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Longevity in the Superintendency: a Case Study of New Jersey District Factor Group CD Superintendents

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LONGEVITY IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY: A CASE STUDY OF NEW JERSEY
DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP CD SUPERINTENDENTS

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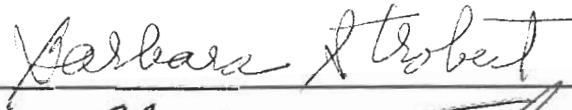Seton Hall University

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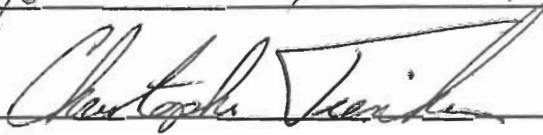
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ABSTRACT

LONGEVITY IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY: A CASE STUDY OF NEW JERSEY

DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP CD SUPERINTENDENTS

During the past several decades the demand for school accountability has increased, with much of the attention and pressure on school leaders, particularly the public school superintendent. Since the 1950's, there has been a marked decline in the average longevity of superintendents in a district which changed from an average of 20-plus years to approximately six years. The decline in district longevity places the superintendent in a challenging position, particularly because meaningful organizational change takes time – a resource that is often missing in the current state of the superintendency.

The purpose of this study is to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of tenure, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it. Longevity arises from two avenues – the superintendent's decision to remain in a school district, and the board of education's willingness to renew the superintendent's contract. The board's decision to renew is grounded in three areas: 1) the superintendent's handling of change; 2) the superintendent's fulfillment of the various roles, and 3) the overall superintendent–board of education relationship. The same three areas influence superintendent job satisfaction, which, in turn, is directly related to the superintendent's decision to stay in the district.

The qualitative methodology of a case study was utilized to conduct this research. Specifically, superintendents and their board of education presidents, or another member, were selected through purposeful random sampling for semistructured interviews. The interview transcripts were analyzed using content analysis.

The findings of the study included identification of key aspects of the superintendent's job satisfaction as well areas of importance to the board of education. The superintendent's job satisfaction was a factor in and of itself, and was also linked to fulfilling the roles, handling of change, and the relationship with the board of education. A positive relationship with the board certainly influenced the superintendent's decision to stay, but would not stop the superintendent from seeking other employment. While occasional board micromanagement might lead to job dissatisfaction, an overall negative relationship with the board would more likely cause the superintendent to leave the district. From the board of education's perspective, handling of change was a factor if the superintendent was not able to implement a change desired by the board, fulfilling the roles was based on district context and current situations, and the superintendent's relationship with the board of education influenced the board's decision to renew. These findings were fairly basic in nature and simply affirm what already exists in the current literature and research on superintendent longevity. However, the political role of the superintendency and the corresponding political frame from Bolman and Deal were identified by the researcher as interfacing with all the other aspects of the conceptual framework and the other three frames. The superintendent's need to be cognizant of the political role and frame stands as the key finding of the research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my parents – Eugene R. Ciociola, Sr. and Theresa A. Ciociola
For your unconditional love and lifelong support;
For instilling in me the importance of education;
For serving as true models of hard work and upstanding character.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

Front page stories, Internet blogs, magazine articles, evening news, or radio talk shows -

whichever way Americans obtain the news - they inevitably encounter stories regarding the

purported crisis in our public schools, calls for reform, and cures for the problem. During the

past several decades, the demand for accountability has increased, with much of the attention and

pressure on school leaders, particularly the public school superintendent (Johnson, 1996; Carter

& Cunningham, 1997; Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Since the 1950's, there has been a marked

decline in the average longevity of superintendents in a district which changed from an average

of 20-plus years to approximately six years (Renchler, 1992; Carter & Cunningham, 1997;

Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Winters, 2000; Alborano, 2002; Glass & Francischini, 2007).

The decline in district longevity places the superintendent in a challenging position, particularly

because meaningful organizational change takes time – a resource that is often missing in the

current state of the superintendency. Carter & Cunningham (1997) described an all-too-familiar

scene:

> The school board purposefully hires a change-oriented superintendent to improve schools
> and prepare them for the 21st century. School employees tend to resist change.
> Community debate rages over the types of changes that should *not* occur. When the
> school board realizes the superintendent is unable to make changes without conflict,
> confusion, and hard feelings, the honeymoon is over. Board members who supported the
> superintendent are defeated. Discord intensifies as everyone spars with the
> superintendent. The superintendent is either chased off or fired. The schools return to
> the status quo and the act is then repeated with an even more skeptical cast for the new
> star to work with (p.73).

On a national level, the superintendency has undergone many changes since the creation of the position, which is often attributed to the Buffalo Common Council that approved a superintendent on June 9, 1837 (Bateman as cited in Carter & Cunningham, 1997). If history serves us correctly, the superintendency is about 170 years old, with four major role changes from the early 1800's through the first half of the 20th century and into the early years of the 21st century. Initially, the superintendent's main function was clerical in nature and focused on assisting the board of education with day-to-day details of running the school. At the turn of the century, states began to develop common curricula for public schools, with superintendents fulfilling the role of teacher-scholar or master educator whose focus was on curricular and instructional matters. In the early 1900's, the Industrial Revolution impacted the superintendent's role, changing it to expert manager with efficiency in handling noninstructional tasks such as budget, facility, and transportation. The release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 heightened public school accountability, and ultimately influenced the superintendency. The early 1980's initiated the change that has continued through today, with the superintendent viewed as chief executive officer, including the roles of professional advisor to the board, leader of reforms, manager of resources, and communicator to the public (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Waters & Marzano, 2006). In the Executive Summary of the American Association of School Administrators Mid-Decade Study, Glass & Francischini (2007) explain this complex role:

> In summary, the superintendency encompasses responsibilities in instructional leadership, fiscal management, community relations, board relations, personnel management. The role is one of both leadership and management within the district and community. These executive educators are key players in the success or failure of the nation's reform agendas (p. xiii).

In 1991, superintendents in New Jersey sensed that the challenging climate would become even more difficult when the New Jersey legislature implemented a major policy change

- the elimination of tenure except for sitting superintendents who were grandfathered in (N.J.S.A. 18A:17-15). In a study regarding the impact of the elimination of tenure, Austermuhl (2000) concluded that the elimination of tenure negatively interfered with achievement of educational goals, due, in large part, to increases in superintendent turnover along with an increase in the number and length of service of interim superintendents. In 2007, for example, there were approximately 40 New Jersey school districts beginning the school year with an interim (Nussbaum, 2007). Further, from 2001 to present, the superintendents' turnover rate has ranged between 11% and 21% per year (Nussbaum, 2007). In some instances, this change in district leadership was initiated by the Board of Education's electing not to renew or extend the superintendent's contract. In other cases, the superintendent decided to leave for varying reasons, including a more lucrative position in another district, a changing working relationship with the Board, or retirement from the profession. While the elimination of tenure might lead one to believe that the most common reason for changing superintendents in New Jersey was a Board of Education decision, data show otherwise. While studying superintendents' job satisfaction, O'Malley (2004) found that, during the five-year period from 1999 to 2004, 50% of the changes were due to retirement, with another 30% being the superintendent's choice to accept a position in another school district. Based on this information, the issue of superintendents' district longevity seems to be important for both boards of education and superintendents themselves.

With passage of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB), New Jersey superintendents felt not only the pressure of uncertain job security, but also needed to handle the increased accountability of NCLB's mandated testing in math, literacy, and science; required qualifications for the teachers and paraprofessionals they recommended for hire; and the

necessity to effect and document increased parental involvement. "Passage of NCLB promises

to transform your life" (Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, and Koff, 2005, p. 111).

Although this statement is rather simple, the influence of governmental mandates and public

pressure is not so straightforward. Student achievement is the most significant facet of the

mandates. With test scores reported in the newspaper, superintendents need to know,

understand, and explain the data to the Board of Education and community in much more detail.

In New Jersey, this includes intricacies such as "adequate yearly progress (AYP)" which entails

41 data points; "safe harbor," a statistical calculation related to achievement of the required

percent of students passing the state test; and "disaggregated data" that includes details regarding

student performance by ethnicity, special education, English Language Learners, socioeconomic

status, and gender. Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) described the increased expectations:

> No longer can a superintendent go before the school board or media and simply claim that the district is doing a great job in educating students. Superintendents must have the skills to explain how well students compare to others in the state and nation. The new school executive must be an authority in monitoring and evaluating student achievement on the basis of objective and expected student outcomes (p. 23).

Of course, reporting and explaining the data is just the beginning. Improving student

achievement – especially where gaps exist between White and minority, general and special

education, and economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students –

becomes an even greater challenge.

Despite the limited empirical evidence demonstrating the influence of the superintendent

on student achievement, educators throughout the literature have stressed the importance of

leadership. Leithwood & Riehl (2003, p. 2, as quoted in Hoyle, et al., 2005) stated: "Leadership

has significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of quality of curriculum and

teacher's instruction." Waters and Marzano (2006) found that superintendents' tenure, or

longevity, was positively correlated with student achievement. If the educational community, and the public in general, genuinely desire to improve our schools and increase student achievement, efforts must be made to identify effective district leadership and subsequently provide the time necessary for the superintendent to bring this desire to fruition. This study examined New Jersey district factor grouping CD superintendents' perceptions regarding their achieved longevity and contributes to the research about ways to increase superintendent longevity in public schools.

Problem Statement

District superintendent longevity has decreased from a high of an average of 20-plus years in the 1950's to the current low of approximately six years, beginning in the 1990's through the present (Renchler, 1992; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cooper, et al, 2000; Winters, 2000; Alborano, 2002; Glass & Francischini, 2007). This decrease coincides, particularly during the past 20 years, with increasing demands for improvement in our public schools. While it is difficult to determine whether the decrease in longevity affected the increased demands or vice versa, the need to study longevity and ways to increase it seems noteworthy. In reviewing literature and prior research on the superintendency, the researcher found an abundance of quantitative data, often gathered through surveys such as those conducted by the American Association of School Administrators, with fewer studies available that used qualitative approaches, especially when including the board of education aspect to the study. The purpose of this study was to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of tenure, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it.

Research Guiding Questions

The main guiding question was, "How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district?" Additional questions, based on the literature review, were as follows:

How do superintendents prioritize and fulfill the various roles of the position?

How do superintendents experience job satisfaction?

How do superintendents maintain positive working relations with their Boards of Education?

How do superintendents identify areas for change?

How do superintendents implement change?

The qualitative methodology of a case study was utilized to conduct this research. A qualitative approach offers rich description regarding the experiences and perceptions of superintendents and board members. These data complemented the existing quantitative data and expanded on the more limited qualitative data, thereby providing the opportunity for more in-depth analysis of this study's guiding questions. Specifically, superintendents and their board of education presidents or vice presidents were selected through purposeful random sampling for semistructured interviews. The interview transcripts were analyzed using content analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The literature review, presented in the subsequent chapter, provided the basis for development of the conceptual framework. Atherton's (2008) study of long tenure and the effect of social context on the superintendency served as a visual model for the development of the conceptual framework for this study.

As shown in Figure 1, longevity arises from two avenues – the superintendent's decision to remain in a school district and the board of education's willingness to renew the superintendent's contract.
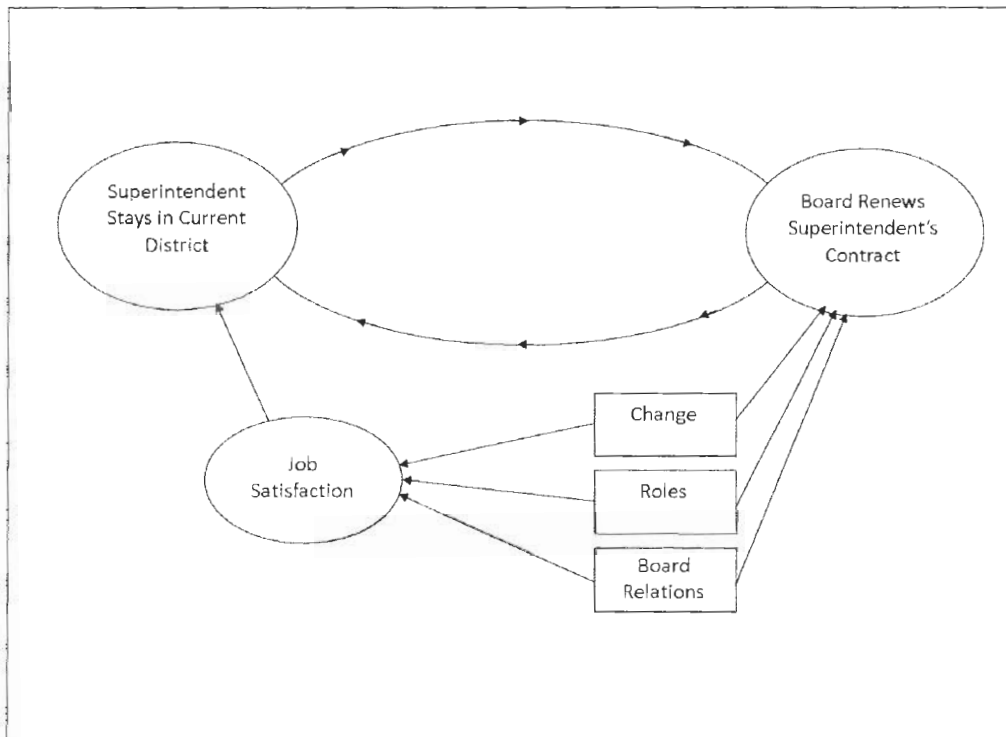
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Superintendent Longevity

The board's decision to renew is grounded in three areas: 1) the superintendent's handling of change, 2) the superintendent's fulfillment of the various roles, and 3) the overall superintendent-board of education relationship. The superintendent must demonstrate the ability to identify areas for change and lead the change itself. Changes must match the values and priorities of the board and school community and be planned and implemented in a skillful manner. In terms of roles, the superintendent needs to be aware of the board's priorities, as well as effectively fulfilling the leadership, management, and political roles. The overall relationship

between the board and superintendent must be one of trust and respect. Communication serves as a key factor in maintaining a positive superintendent-board relationship.

The same three areas influence superintendent job satisfaction, which, in turn, is directly related to the superintendent's decision to stay in the district. The superintendent is assisted when he/she believes that the changes being identified and implemented align with his/her own professional philosophies, and that the resources necessary to implement change are provided. Likewise, the prioritization of roles needs to match both the superintendent's style and ability. The relationship with the board influences the superintendent's ability to lead the district with clear goals and expectations and without mistrust or micromanagement. Overall, a match between the superintendent's style, philosophy, and skills and the board of education's priorities and preferences influence superintendent longevity.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to better understand the concept of superintendent longevity and to identify perceptions of superintendents who have achieved at or above-average longevity in New Jersey. The study provides information to potential and practicing superintendents regarding increasing their longevity in a school district and also provides guidelines for boards of education. By reviewing the findings based on interviews with superintendents who have met or exceeded average longevity of six years in New Jersey, practicing superintendents may be better able to examine their own perceptions and practices. The data might assist superintendents in self-reflection regarding their role prioritization and fulfillment, job satisfaction, change processes, and Board of Education relations. By comparing their own perceptions and practices to the findings of the study, superintendents might identify areas for maintenance, refinement, or change.

For boards of education, this data provides information that might influence superintendent-board relations. By reviewing the findings, boards of education might better understand the perceptions of superintendents who have achieved at or above-average longevity. This understanding might assist the board in examining and enhancing its working relationship with the superintendent.

Relevant data to support the significance of the study were found in the AASA Mid-Decade Study (Glass & Francischini, 2007): 42%, or 562, of responding superintendents were in their current districts for three years or less, and 26%, or 348, of respondents had worked three years or less as a superintendent (p. xvii). Additionally, the mean age of superintendents was 54.6 years, with 76.7%, or 1026, of responding superintendents being over the age of 50 (pp. 15-16). As the current superintendents age and retire, either existing superintendents will switch districts and/or first-time superintendents will enter the position. In 2009 in New Jersey, 338 out of 505, or 67%, of contractual superintendents had been in their current positions for less than six years. Looking at the three-year benchmark, 221, or 44%, of contractual superintendents had been in their current positions for three years or less. At both the national and state levels, the sheer numbers indicate that a clear understanding of developing longevity is needed to assist these new superintendents and those experiencing change of districts.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study had several limitations. First, it is possible that superintendents and board of education members being interviewed may or may not have withheld information in response to the questions. Second, the superintendents and board members participating in the interviews may or may not have honestly responded to the questions.

In this study, the researcher delimited the population by including only superintendents from New Jersey district factor grouping CD public schools who have achieved an average longevity of six or more years in their current position. From the population of 21 superintendents who met these criteria, six were selected for the interview, using purposeful random sampling. The 21 superintendents who work in CD DFG's were sent letters inviting them to participate in the study. Additionally, interviews of board of education members from the same district as the superintendents interviewed were delimited to the president unless the president was not available; this occurred in one instance. From among the superintendents who responded that they were willing to participate, six superintendents and their corresponding board of education presidents were randomly selected.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined to indicate their meanings as used in this proposed study.

Contractual Superintendent- in New Jersey, a superintendent who was hired by the board of education under a contract with a specified number of years of employment listed; the superintendent cannot earn tenure (the status of holding one's position on a permanent basis) in the position.

District Factor Grouping – The DFGs represent an approximate measure of a community's relative socioeconomic status (SES). The classification system provides a useful tool for examining student achievement and comparing similarly situated school districts in other analyses. The current DFG's, based on New Jersey's Decennial Census, were calculated using the following six variables that are closely related to SES: 1) Percent of adults with no high school diploma; 2) Percent of adults with some college education; 3) Occupational status; 4)

Unemployment rate; 5) Percent of individuals in poverty; 6) Median family income. (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

Longevity – the number of consecutive years worked in the same position in the same school district; the length of time which a position is held.

Tenure (as a synonym for longevity) – the length of time that a position is held.

Tenure – the status of holding one's position on a permanent basis.

Tenured Superintendent – in New Jersey, a superintendent who earned tenure (the status of holding one's position on a permanent basis) in a particular position.

Turnover – the rate of replacement of workers.

Summary

In Chapter 1, the researcher presented the context of the study and the climate in which public school superintendents work. In light of this information, the researcher established the significance of the study along with the questions that will guide the research. A conceptual framework was also described.

Through Chapter 2, relevant research and literature are presented. The chapter begins with the concept of longevity and its importance in the superintendency. The changing role of the superintendent is reviewed, with a focus on the varied leadership responsibilities. Additionally, the job satisfaction of superintendents is discussed. Finally, the superintendent-school board relationship is examined.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methodology of the study. This chapter includes descriptions of the participants, the instrumentation and data sources, and the method of data collection and analysis.

In Chapter 4, the results of the study and a detailed analysis of the data are presented. Using the guiding questions, an interpretation of the findings is offered.

To conclude the paper, Chapter 5 discusses the important findings as they correspond to the guiding questions and the purpose of the study. Links between prior research and present findings are identified and utilized to make suggestions for educational policy, leadership practice, and further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a conceptual framework for the study which seeks to identify factors contributing to superintendent longevity. The chapter is organized into sections which initially provide general information about the superintendency, and later target specific facets of the superintendency being studied. The literature review begins with a history of the development of the superintendency. The focus turns to the importance of longevity in school leadership, which serves to reinforce the significance of the study. Included in the longevity section is the history and impact of the elimination of tenure for superintendents in New Jersey. The next section looks at the position itself and discusses the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. Following this, the issue of the change process and its impact on education and the superintendency is discussed. Next, the area of superintendent's job satisfaction is reviewed. After that, the history of the development of boards of education and the superintendent-board of education relationship is explored. The final section presents Bolman and Deal's four frames, which serve as a lens for drawing conclusions. The literature review provides a background for the study and assists with development of the guiding questions on which this proposed qualitative study is based. Additionally, the literature review provided a basis for development of the conceptual framework.

The literature review was conducted using various data bases, including Academic Search Premier, ProQuest, and Dissertation Abstract Database. Boolean/Phrase searches and other basic and advanced key term searches were employed. Reading and review of initial articles and texts led to identification of additional related works. Literature types included both

empirical and nonempirical. Empirical studies included national studies by professional associations, as well as the work of individual researchers who completed dissertations. Nonempirical literature in the forms of articles from professional journals and entire texts written about the superintendency were more prevalent.

The Development of the School Superintendency

The development of the school superintendency aligns with the expansion of public schools from the one-room school house to multiclassroom schools to multischool districts. The position originated at the state level in New York in 1812. The person holding this position, known as the Commissioner of Education in New Jersey, possesses responsibilities for oversight of the overall state education system and serves as a representative of the state. The state superintendent does not, however, hold power or responsibility for day-to-day operation of a school district.

In the early years of public education, the local responsibility was held by one teacher in charge of the school, often known as the head teacher. This position progressed into the principalship as schools grew larger. Eventually, the principalship evolved into the superintendency, with the first school superintendent being appointed in Buffalo, New York, in 1837 (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Interestingly enough, Edwards (2007, p. 5) described the original superintendent as a noneducator: "At that time, the person who was hired and designated as superintendent was also a layman, basically cut from the same cloth as the committee...This person was often paid less than the principal, who was the professional educator in the system."

With the common school movement from 1830 to 1850, the position of school superintendent began to develop into the role we know today. School superintendents were first

seen in large school districts, with 13 such positions created between 1837 and 1850 (Kowalski, 1999). The trend continued throughout the 1800's, with all large United States cities appointing school superintendents by 1890; however, the position was not found in smaller districts and towns until the 20th century (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The roles and responsibilities of the superintendency also evolved over time. The superintendent initially worked as a clerk to the board of education until the end of the 19th century when the role transitioned to an educational focus – the superintendent as master teacher – and responsibilities went beyond that of a clerk to the board (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In the early 1900's, the role changed again, with a business manager aspect taking priority (Edwards, 2007). The superintendency progressed during the first half of the 19th century with the role of statesman, who made decisions as an educational leader/manager who needed to be aware of the political environment (Kowalski, 1999). Around the same time, states began implementing certification requirements for school administrators, and, in some cases, instituted the position of superintendent as a matter of law. Additionally, states also delineated through statute legal responsibilities of the superintendent and the school board, clarifying the authority of each position (Glass, Byork, & Brunner, 2000c).

In the 1960's, input from the community impacted the superintendent's role, since citizens felt that schools were not meeting their expectations and questioned the scientific management model utilized by districts (Glass, 1997). The superintendents were compelled to expand the political aspect of their leadership role (Hoyle, et al., 2005). Ultimately, the superintendent became the chief executive officer of the board of education with the multifaceted role we see today. Edwards (2007) described the expressed and implied duties of the superintendent as commonly found in state statute:

- Serving as chief executive officer of the school board and thus assuming responsibility for all aspects of the work;

- Providing leadership planning and evaluating all phases of the instructional program;
- Selecting and recommending all personnel to the school board for appointment and guiding the growth of said personnel;
- Preparing the budget for submission to the board and administering it after its adoption;
- Determining building needs and administering building programs, construction, operations, and maintenance; and
- Serving as the leader of the school board, the staff, and the community in improving the education system. (pp. 10-11)

As the role and responsibilities of the superintendent developed, there were also changes in the profession itself. In the 1890's, school administrators began to organize separately from teachers (Glasman & Fuller, 2002, as cited in Edwards, 2007). Along with this movement was a change in preparation for school administrators, and in the early 1900's, graduate schools of education added educational administration and supervision as a separate and distinct area of study (Edwards, 2007).

