership behaviors* – Individual elements of the expectations of the superintendent as they relate to job performance (Callan & Levison, 2011).

6. *School proficiency* – Schools receiving a ranking of *Meets Standard* or higher on the West Virginia Accountability System (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Chapter two begins with the theoretical framework that guides this study; instructional leadership theory. This theory is also compared and contrasted to other popular leadership theories from today. The focus then turns to the related literature, which begins with the history of school districts and how the position of the superintendent came into existence. The literature review then looks at traditional leadership behaviors which include communication, vision, moral and ethical behaviors, and virtues (Butcher, 2014) and how those should be integrated in with instructional leadership behaviors that include instructional planning, staffing, organizing for instruction, and human resource development (Neely, 2001). This section also presents research on how superintendents effectively hire the right employees and increase their skills and assist with advancement of teaching careers. The chapter concludes with a summary, discussing gaps in the literature that this study intends to address, which seeks to determine if instructional leadership behaviors that superintendents possess relate to student achievement performance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This proposed study was based upon the instructional leadership theory, which first originated in the 1970's and has been found to have great effects on student learning (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This theory is often related directly to principals although superintendent leadership has been found to make a difference in the success of educational programs and increased student learning (Chand, 1988). An instructional leader is directly involved in issues that affect student learning, including curriculum and instruction (Cotton, 2003). Those key personnel included as instructional leaders include: central office directors, superintendents, directors, coordinators, school principals, and instructional coaches, according

to Cotton (2003). Those leaders who operate under the instructional leadership theory make learning the top priority and this is demonstrated by spending the most time and resources on learning.

The instructional leader focuses on instructional resources by ensuring teaching materials and funds are available to perform duties; by being a resource provider and supporting instructional activities and modeling behaviors; by being a communicator of goals; and is a visible presence in the classroom and school (Crankshaw, 2011). Smith and Andrews (1989), however, found the instructional leader to be one who provides resources, assesses instruction, communicates goals, and creates a positive learning climate.

Instructional leaders attend professional development sessions in efforts to remain informed and focused during class monitoring (Cotton, 2003). These leaders work hard to align curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments. According to Hallinger and Heck (1996), the relationship between an instructional leader at the central office and achievement is often affected by school-level factors such as school climate and job satisfaction. Marks and Printy (2003), however, found instructional leadership accounts for higher academic gains for student achievement than transformational leadership.

### **Transformational vs. Instructional Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership is a leadership theory in which organizational goals are achieved through motivation and increasing self-values of employees, seemingly different from instructional leadership models (Ross & Gray, 2006). These leaders articulate the vision and motivate by being an example, and they provide support to staff members (Leithwood, 1994). The variables within transformational leadership include intellectual stimulation of members, organizational vision, and individual consideration. To be effective, this leadership theory



changes the organizational culture, according to Ross and Gray. In a test of transformational leadership for public school grades three through six, Ross and Gray found that transformational leadership only had an effect on student achievement when administrators made contributions to teacher capacities, values, and efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006). Another finding of this study was that when an administrator uses transformational leadership, they improve teacher commitment to the school and student achievement.

While transformational leaders are the best for change and creating a positive environment, they have an indirect effect, or lesser effect, on student learning (Cotton, 2003). Transformational leaders differ from instructional leaders in several ways. Transformational leaders are considered bottom-up leaders with a focus on a common vision and instructional leaders are considered top-down leaders with a focus on changes through curriculum (Leithwood, 1994). Instructional leaders can, however, be transformational by rewarding staff for accomplishing learning goals. Even though the transformational leaders can create consensus among staff, they are never viewed as an instructional leader (Leithwood, 1994). Fullan (2005), however, found the leader who is a combination of the instructional and transformational leader builds the most capacity in teachers.

### **Organic vs. Instructional Leadership Theory**

One of the popular leadership theories often studied is organic leadership, which is a style of leadership in which employees are involved in making decisions (Miller & Rowan, 2006). This leadership theory was originally developed by Burns and Stocker, who were British theorists who studied flexible leadership theories that adjust well to change (Johnson & Crow, 2017). Employees under this leadership style work together, as a network, to support coworkers and administrators to achieve organizational goals. This leadership theory was originally used in

factories for line workers, but was crossed over to public schools and studied to determine the effects on learning. When studied at the primary and secondary level, no significant effect was found on student achievement with variables including staff cooperation and supportive leadership (Miller & Rowan, 2006). Teacher control was the only variable of organic leadership which was found to have an effect on reading and math, but only at the secondary level.

The reason for this leadership theory having little effect on student achievement may come from some of the structures of organic leadership. This leadership theory is based on little job specialization, decentralized decision making, and little direct supervision (Johnson & Crow, 2017) as compared to instructional leadership which focus on improving student learning by influencing curriculum and instruction through direct supervision of the working conditions of the school (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Instructional leaders, on the contrary, who focus on the content teachers present in addition to the working environment have the greatest impact on student learning (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010), whereas organic leaders have few rules, vague responsibilities, and few duties in which result in little effect on student learning (Johnson & Crow, 2017).

### **Transactional vs. Instructional Leadership Theory**

Transactional leadership theory is a leadership theory in which focuses mainly on managing the organization (Ross & Gray, 2006). This type of leadership was discovered by Max Weber in 1947. Transactional leaders believe employees are motivated by rewards or punishments, are not self-motivated, and employees believe they must obey leader orders (Ross & Gray, 2006). Leaders who are transactional leaders, do not have to change the culture of the organization to be effective. While this leadership theory is popular for industry leaders, Ross

and Gray do not recommend this method of school leaders. In their study, they found no impact on student achievement when using transactional leadership.

Lamb (2013) found that transactional leaders make clear the expectations and consequences or rewards of meeting expectations or not. While instructional leadership focuses directly on affecting and improving student achievement, transactional leaders focus on getting the job done (Lamb, 2013). The instructional leader maintains teaching and learning at the top of the priority list while the transactional leader prioritizes watching employees to reward for achieving goals or steering them back on course through punishment if the goal is not met (Sheahan, 2017). Transactional leadership has been found most beneficial in industries where work is predictable and repeatable (Amanchukwa, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015) while instructional leadership is most beneficial in schools where the leader maintains focus on the goal of improving student learning (Jenkins, 2009). The instructional leader focuses on teaching and learning goals and frees themselves of the organizational, managerial tasks (Jenkins, 2009).

### **Collective vs. Instructional Leadership Theory**

Collective leadership theory assumes that a group of individuals collect or come together to bring about change (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). A collective leader focuses on collaboration and relationships while the group envisions the goal and shapes their decisions to achieve the desired results. When the faculty of a school focus on the school as a unit, teachers will have a positive impact on student achievement, which includes focusing on the mission, professional learning communities, and the public community around the school (Ross & Gray, 2006). When Leithwood and Mascall researched the effects of collective leadership on student achievement, they included teacher capacity, motivation, and work setting. The variables studied were compared to student achievement, and the researchers found that work setting and

motivation were significantly related to student achievement, while collective leadership as a whole had a less yet still significant impact on student achievement.

Collective leadership theory and instructional leadership theory have some similarities. A collective leader focuses on what the school should be and shape their actions to produce those results (Ospina & Hittleman, 2011) while the instructional leader maintains focus on the goal of improving student achievement and focuses their attention on aligning curriculum and instruction to achieve this goal (Cotton, 2003). A collective leader also provides conditions for groups to be motivated toward goal achievement (Ross & Gray, 2006) and the instructional leader provides time for professional learning communities to discuss student data and effective instruction (Sheaham, 2017). The difference of the theories lies in the focus of the goals with the instructional leader focused solely on improving learning and the collective leader focuses on change (Ross & Gray, 2006).

### **Servant vs. Instructional Leadership Theory**

Servant leadership theory was introduced in 1970 by Robert Greenleaf who stated this form of leadership began with the leader seeking first to be a servant of others (Spears, 2010). Servant leadership involves others in decisions by showing them caring and ethical behavior, while enhancing co-worker's personal growth as related to the organization. A servant leader displays listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment, and community. Listening involves hearing what is being said and unsaid, as well as hearing the leader's inner voice (Spears, 2010). Empathy involves understanding and empathizing with others, accepting each individual's specialty and uniqueness. Awareness characteristics are those that strengthen the leader by understanding ethics, power, and values, according to Spears.

Conceptualization is similar to vision in that the leader looks far beyond the present and uses persuasion to convince others through consensus building.

As a servant leader, stewardship becomes extremely important in the school system as it relates to taking care of things that belong to others (Spears, 2010). Servant leaders build communities by committing themselves to the growth of people within the organization, including teachers and students. The servant leader's focus is on employee development with the highest priority being maximizing creativity and initiative of employees (Douglas, 2005), while the focus of the instructional leader maintains teaching and learning as the top priority (Lashway, 2002). The instructional leader also focuses on improving student achievement through data analysis and continuous learning for teachers while the servant leader focuses on teamwork and relationship building (Douglas, 2005).

Although there are several leadership theories that have been compared to the instructional leadership theory, the focus of this prospectus is based on the instructional leadership theory. While much research is provided about this theory, the research connects this theory to principal leadership behaviors and leaves a gap in research connecting superintendents to instructional leadership. This gap in the research is further conveyed by the lack of studies and findings connecting superintendent instructional leadership and its relationship to student achievement.

### **Related Literature**

The existing literature on the role of superintendents and their leadership behaviors dates back to the inception of school districts and superintendents. Although the role has evolved over time into one more focused on instruction and less focused on management, research is lacking between effective leadership behaviors of the superintendent that effectively increase student

achievement. As Maxwell (2002) found, the superintendent's leadership ability determines the effectiveness and impact of student learning.

### **School Districts**

A Massachusetts Colony passed the first legislative law in 1642, requiring children be taught to read for religious purposes and also to enable them to read the laws of the land (Cubberley, 1948). This first legislation led to the 1647 law that required towns in excess of fifty residents to hire a teacher, while towns in excess of one hundred residents were to provide grammar school. Grammar schools were put in place to prepare children for attendance at a university.

The Massachusetts law of 1789 provided the first oversight of the school system by a school committee (Knezevich, 1984). This law also created the first thought of schools being the responsibility of the state. Although these were the first laws of their kind, they began the pathway to the current system of education in place today, including school boards.

With 14,320 school districts in the United States that serve an average of 2,200 students, and nearly 80,000 board members, 60% of which are male and 40% are female, there remains much room for research in the areas of educating students and how this is affected by superintendent leadership behaviors (Glass, 1992).

### **Superintendent Leadership**

The leadership role of superintendents has arguably been one of the most important within a public school district, falling third to teachers and principals who rank first and second respectively to the greatest impact on student learning (Glass, 2002). Zimmerman (2000) found that superintendent's instructional leadership is vital to student achievement and district success. Waters and Marzano (2006) also found that effective leaders positively affect student

achievement, which makes the study of effective leadership characteristics one of utmost importance. With the complex, demanding, stressful, and controversial role of the superintendent (Zimmerman, 2000) being coupled with increasing demands to improve student achievement, it is important to study the leadership characteristics that correlate to increased school proficiency rates. While there are many leadership theories that impact school leaders, this chapter will discuss the most researched leadership theories and their relation to this study.

A study conducted on superintendent instructional leadership behaviors found 90% of superintendents believed the district-level leaders should provide direction for the district on curriculum and instruction (Russonello & Stewart, 2005). Of those 90%, Russonello and Stewart (2005) further found 56% of those superintendents reported instructional decisions are made most often at the district-level rather than the school-level and 75% reported the district is making these decision as a direct result of No Child Left Behind accountability requirements. Although the No Child Left Act forced superintendents to become more involved with instructional decisions, 93% of superintendents surveyed believe they should play a more active role in guiding instruction than the district did prior to the Act (Russonello & Stewart, 2005).

According to President Obama's 2011 White House Address, American students rank 25<sup>th</sup> out of thirty in math and 21<sup>st</sup> out of 30 in science proficiency when compared to other developed countries (White House, 2011). Much research and literature exists focused on leadership theories and their relation to success. As district school systems continuously search for methods of increasing student achievement, it is important to analyze various leadership theories and their effectiveness.

Varying opinions exist on the extent that leadership affects learning. Ross and Gray (2006) found district leadership has an insignificant direct effect on learning while Kruger,

Witziers and Slegers (2007) found leadership has no direct impact on student learning. Waters and Marzano (2006), however, found leadership has a strong impact on student achievement, as did Dulewics and Higgs (2003). Researchers Cuban (1984) and Bridges (1982) found academic success was a direct result of superintendent instructional leadership while Murphy et al. (1985) found districts with excellent student achievement are directly tied to superintendents who are instructional leaders and are involved with curriculum and instructional programming.

Stephen Covey has written books and conducted studies entitled, “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”, “The Leader in Me”, and “The Speed of Trust”, all related to leadership. Covey (1989) found that effective leaders are proactive and begin with the end in mind, which relates to a collective leadership style. Effective leaders seek to understand before being understood, think in terms of win/win, synergize, and sharpen their saws. The phrase sharpen their saws means preserving the greatest asset which is the leader himself (Covey, 1989). No matter the leadership method, the effectiveness of a leader is the degree to which goals are achieved (Vojta, 2013).

District leadership from the superintendent has a significant correlation to student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006), much the same as Dulewics and Higgs (2003) found that leadership influences performance. Today’s superintendent must be ready to implement initiatives to increase proficiency rates and improve the growing expectations of the community (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Superintendents are increasingly being held accountable for the performance of students in their districts. While many factors determine the success of the superintendent and achievement of students, Gerhardt (2002) found that there is a positive correlation between the personality of the superintendent and their leadership success.



A superintendent must be a leader, manager, teacher, and communicator (Kowalski, 2005), while being most responsible for the mission and vision of the district (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). The superintendent must also be a goal setter for achievement and instruction, align board goals with instructional goals, and monitor progress of those goals, aligning resources to achieve the goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Effective leaders are results-oriented and achievement driven, basing decisions on student achievement goals and outcomes (Gutierrez, Spencer, & Zhu, 2012). Due to the demands of the superintendent position, Glass (2002) found that fewer employees seek this prestigious role due to the frequency of turnover and deteriorating board relations. Insufficient salaries for the increased demands of the position, coupled with the demand for increased student achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> Century superintendent positions, have also resulted in fewer entering the field (Hoyle, 2002).