In the late 1800's and through the turn of the century, a superintendent was selected by appointing "a layperson from the committee who had a strong interest in the supervision of schools" (Edwards, 2007). During the early 20th century, however, a common path to the superintendency began by service as a football or basketball coach or band director which led to the principalship, and then the superintendency. This is described by Edwards (2007, p. 15): "Patterns of high visibility, coupled with a public image as a winner, seemed to be one way to climb the educational leadership ladder, and ultimately reach the superintendency." In addition to the coach's path, sponsorship was another way to become a superintendent. Often known as the "old boys club," sponsorship came through a university, a particular professor, or an informal network of leaders (Edwards, 2007). Mentoring served as yet another path to the superintendency. While sponsorship often involved a connection with someone yielding

political power or influence, mentoring is viewed as a professional relationship wherein an experienced administrator guides a younger educator in career advancement (Kowalski, 1999). Each of these roads – coaching, sponsorship, mentoring – has its place alone or in combination with another; yet, the most typical path to, or preparation for, the superintendency is graduate education. It should be noted, however, that most graduate programs in educational administration target the principalship, with no programs designed specifically for the superintendency (Edwards, 2007). Further, the content of the programs do not necessarily align with the complex issues faced by superintendents today. Edwards (citing Bjork, 2001b) shared, "Studies being conducted over the last few decades do show that superintendents are being challenged by different working conditions, and critics report widespread dissatisfaction among those who are completing graduate degree or certification programs in educational administration." Survey results from the AASA Mid-Decade Study, however, indicated that, overall, superintendents are satisfied with their educational administration programs. Specifically, 71.3% reported that their master's program qualifying them for certification was effective or very effective (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

One key work is *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform*, which was commissioned by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1989. The report made specific recommendations, including strengthening field connections, revising courses, modifying instruction, integrating clinical practice, and recruiting student cohorts. Partially in response to this concern, professional organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) developed their own programs and identified standards for the superintendency (Hayes, 2001). In 1993, AASA sponsored a National Commission on Professional Standards for the Superintendency. The outcome was a set of

national standards designed for use by board members as a guide to hiring and evaluating superintendents, as well as to provide benchmarks for the ongoing professional development of superintendents (Kowalski & Glass, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed and released standards in 1996, and updated them most recently in 2008 (Council of Chief State School Officials website; retrieved Dec 2, 2008). The ISLLC standards describe a vision that promotes student achievement while providing a guide for quality school leadership. These standards can be used by universities to develop Master's and Doctoral programs; by educational organizations in planning professional development; by school boards to develop job descriptions, refine hiring practices, and evaluate superintendents; and finally, by superintendents themselves to guide their own development and professional practice.

Longevity and Turnover

The average superintendents' longevity decreased by approximately 16 years from reported rates in the 1950's to the early 1980's through the present. The decrease is even greater in urban school districts. With the combined forces of the public and business community's call for school reform, along with the high-stakes accountability of NCLB, the need for public schools to change their culture and practices seems inevitable. Since organizational change takes time, there exists a need for superintendent longevity (Renchler, 1992; Kowalski, 1995; Austermuhl, 2000; Alborano, 2002; Natkins, Cooper, & Alborano, 2002; Padilla, & Ghosh, 2002; Maritz, 2006). In discussing the consequences of changing superintendents, Peterson and Klotz (1999, p.3) stated: "If anything, school reform efforts have brought to light the futility of trying to restructure schools without leadership stability; the brief window of opportunity accorded superintendents has done nothing to move them toward the role of instructional leader."

Rapid turnover and lack of stability negatively affect a public school system (Carter &

Cunningham, 1997; Alborano, 2000; Cooper, et al, 2000). Time is needed for the superintendent

to learn about the school district, build meaningful and diverse working relationships, identify

needs and potential solutions, and effect meaningful change. When turnover occurs on a fairly

regular basis at the highest level of the school district, the members, particularly teachers and

principals, become wary of the new vision and proposed changes of each new leader.

Throughout the book, *Leading to Change: The Challenge of the New Superintendency,* Johnson

(1996) described this concern:

> Much of the feeling was, people come, get things started, you buy into various programs,
> and before you have the opportunity to refine what you are doing, you have a new
> administration with new philosophy. (p. 42)

> Superintendents who think they can install new programs and leave a district without
> harming it, and school board members who believe that firing a superintendent will open
> the way for better leadership may be mistaken. When school leaders depart suddenly or
> there is repeated turnover, teachers close their classroom doors. (p. 283)
> Since turnover possesses negative consequences for school districts, it is important to

identify what conditions lead to turnover – either through the board's dismissing the

superintendent or the superintendent's deciding to leave. Problems with the political role of the

superintendency seemed to be the most frequent. The political aspect included societal forces,

community concerns, and superintendent-board of education relations (Carter & Cunningham,

1997; Alborano, 2002). In a study of superintendent turnover, Byrd, Drews, & Johnson (2007)

found that 76% of superintendents who changed districts ranked "increased politics" as the

number one or two contributing factor to the instability in the profession. Even when

superintendents and their boards seemingly have positive working relationships, if vocal

community members become displeased and board members feel the pressure, the

superintendent's status with the board can rapidly deteriorate. Lee (2006, p.47) recommended:

"Build your political capital every day. Remember the school board responds to the community and your success will be directly related to how well you are received by your community."

In New Jersey, superintendents possessed the legal right to earn tenure in their positions until the year 1991 when the State legislature ratified Assembly Bill 1131 [A-1131], sponsored by Assemblywoman Barbara Kalik. This bill was signed by Governor James Florio on August 24, 1991. The proposal and passage of the bill was related, in large part, to the concern that removing a tenured superintendent was extremely difficult and costly, if not impossible. In 1997, Boright conducted a study regarding perceptions of superintendent-board member relations since the removal of tenure in 1991. The study involved a survey of New Jersey superintendents and board of education presidents; 359 board presidents completed the survey, while 415 superintendents responded. Boright (1997, p. 26) cited an example: "Kalik's legislative district included the Trenton school district. That school system had received significant adverse publicity concerning a controversial buyout of its superintendent that cost an estimated $375,000.00." As early as 1980, the New Jersey School Boards Association expressed concern with superintendents' tenure (as cited in Koehler, 1976): "No community should have to co-exist interminably with a superintendent who can no longer operate effectively or who no longer agrees, in substance, with prevailing board philosophy." Accordingly, with the support of the New Jersey School Boards Association, the solution to the problem became a legislative one. In eliminating the right to earn tenure, the State established the length of time a board of education could include in a superintendent's contract:

> The board of education of a Type I district and of any Type II district, now having or hereafter authorized to have a superintendent of schools, may, by contract appoint, for a term of not less than three nor more than five years and expiring July 1, a superintendent of schools by the recorded roll call majority vote of the full membership of the board. (N.J.A.C. 18A:17-15)

It should be noted that superintendents who earned tenure prior to the passage of this legislation in 1991, did not have their tenure revoked. This is also included in statute:

> Nothing in this section or in this act shall affect any tenure rights which shall have already accrued to any superintendent prior to the effective date of this amendatory and supplementary act. (N.J.A.C. 18A:17-20.4)

The statute also delineated reappointment of the superintendent:

> At the conclusion of the term of the initial contract of or any subsequent contract as hereinafter provided, the superintendent shall be deemed reappointed for another contracted term of the same duration as the previous contract unless either: a. the board by contract reappoints him for a different term which term shall be not less than three nor more than five years, in which event reappointments thereafter shall be deemed for the new term unless a different term is again specified; or b. at least one year prior to the expiration of the first or any subsequent contract the board shall notify the superintendent in writing that he will not be reappointed at the end of the current term, in which event his employment shall cease at the expiration of that term. (N.J.A.C. 18A:17-20.1)

A limited number of studies have been completed to assess the impact of the elimination of tenure. Boright (1997) identified the following key findings:

1) No appreciable change in the board superintendent-relationship as perceived by the majority of board members and superintendents studied;
2) 86.2% of board members and superintendents rated the relationship as favorable;
3) The superintendent was more likely to see the relations as more negative;
4) Superintendents perceived an increase in boards attempting to become involved in the day-to-day operations of the school district; board members did not report this;
5) 34.2% of superintendents indicated that the board-superintendent relationship declined; only 9.7% of board members indicated that the relationship declined. (pp. 178-81)

Three years after Boright's study was published, Austermuhl (2000) conducted a similar study which looked at the board-superintendent relationship and conflict with delineations between tenured superintendents and contractual superintendents. Austermuhl interviewed 14 subjects including members of the New Jersey School Boards Association, New Jersey Association of School Administrators, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, New Jersey Association of School Business Officials, New Jersey Education Association/Uniserv, as

well as State Legislators. Additionally, Austermuhl distributed a questionnaire which resulted in responses from 27 superintendents and 16 board members. Interestingly enough, the findings indicated that the majority of tenured superintendents preferred the tenure system, while the majority of contract superintendents and board presidents preferred the contract system (Austermuhl, 2000, p. 128). Additionally, intended and unintended consequences of the elimination of tenure for superintendents were identified by Austermuhl (2000):

1) Altered the board-superintendent relationship;
2) Increased the potential for conflict between the board and superintendent;
3) Created lack of continuity in superintendent leadership;
4) Increased the mobility of superintendents;
5) Increased the number of interim superintendents and the length of service of interim superintendents;
6) Increased competitiveness of superintendent salaries. (pp. 133-4)

The issue of longevity is of concern, based on the statistics regarding superintendents' years in a district on both a state and national level. Overall, the average years in a district has decreased over the past 30 years by approximately 16 years. Although some consider the elimination of tenure to be a negative for New Jersey Superintendents and school districts, due to the limited available research it is difficult to draw strong conclusions that the elimination of tenure brought about the decrease, particularly since the decline started prior to the elimination of tenure, as well as due to the fact that the decrease is nationwide, not just in New Jersey. What is evident is that longevity is an important factor in developing effective school districts that can handle change and promote student achievement.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Superintendent

The role of the superintendent has changed significantly during the history of American public education. Today, the superintendent as chief executive officer implies a multifaceted role that involves three main leadership components: educational, managerial, and political

(Johnson, 1996; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Alborano, 2002; Kowalski, 2006). The American

Association of School Administrators (AASA) named five major leadership goals: 1) leading

their districts' instructional practices; 2) building healthy relations between their districts and

other local and state agencies; 3) building healthy relationships with citizens, especially parents

who live in their districts; 4) managing the operations of their school districts; and 5)

representing their districts in local, statewide, and national arenas (AASA, 2007). It is no

surprise that "leading instructional practices" is first on AASA's list of goals, since the concept

of the superintendent as instructional leader is prevalent throughout the literature (Peterson,

2002; Castallo, 2003; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Hoyle, et al, 2005). With the call for

reform and the demands made by NCLB's accountability in literacy, math, and science,

judgment of the superintendent's effectiveness is attributed, in large part, to student achievement

as measured by state tests. Accordingly, communities and boards of education look to the

superintendent to assess areas for improvement, identify potential solutions, and implement

changes to address the needs. Often, these changes come in the form of new content-based

programs and pedagogical practices. Peterson (2002) suggested:

> The current climate and emphasis on the reform and restructuring of the US education
> system has placed an enormous amount of political pressure on schools to demonstrate
> effective leadership at the district level. A critical indicator of that leadership
> effectiveness is the transformation of the core technology of curriculum and instruction."
> (p. 158)

The instructional leadership role, however, goes beyond changes in programs and

practices that in reality are implemented by others, particularly classroom teachers. The role also

calls for superintendents to increase their own knowledge of the teaching and learning process

and to directly lead instructional change. Negroni (as cited by Cambron-McCabe, et al, 2005)

offered quite a dramatic description:

> Such leadership depends, first and foremost, on the example set by the district superintendent. This requires a radical change in the superintendency itself. We cannot manage systems if that means we neglect teaching and learning, leaving the business of instruction to others. We cannot lead learning if we leave the core of instruction unquestioned, unexamined, and essentially mysterious. If we truly intend to educate all students to high standards, then superintendents must become 'lead teachers' again. (p.43)

While this author does not state that superintendents literally need to teach classes, the statement indicates that instructional leadership cannot be delegated to others in the school district. In a study of principals' and board members' perceptions of superintendents as instructional leaders, outcomes suggested that the vision of the superintendent influenced the organization in relation to instruction and academic success (Peterson, 2002).

It should be noted, however, that although the role of superintendent as instructional leader has become more prevalent, the superintendent's responsibilities as manager have not diminished. Among the most critical aspects of the managerial role is the district budget. Results of the AASA mid-decade study indicated that mismanagement of finances was a leading cause of superintendent dismissal (Glass & Francischini, 2007). Cambron-McCabe, et al. (2005, p. 71) offered this caution: "And while everyone will applaud your efforts to lead learning, no one will tolerate your failure to balance the budget. You have to lead. But you have to manage, too." This serves as an example of the complexity of the superintendency: finding the proper balance between leadership and management in light of key issues for your particular community and organizational structure.

The political aspect of the superintendency is a role in and of itself, with connections to the instructional and managerial roles. Although most educators have no desire to be "politicians," the fact that superintendents possess power over people and resources makes the existence of politics inevitable (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hoyle, et al., 2005). A facet of the

political role is understanding the community norms and values. This can include beliefs about traditional or progressive educational philosophy, the relative importance of academics versus athletics, the concept of neighborhood schools, and which staff members and programs are untouchable (Hoyle, et al., 2005; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005). In discussing the concept of the community and how its values impact the superintendent, Hoyle, et al. (2005) stated:

> Superintendents must be able to closely gauge whether a community will accept new educational values or whether the community is comfortable with traditional values. There most definitely are liberal and conservative communities and superintendents need to adjust their agendas to 'fit' the community. (p. 74)

The overall political landscape of the community is a critical factor in superintendent effectiveness and longevity. Bolman and Deal (2003) discussed the concept of creating a "political map" which involves mapping players and their interests. This map helps to serve the superintendent in making decisions that are in alignment with the political terrain while avoiding problematic areas. Accordingly, developing positive working relationships with key community leaders – those with official titles as well as the informal players – serves the school district well. Efforts to create such relationships become the work of the superintendent, often in conjunction with the board president or other board of education members. Blumberg (1985, as cited in Hoyle, et al., 2005) emphasized the critical nature of the political role:

> Although educators have been socialized throughout their careers to have nothing to do with politics, superintendents work with elected officials, special interest groups, and board of education members who expect them to be responsive to public needs and demands, to have political acumen and skills to make wise decisions, to resolve differences, to allocate funds in accordance with educational values, and to generate support for school bond issues. (p. 47)

Like the overall role of chief school administrator, the political role is also complex and requires balance. The superintendent, as well as individuals who are leaders within the community, must be aware of essential community values. Further, superintendents must determine whether their

values match those of the community. This investigation of the community and reflection upon oneself should happen prior to the superintendent's applying for and accepting a position. If there is not a match between the values of the superintendent, board of education, and the community-at-large, conflict inevitably occurs.

Throughout the literature, varying views are emphasized regarding how the three roles should be balanced, and which roles successfully fulfilled lead to increased longevity or unsuccessfully executed bring about decreased longevity and termination. The difficulty and complexity of the job, however, is a point of almost universal agreement (King, 1999; Peterson, 2002; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Hoyle, et al., 2005; Glass & Francischini, 2007). Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) posited:

> The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today. These leaders must have a constantly expanding inventory of skills and capacities and must be able to use these to deal with the complexities of the education enterprise, as well as with the challenges of today's political realities, economic constraints and turbulent social problems. The tenure of many superintendents, particularly those serving in large or urban districts, is often short and/or tumultuous. This can be attributed to a range of factors including conflicts with school boards, city councils, or mayors, or community pressure for improved academic outcomes. (p. 1)

Although the superintendent needs to fulfill all three roles – instructional, managerial, and political – at different times and in varying combinations there are circumstances during which one role must become predominant. Hence, the behavior of the superintendent becomes reliant upon the ability to read the situation and respond accordingly. In the end, however, the effective superintendent who builds longevity must demonstrate excellence in all three roles (Hoyle, et al., 2005).

The Change Process

With the pressure for school reform to increase student achievement, the superintendents' ability to effect change becomes a critical skill that encompasses all facets of the role. Houston and Eadie (2002) focused on how the skills needed to implement change have in and of themselves changed:

> Coping with change has been an essential superintendent skill since the beginning of public education in America…However, today's always changing and often threatening world is uniquely challenging, forcing you, like it or not, to become a virtuoso at leading and managing change – not alone but in close, creative partnership with your school board. (p. 53)

In thinking about change, the superintendent needs to realize that there are two main stakeholder groups that are comprised of various members. The public, or external sector, includes parents, community leaders, and other nonemployees; the district, or internal sector, encompasses principals, teachers and other employees. In some instances, players may be members of both stakeholder groups. Therefore, the superintendent must understand the history and actual workings of the district. Edwards (2007, pp. 116 and 118) indicated: "It is only after the superintendent digs deep into the organization that an understanding of the true workings of the system are revealed…a change process in contemporary parlance features a superintendent who values involvement by all parties that are significant to the educational enterprise." Further, in light of the constituents impacted by the change, leaders need to remain cognizant of the very personal and emotional nature of change. Fullan (2001) wrote:

> If you ask people to brainstorm words to describe change, they come up with a mixture of negative and positive terms. On the one side, *fear, anxiety, loss, danger, panic;* on the other side, *exhilaration, risk-taking, excitement, improvements, energizing.* For better or worse, change arouses emotion, and when emotions intensify, leadership is the key. (p.1)

As educational leader, the superintendent must possess a working knowledge of curricular, instructional, and assessment practices related to increased student achievement. In

his study of the superintendent's role as instructional leader, Peterson (2002, p. 166) found that "Outcomes suggest that the articulated vision of the superintendent appears to have influence on the organizational factors involved in the promotion of instruction and the district's ability to become academically successful." In the role of politician, the superintendent needs to communicate about needed changes with multiple constituent groups, including principals, teachers, and parents/guardians. Through management, the superintendent must ensure that the necessary resources of time, money, and personnel are provided to support the change. This description, however, paints a picture of change that seems to have a specific outline or format. The latest literature on change, however, discusses not a step-by-step process, but rather the importance of creating a culture of, and for, change. Fullan (2001) wrote:

> Transforming the culture--changing the way we do things around here - is the main point. I call this *reculturing*. Effective leaders know that the hard work of reculturing is the sine qua non of progress...Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It does mean producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices. (p. 44)

Since resistance is a natural reaction to change, the process is not simply following a formula. How the superintendent involves stakeholders in the change process can result in increased or decreased resistance. This process involves all three superintendent roles, with a focus on communication and culture. When change is top-down, resistance increases. Likewise, resistance decreases when the superintendent engages stakeholders in meaningful dialogue and creates a culture open to change.

Whether looking at the various roles and steps in the change process or the overall culture of change, the importance of the superintendents' skills in effecting change is quite clear. The literature suggests that this skill may be the most important factor in whether or not a superintendent is viewed as a leader and meets with success in a school district (Johnson, 1996;

Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Heifitz & Linsky; 2002). Enacting change is often what causes

difficulty for superintendents and, in some instances, leads to their dismissal or nonrenewal.

Heifitz & Linsky (2002) described the connection between people's values and change:

> When you lead people through difficult change, you take them on an emotional roller
> coaster because you are asking them to relinquish something – a belief, a value, a
> behavior – that they hold dear. People can stand only so much change at any one time.
> You risk revolt, and your own survival, by trying to do too much, too soon. (p. 116-7)

The superintendent who survives change understands the political landscape, as well as senses

the loss that change may bring to teachers, students, parents, and/or the community.

Superintendents' Job Satisfaction

In light of the challenges of the superintendency and the decrease in average longevity,

the researcher expected to find limited reports of high job satisfaction among public school

superintendents. Studies indicated that superintendents are usually satisfied in their jobs

(Cooper, et al, 2000; Glass, et al, 2000; Kowalski, 2006; Schoen, 2006; Glass & Francischini,

2007).

Of the 2,979 respondents to a national survey, 91% "agree strongly that my work in this

district has given me real career satisfaction" (Cooper, et al., 2000). In AASA's Ten-Year Study

of the American School Superintendent, approximately 56% of the 2,252 respondents nationwide

reported "considerable" self-fulfillment and 37% reported "moderate" levels (Glass, et al., 2000).

The AASA Mid-Decade Study of the superintendency continued to report similar results, with

90% of the 1,338 superintendents who responded reporting being "very satisfied" or "satisfied"

with their positions (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Of the varying facets of the superintendents'

job, the educational role appears to bring about such satisfaction, with areas such as building

curriculum, developing new programs, helping students and teachers, and contributing to society

being named as factors (Cooper, et al., 2000; Glass, et al., 2000; Kowalski, 2006; Glass &

Franceschini, 2007). Schoen (2006) also studied intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of superintendent job satisfaction and found that levels were high in both categories, and included intrinsic factors such as the amount of freedom and developing their own skills along with extrinsic experiences involving collaboration with colleagues and promoting change.

Although the results of research studies indicate that superintendents are satisfied overall, dissatisfaction with facets of the role and responsibilities do exist. Dissatisfaction in the superintendency appears to come from a variety of external sources which often create stress and negatively impact the superintendent and school district. Based on a study of Connecticut superintendents, Richardson (1998, p.7) indicated, "Board relations, politics, personnel issues, workload, time, crisis management, complying with mandates, public criticism and expectations, high visibility, dealing with angry parents, and lack of recognition and feedback are among the major sources of stress perceived by superintendents." Superintendents respond to stress in different ways. Some decide to leave a particular district or retire from the profession. Others remain in a district but alter their plans for the system by avoiding change which may be needed for district progress but problematic and risky in nature (Kowalski, 2005; Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

Despite the stress of the job, public school superintendents throughout the United States and in New Jersey reported high levels of satisfaction. These reports of job satisfaction offer hope to aspiring superintendents and, perhaps, provide insight into increasing longevity.

The History of the Local Board of Education

With the passage of the 1642 Massachusetts School Ordinance, each town was required to select a group of men to manage every aspect of schooling (Edwards, 2007). Accordingly, a committee comprised of community members was appointed to oversee the schools and handle

the task of educational administration. These committees were the original versions of what we today call school boards or boards of education. A key role of the board of education is the hiring of a superintendent. Through this power, the board seeks to have its philosophy and policies implemented into the school district. Today, the National School Boards Association defines its mission as, "to foster excellence and equity in public education through school board leadership" (NSBA website; retrieved November 11, 2008).