The study of effective leadership characteristics for superintendents is important to correlate with student achievement. The success of school systems depend on the leadership of the superintendent (Wilson, 2006). According to Orr (2002) and Whitt (2009), superintendents are the agents of change for school districts. They bring values to the district based on years of research and experience (Glass, 2002). The overall success of a district is found in student achievement, which drastically increases when boards and superintendents work together to do what is right in the right way (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Knowing the importance of superintendents and boards to student achievement, it is important to study the leadership characteristics that correlate to increased student achievement.

Butcher (2014) found superintendent leadership behaviors to be important. In fact, he found the most important leadership behaviors for superintendents to be communication, vision, moral and ethical behaviors, and virtues. While these leadership behaviors are extremely

important, Neely (2001), found the most effective superintendents mesh communication, vision, moral and ethical behaviors, and virtues with instructional leader behaviors that include instructional planning, staffing, organizing for instruction, and human resource development. These are completed while superintendents also manage finances, facilities and overall operations of the system (Houston, 2007). Superintendents as instructional leaders must be master teachers and champions of curriculum while focusing on student learning (Whitt, 2009).

### **Communication and Instructional Planning**

A 2014 study of effective traditional superintendent leadership behaviors in West Virginia found that there are eleven leadership behaviors that board members and superintendents agree are crucial for success (Butcher, 2014). Those eleven behaviors include leadership for: vision and organizational culture, policy and governance, organizational management, instructional programs, system improvement, budgeting and finance, recruiting, developing and motivating personnel, communication, community relations, political acuity, and moral and ethical behavior. Of those eleven behaviors, Butcher found the highest rankings for communication, moral and ethical behavior, and vision and organization culture; and communication was ranked as the biggest behavior linked to effective superintendent behaviors as compared to all other effective behaviors in the study. Superintendents ranked system improvement, community relations, and political acuity as more important behaviors than board members ranked these behaviors.

Communication was found to be the most important instructional planning leadership behavior to seventeen state and national superintendents of the year (Henry & Reidy, 2006). An effective communicator as an instructional leader was found to set clear goals and articulate them to teachers and the community (Smith & Andrews, 1989). Superintendents who are instructional

leaders also communicate expectations for learning and evaluate progress on those expectations (Domenech, 2009). Waters and Marzano (2007) studied leadership behaviors and found communication of student data needs to take place frequently with communities and the media. Glass (2005) found successful superintendents communicate strongly and this behavior builds relationships, trust, and demonstrates situational responsiveness. Superintendents are most often expected to be a listener and communicator to the community, parents, board, and employees (Copeland, 2013).

Educational leaders must be able to communicate clear ideas and outcomes (Vojta, 2013). In a study of 63 public school superintendents, Collins (2001) found 100% of those participants rated public relations as significant to the success of a school district. Seventeen national leaders all listed communication as a key to their success and to high student achievement (Henry & Reidy, 2006). Fourteen of the interviewed superintendents ranked communication so important they have a communication leader in their cabinet. The role of the communication leader is to advise and provide strategies for the superintendent. Sixteen of the respondents felt communication is crucial to moving the district vision forward.

Examples of effective communication for success are in the passage of bonds and levies, accountability requirements, curriculum changes, attendance boundaries, and strategic plans; with the most important and most often listed response being communication is vital to increasing student achievement (Henry & Reidy, 2006). Peterson (1999) further found the most important communication occurs in articulating the district vision for learning. In today's changing educational environment, superintendents need sharp interpersonal and communication skills to meet daily challenges and increase achievement (Amagoh, 2009). Superintendent

communication should be the voice and performance of the district and take place often (Domenech, 2009).

Communication is important between the superintendent's office and employees, parents, community, and school board. Much time must be devoted to board communications from the superintendent (Houston & Eadie, 2002). This communication must be viewed by both parties as honest and timely. Communication is best established through early notification of events expected prior to board meetings, board workshops, create and communicate short and long term strategic plan goals, update board policies, and an accountability system for the superintendent's evaluation (Else, 1992). Lewis, Rice, and Rice (2011), completed a study of leadership standards and found superintendent communication creates and sustains supportive family-school-community relationships.

Communication has been rated as the number one factor in superintendent success by seventeen national superintendents of the year (Henry, et al., 2012). Communication was so important it was rated as critical for district success by 88% of those surveyed. Superintendents further reported the importance of communicating organizational structure. This communication includes achievement goals, expectations, successes, problems, and visionary goals (Henry, et al., 2012). Communication was found to include building positive relationships and being a good listener. Of the 88% Henry and et al. (2012) found to rank communication as critical, those same superintendents reported communication as one of the essentials that determined their success as a public school superintendent.

Although the superintendent should communicate with all board members, Glass (2002) found the most important communication occurs between the superintendent and board president. The board president serves as the leader of the board and also the bridge between the

superintendent and local board (Glass, 2002). The president also holds the most responsibility for hiring and firing of the superintendent, according to Glass. Groholski (2009) found school board president's ranked communication as the most important factor to superintendent leadership.

In collaborating the traditional communication leadership behavior with instructional leadership planning, Yukl (1994), described instructional planning as deciding what needs to be done, who is going to do it, and when it will be completed. As the instructional leader, the superintendent remains focused on improving instruction through prioritizing, allocating resources, assigning responsibilities, planning, organizing and evaluating the curriculum (Sergiovanni, 1984). None of the instructional leadership planning initiatives can be accomplished without effectively communicating the goal, strategically planning the action steps, and monitoring data (Yukl, 1984). The superintendent must communicate this with the board, employees, community, parents, and volunteers (Butcher, 2014).

### **Visionary Instructional Planning**

Vision is an important leadership characteristic that involves establishing the direction the organization needs to go and working toward instilling motivation and commitment from others to achieve the goal (Vojta, 2013). It is a future people are willing to work together to achieve (Seeley, 1992) and without a clearly stated vision, student achievement will decline. Russonello and Steward (2005) found the vision is best established through common instructional language. The visionary leader must be consistent with actions toward reinforcing the vision of the school and this behavior makes an idea into a reality (Vojta, 2013). Vision motivates and inspires people, provides meaning and purpose to the work, it is the drive to see improvement (Nanus, 1992).

School board presidents reported superintendents showed leadership by articulating a vision, supporting that vision, and evaluating personnel, according to Kirst, M. (2003). These behaviors are very similar to the instructional leader method of instruction planning which involves strategic planning, prioritizing, allocating resources, assigning responsibilities and monitoring progress (Neely, 2001). The instructional leader also ensures that materials, facilities and funding are provided for teachers to achieve the goal (Smith & Andrews, 1989). School board presidents also reported superintendents were visible and visited classrooms often. To conduct this study, Kirst surveyed 2,096 school board presidents and reported on those results from the board president perspective. This study is important to researchers in this field to analyze the relations as perceived through the view of board presidents. It is important to review the data provided by the 2,096 surveys and compare those to the information presented through the superintendent view.

The visionary superintendent works to inspire people within the school to make the future picture become a reality (Seeley, 1992) by setting a clear vision and direction for the district (Portis & Garcia, 2007). The vision of instructional leaders comes through a commitment to excellence and alignment of programs to achieve the goal (Eadie, 2003). Vision creates a change from teachers committed to achieve the vision once the leaders shares it and gains acceptance from faculty. Superintendents who have a personal vision for the school district create the potential for rapid implementation if the vision is accepted by the district employees (Nanus, 1992). Public school superintendents were found to be effective in their role when they engaged in district goal setting, made those student achievement goals non-negotiable, and share the vision of those goals with the community and parents (Neale, 2010). Bennis (1990) found that great school leaders have the ability to take the vision and make it a reality by communicating

the vision and empowering others within the system to act upon that vision. Effectively communicating the vision can also be achieved through use of common curriculums, textbooks, and use of district-wide reading and math for a period of three years or more (Russonello & Stewart, 2005).

Mahoney (1990) felt the best school superintendents know where the district is headed and why at all times. The key is to gain teacher visions aligned with district visions, in which teachers focus their vision on student outcomes in the classroom related to the district goal. This is best accomplished for the instructional leader by supporting instructional activities, modeling behaviors, and addressing instructional concerns (Smith & Andrews, 1989). According to The American Institutes for Research, the method to gain teacher alignment is to first know your organization well. The second step is to identify essential individuals within the school or school board who are critical to the vision becoming reality (Mahoney, 1990) because employees are also responsible for the workplace vision development and success (Harteis, 2012). Next, the leader must explore possibilities that can include future ideas from participants in the organization, trends and expectations. The last step is to put the final vision into writing in a clear vision statement (American Institutes for Research). This step occurs after all the information is gathered and discussed.

Being a visionary leader also involves the instructional leadership behavior of staffing for instruction (Neely, 2001). Yukl (1994) found that superintendents must be diligent in finding matches of employees for positions. This includes selecting, placing and promoting the right employees to the right positions. The instructional leader must have the vision in mind and staff for educational advancements must be a primary concern. Without proper placement of human resources, the effectiveness of the school can decline (Neely, 2001). In leading staffing, the

superintendent should follow applicable laws and policies related to class size, teacher licensure and qualifications, retirements, and all personnel operations (Yukl, 1994).

The superintendent's commitment to excellence (Domenech, 2009) and their commitment to results (Phillips & Phillips, 2007) are also part of being a visionary leader. Superintendents who are instructional leaders use their promotion of the district vision to promote high expectations and plan and evaluate the efficacy of the district (Phillips & Phillips, 2007). Superintendents of successful school districts were found to value change and guide change through communication of the system's vision, strategic plan, and continuous improvement goals (Domenech, 2009). These behaviors lead to school personnel buy-in to teaching processes and outcomes (Waters & Marzano, 2007).

A visionary instructional leader plans for community involvement to help increase student achievement (Elmore, 2004). Community involvement is brought about first through building trusting relationships with parents and community members (Sing & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Trust is created by bringing in community members that support the vision of the district and help foster improvement (Sing & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Successful superintendents were found to have a vision, demonstrate leadership through involving communities, and creating a capacity for change (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012).

### **Moral Behavior Through Human Resource Development**

Leadership creates relationships between people and the ability to influence others through leadership depends on the ethical influence the leader has (Waggoner, 2010). Values are important to ethical behavior and are personal beliefs that guide the leader's professional and personal life (Waggoner, 2010). Principles are necessary to set the conditions and help fulfill values and set guidelines for actions and beliefs of the leader (Cooper, 1998). Morals determine



right and wrong as responses to the leader's beliefs. Morals are often thought of as the rule of thumb for the leader (Cooper, 1998).

Values are important to leadership behaviors because they are the beliefs one has about what is important and influence leadership behaviors because humans seek more of what they value (Crossan, Gandz, & Seijitz, 2012). Values vary from person to person and from superintendent to superintendent. They are derived from the environment in which one lives, religious beliefs, friends, social influences, and home lives (Crossan, Gandz, & Seijitz, 2012).

An instructional leader focuses on the human resources of the organization and developing skills through coaching, training, mentoring, and providing relevant professional development (Neely, 2001). The goal of the superintendent should be to increase student learning and with this focus, the superintendent must ensure placement of the certified teachers into the right classrooms. According to Neely (2001), the superintendent should show moral and ethical behavior while mentoring and training teachers. The effective superintendent creates methods for teachers to share expertise amongst each other which helps create a sense of joint responsibility for student learning (Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). The instructional leader allocates funds for professional development conferences, substitutes to cover for teachers to attend trainings, and provide release time for professional growth and development (Yukl, 1994). Superintendents should influence employees by modeling ethical behavior and gaining teacher input into decisions and professional development in efforts to garner trust of the employee (Neely, 2001).

An important human resource focus for superintendents who are instructional leaders lies in the area of professional development. Borko (2004) found appropriate teacher professional development to be an integral component to improving schools. High quality teacher

professional development, according to Kedzior and Filfield (2004) is composed of the following:

- Content-focused sessions
- Extended professional development sessions
- Sessions that include active participation in active learning
- Job-embedded opportunities
- On-going opportunities
- Sessions that align with standards, assessments, and initiatives
- Inquiry-based reflection
- Teachers-driven activities toward self-identified needs
- Student-performance driven sessions
- Includes self-evaluation for ongoing learning.

Professional development should include high-quality professional learning that gives teachers the content and how to use it (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Borko and Putnam (1996) further found that teachers must have rich knowledge and make connections to the content for student learning. Kennedy (2006) found that the quality of teachers is directly related to the conditions of teaching which include providing appropriate training for teachers. Providing appropriate professional development was found essential to school improvement (Borko, 2004).

### **Virtues and Organizing for Instruction**

Virtues are an important part of the ethical leadership behaviors because virtues help the leader to not only know what is right and wrong, but to actually do the right thing (Waggoner, 2010). Doing the right thing can be difficult for superintendents when organizing for instruction as an instructional leader (Neely, 2001). Virtues are behavior habits, normally thought of as

good (Crossan, Gandz, & Seijits, 2012). Ethics are the final portion of the ethical instructional leader and allow the leader to be a good leader by analyzing the situation, understand the values and beliefs, and influence their own actions based on those values and beliefs. Khana and Afzalb (2011) found that in order to enhance performance, the superintendent should emphasize the core values of the organization.

The balance comes in planning and carrying out instructional processes that include grouping, promoting, policy development and revision, trends, innovations, needs assessments, and prioritizing in a virtuous manner to benefit student learning (Neely, 2001) and also includes hiring the most qualified applicants for teaching positions to directly the quality of instruction (Seyfarth, 1996). Building a rich learning environment for students begins by knowing assessments and how to use student learning data to inform instructional decisions (Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Knowing how to use student data, building accountability, and curriculum understanding, are necessary for school improvement (Elmore, 2004).

Superintendents as instructional leaders, who focus on long-term goals and performance, should demonstrate ten virtues, according to Crossan, Gandz, and Seijits (2012) that include humility, integrity, collaboration, justice, courage, temperance, accountability, humanity, transcendence, and judgement and these are often displayed through personnel hiring procedures. Humility helps the superintendent act appropriately while integrity builds trust and humanity helps the superintendent to consider and understand the views of others. Methods of building trust include yearly retreats with the board and superintendent, board continuing education annually, and board self-evaluations (Else, 1992). Collaboration is needed to help employees feel part of the decision making process, yet justice occurs when employees feel they are treated fair, with reasonable decisions made for the organization. According to Crossan, Gandz, and

Seijits (2012), courage is needed for leaders to challenge others and stand up for what is deemed as right but temperance is needed to make the right decisions in the right manner.

Superintendents display transcendence when they see the big picture and think outside the box, judgement is necessary to make informed decisions, and accountability is shown when superintendents own their decisions, right or wrong (Crossman, Gandz, & Seijits, 2012). This is demonstrated through continuous analysis of programs, timelines, effectiveness, and data review (Yukl, 1994). Heneman and Milanowski (2004) found changes to the instructional program must first begin with hiring qualified teachers, followed by changes to instruction, changes to curriculum, and scheduling. Making changes to teacher performance must include recruiting and selecting qualified teachers, proper new teacher inductions and mentoring, providing high-quality professional development, providing adequate compensation, appropriately managing performance, and providing instructional leadership from the superintendent and central office (Danielson, 1996).

Butcher (2014) having found strong correlations between moral and ethical instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement, is not surprisingly given the early studies of Skinner (1961) in which found that humans imitate other humans. To make ethical instructional leadership become more frequent, the leader should participate in reflection and evaluation of the decisions made so the leader understands why the right decision was made (Waggoner, 2010). Reflection can take the leader from ethical decisions to good ethical decisions and taking action. It is essential that leaders reflect and identify personal strengths and weaknesses, reactions, and decision-making approaches to be successful (Frost & Walker, 2007) in addition to school strengths and weaknesses and make change processes for reorganization as needed (Neely,

2001). Without ethics, there is no direction in the school system and people do whatever they please.

### **Ethics in Staffing for Instruction**

In order to influence others, the ethical leader must understand ethics, be a role model for ethical decisions, and implement a plan to promote ethics among employees (Hitt, 1990). This could not be more accurate than in the area of staffing for instruction. This begins first with recruiting high quality teachers through compensation, working conditions, rewards, and other benefits that are personally satisfying to teachers (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Developing teachers and employees to perform jobs efficiently and effectively is very important to superintendent success (Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011).

Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, and Reeves (2012) found the most critical leadership practice to ensure student achievement is for superintendents to find and place a high quality teacher in each classroom in the district, a teacher that is high quality and committed to students. Saphier and Durkin (2011) found, however, that not only are high quality teachers necessary for instructional leaders to seek but placing a good principal in schools is also necessary to improving learning for students.

One of the most important decisions made for a superintendent who is an instructional leader is hiring the right principal (Saphier & Durkin, 2011), which is the center of staffing for instruction. Once hired, being an instructional leader to principals includes placing skilled mentor principals with new principals to assist with leadership development and teaching them what successful principals do (Saphier & Durkin, 2011). Ninety-six percent of superintendents surveyed found that an induction program for principals was necessary for principal success (Russonello & Stewart, 2005). Principals need surrounded with experiences to force continuous

learning and accountability, according to Saphier and Durkin (2011), and the superintendent who is an instructional leader should create those experiences for the principals. They also need to be encircled with opportunities for constant learning (Saphier & Durkin, 2011) and this is done purposefully by superintendents taking a more active role in instructional decisions from the district level (Russonello & Stewart, 2005).

The most important factors in student achievement remains expertise teaching, which is more influential than principal and superintendent leadership (Sanders & Rivers, 96). To be an effective instructional leader of staffing for instruction, one must recruit highly qualified teachers (Russonello & Stewart, 2005). Once hired, 54% of superintendents reported the need for induction or training programs led by teacher-leaders and school leaders (Smith & Andrews, 1989). Those training programs should include school leaders who are present in the classrooms and provide mentoring and pointed feedback to teachers (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Being present in classrooms allows the instructional leader to provide feedback, guide instruction, and improve the learning and culture of the school (DuuFour, 2002).

Staffing for instruction includes committing to providing continuous professional development targeted to meet the needs identified through classroom visits (Salvador & Salvador, 2016). Instructional leaders know how to use all methods of professional development for poor performance, sometimes to coach and other times it is used as punishment, according to Horng and Loeb (2010). Effective instructional leaders focus on continuous school improvement through teacher development that is advanced through appropriate training designed to support teacher needs, improve the instructional climate, and as a method to reward and retain effective teachers (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

Horng and Loeb (2010) also found that superintendents should strategically hire, support and retain good teachers while dealing with and firing poor teachers. This cycle creates effective schools and effective schools are better suited to attract and retain good teachers. This environment pushes teachers to improve at a faster rate than do other environments (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009). Strategic instructional leaders use various approaches to supporting teachers, rather than a one size fits all model (Ing, 2008). The most effective instructional leaders create an environment in which the administrator does not have to provide each support, rather other teachers in the building provide the supports needed to lower performing teachers (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

Although staffing for instruction is essential to being an effective instructional leader, Strong (1988) found that only one-tenth of their time is spent actually doing activities in this area. More time should be spent on this area with a focus on making quality instruction the top priority (Flath, 1989). This focus can be lead through creating learning communities in which teachers collaborate to solve problems, reflect on lessons, and take responsibility for student learning (DuFour, 2002). These learning communities are also used to set high expectations for performance and leaders create a climate of continual learning, according to DuFour. Learning communities provide opportunities for instructional leaders to acknowledge successes and reinforce teaching methods.

### **Morally Evaluating Instruction**

Superintendents must demonstrate their understanding of teaching and learning for employees to support the vision and goals of the district (Portis & Garcia, 2007). As an instructional leader, the superintendent must share a vision of exemplary performance for principals and teachers (Glass, 2005). Sophier and Durkin (2011) found that teachers do not

learn how to be effective or high quality in their teacher preparatory programs during college, rather they learn how to be effective in the workplace when provided learning opportunities, supportive systems, and good feedback.

Instructional leaders ensure appropriate school programs and practices are in place by evaluating and providing interventions as needed (Marzano, 2007). Superintendents who are instructional leaders focus on effective supports and retaining teachers, enhanced classroom instruction through embedded professional development and professional growth plans, and ongoing evaluations with data to support the evaluations (Marzano, 2007). Sallee (2014) found that teachers felt they had a high-quality relationship with the administrator when the leader communicated, was visible in classrooms, demonstrated respect, encouraged them, and had evaluation conversations after each observation. Time spent evaluating and coaching teachers was found to increase student learning and overall effectiveness of the school (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Although often found to make superintendent's less popular among some staff, superintendents who provide constructive confrontation and intervention for struggling teachers and principals increase student learning (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012).

Providing feedback to teachers often comes through the observation and evaluation process. Instructional leaders must focus on the lesson and instruction they witness during the time of the classroom observation (Chester & Beaudin, 1996). Although the observation is important, Chester and Beaudin (1996) found the feedback given following the observation is more important to increase teacher performance. Teachers use the feedback to validate their effectiveness or improve classroom lessons (Chester & Beaudin, 1996) and teachers given specific feedback about performance use this to increase performance (Bandura, 1997).



Walker (2009) conducted a study of the effects of instructional leadership behaviors and found the most significant behavior is for the administrator to model instructional expectations. The administrator must be able to talk about effective instructional methods and guide or model in-class instruction and practice. Woolfolk & Spero (2005) found the highest impact on teacher efficacy was through evaluation of classroom processes. Instructional leadership is demonstrated through evaluating classroom practices and learning and increases self-perceptions (Woolfolk & Spero, 2005).

Instructional leaders engaged with curriculum, work directly with teachers, communicate often, and are present in classrooms were found to have the highest level of student achievement (Hornig & Loeb, 2010) and Eisner (2002) found frequent visits to classrooms were also needed. An instructional leader works to create a learning climate by supervising and evaluating instruction and protecting instructional time was found to improve learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1986). High performing school systems have instructional leaders that spend more time in classrooms and providing direct feedback (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). Instructional leaders should also use observations for more than evaluating, they should be used to gauge the climate of the school (Protheroe, 2009).

### **Superintendent Turnover**

Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a research study and found that the tenure of the superintendent positively correlates to student achievement at .19. A .19 correlation coefficient is a relationship but not a strong relationship (Waters and Marzano, 2006). They also found that this correlation appears in as early as two years of tenure. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) studied superintendent leadership and found it to be more than a role that is fulfilled, rather they found it is a function. They also found that leaders provide direction and influence to accomplish goals.

Leadership was found to be the second most important aspect to student learning, falling second to teacher instruction, which is the most important factor in student learning. This study found leadership to include development of people, articulating the district vision, creating high expectations, building collaborative processes, empower others, respond to opportunities and challenges, and create school communities. Waters and Marzano (2006) also found effective superintendents create goal-oriented school districts and put supports in place to attain those goals. Seeing the ever-complex role of school administrators, it is important to review the characteristics of superintendents that improve student learning.

With the research supporting effective superintendents, the question remains as to why there are often turnovers in superintendents for school districts. The interaction between the superintendent and all five board members in West Virginia districts are the most stressful to the role of superintendent (Butcher, 2014). While not directly linked to the role of superintendent in West Virginia, Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, and Reeves (2012) found superintendents in rural districts have a more difficult job than superintendents in larger districts. High poverty districts were found to result in high turnover for superintendents. One of every five students in rural public schools live in high poverty (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012). Working in high poverty often results in scarce resources for the district and the superintendent being involved in all aspects of the school district because there is not a middle level administrative team to take some of the burden (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012). Another issue they found is often linked to superintendent turnover is the high profile position in which rural communities find the superintendent role to be one with little privacy in close-knit communities of people who have lived there all of their lives (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012).

There are many factors that impact student learning of which the turnover in the superintendency is a major one. Tekniepe (2015) studied factors that influence superintendent turnover and found political, internal, external, and fiscal conflicts to be the main reasons for vacancies. Results of the study found that those superintendents who experience political conflicts were more likely to leave the position if the superintendent did not feel the school board had adequate training or knowledge as compared to those who were less likely to leave if the superintendent did not feel that community pressures influenced district decisions. Interestingly, superintendents were found to be less likely to leave if they felt the school board did not micromanage, while Else (1992) reported 11% of superintendents are dissatisfied with their positions due to board micromanagement. Superintendents were more likely to leave if they felt their contract was not adequate to prevent political termination. Superintendents who did not work collaboratively with teacher unions during contract negotiations were 19% more likely to leave and those that did not work well with principals were two times more likely to leave than those who felt their contract was not adequate (Tekniepe, 2015).

Superintendents of rural districts were found to be more likely to leave their positions if high quality teachers cannot be placed in each classroom (Fornier, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012). Selecting the most qualified teacher for each classroom was found to be the most critical factor to student achievement success. Factors that were found to help superintendents remain in their positions longer included establishing goals and expectations, quick interventions for struggling principals and teachers, close working relationships with principals, and drawing a hard line with union contract negotiations (Fornier, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012). The listed factors are included in Boyter's (1988) Superintendent Instructional Leadership Survey (SILS).

Knowing the turnover in superintendents as district leaders causes feelings of anxiety for employees and decreases student proficiency rates, it is important to look at the reasons superintendents report they are leaving the profession (Copeland, 2013). Superintendents who struggle to understand how to use student achievement data and know assessments were found to leave the profession at higher rates than those who are successful in those areas (Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011).

### **Summary**

A successful superintendent knows what leadership behaviors are expected and makes daily decisions accordingly (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). In order to increase student achievement and remain personally successful, it is essential to develop and sustain effective leadership practices (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). Although there are a number of studies available that look at leadership characteristics of superintendents, telling researchers much of what is known about leadership, there is little research available that relates to the relationship between instructional leadership behaviors of superintendents that impact student achievement, what we need to know. Superintendents are the influential key to school and student achievement success, it is imperative that training programs be developed to support school leaders in these crucial areas (Byrd, 2007).

As Crossman, Gandz, and Seijits (2012) found, competency matters and for a superintendent to be deemed competent and to effectuate change, further research is needed in determining the leadership behaviors that affect student learning. Many superintendents are not successful because they lack the instructional leadership training and behaviors necessary to be successful (Callahan & Levison, 2011). This study is important to training programs for superintendents, board members as they search for the right superintendent leadership behaviors

in candidate searches for the field, and to current, self-reflecting superintendents constantly searching for improvement methods. Although this is an important area to study, few studies exist on instructional leadership behaviors of superintendents (Wilson, 2006).

The literature review examined leadership behaviors essential to increasing student achievement and organization success. While sufficient amounts of data exist studying traditional leadership behaviors such as vision, communication, ethical behavior, and virtues through studies of various leadership theories; the need remains for additional research into the instructional leadership behaviors that effectuate student proficiency rates. In fact, most research on instructional leadership behaviors link those to principals and not superintendents. Some research does exist on superintendents as instructional leaders but there is a gap in the research linking what instructional leadership behaviors have the most effect on student achievement and especially in West Virginia.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Overview

Chapter Three begins with a description of the design for this study and why this design was appropriate. The design is followed by the research question and hypothesis. Next, the participants and setting are described, and a discussion of the instrumentation, the SILS, is presented. The chapter concludes with the procedures and data analysis for this correlational study.

### Design

This study was completed as a multivariate correlational study and utilized a multiple regression analysis to determine the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This predictive correlational design is appropriate to study the relationship between two or more independent variables (superintendent leadership behaviors) and a dependent variable (student proficiency; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Superintendent leadership behaviors were defined as individual elements of the expectations of the superintendent as they relate to job performance (Callan & Levison, 2011). Student proficiency was defined as students scoring a minimum of *Meets Standard* or above on the SAT Cut Scores as indicated by the West Virginia Department of Education and used for determining school rankings. Multivariate studies are used to measure the degree of relationship among various combinations of the variables. The leadership behaviors listed on the survey were used for the multiple regression study to determine if those behaviors can predict school proficiency.

### Research Question

This quantitative study was designed to discover what superintendent leadership behaviors predict increases in school proficiency and answer the following question:

**RQ1:** How accurately can school proficiency rates be predicted from a linear combination of superintendent instructional leadership behaviors?

### **Null Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis for this study was:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (student proficiency rates) and the linear combination of predictor variables (instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction).

### **Participants and Setting**

The participants for this study included superintendents in the 55 public school districts in West Virginia. A convenience sample of 41 of the superintendents was used for this study, based on those responding to the survey. Each county in West Virginia operates as one school district led by one superintendent who acts as the chief instructional leader and secretary to the board. The convenience sample was identified based on those superintendents who responded to the in-person and emailed request to participate in the study. Participants were sought through a request to superintendents who attended a state meeting, followed by an email to those superintendents who were not in attendance at the state meeting, asking them to participate in the study.