In New Jersey, formation of school boards began in 1914 when the requirement was passed into legislation. Originally, the organization was called the State Federation of District Boards of Education of New Jersey and all boards of education in New Jersey were "declared members" (NJSBA website; retrieved November 11, 2008). Today, the organization is known as the New Jersey School Boards Association and consists of 4,800 members representing more than 600 public school districts (NJBSA website; retrieved November 11, 2008).

Superintendent-School Board Relations

In New Jersey, the elimination of tenure provided increased power to the board of education and placed even greater pressure on the superintendent to develop a positive working relationship with the board. Since the local school board possesses the power to hire, evaluate, renew, and/or terminate a public school superintendent, the importance of the superintendent-school board relationship is obvious. Accordingly, the topic is prevalent throughout recent research and literature, with implications for how superintendents can enhance their working relationship with the board as well as direction for board members themselves. The call for school reform and increasing pressure from the business world and general public further emphasize the need for superintendents and boards to develop a positive working relationship to strengthen the leadership and governance of the school district. Galinsky (in King as editor,

1999), who served as both a long time public school superintendent and board of education member, emphasized the following:

> The fate and success of public schools rest heavily on the ability of superintendents to exert leadership to make a positive difference in the lives of children. We need to develop awareness among boards that fostering a team relationship with the superintendent, with a basis in collaboration, is the most effective way to accomplish the goal of improved student achievement. (p. 51)

The superintendent serves in a unique position of being both a leader and employee of the board (Johnson, 1996). This brings forth the challenge of handling the multifaceted role required of the position, while fulfilling the specific needs and responsibilities of the particular board for which the superintendent works. The relationship affects the school district itself, as well as the superintendent's career. Sharp (as cited in Shield, 2002) stated: "The superintendent's relationship with the board is critical, not just for educating the district's students but also for job security of the superintendent." The superintendent's ability to satisfy the local board of education is clearly critical to their longevity in a particular school district (Peterson & Klotz, 1999; King, editor, 1999; Byrd, et al., 2007; Natkins, et al., 2002; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Lee, 2006; Townsend, Johnston, Gross, Lynch, Garcy, Roberts, & Novotney, 2007). Failure to satisfy the board will likely result in the board's dismissing the superintendent, the superintendent's leaving in anticipation of the dismissal, or the superintendent's resigning in light of increasingly negative relations with the board.

While there are various facets to this complex relationship, the literature identifies certain elements that may contribute to, or hinder, the superintendent-board of education relationship.

The issue of communication was identified as a key element by both superintendents and board of education members (King, 1999; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Hoyle, et al., 2005; Glass & Francischini, 2007; Townsend, et al., 2007). The concept of communication is multifaceted, and

includes the frequency, manner, and quality of communication between the superintendent and entire board, as well as between the superintendent and individual board members, particularly the board of education president. In the AASA Mid-Decade Study, Glass & Francischini (2007) found that 74.7 percent of superintendents reported spending five hours or less per week in direct communication with the board, 20.4 percent spent six to ten hours per week, and 5.1 percent spent more than 10 hours per week. A common practice among superintendents is sending to board members' homes written weekly updates that might include highlights of district events, updates on key issues and initiatives, the superintendent's calendar, and other information deemed important for board members to know. This practice provides regular communication to all board members in a consistent and timely manner. The combination of direct communication, usually via telephone and weekly updates via hard copy or e-mail, supports savvy practices, as described by Houston and Eadie (2002, p. 8): "Communication is the glue that helps to cement a strong board-superintendent working relationship, provided that it is pertinent, honest, and accurate in content, that it is provided in a timely fashion, and that it is formulated for ease of understanding." While open communication was named as contributing to positive relationships, the absence of regular communication with the board as a whole, or uneven communication with individual board members, negatively affected the relationship (Boright, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; King, 1999; Austermuhl, 2000; Townsend, et al., 2007). To ensure that communication is a contributor, and not a detractor, from a positive working relationship, the superintendent should discuss expectations regarding communication as early as the interview process, and then set clear parameters once hired. These expectations should be two-way and include the expectations for superintendent-to-board communication as well as board-to-superintendent communication. A singular example of agreed-upon two-way

communication is for neither party to surprise the other, particularly at a public meeting (AASA, 1996; Galinsky in King, 1999; Townsend, et al., 2007).

Like communication, trust was an element named by both groups. Trust could be considered an abstract concept; however, it was described to include factors such as board members' being able to rely on information provided by the superintendent and the superintendent's being able to run the school district without micromanagement from the board. In a study of superintendent-board relationships, micromanagement was named as a "near universal complaint about the job structure" (Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005). A relationship based on trust positively influenced superintendent-board relations, while any level of distrust became a significant pitfall in their working relationship (Boright, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Austermuhl, 2000; Glass, et al., 2000). Since it is such a significant factor, the superintendent needs to work at developing a culture of trust. Townsend, et al. (2007) emphasized the following:

> Establishing a trusting and collaborative relationship between school board members and between the board and superintendent is one of the highest and most essential priorities for the superintendent of schools. To build trust within an organization, the superintendent must continuously focus on coaching, training, and responding to board members' needs. (pp. 22-3)

Building this level of trust requires actions highlighting the superintendent's need to serve as both employee and leader of the board. Communication, previously described as a critical element in and of itself, also contributes to the level of trust.

The clear definition of roles and responsibilities for the superintendent and board of education should be discussed during the interview process, with parameters being finalized when the superintendent is hired. Although the basic distinction of the board as policy making body and the superintendent as administrator of the school system is often understood in general

terms, the specifics as applicable to a particular district need to be defined. Addressing this matter at the beginning of the relationship helps to decrease board micromanagement and contributes to the culture of trust. This delineation should include varying facets of governance and administration. While some areas are commonly agreed upon (i.e., personnel's being the superintendent's responsibility) others will require more in-depth discussion. Houston and Eadie (2002, p.32) indicated that the superintendent and board need to determine: 1) governing products that the board should regularly make decisions and judgments about, and 2) the role the board should play in generating and shaping these products. Jointly developing and remaining consistent to areas defined are significant factors in superintendent-board of education relationships (King, 1999; Peterson & Klotz, 1999; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Townsend, et al., 2007).

The board of education's expectations regarding the superintendent's competencies and priorities also need to be defined at the beginning of the relationship, with regular review and refinement as necessary (Galinsky in King as editor 1999; Peterson & Klotz, 1999; Houston & Eadie, 2002). In the 2007 AASA mid-decade study, superintendents reported that the expectations of their board targeted educational leadership 41.5% of the time, managerial leadership 34.5%, and political leadership 15.5% of the time (Glass & Francischini, 2007). Of course, these are general leadership roles which may give some direction to superintendents. However, the expectations of each board need to be delineated in greater detail to the district's superintendent. Peterson and Klotz (1999, p, 15) emphasized this as a collaborative process, with important ramifications: "The mutual determination of expectations for superintendent competencies by both school boards and the superintendent is critical to the enhancement of the board-superintendent relationship and may result in increased tenure for the superintendent."

While the initial definition of expectations and competencies is usually completed, there is often a lack of followup and feedback. This is an example of where communication can be critical. As the superintendent becomes more familiar with the district and as district needs may change, the superintendent needs to advise the board so that areas of emphasis may be realigned to meet the needs. Likewise, if the board of education determines a new or different direction, this must be communicated to the superintendent. When there are changing views without open discussion, problems may arise in the superintendent-board relationship. Houston and Eadie (2002, p. 82) offered this: "The problem is usually a mismatch between many board members' expectations as to the superintendent's priorities and performance targets and the superintendent's understanding of these expectations." To help avoid this and other problems, the board needs to complete an annual evaluation of the superintendent (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Townsend, et al., 2007). This evaluation is a time for the board to provide feedback regarding the superintendent's performance in meeting expectations and focusing on priorities as well as an opportunity to communicate any desired improvements in competencies and/or changes in priorities.

The overall governance of the school district is a joint responsibility of the superintendent and school board. King (1999) stressed the importance of teamwork:

> School systems that function well are led by a superintendent and a school board that successfully model the values and behaviors they espouse for their students, teachers, and administrators. If the leadership team does not do this, then time, energy, and resources are drained and redirected into managing the inevitable conflict and miscommunication that result. (p. 6)

Naturally, the communication and trust previously discussed contribute to the system's ability to govern at this high level and avoid wasteful conflicts. One key aspect of governance is

district goal setting and monitoring. Goal setting includes overall goals for the board of education and school district that may relate to instructional and noninstructional issues. These goals become the joint responsibility of the board of education and the superintendent, and are accomplished based on the delineated roles. Accordingly, district goals usually become part of the superintendent's annual goals and part of the evaluation process (Boright, 1997). The monitoring of these goals is critical in and of itself, as well as in contributing to the communication factor previously named. Further, evaluating the relationship supports the element of trust (AASA, 1996; Boright, 1997). Conducting an annual retreat is a suggested way to cover the district evaluation/goal setting process, as well as a time to complete the superintendent's evaluation and goals (King, 1999; Houston & Eadie, 2002).

Since board members as elected officials may or may not possess the needed skills and/or experience with governance and leadership, the superintendent needs to ensure that training and development of the board as a whole, as well as individual board members, occurs (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Townsend, et al., 2007). Likewise, identifying particular strengths and skills of board members may also serve the school district and superintendent (Townsend, et al., 2007). Often, neither boards nor their superintendents place emphasis on board development (Houston & Eadie, 2002). In New Jersey, there are training requirements for sitting and new board members (N.G.A.C. 18A: 12-33`a`a). Additionally, many board members participate in training provided by their local, state, and/or national association. While this more generic training assists the board as a governance team, additional district-based training may be needed. Townsend, et al. (2007) promoted direct involvement of the superintendent:

> Superintendents must assume the role of 'coach' for board members with respect to their roles, responsibilities, and behaviors. A wise superintendent provides ongoing direction and guidance with a high priority on 'ongoing staff development' for all district employees, including board members. (p. 4)

Training and development of the board is particularly important when turnover occurs and there are new members (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Townsend, et al., 2007). This is especially critical as the number of board members that hire the superintendent continues to decrease. Like any other group, the dynamics are affected by the changes in board members. Interestingly enough, the length of board member tenure is similar to that of superintendent tenure. The AASA mid-decade study indicates that the average board member tenure is six years (Glass & Francischini, 2007). Depending on when and why the turnover occurs, the change may impact the entire governance structure in terms of how the board operates including the priorities of the board which, in turn, affects the related expectations of the superintendent. Accordingly, the superintendent must play a role in learning about the new board member and acclimating the new member to the school district. Galinsky (1999, King as editor, p. 46) wrote: "Board members need to know and understand what the superintendent does. A process that orients them to the superintendent's daily activities and responsibilities is, therefore, important to the relationship." The superintendent should look to the experienced board members who provide stability to the governance team (Glass & Francischini, 2007). Training of new board members should be done with input particularly from the board president who likely takes a leadership role in indoctrinating the new member.

Beyond the role of assisting new board members, the board president or chairperson often stands as a singularly active and influential person. Houston & Eadie (2002) described the relationship between the board president and superintendent:

> The board president runs the board; the superintendent runs the district's operations. However, the areas of shared responsibility is wide enough that you, as CEO, need to take the initiative in working out a mutually satisfactory division of labor that is clear enough to keep the two of you from butting heads (most of the time). The principle area of shared responsibility is governance – the work of the board itself. (p. 92)

Developing a positive working relationship with the board president benefits the school district's overall governance, as well as the superintendent's success (Cheever, 1999 in King as editor; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Byrd, et al., 2007). Like the superintendent-board relationship, the superintendent-board president relationship requires effective communication and strong trust.

The Four Frames

Bolman and Deal (2003) presented the concept of four frames from which managers and leaders should work:

> The *structural* frame "emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships; the *human resources* frame "sees the organization much like an extended family, made up of individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations; the *political* frame views organizations as "arenas, contents, or jungles; parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources; and the *symbolic* frame "treats organizations as tribes, theatres, or carnivals. (pp. 14-15)

Although the text does not address superintendent longevity, the authors did purport that effective managers and leaders are not only conscious of the frames, but also are aware of when to reframe based on the situation. Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 15) explained: "They reframe until they understand the situation at hand. They do this by using more than one frame, or perspective, to develop both a diagnosis of what they are up against and strategies for moving forward."

The frames can be aligned with the previously discussed components of the literature review. The varying roles of the superintendent directly and/or indirectly relate to the four frames. For instance, the managerial role and structural frame both focus on goals and tasks. The change process, likewise, connects with the concept of reframing to identify and solve problems. For example, when making changes the superintendent may be delving into areas that

are part of the district culture, an aspect of the symbolic frame. Superintendents' job satisfaction and dissatisfaction may develop from any of the frames. Since satisfaction relates to needs, the human resources frame becomes personal to the individual superintendent. The superintendent-board of education relationship may be impacted by any of the frames. The political frame, with its focus on bargaining and coalitions, is seen in such relationships and certainly may influence longevity.

Summary

Superintendent longevity stands as a critical issue in American public education. As the leaders of our school districts, superintendents play instructional, managerial, and political roles. The successful superintendent understands each role, possesses the skills to fulfill each role, and learns how to balance the roles to meet the needs of the school community. Depending upon the manner in which the superintendent identifies the need for, handles planning of, and manages implementation of change, the superintendent may find that the change process either contributes to longevity or brings about departure/dismissal. Enhancing superintendents' satisfaction in their jobs may help to ensure that they remain longer in their school districts. Likewise, when superintendents and boards work together, they help to create a culture of trust between and among themselves as well as with the whole school district. Further, the superintendent's leadership in the district is affirmed by a supportive board of education. Accordingly, boards of education are encouraged to continue the superintendent's employment for increased periods of time, and superintendents are more likely to remain committed to the school district. Overall, the superintendent who can reframe, especially in challenging situations, may enhance the ability to manage and lead; in turn, this may influence longevity.

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the literature related to the history of the superintendency and boards of education, the change process, roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, longevity and turnover, and the superintendent-board relationship. Chapter 3 will describe the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the case study was to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of employment in the same district, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it. The study examined aspects of superintendent roles, job satisfaction, board of education relationships, and handling change. Chapter 3 includes information about the population, research procedures and techniques for data collection, interview questions, and data analysis methods.

Population

Based on the New Jersey Association of School Administrators database of superintendents obtained in February 2009, there are 529 superintendents currently working in New Jersey public schools; 505 of them are contractual superintendents who were hired after the elimination of tenure. Of the 505 contractual superintendents, 167 of them have been in their current positions for six years or more (NJASA, 2009). See Table 1 below:

Table 1. Superintendents with Six or More Years in the Same Position

District Factor Group	Number	Percentage of Total
A	9	6%
B	27	16%
CD	21	13%
DE	33	20%
FG	28	17%
GH	25	15%
I	19	11%
J	5	2%

From the population of 167 superintendents, 21, or 13%, of them work in DFG CD school districts. Using purposeful random sampling, six superintendents and their corresponding board of education presidents were chosen for the case study. Patton (2002, p.230) stated, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth." By adding the randomness to the purposeful sampling, the credibility of the results were increased (Patton, 2002; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). As explained by Patton (2002, p. 240), purposeful random sampling (small sample size) "add credibility when potential purposeful sample is larger than one can handle. It reduces bias within a purposeful category."

Although there are DFG's that encompass a higher percentage of superintendents who have held their positions for more than six years, the researcher's knowledge of the CD district served as the primary rationale for selecting this DFG as the focus for the case study. Patton (2002, p. 433) emphasized the importance of the inquirer as the instrument of qualitative

research: "Because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights, and capabilities of the inquirer, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analyst." During a 25-year career in public education, the researcher has worked in two CD districts, in one district as a teacher and assistant principal, and in the current district as a principal and presently as the assistant superintendent. This experience helped the researcher understand the nature of CD districts, including their educational, population, and fiscal makeup. Since the researcher conducted a qualitative study for the first time, understanding the context enabled the researcher to focus more on the data itself and less on the context of the data collection.

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Research Procedures and Techniques for Data Collection

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Research Procedures

Data collection in this case study was completed by utilizing confidential interviews. The 21 superintendents who work in CD DFG's were sent a letter inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix A), along with a self-enclosed, stamped envelope. Additionally, a consent form was included (see Appendix B). A signed consent form was required for each participant. From among the superintendents who responded that they would be willing to participate, six superintendents and their corresponding board of education presidents were selected.

The preferred method for these confidential interviews was in-person; however, as needed, telephone interviews were utilized. The interviews were arranged in advance with the subjects; permission to record the interview was also obtained. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and were tape recorded. In addition to tape recording the interview, notes were taken to support the recorded questions and responses. When taking notes, the researcher targeted key points made by the subject, particular phrases or expressions used by the subject, and ideas for

possible followup or probing questions. Patton (2002) discussed four purposes of note taking

during the actual recorded interview:

1. Help formulate new questions as the interview is being conducted
2. Assist in identifying early insights that may be relevant to subsequent interviews
3. Facilitate later analysis, including locating important quotations from the tape itself
4. Serve as a backup in the event the recorder malfunctioned or a tape is inadvertently erased (p. 383)

Following the interview, additional notes were made regarding details such as setting as well as

the researcher's reflections about the subject.

Instrumentation

The interview questions were composed in such a way as to elicit data to answer

the research study guiding questions and were based upon the literature review in Chapter 2.

To help ensure reliability and validity, the semistructured interview guide was reviewed by a

jury of peers. This jury included practicing superintendents who have earned their doctorates

but did not participate in the study. Further, superintendents who had experience with

qualitative research and the data collection method of interviewing were included. The first

superintendent who served on the jury of peers had been a superintendent in the same school

district for more than 10 years. This superintendent possesses a doctorate and has experience

with qualitative research, including semistructured interviews and focus groups. The second

superintendent on the jury of peers had been a superintendent for five years. This

superintendent also possesses a doctorate; his dissertation work included semistructured

interviews and thematic content analysis. Based on the review by a jury of peers, questions

were added to the semistructured interview guide. These included: "When you first

accepted your current position, did you anticipate the priorities to be as you now rate them?

If they changed, how did they change and what factors contributed to the change?" This

connects to the guiding question, "How do superintendents prioritize the various roles of the position?" "Did you select your current district by design, or because it was an opportunity to be a superintendent? Explain." This relates to the other guiding question, "How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district?"

The semistructrued interview guide was also reviewed by the researcher's Seton Hall University dissertation advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, and second reader, Dr. Christopher Tienken, who is also a professor at Seton Hall University. Both of these parties reviewed and approved the semistructured interview guide, including the additions suggested by the jury of peers.

The interviews began with general questions that were designed to elicit background and demographic information from the participant. For the superintendents, these questions were as follows:

1. How many years have you been in public education?
2. How many years have you worked as an administrator?
3. What positions have you held prior to your current position?
4. How long have you been in your current superintendent's position?

For the board of education presidents/vice presidents, the demographic questions were the following:

1. How long have you served on your current Board of Education?
2. How long have you been Board President/Vice President?
3. Were you on the Board when the current Superintendent was hired?

Following the general questions, the interview questions designed to elicit data to answer the guiding questions were asked. The guiding questions, interview questions, and rationale are included in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Guiding Questions, Interview Questions, and Rationale

Research Guiding Question	Interview Question - Superintendent	Interview Question – Board of Education President (or Vice President)	Rationale
How do superintendents prioritize the various roles of the position?	1. In your opinion, among the three major roles of the superintendent – instructional, managerial, and political – which is the most critical to maintaining longevity and why? 2. In your current position, explain how you divide your time among the three roles? 3. Based on your answer to the prior question about how you divide your time, what factors do you use to prioritize your time? 4. When you first accepted your current position, did you anticipate the priorities to be as you now rate them? If they changed, how did they change and what factors contributed to the change?	1. In your opinion, among the three major roles of the superintendent – instructional, managerial, and political – which role is most important to you and your Board and why?	"The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today. These leaders must have a constantly expanding inventory of skills and capacities and must be able to use these to deal with the complexities of the education enterprise, as well as with the challenges of today's political realities, economic constraints, and turbulent social problems." (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1990)

Research Guiding Question	Interview Question - Superintendent	Interview Question – Board of Education President (or Vice President)	Rationale
How do superintendents experience job satisfaction?	1. In reflecting upon your current superintendency, what aspects of your work bring you job satisfaction? Why? 2. Do you take any measures to increase your job satisfaction? If so, explain. 3. Are there any areas of your current work that bring you job dissatisfaction? If so, name the area and explain. 4. How do you handle your feelings of dissatisfaction?		Studies indicated that superintendents are usually satisfied in their jobs. (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 2006; Scheon, 2006; Glass & Franceschini, 2007) Dissatisfaction in the superintendency appears to come from a variety of external sources which often create stress and negatively impact the superintendent and the school district. (Richardson, 1998; Kowalski, 2006; Glass & Franceschini, 2007)
How do superintendents maintain positive working relations with their Boards of Education?	1. Describe the measures you take to maintain positive relations with your board of education as a whole? With your Board of Education President? 2. Describe ways in which you communicate with your Board as a whole? With your President?	1. How does your superintendent maintain positive relations with the board of education as a whole? With you as the Board President? 2. In what ways does the superintendent communicate with the Board? With you as the President? Which methods do you find most effective?	"The superintendent's relationship with the board is critical not just for educating the district's students but also for job security of the superintendent." (Sharp, as cited in Shield, 2002)

	3. Explain a situation in which there was a conflict between you and your Board. How was it resolved?	3. Explain a situation in which there was a conflict between the Board and your superintendent. How was it resolved?	"Communication is the glue that helps to cement a strong board-superintendent working relationship, provided that it is pertinent, honest, and accurate in content, that it is provided in a timely fashion, and that it is formulate for ease of understanding." (Houston & Eadie, 2002)
How do superintendents identify areas for change? How do superintendents implement change?	1. What steps do you take to identify an area for change within your school district? 2. Describe the process you used to lead a change initiative in your current district. 3. Explain challenges that you face during this or another change and how you handled the challenges.	1. How does your superintendent identify areas for change? 2. What process did your superintendent use to lead the change? 3. How did your superintendent handle challenges that were faced during this change or another change?	"Coping with change has been an essential superintendent skill since the beginning of public education in America…However today's always changing and often threatening world is uniquely challenging, forcing you, like it or not, to become a virtuoso at leading and managing change." (Houston & Eadie, 2002)

| How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district? | 1. Did you select your current district by design, or because it was an opportunity to be a superintendent? Explain.
2. As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since you have been in your current position for ___ years, you are part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what facets of your professional practice do you attribute this?
3. From your experience in your current position, what aspects of your school district contribute to your longevity?
4. Is there any circumstance that would cause you to leave your current district for a superintendency in another district?
5. Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to your longevity in your current position? | 1. As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since your superintendent has been in his/her current position for ___ years, he/she is part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what aspects of your superintendent's professional practice do you attribute this?
2. From your experience, what aspects of your school district contribute to your superintendent's longevity?
3. Is there any circumstance that would cause your Board of Education not to offer the superintendent a contract extension?
4. Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to the superintendent's longevity in your district? | Rapid turnover and lack of stability negatively affect a public school system.