The largest number of participants possible for this study was all 55 county school district superintendents in West Virginia, which would have been achieved if all superintendents had responded to the request to participate. The number of participants required to have an alpha level of significance of .05 is 66 (Gall et al., 2007). This study could not reach the .05 level of significance even if all superintendents in the state had participated in the study. The .10 level

was the highest possible level this study could have reached, which required 30 participants (Gall et al., 2007). The study did meet the .10 level of significance, as 41 superintendents were a part of the study. The participants had an average of 5.53 years of superintendent experience. For the purposes of this study, the districts in which the superintendents served were divided into three sizes: small (districts with fewer than 10 schools), medium (districts with between 11 and 20 schools), and large (districts with more than 20 schools). The 41 districts ranged in size from a student population of 1,108 to 27,369 (West Virginia Department of Education Public School Support Program Summary, 2018). The number of certified teachers within each district ranged from 75 to 2,048. Complete data on participant demographics and experience are presented in Table 1.



Table 1

*Participant Demographics and Experience*

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	15	36.60
Male	26	63.40
Years experience		
0–5	23	56.10
6–10	7	17.07
11–15	0	0.00
>20	2	4.88
No response	9	21.95
District size		
Large	5	12.20
Medium	16	39.00
Small	20	48.80
Central office years experience (other than as superintendent)		
0	9	21.95
1–5	9	21.95
6–10	9	21.95
11–15	5	12.20
16–20	1	2.44
21–25	1	2.44
No response	7	17.07
Age		
30–39	3	7.32
40–49	6	14.63

50–59	14	34.15
60–69	10	24.39
No response	8	19.51

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*Note.*  $N = 41$

### **Instrumentation**

The Superintendent Instructional Leadership Study (SILS; Boyter, 1988) was used for this study. This instrument was originally developed by Boyter (1988) as a self-rating instrument based on a list of superintendent leadership behaviors. The instrument contained two sections; section one was composed of 42 task statements divided into five instructional leadership construct areas, and section two contained questions related to demographic information. The five construct areas were instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction (Boyter, 1988). The survey was developed as part of the Cooperative Superintendency Program of the University of Texas and was later used by Clore (1991), Davidson (2005), Mitchell (2011), and was also adapted and used by Garcia (2012), who studied instructional leadership characteristics of superintendents.

The survey was composed of instructional leadership behaviors in which superintendents self-reported the level of emphasis they place on each statement describing a behavior using a Likert-scale rating method. Emphasis levels for selection included constant emphasis, frequent emphasis, average emphasis, infrequent emphasis, and no emphasis (Boyter, 1988). Each leadership behavior was rated on a five-point scale that was determined by the response of the participant; constant emphasis = 5 points, frequent emphasis = 4 points, average emphasis = 3 points, infrequent emphasis = 2 points, and no emphasis = 1 point (Boyter, 1988). The behaviors listed for superintendents to self-rank included items related to curriculum mandates, adequate

staffing, instructional design, professional development, employee recruitment, evaluations, district goals, and educational philosophy (Boyter, 1988). The survey was reported to take less than 20 minutes to complete.

The survey contained 42 leadership behaviors that fell under one of five leadership constructs: instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction. Eight of the 42 leadership behaviors fell under the construct of instructional planning, eight fell under staffing for instruction, nine were organizing for instruction, nine fell under human resource development, and eight were considered evaluating instruction.

The second part of the instrument is the means to gather information regarding the demographics of the superintendent and district including the district size, superintendent and central office years of experience, student population, employee population, degrees, and certifications (Boyter, 1988). Section two contained fifteen demographic questions used to gather data related to total years of experience, years as a classroom teacher, years as a principal, years in the central office, and years as superintendent.

The SILS, created by Boyter (1988), was found to be a valid and reliable instrument. The reliability for all tasks was 0.98 and the alpha coefficients for the five task areas (instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organization for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction) ranged from 0.87 to 0.93 (Boyter, 1988). Validity was found for this instrument through Boyter's original study that tested 15 doctoral students and was later mailed to 30 practicing superintendents. The participants were asked to identify any concerns with instructions, readability, scoring, and clarity of task statements (Boyter, 1998). Boyter (1988) found the instrument to be valid, as all participants were also asked to identify concerns related

to reliability and clarity including demographic and scoring areas. Clore (1991), Davidson (2005), Mitchell (2011), and Garcia (2012) also used the instrument and found the instrument to be valid. Clore (1991) made a few slight modifications to the task statements to provide proper subject-verb agreement but did not change the the actual task statements.

Permission to utilize the SILS was sought from Boyter (1988). See Appendix A for the letter of request to use the instrument. The letter of permission to use the instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Student proficiency rates were determined based on 11th-grade scores on the SAT college readiness exam, the assessment used by the West Virginia Department of Education to determine student proficiency and school rankings. The SAT was originally developed in the early 1900s and was first administered in 1926 (Long, 2011). Today, more than two million students take this exam yearly, and it is used by universities as an evaluation instrument for students applying to attend college (Long, 2011). The assessment has also been found to be a predictor of how successful students will be in college by testing reading, mathematics, and writing (Camera & Ecternacht, 2001).

The SAT was found to be a reliable and valid assessment using the formal for Cronbach's alpha. The internal consistency ranges from .93 to .83 (Long, 2011). The internal consistency of each subtest was estimated to determine the reliability of the assessment. Results were found at .93 for reading, .92 for mathematics, and .83 for writing (Long, 2011). A 1997 study of 1,120,563 students who took the SAT one to five times during their last two years of high school found that retesting did not breach the standard error of measure, and according to Long (2011), this also indicates high test reliability.

To measure student proficiency, the SAT was administered to students in the spring of their 11th-grade year. Students received scores in each of the subtests and a total score, which ranged from 400 to 1600 (Long, 2011). Student scores were then compared to average test scores for students in that same grade level across the nation. Scores were then presented in a percentile, meaning that if a student received a 60% on mathematics, they scored better than 60% of students who take the SAT at that same grade level (Long, 2011).

### **Procedures**

Permission to conduct this study was first obtained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Upon approval, superintendents that attended the state superintendent training meeting were asked to participate and provided the recruitment letter and informed consent form. Those not in attendance were emailed with a request to participate in the study and an explanation of confidentiality. Email addresses were obtained from the West Virginia Department of Education Superintendent Directory. Consent forms were also attached to the recruitment letter and email; the consent form can be found in Appendix C. The survey link was sent with the email, and those agreeing to participate could click the link and access the survey.

Two weeks after the original email was sent, a second email was sent to those that had not responded to the first request to participate in the study. For those who did not respond after the second email request, a third email request was sent two weeks following the second request. Each email and letter explained the purpose of the study and requested the superintendent's voluntary participation. A state superintendent meeting also proved an excellent time for some superintendents to consent to participate and complete the survey on paper.

The survey was developed as an exact replica of Boyter's original survey using an online survey tool named Survey Monkey. The survey link was included in the email to simplify the process for those superintendents agreeing to participate in the study. The online survey information was protected and kept private by only being available to the researcher with login criteria to the survey and results. Any paper copies that were utilized were kept confidential by remaining locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's locked office.

The minimum sample size of 30 surveys were required to reach the .10 alpha level of significance, and 41 superintendents agreed to participate in the study. The total number of superintendents in West Virginia is 55, and even if all superintendents had agreed to participate, an alpha level of significance of .05 could not have been reached. Data from the surveys were compiled and analyzed. School proficiency rates were gathered using the West Virginia Department of Education online program, ZoomWV, an online tool in which school and district data are located. Data listed included summative assessment scores, attendance rates, graduation rates, enrollment numbers, and other demographic information for each school and district within the state (West Virginia Department of Education Public School Support Program Summary, 2018). West Virginia schools were ranked, based on student test proficiency scores, on a state-approved system that identifies districts as low performing, average performing, or high performing. Grade 11 achievement scores on the state summative assessment and college performance SAT test were used to determine school proficiency rates for those districts participating in the multiple regression analysis study.

### **Data Analysis**

A multiple regression study was completed for this study. This is an appropriate method to use, according to Gall et al. (2007), in determining the correlation between a dependent

variable (school proficiency) and two or more independent variables (superintendent leadership behaviors). Data were screened for completeness and extreme outliers prior to data analysis beginning. All surveys were reviewed on a spreadsheet for completeness. A visual review and box and scatterplots were used to screen for outliers or impossible rankings.

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean and mode of the survey responses for part one of the survey. The median response was also determined for each item on part one of the survey to determine which response was ranked as the most emphasis. Data from the survey were used to complete a multiple regression in order to determine the magnitude of relationship between the leadership behaviors and student proficiency rates for each of the independent variables. Specifically, a multiple regression was used in this correlational study because this technique can be used to estimate the magnitude of relationship between leadership behaviors and school proficiency rates (Gall et al., 2007).

This study met the multivariate normal distribution assumption, which assumes that the data remaining after the outliers are removed are distributed evenly (Gall et al., 2007). Multivariate outliers were identified using a scatterplot to quickly detect extreme values. This study also used the linearity assumption for multiple regressions, which assumes there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable (school proficiency) and independent variables (superintendent leadership behaviors; Gall et al., 2007).

SPSS was used to organize and analyze the data gathered. Data were then analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics. The stated research question was analyzed using a multiple regression. This was the appropriate statistical choice, as it analyzes the independent variables, superintendent instructional leadership behaviors, and the dependent variable, student proficiency rates. A significant difference was found at the  $p < 0.10$  level. The alpha level of

significance of .05 could not be reached because there were a total of 55 superintendents in the state and the number of participants needed to reach the .05 level of significance could not have been reached if all superintendents had participated in the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the findings and a review of the research question, null hypothesis, descriptive statistics, and results of the study. The data were analyzed using correlational statistics, specifically a multiple regression, to determine if superintendent instructional leadership behaviors can accurately predict student proficiency rates.

### Research Question

This quantitative study sought to discover what superintendent leadership behaviors predict an increase in school proficiency and answer the following question:

**RQ1:** How accurately can school proficiency rates be predicted from a linear combination of superintendent instructional leadership behaviors?

### Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis for this study was:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (student proficiency rates) and the linear combination of predictor variables (instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction). Student proficiency rates were determined based on 11th-grade SAT scores.

### Descriptive Statistics

The participants for this study included 41 superintendents in West Virginia's 55 school districts. Of those participants who responded to the survey, 26 were male and 15 were female. The male population represented 63.4% of the respondents while females represented 36.6% of the participants. The average amount of experience for all participants was 5.53 years.

Participants were asked to self-rank the emphasis they place on each of the leadership behaviors in Boyter's Superintendent's Instructional Leadership Survey (SILS), using a Likert scale ranking from one to five. This self-ranking scale ranged from 1 being no emphasis to 5 being constant emphasis. A ranking of two meant infrequent emphasis, three was average emphasis, and four was frequent emphasis.

The leadership behaviors with the highest mean average fell under the leadership construct of organizing for instruction, with  $M = 4.006$  and  $SD = .871$ . There were eight leadership statements that superintendents ranked under the construct of organizing for instruction. The leadership construct of instructional planning had the second-highest mean average, with a mean score of 3.85 ( $SD = .849$ ). The eight leadership behaviors that fell under instructional planning construct were ranked as being of constant emphasis a total of 68 times by the participants. Instructional planning behaviors were ranked as being of frequent emphasis 132 times, and superintendents ranked this behavior as average emphasis a total of 76 times.

The third highest ranked leadership behavior among superintendent participants suggested the superintendent focuses on human resource development with a mean score of 3.793 and  $SD = .914$ . All rankings fell between average emphasis and constant emphasis, with 65% responding that human resource development was a behavior on which they placed frequent or constant emphasis. Of the nine human resource development task statements ranked by participants in this study, human resource development behaviors were ranked as constant emphasis 69 times and as frequent emphasis 119 times.

The leadership behavior ranked lowest among superintendents was staffing for instruction. This item had a mean score of 3.65, with a  $SD = .974$ , and several participants noted that they do not have the ability within the realm of personnel laws in West Virginia to arrange

employees as they need to. Participants ranked this item between no emphasis and constant emphasis.

Table 2 displays the five leadership behavior constructs and their mean and standard deviation for each leadership behavior. The table also includes the minimum and maximum ranking of each behavior given by participants, all of which had a range from one to five.

Table 2

*Leadership Behaviors Descriptive Statistics*

Behavior	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Instructional planning	1	5	3.85	0.849
Staffing for instruction	1	5	3.65	0.974
Organizing for instruction	1	5	4.01	0.871
Human resource development	1	5	3.79	0.914
Evaluating for instruction	1	5	3.76	0.921

Overall proficiency rates for the 41 districts were reviewed. The minimum proficiency rate was 20, meaning 20% of the district's students were proficient on the SAT test and the maximum proficiency rate was 52%. The mean proficiency rate was 33.18, with a standard deviation of 6.836.

## Results

### Null Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis stated that there was no predictive relationship between student proficiency rates and leadership behaviors related to the following constructs: instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating instruction. The .10 level of significance was the highest possible level this study

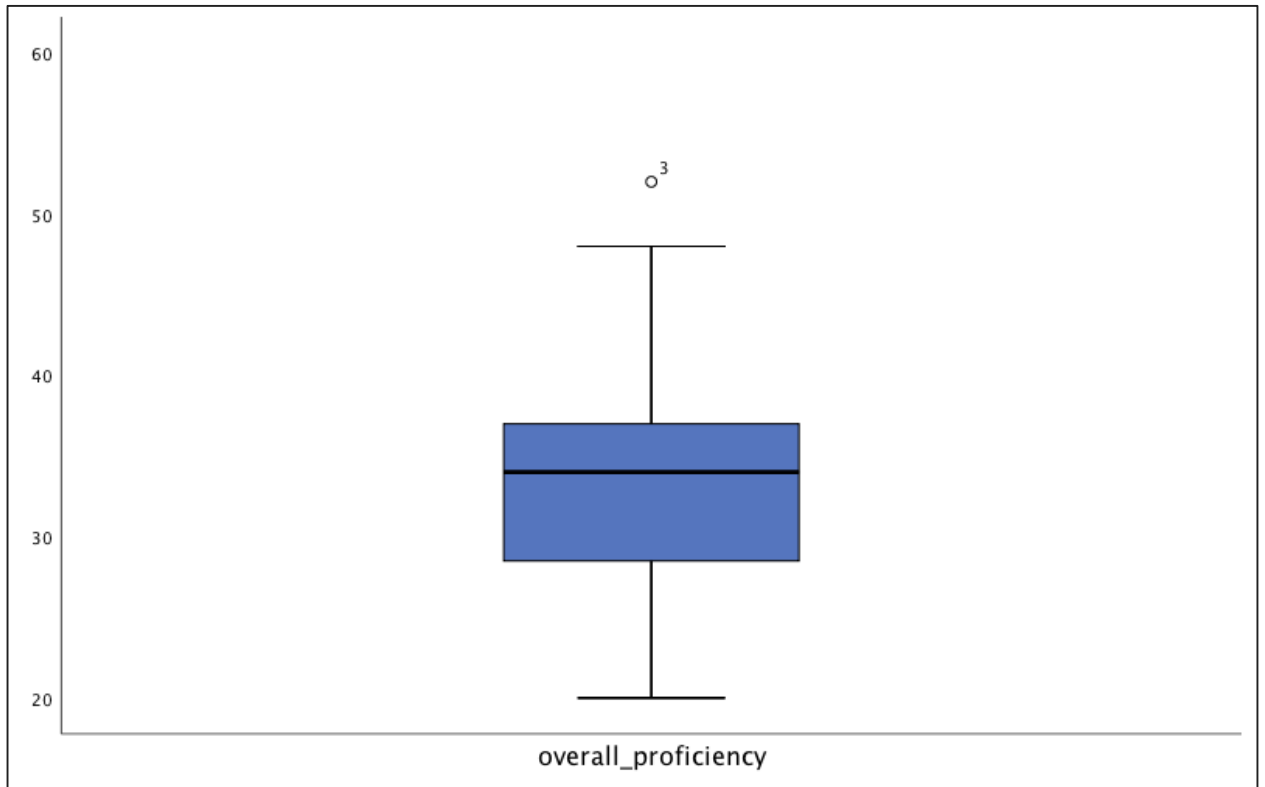
could have reached, and it did meet the required number of participants, as 41 superintendents took part of the study. The study would have required 66 participants to reach the .05 level of significance, but it could not have obtained this number of participants even if all superintendents in West Virginia had participated in the study.