(Alborano, 2000, Cooper, Carella, & Fusarelli, 2000; Carter & Cunningham, 1997)

"Superintendents who think they can install a new program and leave a district without harming it, and school board members who believe that firing a superintendent will open the way for better leadership may be mistaken. When school leaders depart suddenly or there is repeated turnover, teachers close their classroom doors."

(Johnson, 1996) |

Data Collection

For the interview, a semistructured, or combined approach interview protocol, was

employed. Standardized open-ended questions, as previously listed in Table 2, were asked first.

By using this structured strategy, the researcher ensured that every subject was asked the same

required set of questions in exactly the same manner. As indicated by Patton (2002):

> "Collecting the same information from each person poses no credibility problem when
> each person is understood as a unique informant with a unique perspective. The political
> credibility of consistent interview findings across respondents is less of an issue under
> basic research conditions." (p. 347)

Following the standard set of questions, the researcher had the discretion to ask followup

and probing questions within the study's topics. This enabled the researcher to explore the

subject's perceptions, while limiting the researcher from entering areas not within the scope of

the study. Again, Patton (2002) provided support by stating, "Thus, the interviewer remains free

to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to

establish a conversational style but with focus on a particular subject that has been

predetermined" (p. 343). The interviewing of both superintendents and their corresponding

presidents or vice presidents contributed to the validity of the data, since longevity is based on

both the superintendent's decision to remain in a school district and the board of education's

decision to renew the superintendent's contract.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed using the qualitative technique of content analysis. Leedy

and Ormrod (2005, p. 142) described content analysis as "a detailed and systematic examination

of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or

biases." The first step in data analysis was transcription of the interviews which were completed

by a paid transcriber. The transcriber had completed the Ethics in the Treatment of Human

Subjects certification, and was also a secretary with more than 25 years of experience with shorthand, word processing, and the like.

Each subject was assigned a number to ensure anonymity. Once transcribed, the content of the interviews was reviewed to determine significant responses which were underlined, then transferred to a spreadsheet. These responses were coded using an inductive approach – meaning the codes were not predetermined but emerged from the data itself. The first round of coding involved reviewing the responses and labeling them with a general category (e.g., management). This enabled the researcher to form initial impressions of the data. For the second round of coding, responses were further analyzed to identify any categories that could be combined or subdivided (e.g., support; board of education, staff, parents/community). This assisted the researcher with early identification of themes and/or patterns. For the final round of coding, interconnections between and among the categories and/or subcategories were identified (e.g., managerial responsibilities as related to longevity, prioritization of time, and job satisfaction). This final round assisted the researcher with further identification of patterns and/or themes. From multiple rounds of coding, the final patterns or themes were identified and became the basis for the study's conclusions.

Based on the guiding questions of the study, an analytical framework approach was used to organize and report the data. Specifically, for each guiding question the data was reported by the interview questions asked within the various issues addressed in the study. This analytical work provided the foundation for interpretation of the data. Patton (2002, p. 465) emphasized the importance: "This descriptive phase of analysis builds a foundation for the interpretative phase when meanings are extracted from the data, comparisons are made, creative frameworks

for interpretation are constructed, conclusions are drawn, significance is determined, and in some cases, theory is generated."

Summary

The purpose of the proposed case study was to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district suburban New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at, or above, the average years of tenure, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it. The study examined aspects of superintendent roles, job satisfaction, board of education relationships, and handling change.

Chapter 3 provided a description of the methodology to be used for the proposed case study of superintendent longevity. In this chapter, the criteria to identify the subject population were explained. Additionally, the qualitative research procedures for data collection and analysis were described. The interview questions for the semistructured interview protocol were included. These questions were based on the literature review provided in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4 will present the findings, analysis and summary of the data.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the case study was to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of employment in the same district, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it. The study examined aspects of superintendent roles, job satisfaction, board of education relationships, and handling change. A qualitative research methodology was utilized to gather and analyze data and build an understanding of, and insight into, these findings. To gather data, the researcher conducted interviews with six CD DFG school district superintendents who met the criteria of being employed in the same superintendency for more than the average of six and one-half years. Additionally, the researcher interviewed either the board of education president or other board member from each of the superintendent's school districts. A semistructured interview guide was used during the one-on-one interviews. The data collected from these interviews served as the sole source of data. Chapter 4 will explain the data and present an analysis of the findings.

Framework for Analyzing Qualitative Data

The utilization of interviews as a data collection method enabled the researcher to gather rich description of both the superintendents' and board of education members' perceptions regarding superintendent roles, job satisfaction, board of education relationships, handing change, and superintendent longevity in general. Patton (2002) indicated that,

> The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories...the advantage of the interview guide is that it makes sure the interviewer/evaluator has carefully decided how

best to use the limited time available. The guide helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues explored. (pp. 14 and 343)

The responses reported by the study's participants provided the researcher with specific ideas, examples, and scenarios related to each research guiding question. In turn, this enabled the researcher to identify themes and patterns through the qualitative technique of content analysis. The semistructured interview was designed to correlate with the research guiding questions and the prevalent literature available in each area represented through the guiding questions.

While completing the data analysis, the researcher identified patterns and themes in the responses and developed codes for each pattern or theme. The coding enabled the researcher to compare common responses between and among superintendents, between and among board of education presidents/members, and between pairs of superintendents and board of education members. Table 3 below shows the research guiding questions and the corresponding interview questions, with the coding developed for the responses to each question. The coding applies to the responses of superintendents and board of education members, unless otherwise noted.

Table 3: Research Guiding Questions, Interview Questions, and Coding

Research Guiding Question	Interview Question - Superintendent	Interview Question – Board of Education President (or Vice President)	Code
How do superintendents prioritize the various roles of the position?	1. In your opinion, among the three major roles of the superintendent – instructional, managerial, and political – which is the most critical to maintaining longevity and why? 2. In your current position, explain how you divide your time among the three roles? 3. Based on your answer to the prior question about how you divide your time, what factors do you use to prioritize your time? 4. When you first accepted your current position, did you anticipate the priorities to be as you now rate them? If they changed, how did they change and what factors contributed to the change?	1. In your opinion, among the three major roles of the superintendent – instructional, managerial, and political – which role is most important to you and your Board and why?	Interview Question 1: • Instructional • Managerial • Political Interview Questions 2 and 3 (superintendent only): • Instructional • Managerial • Political Interview Question 4 (superintendent only): • Yes • No • Set by Superintendent
How do superintendents experience job satisfaction?	1. In reflecting upon your current superintendency, what aspects of your work bring you job satisfaction? Why?		Interview Question 1: • Students • Accomplishments • Staff

Research Guiding Question	Interview Question - Superintendent	Interview Question – Board of Education President (or Vice President)	Code
Job Satisfaction section for superintendent only	2. Do you take any measures to increase your job satisfaction? If so, explain. 3. Are there any areas of your current work that bring you job dissatisfaction? If so, name the area and explain. 4. How do you handle your feelings of dissatisfaction?		Interview Question 2: • Students • Time in Class/Halls • Intrinsic • Balance with personal life • Support Interview Question 3: • Regulations • Budgetary Constraints • Difficult People • Board of Education Interview Question 4: • Reach out to people • Manage it/Be ready
How do superintendents maintain positive working relations with their Boards of Education?	1. Describe the measures you take to maintain positive relations with your board of education as a whole? With your Board of Education President? 2. Describe ways in which you communicate with your Board as a whole? With your President? 3. Explain a situation in which there was a conflict between you and your Board. How was it resolved?	1. How does your superintendent maintain positive relations with the board of education as a whole? With you as the Board President? 2. In what ways does the superintendent communicate with the Board? With you as the President? Which methods do you find most effective? 3. Explain a situation in which there was a conflict between the Board and your superintendent. How was it resolved?	Interview Question 1: • Communicate/keep informed • Treat everyone same • Differentiated relationships • Listen more/react less Interview Question 2: • Phone • Email • Packet • Meetings • Involvement in community groups • More Phone • Share with President only Interview Question 3: • Instructional • Non-instructional • Personnel • Performance/Contract

Research Guiding Question	Interview Question - Superintendent	Interview Question – Board of Education President (or Vice President)	Code
How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district?	1. Did you select your current district by design or because it was an opportunity to be a superintendent? Explain. 2. As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since you have been in your current position for ___ years, you are part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what facets of your professional practice do you attribute this? 3. From your experience in your current position, what aspects of your school district contribute to your longevity? 4. Is there any circumstance that would cause you to leave your current district for a superintendency in another district? 5. Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to your longevity in your current position?	1. As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since your superintendent has been in his/her current position for ___ years, he/she is part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what aspects of your superintendent's professional practice do you attribute this? 2. From your experience, what aspects of your school district contribute to your superintendent's longevity? 3. Is there any circumstance that would cause your Board of Education not to offer the superintendent a contract extension? 4. Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to the superintendent's longevity in your district?	Interview Question 1 (superintendent only): • Design • Opportunity • Recruited Interview Question 2 - Superintendent; 1 - Board of Education: • Hard work • Involved with Community • Trust/Respect • Meeting Regulations/Making Progress • Luck Interview Question 3 - Superintendent; 2 - Board of Education • Board of Education • Teachers • Parents/Community • Proximity • Salary Interview Question 4 – Superintendent;3 – Board of Education: • Salary • Proximity • Board of Education • K12 District • No Interview Question 5 – Superintendent ; 4 – Board of education: No coding – pattern not identified

Research Guiding Question	Interview Question - Superintendent	Interview Question – Board of Education President (or Vice President)	Code
How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district?	1. Did you select your current district by design or because it was an opportunity to be a superintendent? Explain. 2. As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since you have been in your current position for ___ years, you are part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what facets of your professional practice do you attribute this? 3. From your experience in your current position, what aspects of your school district contribute to your longevity? 4. Is there any circumstance that would cause you to leave your current district for a superintendency in another district? 5. Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to your longevity in your current position?	1. As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since your superintendent has been in his/her current position for ___ years, he/she is part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what aspects of your superintendent's professional practice do you attribute this? 2. From your experience, what aspects of your school district contribute to your superintendent's longevity? 3. Is there any circumstance that would cause your Board of Education not to offer the superintendent a contract extension? 4. Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to the superintendent's longevity in your district?	Interview Question 1 (superintendent only): • Design • Opportunity • Recruited Interview Question 2 - Superintendent; 1 - Board of Education: • Hard work • Involved with Community • Trust/Respect • Meeting Regulations/Making Progress • Luck Interview Question 3 - Superintendent; 2 - Board of Education • Board of Education • Teachers • Parents/Community • Proximity • Salary Interview Question 4 – Superintendent; 3 – Board of Education: • Salary • Proximity • Board of Education • K12 District • No Interview Question 5 – Superintendent ; 4 – Board of education: No coding – pattern not identified

Nature of the Study

The population for the study was comprised of New Jersey public school Superintendents who exceeded the average longevity of six and one-half years and their board of education presidents. The study focused on CD district factor grouping public school districts, of which there were 23 whose current superintendent exceeded the average and was eligible as a participant. Twenty-one of the superintendents were invited to participate in the study. One was not invited because he is the researcher's supervisor; the other one was not invited because he is the researcher's spouse. Seven superintendents responded and initially agreed to be interviewed. Since the research design called for six participants, six of the seven were contacted to set up the interview. Five of the six responded in a timely fashion and the interviews were arranged with those superintendents and their corresponding board of education presidents (in one instance a board member participated, since both the president and vice president were unavailable). The researcher was not able to arrange an interview with the sixth superintendent, who had originally agreed to participate. Therefore, the researcher contacted the seventh respondent and the interviews were scheduled. This particular participant worked in a district that was originally classified as a CD district but had been changed by the New Jersey Department of Education to a B district. Since the superintendent worked in the district when it was a CD, the superintendent was deemed by the researcher's mentor and second reader to be a viable participant.

It should be noted that, although the study was originally designed to focus on the CD district factor grouping in general, another factor within the CD group emerged due to the various roles of the superintendents who agreed to participate. Five of the six superintendents interviewed work in schools districts of 1000 prekindergarten to grade-eight students or fewer. Two of the five serve as chief school administrators, meaning they are both superintendent and

principal. The sixth superintendent works in a district of more than 3500 high school students. Therefore, the collective data may better relate to the longevity of small school superintendents than superintendents of DFG CD.

The superintendents were asked a total of 23 questions, some of which were multipart questions. The first four questions were demographic. The remaining 19 were categorized into five subgroups based on the guiding research questions. The first area, which consisted of four questions, focused on the roles of the superintendent's position – instruction, managerial and political. This included the relationship between roles and longevity as well as prioritizing time expended in each role. The second set of four questions targeted the superintendent's job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and measures to increase satisfaction. Board of education relations was the focus of the third set of three questions and included building board relations, communicating with the board, and handling any conflict with the board. The fourth area targeted identification and implementation of change. Three questions were asked about identifying changes needed, change processes, and facing challenges as part of change. The fifth and final set of questions was about longevity in general. This set of questions explored how the superintendent came to his/her current district, the superintendent's professional practice, and the school district factors.

The board of education presidents were asked 14 questions; some questions were multipart. Like the superintendents, the board president questions began with demographic information; three questions in total. The remaining 11 questions were categorized to match the superintendent's questions. The first area, which included a single question, addressed the roles of the superintendent. The second set focused on the board-superintendent relationship and was

comprised of three questions. Change was the third area addressed, and it included three questions. The fourth and final area focused on general longevity and included four questions.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Three of the superintendents were interviewed in their offices; two of the three board participants were also interviewed in the office of the superintendent without the superintendent present. The third board president was interviewed in the office of the researcher. The remaining three superintendents and board presidents were interviewed via telephone.

Background Information

The first set of questions provided the researcher with background information regarding the superintendents and board of education presidents/member. For the superintendents, the demographic questions included: 1) How many years have you been in public education?, 2) How many years have you worked as an administrator?, 3) What positions have you held prior to your current position?, and 4) How long have you been in your current superintendent's position? The Board of Education Presidents/Member were asked the following questions: 1) How long have you served on your current Board of Education?, 2) How long have you been Board President?, and 3) Were you on the Board when the current superintendent was hired? Data gathered through the demographic questions helped the researcher develop an enhanced picture of the representative group. Further, the data enabled the researcher to analyze responses to the content questions based on demographic characteristics to determine if any patterns exist. Any patterns identified assist the researcher in discussing the ability to generalize the results of the study. Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 present a summary of the demographic data.

	6-11 years	12-17 years
Size		
Under 1000 students	4	1
More than 1000 students		1
Configuration		
PreK-8	4	1
9-12		1

Table 4
District Context of New Jersey Superintendent CD District Factor Group
N=6

  The data from Table 4 show that, although the study was originally designed to focus on the CD district factor grouping in general, size of the district emerged as a subfactor within the CD DFG due to the various roles of the superintendents who agreed to participate. Five of the six superintendents interviewed work in schools districts of 1000 prekindergarten students or fewer. Further, two of the five serve as chief school administrators, meaning they are both superintendent and principal. Therefore, size of the district may be a factor in analyzing the participant responses; the researcher considers this as an unexpected finding that may have implications for future research.

	10-19 years	20-29 years	30-39 years	40+ years
Total Years in Public Education	0	0	5	1
Total Years in Administration	1	3	2	

Table 5
Years of Service of New Jersey Superintendent CD District Factor Group
N=6

All of the superintendents interviewed have 30 or more years of service as public,
educators while five of the six have worked in any type of administrative position for more than
20 years. Relatively speaking, the participant sample was an experienced group of educators and
administrators. This may indicate that overall experience contributes to longevity in the
superintendency.

Superintendent	4
Assistant Superintendent	1
Director/Supervisor	1
Principal	6
Assistant Principal	2
Department Chairperson/Coordinator	3
Teacher	6

Table 6
Prior Certificated Positions Held of New Jersey Superintendent CD District Factor Group
N=6

Three pieces of data from Table 6 are of note: 1) Four of the six superintendents had prior
experience as a superintendent before accepting their current positions, 2) all six of the
participants served as principals during their careers, and 3) all six also worked as teachers
during their careers.

	0-5 years	6-10	11-15	16+
Years on Board of Education	1	2	2	1
Years Service as Board of Education President	5	0	0	0

Table 7

Years of Service of New Jersey Board of Education Presidents/Member CD District Factor Group

N=5 Board of Education Presidents

N=1 Board of Education Member

The years of service on the board were spread out across the years, with a cluster from six to 15

years. In terms of years as president, a pattern existed, with all five presidents serving five years

or less as president.

On Board of Education	3
Not on Board of Education	3

Table 8

Member of Board of Education When Superintendent Was Hired of New Jersey Superintendent CD District Factor Group

N=6

The data are evenly split in terms of the participant's being on the Board of Education when the

superintendent was hired. Accordingly, this does not appear to be a factor in analyzing the

results.

Research Guiding Questions

Research guiding question 1. How do superintendents prioritize and fulfill the various

roles of the position?

Superintendent:
In your opinion, among the three major roles of the superintendent – instructional, managerial, and political – which is the most critical to maintaining longevity and why?

Board of Education:
In your opinion, among the three major roles of the superintendent – instructional, managerial, and political – which role is most important to you and your Board and why?

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) names "leading their districts' instructional practices" and "managing the operations of the school district" as two of the five major goals of the superintendent (AASA, 2007). The importance of superintendent as instructional leader is also prevalent throughout the literature (Peterson, 2002; Castallo, 2003; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Hoyle, et al., 2005).

In terms of management, Cambron-McCabe, et al. (2005, p. 71) focused on the critical nature of management, indicating, "And while everyone will applaud your efforts to lead learning, no one will tolerate your failure to balance the budget. You have to lead. But you have to manage, too." The literature review identified various components within the political role and named aspects such as societal forces, community concerns, and superintendent-board of education relations (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Alborano, 2002). In a study of superintendent turnover, Byrd, et al. (2007) found that 76% of superintendents who chose to change districts ranked "increased politics" as the first or second contributing factor to the instability in the profession.

The responses from the superintendent participants included mention of all three roles. Two of the respondents named *political* as most critical to longevity, two indicated *managerial* as the most important, one named *instructional*, and one responded with *mixed*. Superintendent 4 stated:

I see myself first and foremost as an instructional leader, but I guess I would have to say *managerial*. As a superintendent that is probably the primary role that you have in the district. Because, as the manager, the CEO, you are responsible to keep operations running efficiently and effectively from the fiscal standpoint, from the instructional standpoint as well as from the safety standpoint. You really do spend the bulk of your day and your time managing the operations of the school district.

Superintendent 1 gave the mixed response explaining:

I don't think one is more important than another – *political* is the least. What I try to do is always take the approach of treating the money/budget, $16 million here, like it is my own. Achievement wise, if you are not spending a large amount of your time in the academic area, you are in the wrong field. Politically, it has by osmosis.

From the board president/member perspective, management was the most common response, with all five presidents and one member naming management as most important to the board; two of the six also mentioned *instructional* along with *managerial*. None of the board members named the political role as being most important to the board.

Board of Education President 5 responded based on the current context of the school district explaining:

Right now I think it is *managerial*. We don't have – we are almost at the end of negotiations with the teachers. We may have a contract but things have been tough for the last couple of years because we did not have a contract. It has been important for her (the superintendent) to step up to the plate and be the superintendent and be the manager and be the liaison between the board and the teachers.

Of the six pairs of superintendents and board presidents/members, three of the six responded with similar answers: two of the pairs selected *managerial*, and one pair gave a mixed response.

Superintendent only:
In your current position, explain how you divide your time among the three roles? Based on your answer to the prior question about how you divide your time, what factors do you use to prioritize your time?

All six of the superintendents gave examples of managerial-type responsibilities when explaining how they divide their time among the roles. Two of the six also indicated that

instructional priorities impact how time is spent. Superintendent 3, who also serves as the principal, stated:

> I try to spend the bulk of my time on instruction. I try to get out into the classroom, but I am not always as successful as I would like to be. The regulatory issues are really quite large when you are in a small district where there is only one full time administrator...Our priorities are less and less our own as school administrators. That is driven by the testing calendar, the fall report calendar, and the DRTS, and the ASSA and all the other reports.

Likewise, Superintendent 5, who is also the principal, named *reports due* as a factor along with

child safety and *parental issues*, explaining,

> If a report is due to the state department and, of course - you never want to be late to the state department and be put on that ugly list - that would always come first. But the other thing is because I have a dual role, always child safety and parental issues. Because that is what is going to come and bite you if you don't attend to parental issues.

Superintendent 2, who represents the largest district in the study, also indicated *managerial-*based on the context of the district:

> I think *managerial* gets the most, because it is a rather large district and there are a lot of decisions that have to be made, especially at this time since I am building facilities. Instruction is on a weekly basis, but that is usually brought to me, more so that I may point things out that they (other administrators) go in a certain direction or look at certain ideas for instruction.

Superintendent 6 reflected upon a typical day or week and provided percentages of time spent on each of the roles indicating: "I would suspect that the *managerial* is probably around 70%; the *instructional* about 20%; and the *political* around 10%."

> *When you first accepted your current position, did you anticipate the priorities to be as you now rate them? If they changed, how did they change and what factors contributed to the change?*

Two of the respondents, Superintendents 1 and 2, indicated that they set the priorities for the district and their work when they were hired by the board. Superintendent 1 explained the process he undertook as part of an entry plan into the position:

First thing I did was I met with every board member for one hour, and I wanted to hear from them what they felt their needs were...They wanted change, so after 100 days on the job I sent them a memo on what I felt needed to be done and what needed to be addressed and they still work from that – they call it the "doctrine." It had 17 points and we have met just about every one of them.

Three of the respondents answered that the priorities did change from what was anticipated. However, different reasons were given for the change.

Superintendent 4 explained, "No matter how much you think you are prepared for this job – or how much you think you know what the job is going to involve, until you actually are in the job you don't really know what is required of it...You learn the job by doing the job."

Superintendent 6 indicated:

When I first came on board there was a supervisor of curriculum and instruction and that position was not filled so there are a lot of managerial things that that person did that now we have to split among the two principals and myself. We find ourselves managing more and getting away from instruction.

Only one participant, Superintendent 3, answered affirmatively. He elaborated, saying, "I would say I knew what I was getting into. I was friendly with the ex-superintendent; he and I were lateral colleagues in different districts in the same county so I got to know him pretty well. I know about the district pretty well so I knew what I was getting into."

Summary - research guiding question 1. Overall, the data collected in regard to research guiding question 1 - *How do superintendents prioritize and fulfill the various roles of the position?* – reflects the literature which suggests that all three roles are important, depending upon the particular school district. One superintendent included all three roles in the response, as did one board of education member. Glass and Francischini (2007, p. xiii) explained: "In summary, the superintendency encompasses responsibilities in instructional leadership, fiscal management, community relations, board relations, personnel management. The role is one of both leadership and management within the district and community."

Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) recognized this as well:

> The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today. These leaders must have a constantly expanding inventory of skills and capacities and must be able to use these to deal with the complexities of the education enterprise, as well as with the challenges of today's political realities, economic constraints and turbulent social problems. (p.1)

Although *political* was mentioned by three superintendents and *instructional* was mentioned by two superintendents and two board of education members, the data collected from the superintendents and board of education presidents/members focused most predominantly on the managerial *role*, with responses in that theme involving three superintendents and all of the board of education members. This differs from the normative literature, which emphasizes a connection between the political role and superintendent longevity (Lee, 2006; Hoyle, et al., 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Alborano, 2002; Boright, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Carter and Cunningham (1997, p. 156) stated, "Today, a central focus for our nation's superintendents is acquiring and honing the skills of building culture, coalitions, and alliances; interprofessional collaboration; political insight; multiple constituencies; shared visions; communication, and the process we call community." Another difference between the normative literature reviewed and the data collected was in the area of instruction. The normative literature placed great emphasis on instructional leadership (AASA, 2007; Peterson, 2002; Castallo, 2003; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Hoyle, et al., 2005). However, only one superintendent named the instructional role as the most critical to maintaining longevity. The other superintendents believed instruction is important; however, the reality of the managerial role included demands that took the superintendents away from the instructional piece, or the superintendent's work in the instructional area came from the managerial aspect (e.g., communicating an instructional goal or initiative to another administrator).

Research guiding question 2. How do superintendents experience job satisfaction?

Studies indicated that superintendents are usually satisfied in their jobs (Cooper, et al., 2000; Glass, et al., 2000; Kowalski, 2006; Scheon, 2006; Glass & Franceschini, 2007.)

In reflecting upon your current superintendency, what aspects of your work bring you job satisfaction? Why?

Two major themes emerged from responses to this question: *students* and *accomplishments*. Two superintendents named both, two superintendents named only *students*, and two replied with accomplishments. Superintendent 3, a chief school administrator (CSA), talked about interaction with students: "One of the benefits of having an office in a school like this, I have lunch with kids every single day. I really enjoy getting to know them and their view on things – just the contact which you often don't have any more when you are the superintendent." Superintendent 5, also a CSA, talked about students, stating, "Children. I love children…When I am having a really horrific day, I go and hang out for five minutes in the kindergarten or a special education room." The enjoyment of contact with students was also shared by Superintendent 6: "Children, children, children. Being able to walk out into the hallway, which is 10 feet away, and walk past the kindergarten children, seeing them interacting with their teachers, and seeing them achieve and grow right into the grades, is probably the most satisfying factor of the job itself."

Superintendent 2 focused on accomplishments in a district of more than 3500 high school students:

> I think what brings me job satisfaction is taking a district and moving from here to there. I feel, with this particular position, I have moved facilities; I have moved curriculum; our test scores have gone up. We passed AYP this year. My curriculum offerings are certainly going to be probably the best in the area. So the job satisfaction is a combination of these things, of course, with everyone else working in concert.

For Superintendent 4, who serves in a prekindergarten-to-eighth-grade district of close to 1000 students, accomplishments were also the main source of satisfaction.

Like Superintendent 3, Superintendent 4 discussed student achievement:

> The fact that we have made AYP every year – AYP since I have been Superintendent. And the biggest satisfaction, I guess, is knowing as a CD district which, you know, is basically a low/middle income school community, we were able to raise the bar, hold staff and students accountable, get decent test scores, make AYP, see improvement every year, set goals and achieve them. I can stand back and take personal satisfaction in that because I am the person at the head of the ship – steering the ship.

Do you take any measures to increase your job satisfaction? If so, explain.

Three of the participants connected measures to increase satisfaction with their response to aspects that bring satisfaction, in particular the students. Superintendent 3 explained, "I try to get out there as much as I can. By 'out there', I mean into the classrooms, and periodically I will overtly insinuate myself in the structure of the classroom by asking the teacher to let me do current events one day." Superintendent 1 reported a daily ritual of "walking the halls of every school, meeting kids, parents, and staff." Two of the superintendents reported that they did not take any measures to increase satisfaction. Superintendent 2 stated, "Not really, that is really intrinsic. I have always loved my jobs in education. I've spent my whole career in education." Superintendent 6 indicated that specific measures were not needed, since aspects of the job were naturally satisfying, and he explained, "I am, frankly, pretty satisfied as it is. I enjoy coming to work. I enjoy planning my day the night before. I enjoy interacting with the people."

Superintendent 4 offered a response with both a personal and professional component, stating,

> On a personal note, I just try to keep balance in my life. I am a firm believer in working out, staying fit and staying healthy. This is a job with a lot of stress, and I just make it a point to make sure that I find time for personal satisfaction – personal fitness and keeping myself healthy so I am in the best shape to deal with the demands of the job. On the professional side, because of the support that I have from my board and my staff and the community who are very happy that I have stayed on in the district. Their support allows

me to do initiatives and to move forward…So I think if you put it all together, I think that is the satisfaction that has kept me feeling good about being a superintendent in really tough times to be a superintendent.

Although the literature and this study indicate that superintendents experience satisfaction in their work, dissatisfaction in the superintendency also exists and often comes from external sources (Richardson, 1998; Kowalski, 2006; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Based on a study of Connecticut superintendents, Richardson (1998, p.7) indicated, "Board relations, politics, personnel issues, workload, time, crisis management, complying with mandates, public criticism and expectations, high visibility, dealing with angry parents, and lack of recognition and feedback are among the major sources of stress perceived by superintendents."

Are there any areas of your current work that bring you job dissatisfaction? If so, name the area and explain. How do you handle your feelings of dissatisfaction?

In terms of job dissatisfaction, there were three main topics named by four of the superintendents: state department of education, fiscal matters, and board of education. One of the superintendents said there were no areas of dissatisfaction, and another named "difficult people." Superintendent 2 included both regulations and fiscal issues in the response, stating, "The area, of course, is the burden of the state, especially in the current financial situation we find ourselves in. The lack of meaningful direction from the Department of Education. The frustration of the financial issues. They're my biggest concerns." In describing how the dissatisfaction was handled, the Superintendent indicated, "I think you manage it as it comes along. You try and plan and be ready for whatever."

Superintendent 4 also discussed both of these issues by saying,

The demands put on you by the state. Every year there is a new challenge with the funding – whether it is S1701, whether it is the preschool initiative or lack thereof. Now we're told they are talking about possibly cutting state aid and using our surplus to try

and balance the state deficit…It is just the challenges, the EWEG, the demands. There is always a new demand put on you in regards to what the parameters are.

This superintendent also focused on managing the dissatisfaction and explained, "I think that I do try to stay ahead of it. The things that are routines every year - whether it be NCLB grant, IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004] grant - you kind of have an idea of what's coming and what to do."

For two of the superintendents, issues related to the Board of Education brought about dissatisfaction. Superintendent 5 described the frustration:

The board members – I have some that are not involved, but vote against something that was positive for the children. They are only there to vote against you. They are never here for anything positive – I have members who miss two meetings, then come to one and then miss another two and come to one just to get under the radar.

To handle the frustration, this superintendent indicated that she "spends time with her family and tries not to think about work."

Superintendent 6 also mentioned the Board, but described a different aspect and how he handles the situation:

I guess it is when my board members - although they are good members generally speaking - but when they get into areas that they have no idea what they are talking about…That is probably the most frustrating thing where they seem to think they know more than the educators that deal with the children every day of the week all throughout the year.

This superintendent explained how he gives the board articles on a regular basis. Further, he stated:

On occasions when micromanaging rears its head, I will remind them that they are to give me the 'what' they want done. I am responsible to create the 'how.' I have been able to minimize a lot of micromanagement. It doesn't always prevent it but it does remind them of their role and it has been helpful over time.

One of the superintendents named difficult people as a source of dissatisfaction. In reflecting upon his own professional practice, Superintendent 3 expressed,

> I have never enjoyed dealing with difficult people, and unfortunately, that happens now
> and again. I don't relish that part of the job at all. It can be stressful. We all want to
> make people happy. We all want to do the best things for kids at the same time.
> Sometimes they are mutually exclusive, unfortunately.

To handle this challenge, Superintendent 3 explained, "I try to reach out to parents as many times as I can, and not always parents necessarily but any dissatisfied member of the school community…I try to continue to reach out to those people until I am fairly confident that we can agree to disagree but there is no personal animosity."

  *Summary – **research guiding question 2.** Students* and *accomplishments –* these are the two major themes that emerged from the participants' responses regarding job satisfaction. The literature regarding superintendent job satisfaction supported these themes and specifically identified: building curriculum, developing new programs, helping students and teachers, and contributing to society (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski, 2006; Cooper, et al., 2000; Glass, et al., 2000). Schoen (2006) studied perceptions of job satisfaction of K-8 superintendents in DFG I&J Bergen County, New Jersey, school districts and found that, "The ability to effect change in a positive manner was the prevailing theme throughout all the superintendents' responses to this question." Both of these themes related to conditions within the actual school district and, to an extent, remain under the control of the superintendent.

  In terms of job dissatisfaction, the common responses reflected the literature. Dealing with the State Department of Education, managing challenging fiscal matters, and working with the board of education were named by multiple participants. Hoyle, et al. (2005), discussed the combined impact of these areas, "As accountability for the management of school districts has become a higher priority for school boards, state education departments, and taxpayers, the role of the superintendent has become more demanding." Schoen (2006, p. 106) indicated: "Five superintendents in the study were dissatisfied with the increasing intrusion of mandates and

outside influences, political and state changes, budget cuts, and all those things that take them away from their time during the day in working with the kids in improving instruction." Grady and Bryant, as quoted in Carter & Cunningham (1997), focused on the board and indicated that, "The principle cause of turnover seems to be problems in the relationship between district leaders and the school board or individual board members." Castallo (2003) focused on board micromanagement: "One of the concerns most often voiced by school superintendents refers to board members who become inappropriately involved in the administration of the schools. Two of the three job dissatisfaction themes – *Department of Education* and *fiscal* - came from external sources. Although the superintendents possessed extensive control over the areas reported as satisfying, in terms of the two aforementioned dissatisfying areas, the superintendent could generally manage only how they responded to the sources. For the third area – board of education – the superintendent had some control over relations with the board and could certainly manage responses to the board. However, the level of control over this internal source was not as high as the external areas of satisfaction.

Research guiding question 3. How do superintendents maintain positive working relations with their Boards of Education?

> Superintendent:
> *Describe the measures you take to maintain positive relations with your board of education as a whole? With your Board of Education President?*
>
> *Describe ways in which you communicate with your Board as a whole? With your President?*
>
> Board of Education
> *How does your superintendent maintain positive relations with the board of education as a whole? With you as the Board President?*
>
> *In what ways does the superintendent communicate with the Board? With you as the President? Which methods do you find most effective?*

"Communication is the glue that helps to cement a strong board-superintendent working relationship, provided that it is pertinent, honest, and accurate in content, that it is provided in a timely fashion, and that it is formulate for ease of understanding" (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. 18).

In reviewing the responses given by the superintendents and board presidents/member, two common and interrelated themes emerged: *treating every board member the same*, and *the superintendent's keeping the board members informed.* The questions about maintaining positive relations and superintendent-board communications were developed as separate areas in the semistructured research guide. However, the responses to the positive relations questions often mentioned communication; one of the main ways superintendents treated board members equally was in the sharing of information. Therefore, the data presented reflects the connection between and among these topics, as suggested by the participants' responses.

Four of the six superintendents – participants 2, 4, 5, and 6 – indicated that treating all board members the same was key to maintaining positive relations with the board. However, only two board presidents – 4 and 5 – gave this response. Superintendent 1 talked about treating everyone, not just board members, the same.

Superintendent 2 expressed that, "As a board of the whole, no one gets something that not everyone gets. My communications are with all board members, unless there is a need to recuse someone from certain things, meaning someone has a relative." The Board President for Superintendent 2 indicated that the relationship is quite successful. However, one of the reasons given was the Superintendent's ability to "do his homework and he has learned how to tweak the individual board members when he needs to."

Superintendent 4 and her Board President both discussed the importance of treating everyone the same. Superintendent 4 shared, "I really try to treat everyone the same. All the board members pretty much get all the information at the same time. Because we are a small district, we really do most of our work as a board of the whole." The Board President indicated that, "Everyone is included. I don't think there is any difference whatsoever. I say the board to me is one as a whole."

The issue of treating all the board members the same was expressed by Superintendent 5, who stated, "I just try to keep them from thinking, 'oh she likes Johnny Jones better than Mary Jones and she tells Johnny Jones more than she tells Mary Jones'- that kind of thing. Because if they think you have a favorite among board members, you are sunk." The Board President for Superintendent 5 shared that there have been negative relations between the Superintendent and some board members, despite the Superintendent's efforts. The Board President explained, "Even though they make snide remarks or they roll their eyes, she doesn't play any favorites. She keeps us abreast of all the issues equally."

Superintendent 6 emphasized the importance of timing and not playing favorites:

> I think that it is important to make sure that I don't give one a piece of information when I don't give all the others a piece of information. I give them all at the same time so it doesn't show favoritism except with the board president if it is a sensitive issue. I will give that to him and let him determine whether or not he feels like sharing it with the rest.

Superintendent 6 also mentioned the importance of building trust with the board. Trust was a concept prevalent in the literature. A relationship based on trust positively influenced superintendent-board relations, while any level of distrust became a significant pitfall in their working relationship (Boright, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Austermuhl, 2000; Glass, et al., 2000). Superintendent 6 shared, "I built up a great deal of trust. If I say something I mean it.

I don't play games as far as that is concerned. It is very important to me and to them because we can trust each other and that builds up confidence."

Responses regarding the means of communication were quite similar. Five of the six superintendents and five of the six board presidents indicated there was some type of weekly packet or written communication to the board. Four of the six superintendents and four of the six board presidents/member also mentioned telephone calls. Five of the six superintendents named *e-mail*, as did three of the six board members. *The monthly board meeting(s)* was named by three of the six superintendents, yet only one board member named *the meeting(s)*. In every instance, superintendents and board presidents/members named multiple means of communication - both on a regular basis and when a specific issue arose that could not wait for a board meeting or the weekly packet.

Superintendent 1 explained:

Every Friday they get a Board update, and it's a memo that basically tells them everything that occurred this week, any concerns, things going on. They have come to rely on it. Phone calls. Emails. Do I Twitter with them? No. Do I constantly call them? No. Do I make sure they know I'm thinking of them in certain situations? Yes. Personal things like the birth of a grandchild, a death, any event in their life.

Superintendent 1's Board member shared: "Usually through a phone call - sometimes it would be right at the meeting – there is a superintendent's report, but if anything of significance a phone call first with further discussion or further information coming. Written communication, too."

Superintendent 2 and his Board President focused on verbal communication. Superintendent 2 stated, "I speak to my board and talk to them. My board is long-standing but I would not consider us friends. Combination written and phone calls." The Board President emphasized:

I think the telephone – the specific reason is it is usually faster. I also feel comfortable when I get the tone from someone personally on what they think about an issue. When you write something, you may do it cautiously, whereas audibly you may probe things and get a better idea of what they are talking about.

Superintendent 3 responded with multiple means of communication:

We meet monthly with all the committees…I do a newsletter. I will also call board members directly if there is something of interest for their committee or their role on the board. I will forward e-mails to them. A number of our board members I have been involved with through nonprofit capacities…that is a great place informally to share information. Of course, there is the formal form of the board meeting. That is more perfunctory.

The Board President of Superintendent 3 shared, "He is very effective with communication."

Superintendent 4 also discussed varied communication measures:

I do board packets, either weekly or biweekly, depending on what is going on in the school. I send them e-mails pretty regularly. When I do staff bulletins to the staff I always cc the board members at the same time. We have a community liaison group that meets usually quarterly over the course of the year and that is also a good vehicle for keeping the channels of communication open. We have a whole system here that when I send messages out to parents and staff, I also make sure the board members get those same communications. When we have board meetings, which we have once a month, I pretty much update the board on all the activities that have happened or that have occurred in the school this past month."

Superintendent 4's Board President reinforced much of her response, stating,

She communicates with the board on a weekly basis. She sends out packets as to what is going on, activities, anything going on in the school, etc., upcoming events, information about PTA, anything that they (the board) have questions on a regular basis and if needed about contracts and benefits.

Additionally, Superintendent 4 connected the positive relations and communication:

I think the board feels I keep them well informed about what is going on in the school. It has not ever been an issue - they have never said to me that they don't know what is going on. I would rather they know everything than not know and get a phone call, because in a small community it would be very easy for people to pick up the phone and call board members. I want them to hear it from me before they hear it from somebody else.

Superintendent 4's Board President shared, "They [relations with the board] are excellent...She communicates with the board on a weekly basis...She has an open door."

Superintendent 5 explained:

> I try to do a superintendent weekly update...At the meeting I try to give them as much information as possible...I try to e-mail them articles...Or I send to the Board of Education something that a teacher had sent me that they are starting a program. I send that out just so they (the board) feel a part of it.

Superintendent 5's Board President also named similar means of communication: "She will call with information, she emails, she will send out information... She is pretty good about things."

Superintendent 6 named several forms of communication,

> E-mail, the bulletins I give them every week. I type up 'super' notes that I give out to every board member...When I go to a board meeting and they ask me a question, I am prepared and my BA is prepared for 95% of their questions. If one doesn't work or if we don't understand it, we say we will get back to them and we always do on a regular basis.

Superintendent 6 also discussed the importance of information in developing a positive working relationship:

> My board likes information. I have professional people. I have, you know, accountants and financial people. I have executives and these are people that appreciate details as to what is going on. So I continually inform them...by keeping them informed of things on a very regular basis, they feel good about decisions they make.

The Board President for Superintendent 6 talked about the Superintendent's educating the board:

> He does weekly e-mails bringing up, you know, things that are going on within the school. To keep us informed on issues that are going on with the school, issues that he has found out at different superintendent roundtables, and stuff like that, so he brings it back and lets you know what is going on. To try to give you an idea on what is going on within the county. Updating us on what is going on with the state, federal programs, and stuff like that. Information, the minimum of once a week, usually on Fridays, but sometimes more just to, you know, let us know what is going on.

In terms of the relationship and communication with the board president, five of the six superintendents indicated that there was a different relationship and amount of communication, based on the position. Four of the five Board Presidents indicated the same; one Board President

emphasized *equal treatment*; one participant was a member, not the President. Superintendent 3

explained how his whole Board understands the unique role of the board president: "Well, our

board is comfortable with me sharing issues with the board president only and allowing him then

to use his discretion on what gets shared with other members of the board. I guess I could say

they are comfortable with the board president being the 'go-to guy.'" Superintendent 3's Board

President named contractual obligations related to the superintendent-board president

communication, as well as handling certain issues:

> Yes, actually, contractually there are a few items that the superintendent needs to communicate directly with me as board president about something as simple as being out of the district for more than three days at a time for the sake of leadership in the schools...The communication is there because there are things that I think he feels he needs to share with someone at the board level, and then we will often talk about how we want to present this to everyone else.

Superintendent 6 also mentioned talking to the president about a sensitive issue with the

president before sharing it with the rest of the board. Additionally, Superintendent 6 indicated

that he and the Board President review the agenda, "My Board President and I meet just before

every board meeting. We will meet and go over the agenda very carefully." The Board

President for Superintendent 6 talked about the aspect of information flowing from the president

to the superintendent,

> I do it in the same way, trying to tell the superintendent what is going on with the board, especially with some of our board members' relations with the superintendent...I try to avoid problems and tell him what they are looking for. So, in essence, I am trying to make him look good in their eyes as well. Because I think his success is our success.

Superintendent:

Explain a situation in which there was a conflict between you and your Board. How was it resolved?

BOE:

Explain a situation in which there was a conflict between the Board and your superintendent. How was it resolved?

Two of the six superintendents reported that personnel decisions were the source of a conflict between the superintendent and an individual board member. Superintendent 1 explained a conflict about personnel that happened early in his tenure:

> About one year after I started, there was one board member who was upset that I passed the nepotism policy because he wanted his wife to be hired. We had a board meeting, and when he looked over the agenda, he asked to have these two recommendations taken off. We went into executive session with those two recommendations. I had no idea what was coming. He basically accused me of 'good ole boy networking' for this person I had hired – which was bogus. Although I was only in the district a year, I just let him have it in front of everybody. I was angry. I phrased it this way, "With all due respect, you need me a lot more than I need you. This is the way it is going to be." That is the first and last time they saw me angry. That was it.

Superintendent 5 also named a conflict over personnel, "We had one board member at the last meeting that did not want to vote for a teacher I was recommending because they were too high on the guide. I explained how the teacher was nationally board certified and how that was a plus for our district, etc. She still voted no and the others voted yes."

The Board Member and President of Superintendents 1 and 5, respectively, did not share these personnel matters when asked about conflict.

Superintendent 3 shared that "there hasn't been much in the way of conflict," but then explained how the last contract negotiation between him and the board had been difficult.

> This last contract negotiations was somewhat contentious because the negotiations committee has changed drastically. And there were some real hard liners on that committee. This issue happened as a result of communications between the finance committee chair and the negotiations committee folks – I would say there were some strained relations there. Last night we all kissed and made up. I made a little speech and everybody was happy. There is not a lot of conflict in this community between the board and the superintendent and things are pretty harmonious.

Although Superintendent 3's board president did not mention the conflict over the contract negotiations, the Board President did share a conflict:

One board meeting, there was a disgruntled employee in the school, and the disgruntled employee decided to take the superintendent to task because of the way her son, who was a summer worker, and she, who was a worker in the cafeteria, felt that they had been treated. They went out with a couple of the parents who were upset with some of the special education issues. My understanding, although not privy to the decision, there was a court decision made concerning a special education student which the school district basically won their case, but the placement of the student was allowed to continue because it was really for the best of the student. Now, not being able to say anything more than that, these set of parents came to a meeting, they helped to generate a petition along with the other disgruntled employee with 100 and some signatures that they came to a board meeting to present. It also coincided with a public hearing under the statutory regulation of the State of New Jersey about the superintendent's contract. It was, in effect, the perfect storm on the bad side. We were advised by our solicitor, and I think we took that under good advice not to respond. We did not want it to become a shouting match. There were a lot of things that were said were negative—derogatory. We went into executive session…We eventually diffused it I think by having individual conversations - one set of parents or one parent/guardian at a time explaining the circumstance. I got a hold of the petition a little while later, and I tell you this petition had 190 signatures on it and there were a bunch of non-voting minor children. Half of the people that signed I am thoroughly convinced, because I have knowledge of them, didn't even know what they were signing and with that it lost a little bit of its credibility and the situation kind of resolved itself. That is the major one that comes to mind.