**Data screening.** Data screening was conducted for completeness and to identify extreme outliers, for the dependent variable (student proficiency) and independent variable (superintendent leadership behaviors) prior to completing the data analysis. All survey answers were reviewed online using Survey Monkey and on a computer spreadsheet for completeness. Those surveys taken with paper and pencil were entered into Survey Monkey by the research investigator so data could be analyzed using the same method for all responses. Those surveys entered into Survey Monkey were transcribed exactly as each participant had written.

A visual review of the spreadsheet as well as creation of box and scatter plots were completed to screen for outliers or impossible rankings. Data from the survey were used to conduct a multiple regression in order to determine the magnitude of the relationship between the leadership behaviors and student proficiency rates. A multiple regression was used in this correlational study because this technique can be used to estimate the magnitude of the relationship between leadership behaviors and school proficiency rates (Gall et al., 2007).

Figures 1 through 6 show box plots created to assist in searching for outliers in the overall proficiency data, instructional planning that correlated to student proficiency, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating for instruction that correlated to student proficiency as measured by 11th-grade SAT scores. The box plots indicate a few outliers; however, they were determined to be useful to the study, and

the data points were included in the research. The outliers noted fell outside of the proficiency pattern range but were useful (Gall, Gall, Borg, 2007).



*Figure 1.* Overall proficiency outliers box plot.

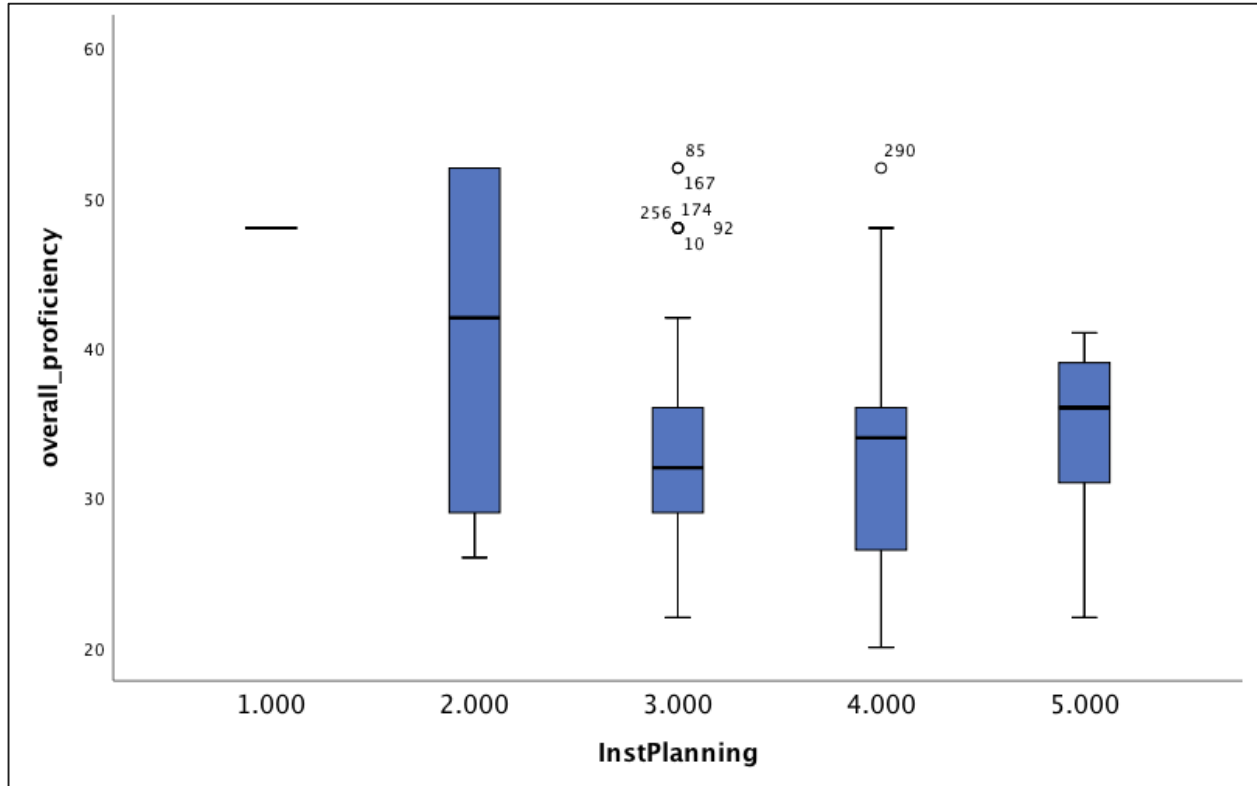


Figure 2. Likert rankings instructional planning.

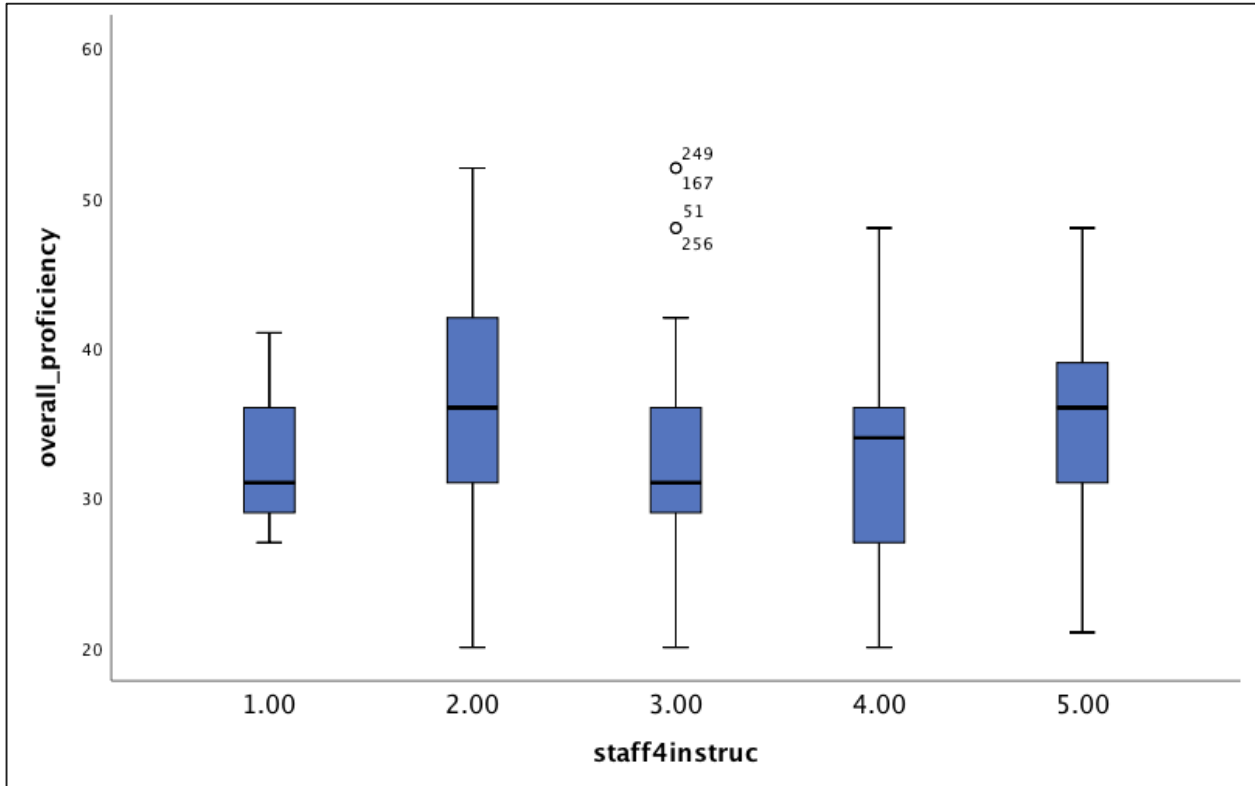


Figure 3. Likert Rankings Staffing for Instruction.

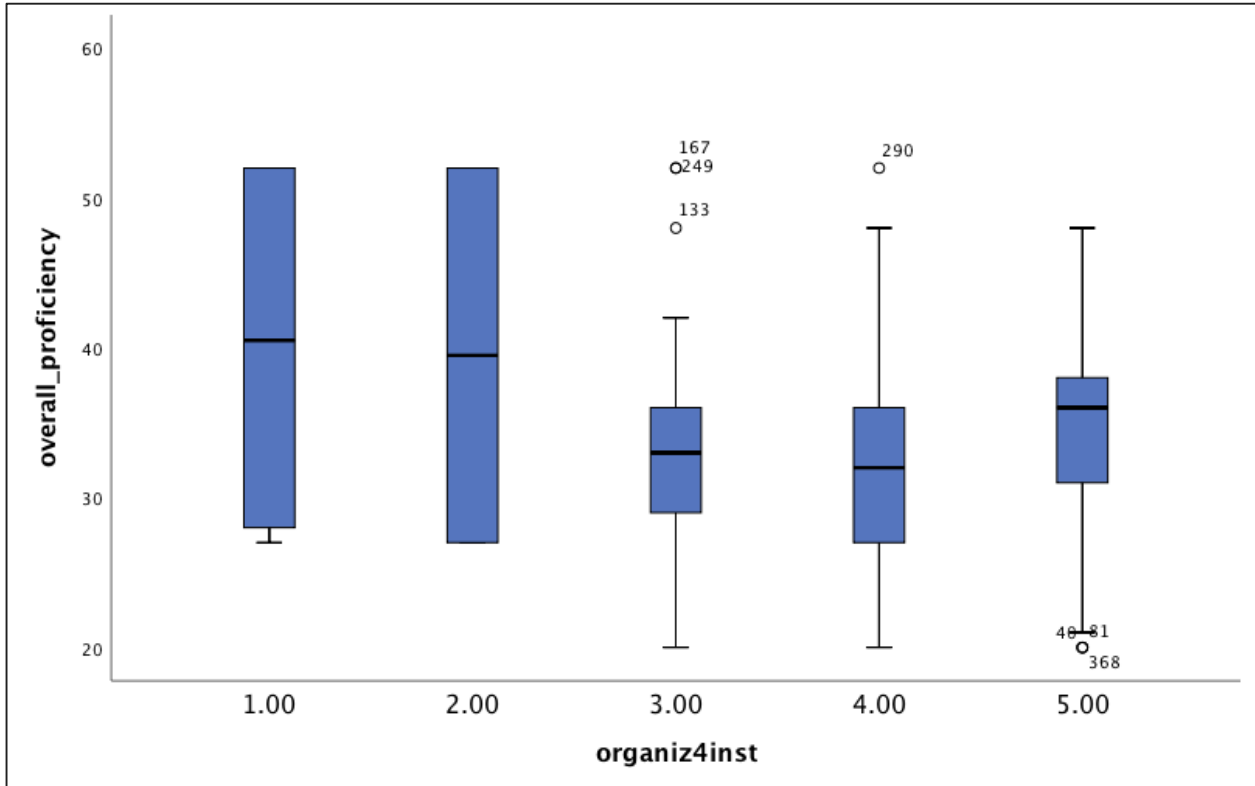


Figure 4. Likert rankings organizing for instruction.