Two of the superintendents discussed a conflict involving a personnel-program issue.

Superintendent 4 explained one such situation:

I made a recommendation when we had to make budget cuts that we cut our foreign language position to a part-time position rather than keeping it as a full-time position. I was going to keep the foreign language program at the middle school only, and I was going to a tutorial taping type of a program for the elementary or more exploratory. I was surprised; I didn't think the board would have a hard time with that, because we had to make cuts and I had to come up with some areas that we could cut back. I was surprised; they were adamant they wanted to keep the full-time foreign language position and said look elsewhere. I was surprised. Instead because one of the initiatives on the maintenance side that particular year was putting in—fixing our drainage system. To keep the one I had to cut the other. I felt that it was important that we finish the maintenance side, and I could live with an exploratory at the elementary but I was surprised [that] to the board it was more important to keep the foreign language program intact rather than finishing off the drainage project. I said fine. 'The bottom line is if you feel that strongly about it, that is what we will do and we will go back and just make that a two-year project.' Ironically, that following year we had to make additional cuts to the budget, and they were the ones who said, 'Remember when you made that suggestion last year about cutting the foreign language program? Maybe we should. This is the year we look at it.' It is funny—you just –you know what I mean—you just never know. As adults and professionals, when we do have a disagreement, I think we are respectful

enough of each other that we are able to work them out. We usually come to a conclusion and move forward. I can honestly say, in 12 years we haven't had many and when they do crop up we are usually like I gave an example of.

The Board President for Superintendent 4 did not name this situation or any other conflict.

Superintendent 6 also had a personnel-program conflict that was related to budget reductions:

We had a conflict recently over a specific program we had. We had to cut some staff this time last year in a particular program for an isolated group of students. And the board felt as if I was not as supportive as I should have been in agreeing to, and pushing for, the cuts because by moving a couple of teachers out, we brought a board-sponsored and board-selected program of study to that - we were able to - we would put into the schools that would eliminate the need of those two teachers. I wasn't fully sold on the program so my support in the public was a little on the lukewarm side. And they picked that up, and it became somewhat of a conflict with us. I felt they were micromanaging by bringing a program in and telling us to do a program without having me do the proper leg work and the proper background with those affected to prepare them. They just said cut the staff put this program in and that was it. And that wasn't a healthy thing for the district. So my lukewarm reception of that and advocacy of that created some problems with me and some board members. It was finally resolved. It went on for a couple of months and we finally resolved it. I told the board 'You want me to do this. Get off my back. Let me do it. Stop pushing things. Let me just deal with the situation. I will get it working and it will work just fine but it is going to take some time. Now, take the handcuffs off; let me do it.' And I did that and it did work out just fine. So we are over the situation. I basically told them to back off, back out of the situation and give it over to me, I can handle it. I did that and now we are back on good terms again.

The Board President for Superintendent 6 also referenced a personnel issue but a different one:

Within the last two weeks coming out of our last meeting we had our Director of Special Services who just retired and we just replaced her. She was a social worker. Now the talk is we don't have the social worker and discussion with budgetary concerns was we would try to... I guess the plan was to get a social worker from another district that was going to do it at night. Kind of on their own time and I guess that fell through or somebody read the regulation that said that it has to be during school hours. So now there is kind of a debate that the superintendent wants to hire somebody, and the board kind of says that is not what we want to do, we don't want to spend the money. That is not what we had in mind. I guess it turned to discussion, you know, I guess it's coming from the reading of telling what is going to be and you know this is what we have to do. It is a kind of an ongoing project that is what is going on. This is something that has occurred probably in the last few weeks; it is just an example.

Summary – research guiding question 3. The importance of positive working relationships with the board as a whole, as well as with individual board members, was evident

from the participants' responses and is supported by the literature on superintendent-board relationships. Townsend, et al., (2007) stated,

> Whether a new or a seasoned veteran, the effective superintendent knows that building a solid board relationship takes priority. The position comes with endless high-priority tasks, of which the most essential is getting to personally know the board members and their interests, goals, and passions. (p.1)

Two themes emerged within this topic: *communication* and *treating board members equally*. As a singular issue, the superintendent's ability to effectively communicate with the board was prevalent throughout the literature (Glass & Francischini, 2007; Townsend, et al., 2007; Hoyle, et al., 2005; Kowalski, 2005; Castallo, 2003; Austermuhl, 2000; King, 1999; Galinsky (in King as editor), 1999; Boright, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Castallo (2003, p.53) stated, "While there are no absolutes for success, superintendents and board members indicate that there are things that can be done to increase potential for success. First among these is good communication. What was most clearly implied was the link between communication and trust."

The need to treat all board members the same was also stated in the literature (Lee, 2006; King, 1999; Galinsky, in King as editor, 1999; Boright, 1997). Smith, in King as editor, 1999, wrote:

> When superintendents share information in writing or in person with the whole board, they reinforce the fact that its deliberations and decisions are a group activity and that all members should receive the same info. Importantly, they also reduce the potential for members to perceive favoritism. (p. 32)

Lee (2006, p.47) shared, "If you ignore a board member, you will regret it. Tell everybody the same thing. If one member requests something special, send it to all members."

The other key area of the superintendent-board relationship was that of conflict. Overall, the superintendents and board presidents reported little or no conflict, and that any conflicts that had occurred were effectively resolved. One superintendent-board president pair separately

discussed major conflicts that could lead to the superintendent's leaving or the board's not extending the contract. In another district, the board president indicated that the manner of handling a particular conflict could impact the superintendent's status. The handling of conflict and its relationship to superintendent longevity were discussed in the literature. Glass & Francischini (2007) wrote:

> Conflicts between the superintendent and board naturally occur. If and how they are resolved is an important key in creating an effective and efficient school district. Successful resolution of conflicts is a mutual responsibility of the board and superintendent. If the conflict cannot be resolved, it is likely a superintendent change will occur through dismissal, retirement, or a voluntary relocation to another district.

From the superintendent's perspective, the literature named *micromanagement by the board* as the main area of conflict (Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Castallo, 2003; Galinsky (in King as editor), 1999; Boright, 1997). It should be noted that micromanagement was considered to be the chief source of board-related superintendent job dissatisfaction previously discussed. The main theme within conflict was *personnel*, including the board's trying to micromanage selection of personnel and program-related personnel decisions. Carter & Cunningham (1997, p. 98) reported that "Many ethical conflicts between superintendents and boards occur over personnel decisions."

Research guiding question 4. How do superintendents identify areas for change? How do superintendents implement change?

Edwards (2007, pp. 116 and 118) indicated that "It is only after the superintendent digs deep into the organization that an understanding of the true workings of the system are revealed…a change process in contemporary parlance features a superintendent who values involvement by all parties that are significant to the educational enterprise."

Superintendent:

What steps do you take to identify an area for change within your school district?

BOE

How does your superintendent identify areas for change?

There were several different responses from superintendents and board of education members regarding the identification of change. *Staff input* was the most common response, including three of the six superintendents and three of the six board presidents/member. *Staff input* included teachers and administrators, through both formal and informal processes. Superintendent 6 emphasized the importance of staff input:

> Change most of the time comes from the bottom up in this district. I engage my staff, my teaching staff and my administrators to think out of the box, to use an old term. They (the teachers) have a lot of ideas; a lot of them are a lot smarter than the administrative team are when it comes to teaching and educating kids…they have opportunities in their leadership teams at each of the two schools to bring ideas to their principals. The principals bring them to me and we talk about them administratively, how involved and if we think it has got some merit to it, we will go back to the teachers who came up with it.

Board of Education President 2 discussed the role of administrators, "In terms of education, with respect to curriculum and things like that, we have people that do that – one of those areas where they are supposed to be telling him (the Superintendent) what has to be changed."

Fullan (2001) wrote:

> Transforming the culture - changing the way we do things around here - is the main point. I call this *reculturing*. Effective leaders know that the hard work of reculturing is the sine qua non of progress…Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It does mean producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices. (p. 44)

Superintendent 3 explained that he elicits staff input, but that the culture of the school district can sometimes impede this: "It is not always easy because of the culture. The culture of this school is [that] the faculty meetings are places for the faculty to hear information, and there

is not a lot of give and take, unfortunately. It has been very hard for me to do that, so the form

generally is smaller group discussions."

The utilization of research and superintendents' own perceptions were integrated methods for

identifying change; three superintendents' and three board presidents' responses created this

theme. Superintendent 4 discussed the importance of research, including involvement of staff:

> I do a lot of research. I don't do things haphazardly. If I see we have a change coming, I usually will direct the Principal and the Child Study Team Director, the Finance and the Business Administrator to form a committee to do the research and get the staff involved. Let's take a look at what needs to be changed and why.

The Board President for Superintendent 4 reinforced the response, "She researches her

materials and solutions...finds the best solution possible as to what to do next."

Superintendent 1 explained, "I am very much in tune to perception. With public opinion

- if there is a perception - there is a reality." The Board Member for Superintendent 1 discussed

the *superintendent's ability*:

> When our superintendent first came on, there were a number of things that needed to be changed...We were looking for someone to basically take the bull by the horns and do the things that needed to be done...He handled it very, very well. It just gave us a sense of security, or a feeling of security, that we had a person in that position that was able to manage the district very well.

Superintendent:

Describe the process you used to lead a change initiative in your current district.
Explain challenges that you faced during this or another change and how you handled the challenges.

Board of Education:

What process did your superintendent use to lead the change?
How did your superintendent handle challenges that were faced during this change or another change?

The process used for leading change and the response to resistance were often

interrelated. Five of the six superintendents discussed having a plan or forming a committee.

We have a kindergarten and a preschool here in the building. Preschool had never done report cards, so they didn't even want to be part of it...I said, 'Yes, you do need to be a part of it because we are now with Power School/Power Grades, and we are going to align the report card to that system.' Well, needless to say, once we got into the process, we realized a lot of what we needed and mandated, and the structure was really over the heads of the preschool and kindergarten. So, what we opted to do was we took them out of the Power School, and we allowed them to do their work on the side. They had to realign and revamp and come up with a preschool report card, and on the kindergarten side they totally revamped and made a more readiness report card. And unlike grades one to eight where everything is in the system and on Power Grades, they are still off line and they still do things manually but they have a report card that is in line with what we give the rest of the school. Change is always evolving and you have to step back sometimes and revamp and regroup and do things a little bit differently and then come back and revisit it another time.

Superintendent 6 explained a situation with mathematics:

We bought Everyday Math, as a number of districts did; I am going back, well, the year before I even got here. They started it and it was a bit of a fight along the way. So what we did [was] we backed up and we made sure, we slowed down the whole process. We were going to do two or three grade levels a year; we backed off to doing one or two grade levels a year...we just simply slowed down the process and added additional training opportunities, additional modeling. Teachers, themselves, would model for each other.

In addition to staff involvement, two of the participants discussed the involvement of

parents and the community. Superintendent 1 needed to address a negative perception of his

students from members of certain segments of the community: "We have bombarded the

newspapers with positive press. We have taken the position of a community service organization

for our 7th and 8th graders...we involved the whole community to change this perception."

The Board President for Superintendent 2 shared how the Superintendent handled

concerns over redistricting:

One school was overcrowded and our other school was underutilized. We had the sending district kids from one township and another town's and they were so comfortable going to one school. In the Board's eyes, what was best for the kids that the school was built for had to come first. The superintendent worked it out and found ways to handle it – he provided 1:1 tours for any parents that were being sent to the other school to show that there were just as many good things there. It worked quite well, and actually some of the people now who think it is going to change again are quite unhappy and would just as soon stay at their current high school.

Summary – research guiding question 4. The most prevalent theme for both identification and handling of change - *staff involvement* - was identified from the data gathered and was also indicated in the literature (Edwards, 2007; Fullan, 2001; Spillane, as cited in Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The way in which the superintendent involves staff and communicates with them through the entire change process is critical. Fullan (2001) wrote:

> If you ask people to brainstorm words to describe change, they come up with a mixture of negative and positive terms. On the one side, *fear, anxiety, loss, danger, panic;* on the other side, *exhilaration, risk-taking, excitement, improvements, energizing.* For better or worse, change arouses emotion, and when emotions intensify, leadership is the key. (p.1)

Involving staff was also the theme for how superintendents handled staff resistance, which was the most common response regarding challenges faced during a change. Staff involvement was proactive through both general input and committee work. Further, initially involving the staff members most likely to embrace the change was a strategy utilized to address the challenge of resistance. In discussing the leader's ability to handle conflict within change, Bolman and Deal (2003, p.378) stated: "Successful change requires an ability to frame the issues, build coalitions, and establish arenas in which disagreements can be forged into workable pacts."

Five of the six superintendents and their board presidents described change scenarios, including situations with conflicts that were handled by the superintendent. One of the six superintendents and the corresponding board president shared a situation regarding change that could alter the superintendent's status in the eyes of the board.

Research guiding question 5. "How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district?"

Superintendent:

Did you select your current district by design or because it was an opportunity to be a superintendent? Explain.

Three of the six superintendents reported that they selected their current district by design; one indicated that the decision was both an opportunity to be a superintendent and the design of the particular district; two superintendents reported that they were recruited for the position.

Superintendent 1 shared a discussion that he had with the Board, as well as why he accepted the position when recruited:

> When I met with the Board the first time, they asked me why I didn't apply, and I told them they had a reputation of micromanaging and I didn't want to have to say 'Mother, may I?' every time I wanted to do something. The board president said that was the greatest thing she ever heard.

Superintendent 2 was also recruited:

> I think my position is going to be different than most. I was here. I had spent time here as the T&E Coordinator, Curriculum Assistant to the Superintendent, and then I was made Superintendent. When the superintendent was retiring, they called me and wanted me to apply. When we talked about the contract, I turned them down. I initially didn't apply because it wasn't sufficient. They asked me what would be sufficient. I actually threw out a rather large number thinking it was over. When I went to the previous superintendent's retirement party and the business administrator came up to me and said, "We reopened the job. Really, we didn't like anybody we interviewed. We had to raise the salary. He told me the number. It was exactly what I put out there. He said, 'We are closing applications next week; will you apply?' And I did.

Superintendent 3 was one of the participants who selected the district by design.

> This district seemed like a real good match for what I wanted. I didn't want to work in a bureaucratic monster. I wanted to work in this small little district where I could not be encumbered by the bureaucratic structure. I wanted the freedom to get things done and get them done quickly without having to wade through levels of permission to do something that was sensible to do immediately.

Superintendent 4 also discussed design:

> This is not my first superintendency. I came from another small district that I enjoyed being in, and the opportunity arose to come to this district....it was somewhat of a larger

district even though it is still a smaller district. It was definitely closer to home, which was a plus. There were challenges here that I thought I could address and help.

Superintendent 5 indicated that she did select the district by design but that in hindsight, it was not a good selection: "I was already a superintendent...just thought this would be the better job, due to the fact that I listened to an old mentor who, unfortunately, had way wrong information...I didn't research it as much as I should have."

Superintendent 6 was the sole respondent who indicated both *design* and *opportunity*:

Both. First of all, I chose it because I live so very, very close to the district, within a ¼ mile, which was a nice feature. Plus, I chose it because I always wanted to be the kind of superintendent who was closely knitted into the fabric of the community. And being where I am, here, I am able to see the kids like all the time. I go to the same restaurants. I ride my bike through town, so I have developed a really good relationship with the families and the kids because I am right here with them. And I always wanted to do that because, you know, all the other officials in the town live in the town. So I think it is important that the work I do affects 30% of the population of the town. That is a lot of people and to be there and to be present, to see them at the WaWa's and to see them at the restaurants, is an important thing. I like that feature and I think they do too. They know I am accessible and I am a member of the community. Things that - decisions that we make affect me as well as they do everybody else. By design, yes, and I wanted to be a superintendent. I thought it was time in my career. I had been a principal and I thought now it is time to take that step. I am ready for it. And I think it is something I would excel at, so that is why I am here.

Superintendent:

As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since you have been in your current position for ___ years, you are part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what facets of your professional practice do you attribute this?

Board of Education:

As you may or may not be aware, the average superintendent longevity in a school district in New Jersey is 6.5 years. Since your superintendent has been in his/her current position for ___ years, he/she is part of the approximately 24% of New Jersey contract superintendents that exceed the average. In your opinion, to what aspects of your superintendent's professional practice do you attribute this?

In terms of the superintendent's professional practice, one theme – *hard work* – emerged from the responses and was given by four of the six superintendents and two of the six board members. Superintendent 1 actually shared this factor when answering another question; however, the response fits the theme for this question:

> I got the job in one district from what I did in another district. Your work ethic – not taking time off when going from job to job. People catch on if you are serious about what you do. I tell my kids if you have a job and you need to be there at 8:00, you get there at 6:00. If you can leave at 4:00, you leave at 4:30 or 5:00. It's old fashioned stuff. It works. Boards catch on to that because there are stiff-willies and people just looking to advance themselves.

Superintendent 1's board member reinforced the response: "I think part of it is him personally. I think it's his work ethic. He takes his positions – he takes ownership. This is his business, in a sense, that he is running."

Superintendent 2 also talked about work ethic: "No one works harder than me, or longer, and no one else would ever say that doesn't happen."

Superintendent 3 shared, "I don't think you would be successful and remain in the position if you don't understand that you really have to work hard and spend the time and sacrifice time away from your kids on occasion and your wife and family. You need to recognize that it is not an eight-hour-a-day job."

Superintendent 6 mentioned hard work as well: "I can only hearken back to the fact that I am a hard worker."

Superintendent:

From your experience in your current position, what aspects of your school district contribute to your longevity?

Board of Education:

From your experience, what aspects of your school district contribute to your superintendent's longevity?

Two common responses were elicited in regard to school district aspects: *the board of education* and the *parents/community*. Four of the six superintendents named *the board*, as did two of the board presidents/members. Superintendent 1 stated, "Board member longevity. I've had the board members on the board for numerous years. The former president was on the board for 27 years. Five members are still on the board that were here when I started. They learn how to operate as a board and enjoy each other's company." Superintendent 1's board member also shared this response: "Well, *the board*, I really do think from my understanding we are unique. We are a good group of people." Superintendent 2 also discussed board stability:

> My board is longstanding. The movement was slow; it was not ever dramatic...so having a board that is relatively stable. Being able to educate the board members when they come in to fit in. That does not mean that all my board members get along. It does not mean that. However, the district has been able to move consistently with their philosophy. The board really knows they make policy. There's no dispute or argument about that.

Superintendent 3, in talking about the board, shared, "We have always had great boards of education that are harmonious. They are nice people; they are good people and pretty much are on the board for the right reason. They like kids."

Superintendent 4 mentioned the relationship with the board: "A lot has to do with being able to establish yourself with the board, establishing a good working relationship with the board...I have a very supportive board." Superintendent 4's board president indicated the same, "The support from all of us. The board of education."

Four of the six superintendents talked about the *parents/community*; this was also the response of three of the board members. Superintendent 3 provided a multifaceted response - part of which was about the *parents/community*:

> Lastly, I will tell you the community here is unbelievable. The biggest problem I faced as the superintendent early on was trying to find ways to engage all the parents that

wanted to be engaged. There were arguments - who was going to chaperone the trips, who was going to be the room mother. The appearance as you drive in is that this is a small little community. That certainly is true, but there is a certain educational sophistication about that you might not see as a casual observer. There are a lot of farmers in, and a lot of the people who farm for a living, who you might think of as high school grads. Many of them have gone to Notre Dame and Cornell and the service academies. There is a real pipeline to high caliber universities out of this community and it makes it kind of unique. It is an educated parent population that wants to be involved. We have foundations that raise money that would really surprise somebody that doesn't know much about [it]. There is a support system—Boosters Foundation. They raise about probably about $20,000 per year. They buy the uniforms for the kids. We have an interscholastic sports program. They pay for the officials. They put on clinics for kids. They buy banners at the end of the season if the team has done especially well. They will buy lights for the school board if they are needed. They will find support for education. There is a Science and Technology Foundation that raises probably 30 or 40,000 dollars a year. PTA probably raises about $75,000 or $80,000 a year. So this is really vibrant, active parent community. As long as you can marshal the forces and mitigate the petty disputes and keep everybody on the same page, it is a great place to work. There is a ton of support.

Superintendent 3's board president also mentioned the community: "We have a district filled with terrific families..."

Superintendent 4 shared: "I have had a good community. The mayor and council to do work with me on many initiatives." The board president also said, "The community."

Superintendent 5 focused solely on parental support: "Support from some key people. Some key parents who say, 'please don't leave before my child graduates...promise me that.' That sounds funny, but it is true."

Superintendent 6 also discussed the community aspect, saying, "It is a very family-oriented town and they have a fondness for me, and I have a fondness for them because they see me all the time. Well, I see them all the time. A good blue collar town and people really enjoy their school and getting to know each other through the years."

The other common response was *the staff*, indicated by three superintendents and three board of education presidents. Superintendent 3 and his Board President gave these responses: Superintendent 3 stated, "The staff is really helpful. It is a nice group of people; again, they get

along with one another. Generally speaking, they like kids. They are doing what they are doing for the right reason and that makes it easy." The Board President named, "terrific educators," when giving the response.

Superintendent 4 shared that, "...also working well and having a good respect with your staff...I have a very supportive staff." The Board President echoed this, "The staff is very accommodating to her....number one is the staff."

Superintendent 6 mentioned the staff when talking about the students and the size of the district: "I think they develop a fondness for their teachers because they are here so long." The Board President for Superintendent 6 directly named the staff as contributing to the superintendent staying in the district: "We have an excellent staff, a very good dedicated teaching staff that he is very fond of. It is a long-tenured staff. And I believe he has good relations with the staff, most of them."

Superintendent:

Is there any circumstance that would cause you to leave your current district for a superintendency in another district?

Board of Education:

Is there any circumstance that would cause your Board of Education not to offer the superintendent a contract extension?
Three of the six superintendents indicated that there was not any circumstance that would cause them to leave their current district. Of the three, one of the board presidents/members gave the same response; two indicated that certain circumstances might lead to not extending the contract. Two of the superintendents named *salary* as a possible reason to leave, as did one board president; however, the board president was not in the same district as either of these two superintendents. One superintendent named *proximity combined with a different configuration* as a potential reason to move to another district; the corresponding board president gave a "no"

response. Only one superintendent stated an emphatic "yes"; the board president gave a "yes"

based on the composition of the board.

Superintendent 3 was one of the participants who indicated he would not leave:

I don't think so. That would be very doubtful. I am actually on the cusp of a career change; I have four years left on this contract. I don't want to be a superintendent after that. You have a certain shelf life and I want to do something different. I have different feelers out—universities and things—I have worked as an adjunct at Rowan and some other places, off and on. This is a pretty good place to work. I don't think I would leave this district as a superintendent to go somewhere else to be a superintendent. They treat me pretty well. How much money do you need? You know, I am well compensated. It is a nice place.