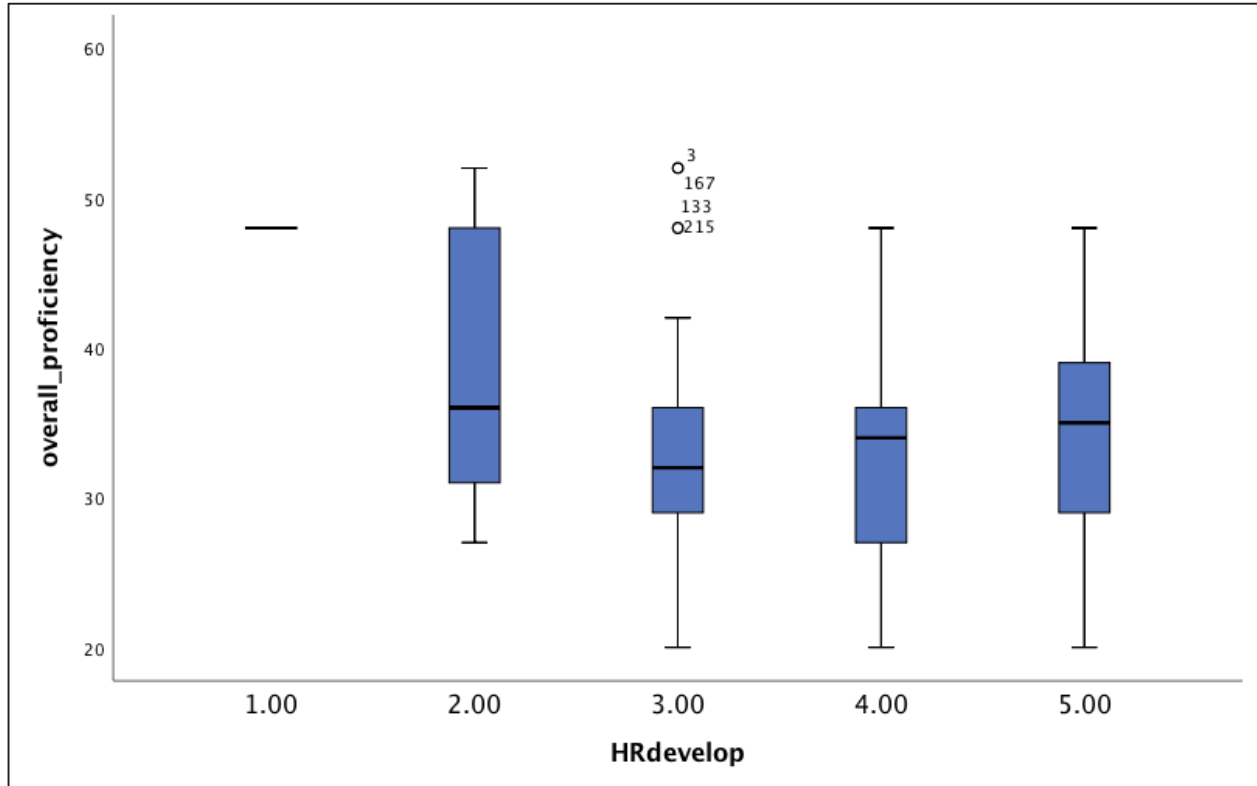


Figure 5. Likert rankings human resource development.

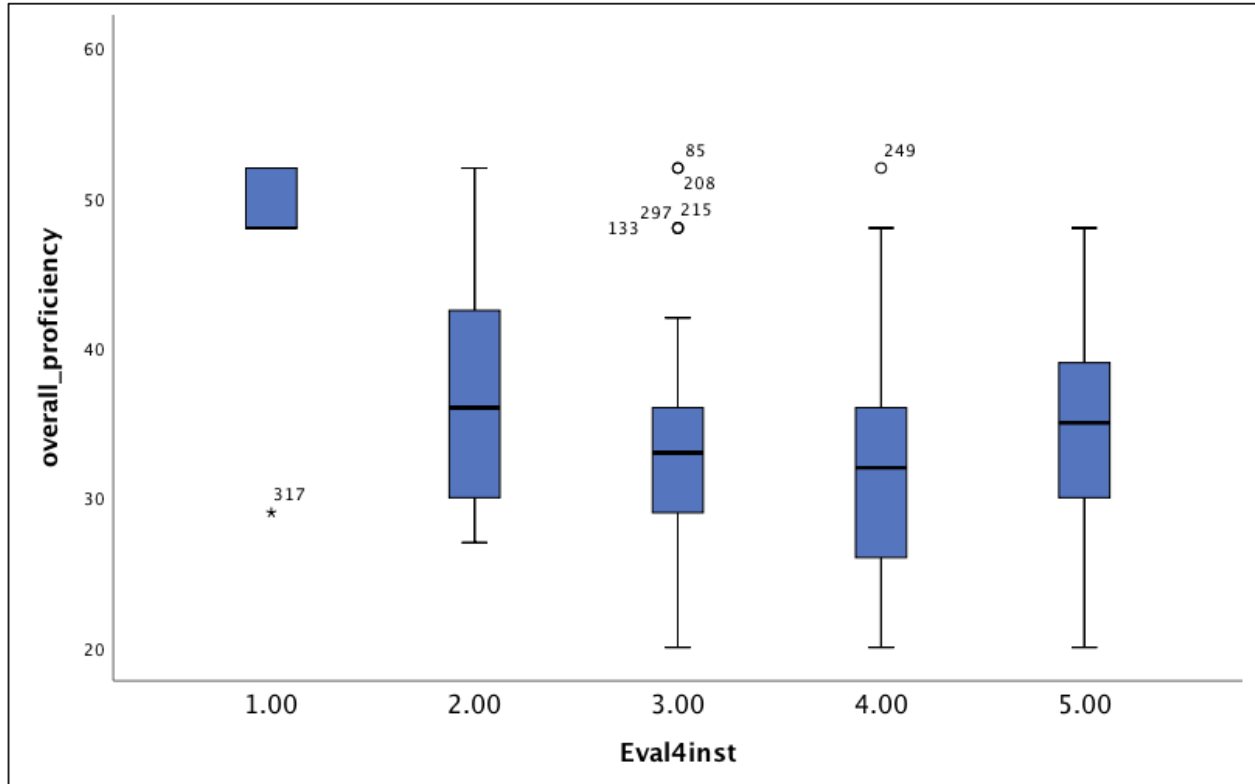


Figure 6. Likert rankings evaluating for instruction.

**Assumptions.** Data must meet several assumptions for a multiple regression analysis to be appropriate. Those assumptions include the assumption of multivariate outliers, the assumption of linearity, the assumption of non-multicollinearity, and the assumption of multivariate normal distribution (Gall et al., 2007). The multivariate normal distribution assumption assumes the random variables in various situations are normally distributed and apply to many statistics (Balakrishna & Lai, 2009). The linearity assumption was determined using scatterplots. Multivariate outliers were identified using a scatterplot to quickly identify extreme values.

Evaluating the assumption of bivariate outliers involves looking for elliptical-shaped patterns and the cigar-shape open in the middle of the graph, demonstrating no outliers. Figure 7 is a scatterplot comparison of independent variable data. The independent variables were

abbreviated in SPSS; staff4instruc was the abbreviation for staffing for instruction, HRdevelop was the abbreviation for human resource development, organiz4inst was the abbreviation for organizing for instruction, and InstPlanning was the abbreviation for instructional planning. This scatterplot shows no outliers. The scatterplot in Figure 8 displays the dependent variable, student proficiency rates, with the independent variables, superintendent leadership behaviors, while Figure 7 displays independent variables only. The difference between Figure 7 and Figure 8 is that Figure 8 showed more of a linear relationship without outliers. A review of Figure 8 shows the cigar shape through the middle and more elliptical shapes, showing the assumption was met.

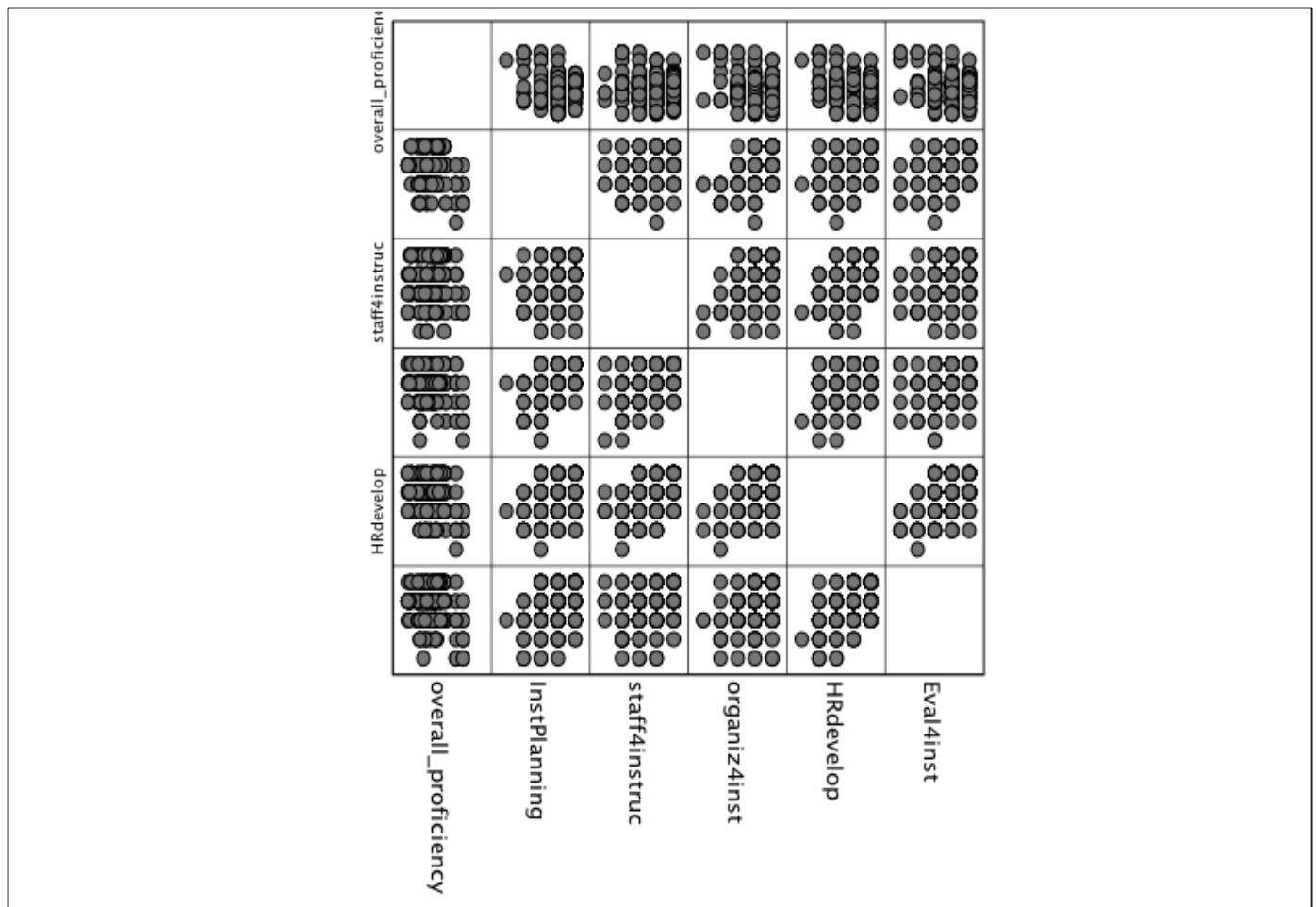


Figure 7. Scatterplot between predictor variables.

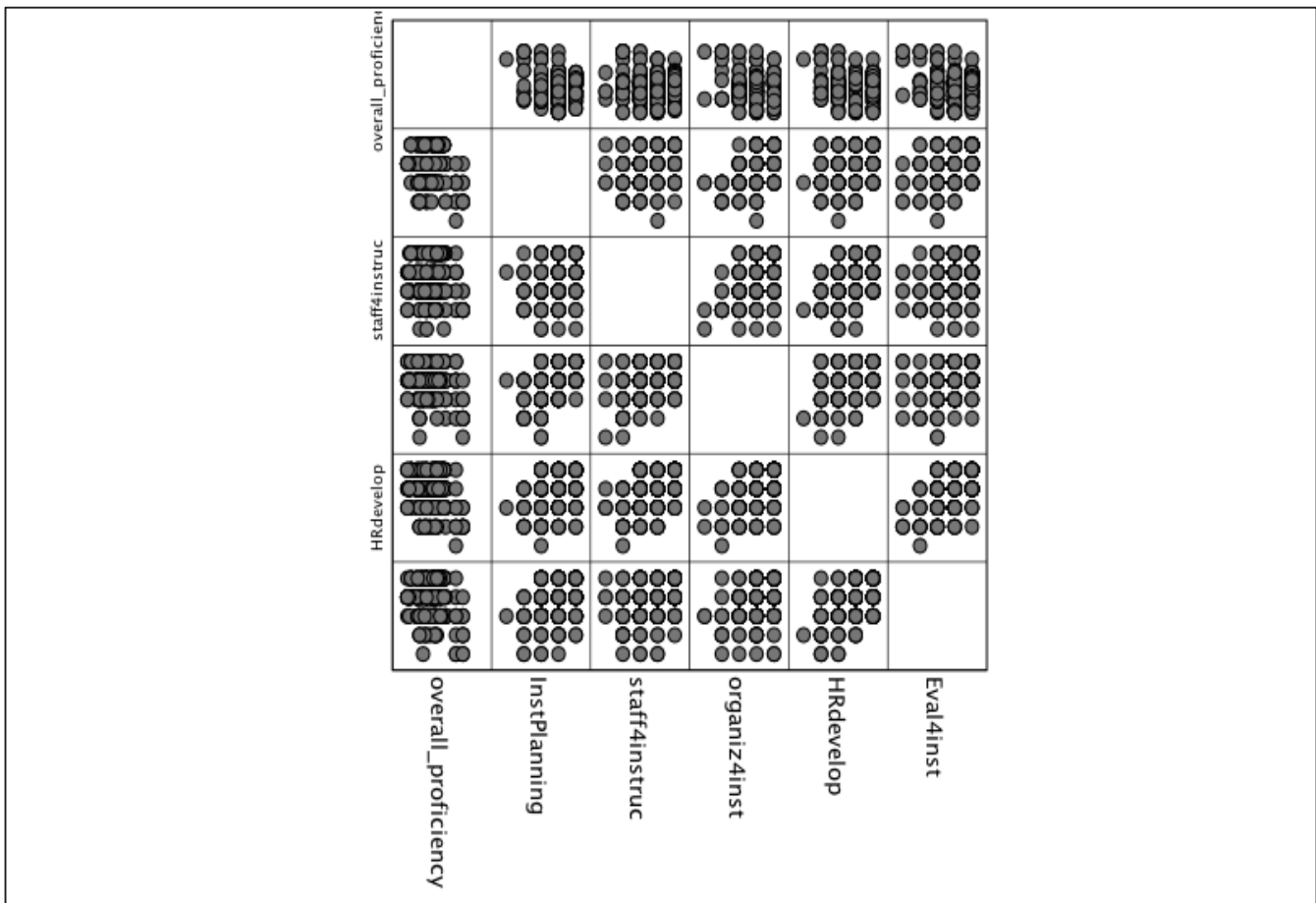


Figure 8. Scatterplot between proficiency and predictor variables.

This study also met the linearity assumption for multiple regression analysis, which assumes there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable (student proficiency) and independent variable (superintendent leadership behaviors) as displayed in Figures 9 and 10 (Gall et al., 2007). Figures 9 and 10 are two of five scatterplots created and reviewed for each of the independent variables: instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, and evaluating for instruction, and the dependent variable, student proficiency. The assumption was met for each independent variable, as the linear relationship was shown for increased student proficiency rates with increased Likert

rankings for each of the leadership behaviors as self-ranked by superintendent participants in this study.