The Board President for Superintendent 3 shared:

Probably in my personal opinion, No. There are some other board members who I think now understand the process that actually understand how powerless a board of education truly is to affect a lot of the decisions that go on in the district. Now, because everyone who sits on that board has a full-time job, and some a full-time job that really lasts beyond full-time hours, they have come to realize that as part of the process that coming to terms with the superintendent and hiring that superintendent is one of the true duties that they really have autonomy over…you have to put your faith in that person.

Superintendent 5 explained why she would take another position, "Yes, I absolutely

would leave. I absolutely regret it. It has just become too stressful here. The undertone is that

they really want just a principal, not a superintendent." The Board President for Superintendent

5 would offer the superintendent another contract, but indicated that the view was not shared by

all:

To be honest, if we get negative people on the board again. We had the majority and I was the minority over a year ago and did not offer her a contract. And then we got new people on the board; we offered her a contract and she accepted it. Two members of the board, I think, could be swayed either way so I am getting a little nervous thinking about election day coming in April and hopefully we get some people - we may have some people who are not running for re-election - and hopefully we get some people who really care about the school district to run. That is what we need here. We don't need the nastiness again. There was one board member, no matter what you say to her, no matter what you do, she just does not like the superintendent, and I don't know what the reason is. The superintendent has asked me several times, 'What does she have against me?' You know, I have no idea. I can't see it because she is just great - she is wonderful here.

Superintendent:

Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to your longevity in your current position?

Board of Education:

Is there anything I have not asked you that you believe contributes to the superintendent's longevity in your district?

The responses to this question did not yield any pattern for the superintendents or the board presidents/member nor did any of the pairs of superintendents and board presidents/members give similar responses. Ideas shared by the superintendents included: the overall way you work, being active in the association, liking what you do, building rapport and respect, luck and if they like you, and integrity. Not every board member gave a response to this final question. Those board members that did give an answer named *diffusing issues* and *helping the board understand the role*, *having an open door* and *using a process*, and *the cost to replace a superintendent*.

Superintendent 2 talked about the Association (NJASA):

One thing - there is something. I have been very active in my association, and just by happenstance I know a number of politicians on the state level and a number of people on the DOE. I think keeping involved, you can get help from these people, questions answered. I think it's a big aspect that people aren't doing today. I see new superintendents - they don't know how important it is. They never asked the right questions of the support people. I am watching it occur as we speak with the young people. By "young," I mean people in their first superintendency.

Superintendent 2's Board President shared:

I think that in the years that I have been here: There are nine board members, and there have probably been 30 different people during that time. Some have come on the board with specific agendas, as many board members do. He has been able to really diffuse those personal issues pretty well and been able to get those people to think about what their real role in the overall process is.

The Board President for Superintendent 3 talked about *open communication* as part of a process:

Open communication - in a couple of words - if I have an issue with the superintendent, and there have been a few occasions when I have, he has had an open-door policy, and I believe strongly – first of all - I believe everything needs to have a process. And that process unfortunately takes some time - that can be quite frustrating, but if you have a vision from what you think that a school district needs to accomplish, applying that vision by way of being a member of the board of education can be achieved, or can be achieved in part, in open communication with the superintendent. [His] having an open door policy, and also I am a very big believer in 1:1 communication. In the past (over the 8-1/2 years that I have served on the board - almost 9 years now) - I have had an issue here and there. I have made it a personal point to never, ever, embarrass anyone in public. That is a mistake. I think no one ever wants to be embarrassed. If you have something to say to someone that really has the potential to be hurtful and you feel strongly about it, then you handle it one on one and you resolve it that way first. And I have never had a problem in my few experiences being able to do that. And I have promised it to him even in my position as board president. I want to never, ever, want to embarrass you in public. We are on the same team. If I was a coach of a team I wouldn't want one of the players of the team coming out and saying, "oh these guys; he calls time out at the wrong time, etc." No, it is about saying, "Can I talk to you for a few minutes. I have a couple of issues; what can we do to resolve them?" So everything has to have a procedure - protocol.

Summary – research guiding question 5. The fifth guiding research question focused on conditions that may contribute to longevity beyond, or in relation to, the specific areas studied (job satisfaction, ways of handling change, fulfilling roles, and board relations). The two overall themes that emerged from the responses are *the superintendent's work ethic*, or *being a hard worker*, and *working in a supportive environment*, including *the board of education*, *staff*, and the *parents/community*.

Although the literature did not necessarily include the phrase "hard work," the descriptions of the superintendent's job in today's world certainly imply a position that requires hard work. Hodgkinson & Montenegro (1999) posited:

The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today. These leaders must have a constantly expanding inventory of skills and capacities, and must be able to use these to deal with the

complexities of the education enterprise, as well as with the challenges of today's political realities, economic constraints and turbulent social problems.

These descriptions are related to the multifaceted roles the superintendent must fulfill. In the Executive Summary of the American Association of School Administrators Mid-Decade Study, Glass and Francischini (2007) explained this complex role:

> In summary, the superintendency encompasses responsibilities in instructional leadership, fiscal management, community relations, board relations, personnel management. The role is one of both leadership and management within the district and community. These executive educators are key players in the success or failure of the nation's reform agendas. (p. xiii)

The need for a supportive environment is identified in the literature. The connection between and among the board members, staff, and community members is related to superintendent longevity. Lee (2006, p.47) stated, "Build your political capital every day. Remember the school board responds to the community and your success will be directly related to how well you are received by your community." The superintendent's ability to satisfy the local board of education is clearly critical to their longevity in a particular school district (Peterson & Klotz, 1999; King, editor, 1999; Byrd, et al., 2007; Natkins, et al., 2002; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Lee, 2006; Townsend, et al., 2007). Four of the six pairs of superintendents indicated that there was a positive working relationship with the board, and if they did leave the district, it would not be due to the board. One pair suggested *an overall good relationship with one area of disagreement.* In only one district did the superintendent desire to leave due to the board, and the board president indicated that the board's not extending the contract was possible, based on what happened in the next board election. Sharp (as cited in Shield, 2002) reinforced this: "The superintendent's relationship with the board is critical, not just for educating the district's students but also for job security of the superintendent."

The Data in Relation to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1 shows that the board's decision to renew is grounded in three areas. One is the superintendent's handling of change. From the data analysis, no board member named *positive handling of change* as the major reason for the superintendent's longevity. However, one board president stated that the inappropriate handling of a change desired by the board could negatively impact the superintendent's status. Second is *the superintendent's fulfillment of the various roles and how this contributed to the board's decision to renew or not renew.* The responses by the superintendent and board president pairings did not yield exact matches in terms of priority of role fulfillment. Overall, the ability to fulfill the roles based on the current situations of the particular district was important to the board members. The third area was *the overall superintendent-board of education relationship.* Based on the data, this was identified as contributing to the longevity of the superintendent.

The same three areas may influence superintendent job satisfaction, which, in turn, is directly related to the superintendent's decision to stay in the district. From the data, five of the six superintendents reported being satisfied with their current positions. The two main areas of satisfaction were *students* and *accomplishments.* The theme of *students* came from four of the five superintendents who work in the districts of 1000 students or less. Therefore, this theme may relate to district size, as opposed to some factor unique to the particular district. In terms of accomplishments, this was a factor for superintendents in the smaller, as well as the one larger, district. From the data, five of the six superintendents reported being satisfied with their current positions. Areas of dissatisfaction derived mainly from external sources, and not from ways of handling change or fulfilling roles. The two superintendents who said they might leave the district indicated that it was not about any dissatisfaction, but rather a different opportunity. One

superintendent expressed dissatisfaction with board micromanagement related to change; however, this would not cause the superintendent to leave the district. One superintendent directly named a problematic board relationship as the source of dissatisfaction and the reason the superintendent wanted to leave the district.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of employment in the same district, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it. The study examined aspects of superintendent roles, job satisfaction, board of education relationships, and ways of handling change. A qualitative research methodology was utilized to gather data and to provide an understanding of, and insight into, these findings. Chapter 4 explained the data and presented an analysis of the findings. Chapter 5 will summarize the responses from the semistructured interviews, present conclusions that can be made based on the study, view the themes through Bolman and Deals' (2003) four frames, and provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Through interviews with superintendents and their board of education presidents/members, the researcher was able to gain insight into superintendent longevity as related to the conceptual framework of this study. The perceptions of the participants afforded the researcher the opportunity to compare and contrast the normative literature about this complex education role with the reality of practicing superintendents. Further, by also interviewing board of education presidents/members, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the unique superintendent-board of education relationship and the priorities of the volunteers who serve as board members. Bolman and Deals' four frames also serve as a lens through which the study's findings are considered.

The purpose of this study was to investigate district factor grouping (DFG) CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of tenure, identify their perceptions regarding longevity, and contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it. The study investigated longevity from two aspects: 1) the superintendent's decision to remain in a school district, and 2) the board of education's decision to renew the superintendent's contract. Chapter 1 explained the problem to be studied. The context of the study and the climate in which public school superintendents work were also discussed. In Chapter 2, relevant research and literature were presented. This included: the concept of longevity and its importance in the superintendency, the changing and multifaceted role of the superintendent, the job satisfaction of superintendents, leadership in the change process, and the superintendent-school board relationship. Chapter 3 provided an

explanation of the qualitative methodology of the study. In Chapter 4, the results of the study and a detailed analysis of the data were presented. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study's rationale and methodology; a discussion of key findings, including conclusions for each guiding research question; a summary of the findings; and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research. Finally, concluding remarks are shared.

Rationale

Relevant data to support the significance of the study were found in the AASA Mid-Decade Study (Glass & Francischini, 2007): 42%, or 562, of responding superintendents had been in their current districts three years or less, and 26%, or 348, of respondents have worked three years or less as a superintendent (p. xvii). Additionally, the mean age of superintendents is 54.6 years, with 76.7%, or 1026, of responding superintendents over the age of 50 (pp. 15-16). As the current superintendents age and retire, either existing superintendents will switch districts and/or first-time superintendents will enter the position. In New Jersey, 338 out of 505, or 67%, of contractual superintendents have been in their current positions for less than six years. Looking at the three-year benchmark, 221, or 44%, of contractual superintendents have been in their current positions for three years or less. At both the national and state levels, the sheer numbers indicate that a clear understanding of developing longevity is needed to assist these new superintendents and those experiencing change of districts.

Based on the aforementioned data, the issue of superintendent's district longevity seems to be important for both boards of education and superintendents themselves. The study provides information to potential and practicing superintendents regarding increasing their longevity in a school district and also provides guidelines for boards of education. By reviewing the findings based on interviews with superintendents who have met or exceeded average

longevity of six years in New Jersey, practicing superintendents may be better able to examine their own perceptions and practices. The data might assist superintendents in self-reflection, regarding their role prioritization and fulfillment, job satisfaction, change processes, and board of education relations. By comparing their own perceptions and practices to the findings of the study, superintendents might identify areas for maintenance, refinement, or change.

For boards of education, this data provides information that might influence superintendent-board relations. By reviewing the findings, boards of education might better understand the perceptions of superintendents who have achieved at or above average longevity. This understanding might assist the board in examining and enhancing its working relationship with the superintendent.

Summary of Methodology

A qualitative-method research study was conducted to collect data and address the research questions. Superintendents and the corresponding board president, or another board member, participated in individual semistructured interviews; six superintendents, five board of education presidents, and one board of education member completed the interview conducted by the researcher.

The interview questions were composed to elicit data to answer the research study guiding questions and were based upon the literature review in Chapter 2. To help ensure reliability and validity, the semistructured interview guide was reviewed by a jury of peers. This jury included two practicing superintendents who have earned their doctorates, and who have experience with qualitative research and the data collection method of interviewing. The semistructured interview guide was also reviewed by the researcher's Seton Hall University

dissertation advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, and second reader, Dr. Christopher Tienken, also a professor at Seton Hall University.

Data analysis was completed using the qualitative technique of content analysis. The first step in data analysis was transcription of the interviews, which were completed by a paid transcriber. The transcriber completed the Ethics in Research Involving Human Subjects tutorial and earned the certification. The content of the interviews was reviewed to determine significant responses. These responses were coded using an inductive approach – meaning the codes were not predetermined but emerged from the data itself. The coded responses were further analyzed to identify any subcategories, as well as interconnections between and among the categories and/or subcategories. From this coding, any patterns or themes were identified.

Discussion of Key Findings

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, based on the guiding research questions and in relationship to the existing literature. One broad-based question guided the study: "How do superintendents increase their longevity in a school district?" Five additional guiding questions were asked: (1) How do superintendents prioritize and fulfill the various roles of the position? (2) How do superintendents experience job satisfaction? (3) How do superintendents maintain positive working relations with their Boards of Education? (4) How do superintendents identify areas for change? (4a) How do superintendents implement change? For the main guiding question, as well as for each of the additional guiding questions, the researcher reviewed the findings and drew conclusions. To help provide clarity, the conclusions of the study are explained below, organized by guiding research question. Each of the sections also includes a discussion of the conclusion in light of the Bolman and Deal frames.

Conclusion 1: The Roles of the Superintendent

An analysis of the data revealed that superintendents and their board of education presidents/member named all three roles in varying combinations. Overall, the superintendents and board presidents reported that multiple roles were critical to longevity and important to the board. This aligns with Bolman and Deal's emphasis on the ability to work between and among the four frames. Bolman and Deal (2003, pp. 365-6) concluded:

> Each of the frames highlights significant possibilities for leadership, but each is incomplete in capturing a holistic picture...Ideally managers combine multiple frames into a comprehensive approach to leadership. Still, it is unrealistic to expect everyone to be a leader for all times and seasons. Wise leaders understand their own strengths, work to expand them, and build teams that can offer an organization leadership in all four modes: structural, political, human resource, and symbolic.

This conclusion, again, connects with the multiple roles being named by superintendents and board presidents. However, it seems to create a greater challenge for the small district superintendents who have limited resources to form a team. Throughout the responses, the researcher found five of the six superintendents -- both the CSA's and those with some other administrators in the district – talk about wearing many hats, fulfilling many roles, and the like. The one superintendent and board president from the large district indicated that, although the superintendent may set tone or identify needs, a team of administrators helped bring things to fruition. In a small district, the ability to reframe seems to fall almost solely on the superintendent, while in a larger district reframing can come from various sources. The superintendent in the small district, therefore, needs to build the capacity within him/herself to fulfill the various roles or make a distinct effort to identify resources to fill the gaps. With limited financial resources, the complementary framers may need to come from the ranks of teachers, community members, and/or the board of education. In hiring practices and in forming committees, knowing one's strengths and identifying complementary strengths in others is

critical to creating a situation where multiple frame perspectives and reframing can occur through the input and effort of various personnel.

Although multiple roles were named, one role – the managerial role – was named most often by individual superintendents, individual board members, and superintendent-board pairs. The researcher's analysis established the conclusion that the managerial role held the greatest influence over superintendent longevity. The superintendents indicated that responsibilities related to government mandates, fiscal matters, school safety, etc. required them to focus on the managerial role of the position. The board presidents/member also viewed managerial as the most important role, looking for the superintendent to handle matters such as facility projects, budget concerns, and other issues raised by district staff, parents/guardians, and community members. The magnitude of the managerial role and longevity is present in the literature. This was expressed by Cambron-McCabe, et al. (2005, p. 71): "And while everyone will applaud your efforts to lead learning, no one will tolerate your failure to balance the budget. You have to lead but you have to manage, too." Glass and Franceschini (2007, p. 35) made a similar statement: "A frequent (if not the leading) cause of superintendent dismissal is mismanagement of finance and budgets, not low test scores." The six superintendents who participated in the study all have exceeded the average longevity and, based on the data collected from these superintendents and their board of education presidents/member, they have all met the managerial expectations and responsibilities. Therefore, the researcher identifies a connection between the normative literature and findings of the study.

This focus on the managerial role aligns with the structural frame. For example, in describing the handling of change, the superintendents and board presidents reported that there was a process involved; the structural frame names a "rational sequence to produce the right

decision" for decision making (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.306). In terms of communication, the superintendents reported sharing facts and information with the board; the structural frame states that communication involved "transmitting facts and information (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 307). However, when the researcher looked into the superintendents' descriptions of involving staff in change, finding satisfaction in being/working with students, etc., the data show that the human resources frame is of great importance in their work. For instance, in handling change, staff input was the main theme; the human resources frame includes "an open process to produce commitment" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 306). The superintendents and board presidents shared that meetings were a key form of communication, and that important issues were discussed at meetings. This moves communication from the structural frame into the human resources frame which emphasizes "exchange information, needs, and feelings" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 307). Perhaps the superintendents are unconsciously completing their managerial tasks with a human resources mindset.

Although not the predominant theme, the instructional role was named by some superintendents, especially those who held the dual role of superintendent and principal. These dual-role administrators discussed the importance of visiting classrooms and conducting observations/evaluations as a critical aspect of their work. These superintendents/principals, whether they realized it or not, were working within the human resources frame which views evaluation as "using a process for helping individuals grow and improve" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 306). The participants who served solely as superintendents viewed the instructional role from the perspective of identifying priorities, setting the tone, working with committees, and informal visits to schools and classrooms. These superintendents were working within multiple frames: 1) the structural frame, which views strategic planning as "creating strategies to set

objectives and coordinate resources" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 306), as well as goal setting

which is describe in the structural frame as "keeping the organization headed in the right

direction" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 307); and 2) the human resources frame, which promotes

decision making through an "open process to produce commitment" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.

306), in addition to goal setting by "keeping people involved and communication open" (Bolman

& Deal, 2003, p. 307). Although the instructional theme was included in the responses, it was

not the prevalent theme. This is a difference between the data collected and the normative

literature, which emphasized the critical nature of instructional leadership in today's world

(AASA, 2007; Peterson, 2002; Castallo, 2003; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005; Hoyle, et al.,

2005). Negron (as cited in Cambron-McCabe et al., 2005) explained the instructional leadership

role:

> In today's environment, successful leadership is animated as the will to educate children
> to high standards. Such leadership depends, first and foremost, on the example set by the
> superintendent. This requires a radical change in the superintendency itself. We cannot
> manage systems if that means we neglect teaching and learning, leaving the business of
> instruction to others. We cannot lead learning if we leave the core of instruction
> unquestioned, unexamined, and essentially mysterious. If we truly intend to educate all
> students to high standards, then superintendents must become lead teachers again (p. 43).

The difference between the data and the normative literature may be due to the study focusing on

longevity and the literature looking at school performance and student achievement.

The superintendents saw the political role as a component of longevity only in connection

with the superintendent-board of education relationship; however, the board of education

presidents did not view the political role as the most important. This is another difference

between the normative literature and the data collected. The normative literature emphasizes a

connection between the political role and superintendent longevity (Lee, 2006; Hoyle, et al.,

2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Alborano, 2002; Boright, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

Carter and Cunningham (1997, p. 156) stated: "Today, a central focus for our nation's superintendents is acquiring and honing the skills of building culture, coalitions, and alliances; interprofessional collaboration; political insight; multiple constituencies; shared visions; communication, and the process we call community."

The superintendents, in viewing the political role only in relationship to the board of education, may be missing the fact that politics are embedded into the other roles and aspects of their work. Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 238) stated, "Every significant organizational process is inherently political." For example, decision making processes and evaluating staff are political in that they are "opportunities to gain or exercise power" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 206). Since the literature on superintendent longevity emphasizes the political role, it is difficult to think that the superintendents in this study would have exceeded average longevity if they were making political errors. This suggests that superintendents, in particular, need to further reflect upon their actions, interactions, and decision making so they are cognizant of the political nature of their work.

These data might suggest that superintendents and their boards of education are not conscious of the political aspects of the managerial and instructional roles, or that they hold a narrow definition of the term "political." Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 181) defined politics as "the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests." An example may help clarify this definition. School districts across New Jersey are in the process of cutting their budgets in light of state aid reduction and failed budget votes. In determining what to reduce from the proposed budget, if the superintendent makes the recommendation to fund instrumental music while reducing interscholastic sports, this is a decision that may be viewed on the surface as a combination of management and instruction.

However, according to Bolman and Deal, politics are embedded into this decision because it involves allocation of scarce resources. To take the scenario further, if in choosing instrumental music over interscholastic sports causes an outcry from the parents/guardians and community, and if those stakeholders become vocal to the board of education, the superintendent's status could be altered. Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 186) stated, "It is naïve and romantic to hope that organizational politics can ever be eliminated in organizations. Managers can, however, learn to understand and manage political dynamics." Accordingly, it is important for superintendents to understand the underlying political ramifications of the decisions they make when fulfilling their managerial and instructional roles. In making decisions – whether it is a single decision about a major issue or a series of decisions about lesser issues – superintendents need to be aware of the impact of decision making on their longevity. The decision might seem, to the superintendent, to come from the structural frame or the instruction realm; however, the underlying political ramifications of the decision cannot be ignored. The superintendent must be conscious of the political frame, even when not overtly fulfilling the political role.

Conclusion 2: Superintendents' Job Satisfaction

Students and accomplishments – these two themes of superintendent satisfaction are supported by the literature (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski, 2006; Schoen, 2006; Cooper, et al., 2000; Glass, et al., 2000). The themes of dissatisfaction – *department of education, fiscal matters*, and *board of education relationships* – likewise are supported by the literature (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Schoen, 2006; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005). In discussing working conditions of superintendents, Glass & Franceschini (2007, p. 45), stated, "This professional portrait depicts a position with substantial fiscal challenges, lack of time, stress, occasional conflict with special interest groups, and a continual effort to maintain a constructive working

relationship with board members." Further, both the satisfaction and dissatisfaction themes show the superintendents, consciously or unconsciously, working within multiple frames. The student theme enables the researcher to identify a tie to the symbolic frame and includes rituals which are "day-to-day routines" such as walking the halls, as well as holding ceremonies which are "grander, more elaborate, and less frequent," like graduation ceremonies (Bolman & Deal, 2003 p. 264). Additionally, the positive work with students and negative board relations connects with the human resources frame; the researcher notes that Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 161) stated, "Relationships, then, figure prominently in both individual job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness." In terms of *accomplishments* as a satisfier and *department of education* and *fiscal matters* as dissatisfiers, the structural frame is in play, with its focus on goals and objectives. Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 400) stated, "The ethical imperative of the factory is excellence: ensuring work is done as well and efficiently as possible to produce high quality output."

In reviewing the sources of dissatisfaction, the researcher again questions whether the superintendents were aware of the politics that might be embedded into every facet of their role and the potential effect on longevity. For instance, dealing with a micromanaging board or difficult people is inherently political. Should the superintendent encounter a difficulty with a person who possesses connections to powerful community members or board members, the difficulty might grow from a one-on-one difference of opinion to a greater issue of conflict with the board of education. On the surface, this might be considered a communication issue that relates to the job satisfaction of the superintendent. However, this seemingly simple communication matter holds political ramifications. Likewise, if the micromanagement of the board is challenged by the superintendent, a power struggle – a political event – might ensue.

This struggle could impact longevity, with the superintendent's deciding to leave and/or the board of education's not renewing the superintendent's contract.

Conclusion 3: Superintendent-Board of Education Relationships

Two themes emerged from the data on the superintendent-board of education relationship: *communication* and *equal treatment.* The superintendent-board of education relationship stands as a critical aspect of superintendent longevity and is connected with each of the four frames. Communication is an area that may require reframing, based on the situation. For instance, if the superintendent simply needs to convey factual information, the structural frame is at work. However, if the communication requires exchanging information with the board members, the human resources frame is in play. In certain instances, the superintendent might need to work from the symbolic frame in sharing the district or community culture through storytelling, another form of communication. In determining the level and content of communication, the superintendent is actually working within the political frame. Information is a resource; allocation of that resource is a decision with political ramifications.

In terms of treating all board members the same, multiple frames are also involved. The superintendent's treatment of board of education members, whether consciously or unconsciously, is, first and foremost, political in nature. Both the political and human resources frames speak to an open process and keeping people involved. If an important decision is being made, the superintendent needs to be sure that all board members have equal access to information and equal opportunities to be involved in the decision making process. Similarly, in the symbolic frame, the concept of sharing permeates the organizational process. For instance, if the district is developing core values, it is important that all board members share in the naming of these foundational principles. The manner in which the board of education operates -

committee of the whole, separate committees, or a combination of the two – relates to the structural frame. In designing the structure, all board members' preferences need to be considered. Further, the superintendent needs to be sure to work within the structural model designed. In doing so, the superintendent has a basis for determining when equal treatment is absolutely necessary and any situations or issues for which treatment may be different due to the committee design.

Although effective practice in each of these three frames – structural, human resources, and symbolic – may contribute to the superintendent-board of education relationship, the political frame serves as an underlying factor for the overall health of the relationship. The superintendents who enjoy positive working relationships with their boards of education might or might not be fully conscious of the political frame in which they are working. The superintendents who have isolated or major issues with their boards of education might be more aware of the political reality of the negative relationship and its impact on their longevity in the district – either because the board does not renew or the superintendent decides to leave.

Conclusion 4: Identifying and Implementing Change

One predominant theme – staff involvement – emerged from the data regarding the change process. This included determining areas for change, planning for implementation, and handling of resistance. The data revealed successful implementation of change, as well as challenges faced and handled by the superintendents. This suggests that the superintendents, consciously or unconsciously, understood the change process which Bolman and Deal (p. 370) were describing when they wrote, "Organizational change is a multiframe undertaking." The examples provided by the superintendents and/or board of education presidents/members directly connected with three of the four frames. Providing training over time to implement the Everyday

Mathematics program is an example of working within the human resources frame. Bolman and Deal (p.373) stated, "Training, psychological support, and participation all increase the likelihood that people will understand and feel comfortable with the new methods. When planning implementation of a computerized report card system, the superintendent agreed to alter the participation of teachers of preschool and kindergarten; here, the structural frame was at work. Bolman and Deal (p. 372) indicated an essential structural strategy for change: "Communicating, realigning, and renegotiating formal patterns and policies." The superintendent who initially involved interested staff in working with new classroom technology, and then had these teachers work with others, was using the political frame to implement change. Bolman and Deal (p. 372) discussed the creation of "new coalitions" as a critical strategy in the political frame. The superintendents who successfully implemented change showed their ability to anticipate potential concerns and/or respond readily to concerns raised as the process evolved.

Argyris and Schon (as cited in Bolman & Deal, pp. 165-6) described their Model II theory of action to involve: 1) Emphasize common goals and mutual influence; 2) Communicate openly and publicly test assumption and belief; and 3) Combine advocacy with inquiry. Overall, the superintendents held the belief that decision making and change processes require the type of management that integrates advocacy and inquiry. This serves as an example of the interaction between the human resources and political frames.

Conclusion 5: Increasing Longevity

Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 339) offered: "Leadership is thus a subtle process of mutual influence fusing thought, feeling, and action to produce cooperative efforts in the service of purposes and values embraced by *both* the leader and the led." The two themes that surfaced from the data about longevity support this description. The first theme – *work ethic* or *hard work*

– focused on the superintendents' professional practice, while the second theme – *a supportive environment* – was a district factor. Perhaps by modeling the action of hard work the superintendent influences the stakeholders to be supportive of the purposes and values of the superintendent and organization known as the school district.

When the superintendent takes action, this shows work ethic. Sergiovanni (2007, p. 20) called this the "hand of leadership – the actions we take…" When the stakeholders – be it staff, parents, and/or the board of education – show support, they are demonstrating cooperative efforts. Here, Sergiovanni (2007, p. 26) discussed the distinction between subordinates and followers: "Subordinates respond to bureaucratic authority, and sometimes to personal authority. Followers, by contrast, respond to ideas." Although not directly aligned with either hard work or a supportive environment, Sergiovanni (2007) offered two facets of leadership in addition to the *hand*:

> The *heart* of leadership has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to – the person's *personal values,* to use a popular term…The *head* of leadership has to do with the theories of practice each of us has developed over time and our ability to reflect on situations we face in light of these theories (p. 20).

Like Bolman and Deals' four frames, Sergiovanni's trio of head, heart, and hand suggest a multifaceted approach to leadership and the need to work between and among the facets to lead effectively. The data collected during this study suggest that the superintendents are working in multiple frames and from varying combinations of head, heart, and hand. To contribute toward longevity, the dominant frame may be based on the particular district context and/or a particular situation within the district.

Summary of Key Findings

The conceptual framework of this study grounded superintendent longevity in two main areas: the superintendent's decision to stay in the district, and the board of education's decision

to renew or extend the superintendent's contract. The superintendent's job satisfaction was a factor in and of itself and was also linked to fulfilling the roles, handling of change, and the relationship with the board of education. A positive professional working relationship with the board certainly influenced the superintendent's decision to stay, but would not stop the superintendent from seeking other employment. Although occasional board micromanagement might lead to job dissatisfaction, an overall negative relationship with the board would more likely cause the superintendent to leave the district. From the board of education's perspective, handling of change was a factor if the superintendent was not able to implement a change desired by the board, fulfilling the roles was based on district context and current situations, and the relationship with the board of education influenced the board's decision to renew. These findings are fairly basic in nature and simply affirm what already exists in the current literature and research on superintendent longevity.

However, as the researcher reviewed the data and conclusions through the lens of Bolman and Deal's four frames, the ability to work within all frames in each of the aforementioned areas became apparent. This is similar to the superintendent's ability to prioritize and fulfill various roles based on the context of, and current issues within, the district. Further, the political role of the superintendency and the corresponding political frame from Bolman and Deal are identified by the researcher as interfacing with all the other aspects of the conceptual framework and the other three frames. The political role and frame are connected to each aspect of the conceptual framework, as well as to the other frames to serve as a basis for the following implications for superintendent professional practice.

Recommendations for Practice

Although the superintendents in this study downplayed the political role, their responses in areas that were seemingly instructional or managerial showed a political thread, especially when considered in terms of Bolman and Deal's reframing theory. Accordingly, the discussion of implications for professional practice will focus on the political role and frame.

When searching for a superintendent's position, the educator needs to assess the political landscape of the school district. This might include the level of board of education micromanagement and the interface between the municipality and the school district. This information gathering is the beginning of the creation of a political map. The educator's work might include discovering why the superintendent's vacancy exists and researching information about the board of education members. Sources might include colleagues in the educational network, as well as technological tools such as Google searches. Further, the superintendent should ascertain through the interview process the board's expectations for change, as well as any other critical issues in the school district. If the superintendent selects a school district with a political climate that does not match the superintendent's ability or philosophy, this can lead to issues that will hinder the superintendent's ability to work successfully in the district and achieve longevity. A similar implication exists for the board of education. When conducting a superintendent search, the board of education needs to be clear about its philosophy about education and involvement in the school district operations. Although these recommendations might sound simplistic on initial presentation, the data from this study suggest that the superintendents were not fully aware of how politics may be embedded in seemingly nonpolitical aspects of their work, the highly political nature of their jobs in general, and the relationship between politics and their longevity.

Once hired, the superintendent needs to continue developing the political map to help identify players in the school district and community whose alliances may be beneficial or needs be critical. Whether fulfilling the instructional or the managerial role, conducting daily business or making major decisions, the superintendent needs to be fully conscious of which actions and decisions are political in nature. If the superintendent is aware that the political frame is at work, the superintendent should take measures to leverage allies and neutralize adversaries. Further, the superintendent must possess a strong sense of self; if the superintendent's belief system requires a certain decision that contradicts the political climate, the superintendent needs to understand the impact the decision may have on longevity and be willing to accept that impact. Again, the board of education plays a role in this process. The board of education needs to advise the superintendent of key players in the community, as well as issues that may possess political ramifications.

Bolman and Deal (2003) explained the realities of the political frame:

> The question is not whether organizations are political but rather what kind of politics they will have. Political dynamics can be sordid and destructive. But politics can also be the vehicle for achieving noble purpose. Organizational change and effectiveness depend upon the managers' political skill. Constructive politicians recognize and understand political realities. They know how to fashion an agenda, map the political terrain, create a network of support, and negotiate with both allies and adversaries. In the process, they encounter a practical and ethical dilemma when to adopt an open, collaborative strategy or when to choose a tougher, more adversarial approach. They have to consider the potential for collaboration, the importance of long-term relationships, and most important their own values and ethical principles. (p. 220)

Superintendents, in selecting a district, in entering a new position, and in maintaining their current positions, need to be cognizant of this political reality. Further, the superintendent must possess or develop the skills to be able to work within the political reality in accordance with one's own beliefs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since this study involved a limited number of participants in mainly small districts of one DFG, the recommendations for future research focus, in part, on replication of the study in different settings. Additional recommendations target areas of the findings that would assist the superintendents in understanding effective professional practice, especially in the political frame and its impact on longevity.

1) Replicate this study in CD DFG school districts of varying sizes to determine the influence of district size on longevity.

2) Replicate this study in small school districts with different DFG's to determine the influence of district type on longevity.

3) Design a study to further explore the gap between the normative literature which emphasizes the political role and the data from this study that emphasizes the managerial role in relationship to longevity.

4) Design a study to further explore the superintendents' awareness of the political role and frame and the interaction with the other roles and frames.

5) Design a study to further explore the role of change agent and superintendent longevity.

6) Design a study to explore if prior position held is a factor in understanding the political frame and its relationship to longevity.

7) Design a study to explore the political reality and influence on longevity in Type I versus Type II New Jersey School districts (appointed vs. elected boards of education).

Concluding Remarks

Hoyle, et al (2005, p. 22) stated, "The position of CEO superintendent is more than a vocation. It is a calling." This quote suggests the complex and demanding nature of the public

school superintendent in the 21st century. As the national, state, and local media continue to focus on the need to improve our public schools, the superintendent of schools becomes highly visible and more accountable. The challenge of successfully balancing the varied roles and maintaining positive board of education relationships can lead to superintendent turnover. In New Jersey, the current fiscal situation, the negative focus on public schools, and the overall political climate create an even greater difficulty for school leaders. The political realities of this high profile position can easily influence the superintendent's longevity. When superintendent longevity is not maintained, school improvement becomes even more difficult. Thus, a vicious cycle ensues.

Despite the complexities of the roles and relationships, some factors that contribute to longevity are not all that complex - old-fashioned basics, such as working hard and getting along with people. Other factors, of course, are not quite so simple and include managing complex change and handling board micromanagement. The superintendents who participated in this study expressed great passion for their work while communicating frustrations they experience. Often, the success stories and frustrations were political in nature – whether or not the superintendents were fully conscious of the political aspects of their work. Although educators often strive to remain apolitical, they must not confuse this with working within the political frame. To serve effectively and to achieve worthy goals for our children, superintendents need to leverage politics in a positive manner. If superintendents focus on children and engender school systems and stakeholders that focus on children, they will not only fulfill the vocation of education leader, but also rise to the calling of the superintendency.

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Appendix A

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY.

1 8 5 6

November 10, 2009

Superintendent of Schools

Dear Superintendent:

I am currently enrolled at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, in the Executive Ed.D. program as a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy. I am writing to invite your participation in a semi-structured interview that is needed for my dissertation study of New Jersey Superintendents and longevity.

My research study is a qualitative case study of district factor group CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have worked in their current positions for six or more years. The study focuses on superintendent roles and responsibilities, identification and handling of change, job satisfaction, and superintendent-board of education relationships. Data collection is through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. It is estimated that the interview will take approximately one hour.

From the superintendents who agree to participate, six will be randomly selected. Once selected, the superintendents will be contacted to arrange a mutually convenient appointment for the interview. Additionally, the board of education president from the same school district will be contacted for participation. If the president is not available, the vice-president will be contacted.

If you are willing to serve as a participant in the study, please read and sign the attached Informed Consent Form and return it to me by November 30, 2009, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you have any questions, please contact me at 609-748-1250, ext. 1011, or 609-402-5415. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Annette C. Giaquinto
Executive Ed. D. Program
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
Jubilee Fourth Floor
South Orange, NJ 07079

Attachment

College of Education and Human Services
Executive Ed.D. Program
Tel. 973.275.2728.
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

1 8 5 6

December 3, 2009

Dear Board of Education Member:

I am currently enrolled at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, in the Executive Ed. D. program as a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy. The Superintendent of Schools in your district has already agreed to and has been selected as a participant in the dissertation study I am conducting. Accordingly, I am writing to invite your participation in a semi-structured interview that is needed for my dissertation study of New Jersey Superintendents and longevity.

My research study is a qualitative case study of district factor group CD school district New Jersey superintendents who have worked in their current positions for six or more years. The study focuses on superintendent roles and responsibilities, identification and handling of change, job satisfaction, and superintendent-board of education relationships. Data collection is through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. It is estimated that the interview will take approximately one hour.

If you are willing to serve as a participant in the study, please read and sign the attached Informed Consent Form and return it to me by December 10, 2009, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please also enclose a business card or somehow indicate the email address and/or phone number at which I can contact you to set-up the interview. I hope to schedule your interview on the same date as your Superintendent's interview. If you have any questions, please contact me at 609-748-1250, ext. 1011, or 609-402-5415. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Annette C. Giaquinto
Executive Ed. D. Program
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
Jubilee Fourth Floor
South Orange, NJ 07079

Attachment

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

1 8 5 6

Date

Affiliation:
Annette C. Giaquinto is currently enrolled at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, in the Executive Ed.D. program as a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy. She is currently employed as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Galloway Township Public Schools, Galloway, New Jersey.

Purpose of the study:
The title of the study is *Longevity in the Superintendency: A Case Study of New Jersey District Factor Group CD Superintendents*. The purposes of the study are to: (a) investigate district factor grouping CD school district New Jersey Superintendents who have achieved at or above the average years of tenure, (b) identify superintendents' and board of education members' perceptions regarding longevity, and (c) contribute to the knowledge base regarding superintendent longevity and ways to increase it.

The research will be conducted by using qualitative semi-structured interviews that focus on superintendent longevity as related to prioritizing roles and responsibilities, identifying and handling change, job satisfaction, and superintendent-board of education relationships. By this letter, superintendents are invited to participate in the qualitative semi-structured interview. Superintendents receiving this letter were selected based on their current employment as a superintendent in a CD DFG for six or more years. From the superintendents who agree to participate, six will be randomly selected for the actual interview. It is estimated that the interview will take approximately an hour to complete. If he/she is selected for the interview, the appointment will be scheduled at his/her convenience and will take place at the superintendent's office or other location of his/her choosing.

Additionally, the board of education president of that superintendent's school district will be invited to an interview. If the president is not available, the vice-president will be invited. The president/vice-president interview will focus on superintendent roles and responsibilities, identifying and handling change, and superintendent-board relationships.

Procedure:
The researcher will conduct the interview at the superintendent's office or at a location of his/her choosing. It is estimated that the semi-structured interview will take approximately an hour to complete. It will be scheduled in advance by mutual agreement.

Semi-structured interview format:

The semi-structured interview, to which he/she is invited to participate via this letter, will follow an identical format for the six participants. The interview will begin with four demographic questions. These questions will be followed with three questions about roles / responsibilities and prioritization of

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roles; three questions about how working relationships with the board of education are maintained and developed; three questions regarding identification of areas for change and implementation of change; and four questions about longevity. Once all the planned questions are completed, based on his/her responses additional questions about the aforementioned topics may be asked.

The interview will be audio-recorded on a Dictaphone and digital voice recorder. The data will be uploaded to a USB memory key. It will not be stored on the hard drive of a laptop or desktop computer. The transcript, however, will become part of the data analysis of the dissertations. Participants will be identified anonymously only by participant number.

Voluntary nature of participation:
Participation in the research study is voluntary. By signing the Informed Consent Form and participating in the semi-structured interview, he/she is consenting to participation in the research study. The inability or refusal to participate or to discontinue participation at any time will involved no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled. The participant may choose to discontinue his/her participation at the point of the interview. The interview will be recorded using a Dictaphone and digital audio recorder. It will be transcribed and become part of the analysis of the data of the research study. The participant will be identified by participant number only. The researcher will maintain complete confidentiality regarding his/her participation.

Anonymity of the survey/interview:
Anonymity and confidentiality will be protected. Participants in the semi-structured interview will be identified as Superintendent Participant #1 through #6 or Board member Participant #1 through #6 respectively. However, district factor grouping CD will be identified. This may provide meaning to a reader of the research that is unintended.

Confidentiality:
Confidentiality will be protected. Data will not be stored electronically on hard drives of laptop or desk top computers. If stored electronically, data will only be stored on a USB memory key. Data will be secured in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher and the researcher's mentor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, will have access to the stored data.

Data storage:
Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Any electronic data will be stored only on a USB memory key. No data will be stored on the hard drive of a laptop or desktop computer.

Access to data:
The researcher and the researcher's advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, College of Education and Human Resources, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, will have access to the data. No other individuals will have access to the research data. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

Risks or discomforts:
No risks or discomforts are anticipated in the research study.

Direct/potential benefits of the research study:
No direct benefit will be provided to the research participant. Potential benefits include providing data that will aid the analysis and improvement of professional practice.

Compensation:
No payment or remuneration will be provided to research participants.

Risks other than minimal:
No risks other than minimal are anticipated in the research study.

Alternative procedure of risk management:
No alternative procedures for risk management are anticipated.

Contact information:
Annette C. Giaquinto is the principal researcher of the study. If the participant has any questions or concerns, or in the unlikely event that he/she encounters risk or harm as a result of participation in the research study, please contact the principal researcher by writing to: Seton Hall University, Executive Ed. D. Program, College of Education and Human Resources, Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy, Jubilee Hall Fourth Floor, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey 07079, or by telephoning 973-275-2728. Participants may also write to the researcher's mentor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, Seton Hall University, Executive Ed. D. Program, College of Education and Human Resources, Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy, Jubilee Hall Fourth Floor, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey 07079, or by telephoning 973-275-2324. Additionally, participants may contact Dr. Mary Ruzicka, Seton Hall University IRB Director, Office of Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board, Presidents Hall Third Floor, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey 07079, or by telephoning 973-313-6314.

Audio-tapes:
The oral interviews will be recorded on a Dictaphone and on a digital audio recorder. The digital data will be uploaded only to a USB memory key. The electronic data will not be stored on the hard drive of a laptop or desktop computer. Each participant's written permission to audio-tape is required. He/she will be identified in the research study numerically as Superintendent Participants #1 through #6 or Board Participants #1 through #6 as designated. Access to the audio-tape file will be granted only to the principal researcher, Annette C. Giaquinto, and the research advisor/mentor, Dr. Barbara Strobert. The audio-recorded file will be listened to only by the researcher and advisor/mentor. The audio-recorded files will be transcribed by a paid transcriber. The audio-recorded files will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed at the end of a five year period. The transcript data and the data analysis will be included in the researcher's dissertation.

Required signature:
Participants in the semi-structured interview are required to sign and complete the Informed Consent Form. Accordingly, he/she is required to sign below.

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Acknowledgement of Informed Consent Form:

I have read the above information, and I agree to participate in the study. I am aware that I will be given a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my records before the research is conducted.

Signature of the Person Participating in the Study: _____

Date of Signature: _____

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Affiliation:
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The research will be conducted by using qualitative semi-structured interviews that focus on superintendent longevity as related to prioritizing roles and responsibilities, identifying and handling change, and superintendent-board of education relationships. Board of Education Presidents or Vice-Presidents receiving this letter were selected based on their school district's superintendent being selected to participate. These superintendents needed to be employed in a CD DFG for six or more years. From the superintendents who agreed to participate, six were randomly selected for the actual interview. Accordingly, the Board of Education President or Vice-President of that same school district, by this letter, is invited to participate in the qualitative semi-structured interview. It is estimated that the interview will take approximately an hour to complete. The appointment will be scheduled at the participant's convenience and will take place at his/her district office or other location of his/her choosing.

Procedure:
The researcher will conduct the interview at the participant's district office or at a location of his/her choosing. It is estimated that the semi-structured interview will take approximately an hour of his/her time. It will be scheduled in advance by mutual agreement.

Semi-structured interview format:

The semi-structured interview, to which he/she is invited to participate via this letter, will follow an identical format for the six participants. The interview will begin with four demographic questions. These questions will be followed with one question about roles / responsibilities and prioritization of roles; three questions about how working relationships with the board of education are developed and maintained; three questions regarding identification of areas for change and implementation of change; and four questions about longevity. Once all the planned questions are completed, based on his/her responses additional questions about the aforementioned topics may be asked.

The interview will be audio-recorded on a Dictaphone and digital voice recorder. The data will be uploaded to a USB memory key. It will not be stored on the hard drive of a laptop or desktop computer. The transcript, however, will become part of the data analysis of the dissertation. Participants will be identified anonymously only by participant number.

Voluntary nature of participation:
Participation in the research study is voluntary. By signing the Informed Consent Form and participating in the semi-structured interview, he/she is consenting to participation in the research study. The inability or refusal to participate or to discontinue participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled. He/She may choose to discontinue his/her participation at the point of the interview. The interview will be recorded using a Dictaphone and digital audio recorder. It will be transcribed and become part of the analysis of the data of the research study. He/She will be identified by participant number only. The researcher will maintain complete confidentiality regarding his/her participation.

Anonymity of the survey/interview:
Anonymity and confidentiality will be protected. Participants in the semi-structured interview will be identified as Board member Participant #1 through #6 respectively. However, district factor grouping CD will be identified. This may provide meaning to a reader of the research that is unintended.

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Risks or discomforts:
No risks or discomforts are anticipated in the research study.

Direct/potential benefits of the research study:
No direct benefit will be provided to the research participant. Potential benefits include providing data that will aid the analysis and improvement of professional practice.

Compensation:
No payment or remuneration will be provided to research participants.

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Risks other than minimal:
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Alternative procedure of risk management:
No alternative procedures for risk management are anticipated.

Contact information:
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Signature of the Person Participating in the Study: _____

Date of Signature: _____