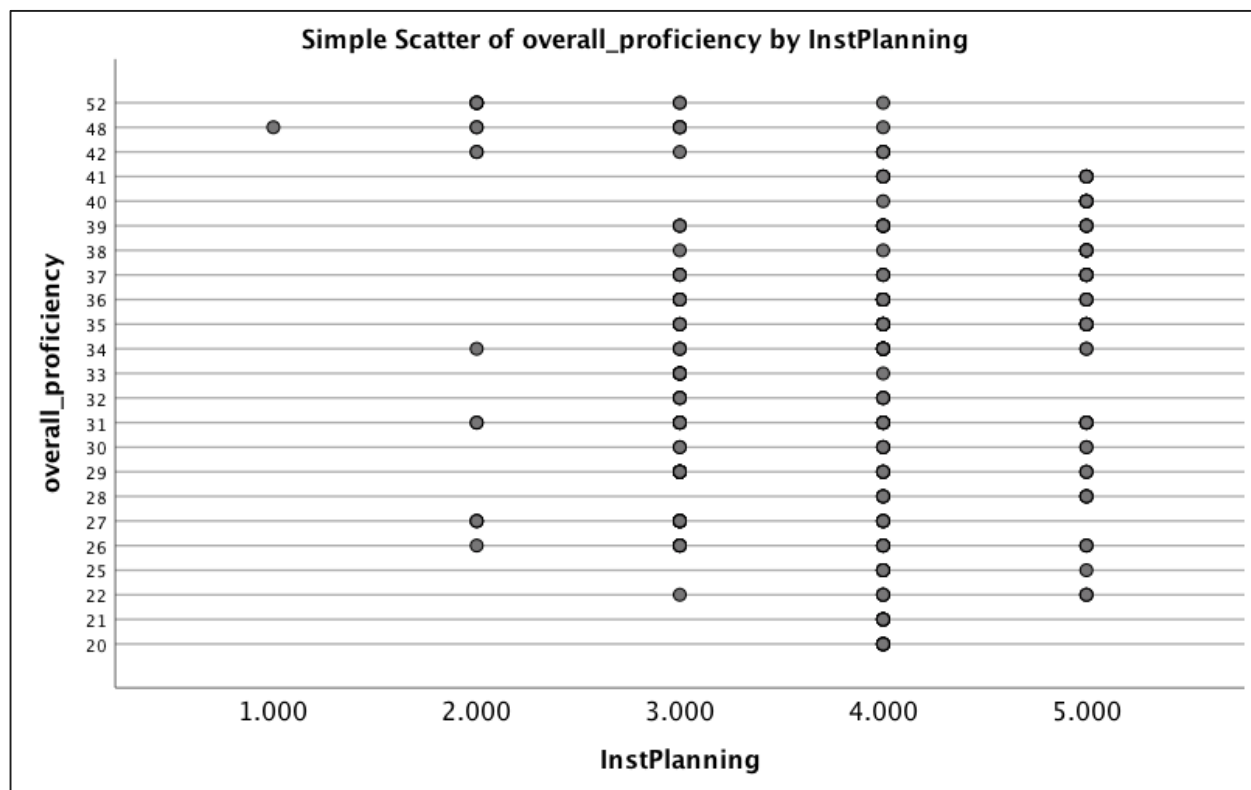


Figure 9. Scatterplot instructional planning linearity assumption.

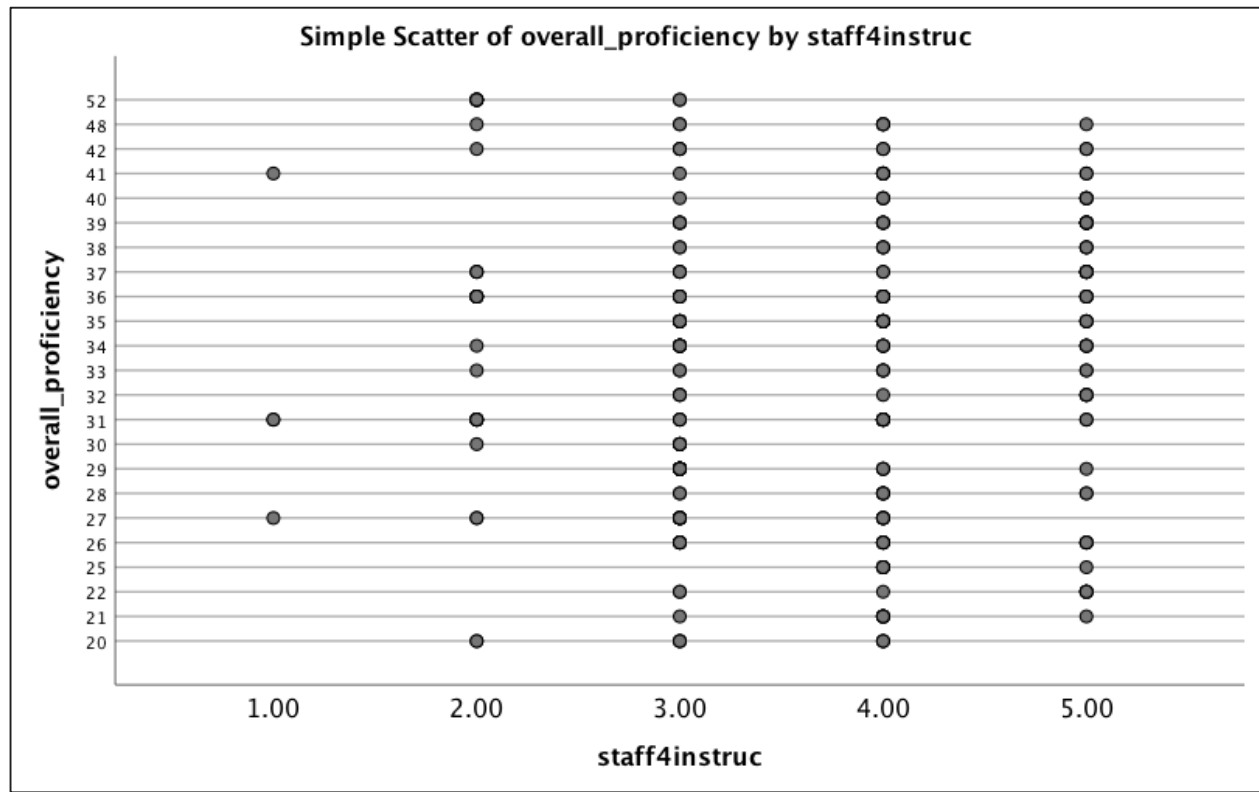


Figure 10. Scatterplot staffing for instruction linearity assumption.

The assumption of an absence of multicollinearity was met, as displayed in Tables 3 and 4. These tables are two of five tables created to determine the variance inflation factor for each of the independent variables. This assumption was evaluated to determine if the independent variables were related to each other. A variance inflation factor over three indicates a small degree of multicollinearity, and although there were a few variables with a variance inflation factor greater than three, there were no variables greater than five (Gall et al., 2007).

Table 3

*Collinearity Statistics: Evaluating for Instruction*

Leadership Behavior	Tolerance	VIF
Instructional Planning	.360	2.814
Staffing for instruction	.488	2.079
Organizing for instruction	.294	3.422
Human resource development	.417	2.456

Table 4

*Collinearity Statistics: Instructional Planning*

Leadership Behavior	Tolerance	VIF
Instructional Planning	.506	2.008
Staffing for instruction	.395	2.582
Organizing for instruction	.332	3.060
Human resource development	.457	2.209

The scatterplots in Figure 11 and Figure 12 are two of five scatterplots created to examine the assumption of multivariate outliers. InstPlanning in Figure 11 was the abbreviation used for instructional planning, and staff4instruc in Figure 12 was the abbreviation used to represent staffing for instruction. Although there are a few proficiency points higher than others, the scatterplots did not indicate any extreme bivariate outliers in any of the scatterplots since proficiency rates vary for each district, and the assumption of multivariate outliers was tenable.

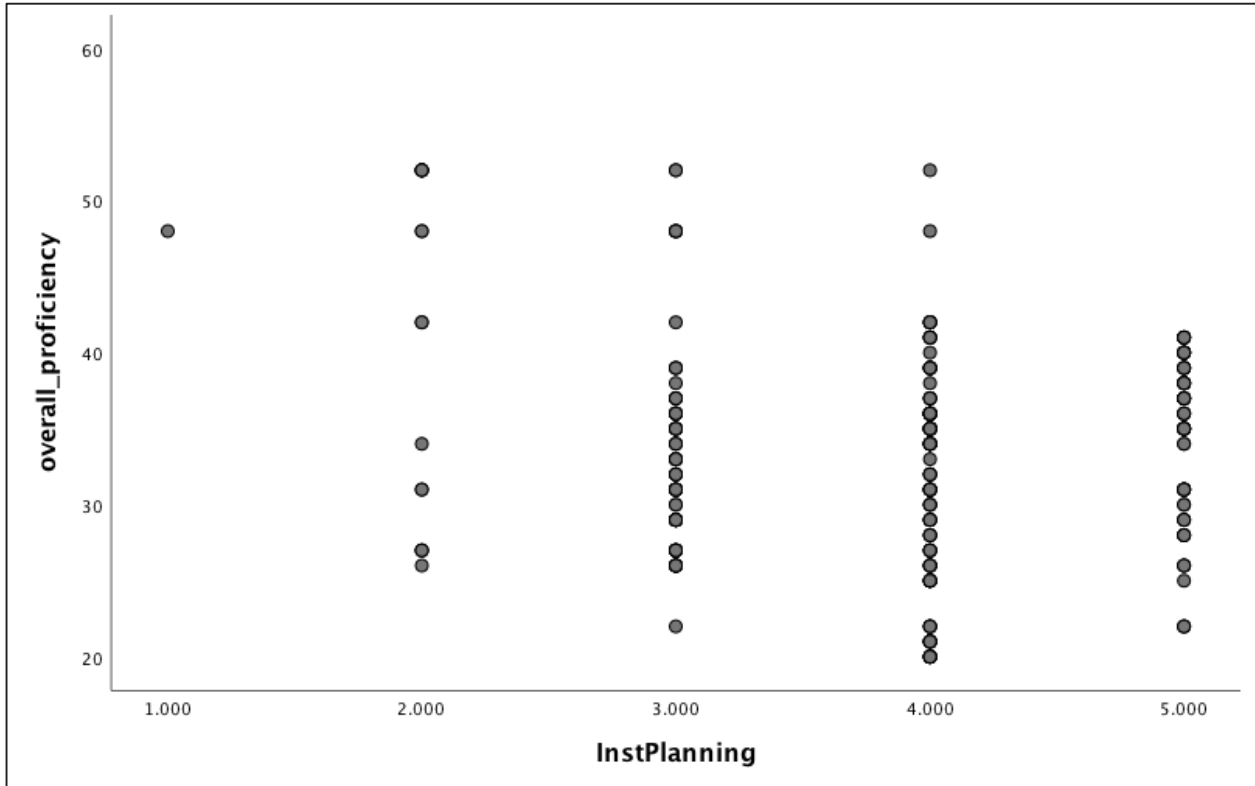


Figure 11. Proficiency rate and predictor instructional planning.



*Figure 12.* Proficiency and predictor staffing for instruction scatterplot.

**Results.** A multiple regression was performed to determine if a significant predictive relationship could be found between the dependent variable, student proficiency rates, and the independent variable, superintendent leadership behaviors.

Table 5

*Leadership Behaviors Effect on Proficiency*

Model	$R$	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	F change	$df1$	$df2$	Sig. F change
1	.962	.925	.923	697.941	5	284	.000

*Note.* Predictors: Eval4inst, staff4instruc, organiz4inst, InstPlanning, HRdevelop

The multiple correlation coefficient represents the quality of prediction of the dependent variable (Lund & Lund, 2019), student proficiency,  $R = .962$ . The  $R$  value of .962 indicates a high level of prediction. The  $R^2$  is the coefficient of determination, as displayed in Table 5, and

it showed that 92.3% of the variability in student proficiency rates was predicted by the five leadership constructs. The ANOVA, displayed in Table 6, shows the regression was a good fit for the data,  $F(5,284) = 697.941, p < .001$ . The null hypothesis was rejected as a result. The results from tables five and six are for the five leadership behavior constructs combined effect on student proficiency rates. When studying the five leadership behavior constructs independently, human resource development was found to add statistical significance to the prediction independently at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 6

*ANOVA*

Statistic	Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	308049.260	5	61609.852	697.941	.000
Residual	25069.740	284	88.274		
Total	333119.000	289			

*Note.* Predictors: Eval4inst, staff4instruc, organiz4inst, InstPlanning, HRdevelop

Table 7 displays the significance of each variable independently. All five independent variables have a significance of  $p < .000$ , as displayed in table six, which studied the five leadership behavior constructs combined effect on student proficiency rates. Human resource development was found to add statistical significance to the prediction independently at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 7

*Coefficients*

Independent variable	B	SE	Standardized coefficient beta	T	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
(Constant)	38.426	2.424		15.919	.000	33.675	43.178
Evaluating for instruction	-.598	.529	-.080	-1.131	.259	-1.639	.443
Instructional planning	-.546	.586	-.067	-.932	.352	-1.698	.607
Staffing for instruction	.448	.492	.063	.910	.363	-.520	1.416
Organizing for instruction	.479	.605	.058	.793	.429	-.711	1.670
Human resource development	-1.159	.575	-.153	-2.015	.045	-2.291	-0.27

Table 8 displays the correlation values for each predictor variable. A statistically significant linear relations was found to exist between the five leadership behavior constructs and overall student proficiency rates, with all variables having a positive correlational value between -1 and +1.

Table 8

*Correlation Values*

Control Variable			Inst Planning	Staff4In st	Organize4I nst	HRdevel op	Eval4In st
OverPro	InsPlan	Correlat	1.000	.380	.523	.355	.384
		Sig	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Staffins	Correlat	.380	1.000	.421	.469	.307
		Sig	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	Orginst	Correlat	.523	.421	1.000	.445	.314
		Sig	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	HRdev	Correlat	.355	.469	.445	1.00	.513
		Sig	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	EvaInst	Correlat	.384	.307	.314	.513	1.000
		Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000	.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to determine if superintendent leadership behaviors could predict increased school proficiency rates among the 55 public school districts in West Virginia. A multiple regression was conducted between the independent variables (instructional planning, organizing for instruction, staffing for instruction, evaluating for instruction, and human resource development) and the dependent variable (student proficiency rates). This chapter provides an overview of the findings from the correlational study and implications for superintendent leadership behaviors as they correlate to student proficiency rates. The Discussion will review the results of the null hypothesis and compare the results to previous research findings. Limitations of the study are discussed as well as recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to determine if superintendent leadership behaviors could predict increased school proficiency rates among the 55 public school districts in West Virginia. This quantitative study sought to discover what superintendent leadership behaviors predicted increases in school proficiency and answer the following question: How accurately can school proficiency rates be predicted from a linear combination of superintendent instructional leadership behaviors?

This research topic was chosen due to the lack of research in the area of superintendent instructional leadership (Wilson, 2006; Butcher, 2014; Kowalsky, 2006). The null hypothesis stated there was no relationship between student proficiency rates and leadership behaviors related to instructional planning, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, human

resource development, and evaluating instruction. This multiple regression revealed that 92.3% of the variability in student proficiency rates could be predicted by the emphasis placed on the five leadership constructs. The  $R$  value of .962 indicated a high level of prediction for student proficiency rate increases based on the linear combination of the five leadership behavior constructs: evaluating for instruction, organizing for instruction, human resource development, instructional planning, and staffing for instruction. The results of this study indicated a relationship does exist between superintendent leadership behaviors and student proficiency rates. This multiple regression model study was statistically significant,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .923$ , meaning the variance between the dependent variable and independent variables accounted for 92.3% of the variance. The null hypothesis was thus rejected.

Previous research focused on the principal as the instructional leader (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Jenkins, 2009; & Douglas, 2005). Little research existed regarding the superintendent as the instructional leader, although Chand (1988) found superintendent instructional leadership had been found to make a difference in student learning and Cotton (2003) found the superintendent was included in the instructional leadership key personnel.

The findings from the current research study corresponded to previous research from Waters and Marzano (2006), who found the leadership of the superintendent has a significant correlation to student achievement, yet Ross and Gray (2006) had found an insignificant direct effect on learning. Research conducted by Paine (2002) analyzed the individual leadership behaviors using the SILS (Boyter, 1988), and found a statistically significant relationship between seven individual behaviors and those same behaviors as ranked by principals completing the same survey. The results were not measured to determine if a statistical

significance could be found between the leadership behaviors and student learning. Paine (2002) completed a research study investigating the statistical relationship between superintendent instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by the superintendents and their principals of high performing high schools in West Virginia. His study included 20 superintendents in West Virginia and 20 principals, who completed the survey giving their perception of superintendent leadership behaviors (Paine, 2002).

This current study as well as the study completed by Paine (2002) found statistical significance in the leadership constructs using the SILS. The study completed by Paine (2002) found a statistical significant relationship for instructional planning, organizing for instruction, and human resource development. The study did not find a statistical significant relationship for staffing for instruction and evaluating instruction (Paine, 2002). The current study differed from the findings from Paine (2002) through the statistical significant relationship in student achievement based on the combination of all five leadership behavior constructs, including instructional planning, organizing for instruction, human resource development, staffing for instruction and evaluating for instruction.

Clore (1991) completed a study using the SILS by asking 219 superintendents to complete the survey. Results of the study completed by Clore (1991) showed a statistically significant relationship between eleven leadership behaviors that fell under all five leadership constructs and student achievement scores in Texas Public Schools. This significance is comparable to the current study which also found a statistical significance between the five leadership task areas and student proficiency rates in West Virginia, although the current study yielded a higher level of prediction,  $R = .962$ , where Clore (1991) had a statistical significance of  $R = .33$ .

The leadership behaviors self ranked by superintendents on the SILS included items related to creating a vision for the district, maintaining a system for instructional change, setting goals and objectives that satisfy the needs of the community, establishing priorities, monitoring goals and objectives to fulfill vision and priorities for the district (Boyter, 1988). This study found a statistically significant relationship for these instructional leadership behaviors under the instructional leadership construct of organizing for instruction and this aligned to the research study findings from Leithwood and Riehl (2003), who found superintendents must be ready to implement initiatives to increase proficiency rates and improve the growing expectations of the community. The superintendent should be the agent of change, according to Orr (2002) and Whitt (2009), and inspire teachers by setting a clear vision for the district (Portis & Garcia, 2007). A clear vision creates a change from teachers committed to achieving the vision (Eadie, 2003). Superintendents who focus on organizing for instruction, along with the other leadership behaviors were also found, in the current study, to have a statistically significant difference on student proficiency rates.

Superintendents of successful school districts were found to value change and guide change through communication of the vision, strategic plan, and continuous improvement goals (Waters & Marzano, 2007). The vision, goals and strategic plan should be communicated to the employees, parents, and community. With today's technology the information can be presented in person or recorded and posted on websites and social media accounts. Goals developed should be a collaboration of teachers, administrators, parents and community members and then communicated to the communities through community forums and online methods.

A statistical significance was found in this study for student proficiency in instructional planning, human resource development, staffing for instruction, evaluating for instruction, and



organizing for instruction through the leadership behaviors of providing research-based curriculum planning, development, and design procedures. The prediction between developing research-based curriculum planning, development, and design procedures and student proficiency rates relates to the findings of Smith and Andrews (1989). In their findings, the superintendents should ensure that materials, facilities and funding are provided for teachers to achieve the goal. The superintendent should remain focused on teaching and learning by ensuring materials and funds are available and resources are provided (Crankshaw, 2011). For this to occur, the system for instructional change must be created and maintained. The superintendent, through direct interaction with instructional leaders, should budget and plan spending that meets the goals of providing curriculum and professional development teachers need to implement the curriculum. The guiding of funding occurs through providing input into the initiatives from the district to the individual departments that fund those aspects of educating students.

The superintendent, as the chief instructional leader, focuses on learning as the top priority and spending demonstrates their focus on learning by maintaining that constant focus on goals and progress (Cotton, 2003). The superintendent that is directly involved with issues that affect student learning, including curriculum and instruction are key to increases in student proficiency (Cotton, 2013). This is ever-important as the accountability for districts based on high-stakes testing increases. To remain focused, distractors must be removed for teachers and the emphasis of the instructional vision and goals stay constant.

In summary, the findings of this study found the combination of superintendent instructional leadership behaviors of staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, evaluating for instruction, instructional planning, and human resource development were

significant predictors of student proficiency. The data from this study suggest that as superintendents place greater emphasis on the leadership behaviors, student proficiency rates increase. These findings align with some prior research and add to the prior findings by suggesting a greater increase in student proficiency by focusing on all five leadership constructs.

### **Implications**

The implications for the current research study provided additional information about the relationship between five leadership behavior constructs and increased student proficiency. These findings helped to fill a gap and contributed to the literature from prior research, which related to leadership behaviors focused mainly on principal leadership that affected student proficiency. The model was statistically significant  $p < .001$ , with a high adjusted  $R^2$ , meaning a high amount of variance in student proficiency was accounted for in the model.

This study was significant to the field for superintendents, board members, and professors leading courses for superintendent certifications, and added to the prior research by showing high levels of statistical significance for all five leadership behaviors. Much research already existed on leadership skills, however most were focused on principal leadership behaviors (Hackman & Johnson, 2009). Wilson (2006) studied effective leadership behaviors for superintendents while Butcher (2014) studied the perception of effective leadership behaviors as viewed by superintendents and board presidents. Although numerous studies have been completed on superintendent leadership behaviors, little research has been conducted correlating instructional leadership behaviors to school proficiency, thus this study partially filled a gap in previous research.

The multiple regression analysis conducted between student proficiency rates and superintendent leadership behaviors was statistically significant and had a high adjusted  $R^2$

valued of .923. In this study, the leadership behaviors of all five constructs combined were studied to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between student proficiency rates and the instructional leadership behaviors. This study differed from previously studied superintendent leadership behaviors which did not study all five constructs combined (Paine, 2002; Clore, 1991). The results of this study are beneficial to superintendents and aspiring superintendents. Focusing high levels of emphasis on instructional planning, human resource development, organizing for instruction, staffing for instruction, and evaluating for instruction has been found to make a statistically significant difference in student proficiency.

The results of this study could be used to guide superintendent training programs and curriculum with the ever-increasing focus on student achievement. Lessons could be designed to focus on ways to help prospective superintendents to effectively maintain a focus on all five leadership behaviors. The findings could also be used to help individuals become results-oriented and achievement driven, basing decisions on student achievement goals and outcomes while facilitating instructional change. Higher education institutions with superintendent certification programs could assist aspiring superintendents in narrowing their focus to increase proficiency rates within the district. The superintendent position is one in which there are numerous facets of the role, including community involvement, facilities, child nutrition, federal programs, early learning, middle school, high school, parent involvement, transportation, and due to the numerous areas of educating students, superintendents can lose focus on student achievement. Training aspiring superintendents to focus on maintaining a system for instructional planning, evaluating for instruction, staffing for instruction, organizing for instruction, evaluating for instruction, and human resource development could improve proficiency rates for districts across the United States.

Current superintendents can also use the findings from this study to improve school proficiencies within their districts by focusing on the two behaviors found to correlate to increased proficiency. Superintendents could use the findings from this multiple regression correlational study to focus on the four leadership behaviors to improve proficiency rates for the district. Those behaviors were maintaining a system for instructional change and providing for theory and research-based curriculum planning, development, and design procedures.

The positive relationship found between the leadership behaviors and proficiency rates could be beneficial to school boards in addition to superintendents. School boards are responsible for hiring and evaluating superintendents. Hiring a superintendent who is focused on increasing student proficiency rates should be the focus of every school board. Knowing the research results that correlate leadership to improved proficiency will benefit school boards in seeking the best candidate for their district. Additional research is needed to better understand the relationship between superintendent instructional leadership behaviors and student proficiency using a larger, more dispersed group of superintendents and school districts.

### **Limitations**

Limitations to all research studies exist and the current study was not immune to limitations. Correlational studies have limitations, as reported by Warner (2013), in which reported that no correlational relationship was found and could threaten the validity of the study. The multiple regression study was limited to making predictions about the significant relationships between superintendent leadership behaviors and proficiency rates in West Virginia.

Another limitation to the current study is the lack of participants willing to participate in the survey responses. With 41 participants, this study may not translate to an entire population,

as Gall et al. (2007) reported. The researcher wondered if the correlations would have existed if a larger population of superintendents had completed the survey. A limitation to gaining superintendent input for the survey was the length of time to complete the survey. The few participants who did not complete the entire study indicated in the comment section that the survey was too long.

Since the Superintendent Instructional Leadership Study (SILS) was a self-reported survey, the participants could have ranked themselves higher or lower than the emphasis that is actually placed on each leadership behavior. The convenience sample ( $N=41$ ) was not randomly selected, however, this limitation should not have affected the data collected or the correlation study results.

The study was further limited by the fact that it was limited to superintendent responses and proficiency rates in West Virginia. Correlations were found related specifically to student proficiency rates on 11<sup>th</sup> grade SAT assessments and superintendent leadership behaviors as self-ranked by acting superintendents in public school districts in the state of West Virginia. Assumptions cannot be made about correlations to leadership behaviors in other states.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As the current study evolved, further research opportunities became known for further study of superintendent leadership behaviors. One opportunity for additional research exists in studying the leadership behaviors of veteran superintendents and beginning superintendents, specifically reviewing those behaviors in relation to district proficiency. The separation of the behaviors from veteran superintendents and beginning superintendents should be studied to determine if a correlation exists between those differing behaviors would be beneficial to this

area of research, meaning determining if the seniority of the superintendent would have an effect on the leadership behaviors.

A second recommendation for future research exists with the results from the current research study in that once the data are made available, an investigation could be completed to determine if superintendents utilize the results and change focuses to the statistically significant behaviors that impact student proficiency rates. Future research studying the methods of implementation of the behaviors that were found to have a correlation to increased proficiency rates could also be beneficial to the field of superintendent leadership behaviors that affect student learning.

With some participants indicating the current survey was too long, there is opportunity to utilize a different survey to research the correlation of superintendent leadership behaviors to student proficiency rates. The research could be extended to several states or the entire United States instead of targeting superintendents from only one state, West Virginia. With increasing emphasis being placed on high stakes testing, superintendent leadership behaviors that are known to correlate to increased proficiency rates could redefine superintendent certification preparation programs.

The study should also be repeated using summative assessment scores for elementary and middle school proficiency rates for the multiple regression correlational study. This study could be duplicated in West Virginia, with the only difference being the grade level variable in determining student proficiency rates. This study could also be duplicated in other states using high school scores to research the relationship (if any) that exist between superintendent leadership behaviors and proficiency rates for students in other states and compare those to student proficiency in West Virginia.

A final recommendation for future research is to determine if the district size effects the ranking of leadership behaviors from superintendents. Researchers should capture the diversity of rankings of emphasis placed on leadership behaviors for superintendents of small, medium, and large districts. These results could then be used for a multiple regression correlational study to determine their effect, if any, on proficiency rates.

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**APPENDIX A: Letter Seeking Permission to Use Survey Tool**

July 13, 2018

Dr. Gwyn Boyter  
[REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Boyter:

I am a doctoral student from Liberty University writing my dissertation titled *Superintendent Relations: Impact of Leadership on Student Learning*, under the direction of my dissertation chair, Dr. John Bartlett and methodologist, Dr. Rebecca Lunde. Dr. Bartlett can be reached at [REDACTED] and emailed at [REDACTED]. Dr. Lunde can be reached via email at [REDACTED]

I would like your permission to use the Superintendent Instructional Leadership Survey instrument in my research study. I would like to use and print the survey under the following conditions:

- The instrument will be used only for my research study and I will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include a copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replaying to me through email at [jbasile@liberty.edu](mailto:jbasile@liberty.edu)

Sincerely,

Joetta Basile  
Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX B: Email Granting Permission to Use Survey Tool**

g b <gb2467@hotmail.com>

Basile, Joetta

You have permission to use the requested survey instrument per the stipulations in your written request.

Good luck with your research.

Gwyn Boyter, Ph.D.

[REDACTED]

BJ

Basile, Joetta

[Instrument Permission Request.pdf](#)

[124 KB](#)

Please find attached my written request to use the Superintendent Instructional Leadership Survey instrument. I appreciate your consideration and you speaking with me today.

Joetta Basile

Doctoral Candidate

Liberty University

**APPENDIX D: IRB Approval Letter****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 12, 2018

Joetta Basile IRB Approval 3493.111218: Superintendent Relations: Impact of Leadership on Student Learning

Dear Joetta Basile,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project. Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**The Graduate School**

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