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Superintendent Selection in North Dakota: Practices and Criteria

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SUPERINTENDENT SELECTION IN NORTH DAKOTA:
PRACTICES AND CRITERIA

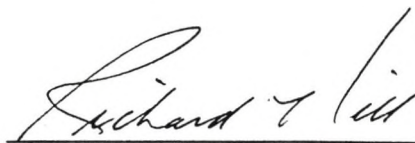
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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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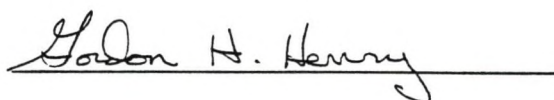
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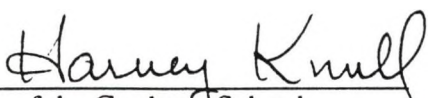








This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.



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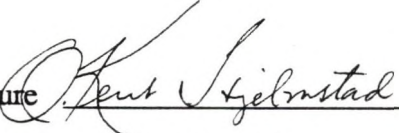
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to learn how North Dakota school board members who had recently participated in the selection of a school superintendent perceived the relative importance of (a) hiring practices, (b) administrative skills, and (c) superintendent attributes. Analyses of individual items and clusters of items were conducted. In addition to the general purpose, analyses were conducted by gender, by duration of board incumbency, and by school enrollment size.

Data for the study consisted of responses from 124 school board members from 39 school districts. (The universe of districts which had hired a superintendent during the 1990-1993 time frame was 55 districts.) Responses were gathered from a three-part questionnaire constructed by the writer.

Administrative skills assessments dominated the selection process for new superintendents. Board members placed more importance on personal attributes of candidates than on hiring practices used. Female board members generally recorded higher importance assessments than male board members. Female board members also preferred greater education, experience, and management skill. Board incumbency seemed to be a negligible variable in the selection of a new superintendent. In the selection process, board members from smaller schools valued the advice of others less than did board members from larger schools. Board members from large schools were less concerned about age, appearance, and current job location than were board members from smaller schools.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To paraphrase Talleyrand, "Schooling is too important to be left to educators." In short, public schools must be governed by the public. At least two circumstances mitigate against unfettered professional autonomy for educators. First, unlike many professional services offered in the private sector, public schools approach a monopoly. A dissatisfied parent or student, in most instances, has a restricted ability to change school districts, schools, or teachers. Thus, as with other monopolies, there are reasonable grounds for regulation by society. A second reason for lay control over professional educators and schools in general stems from the socially sensitive nature of the school's functions. Schools are commonly held responsible for transmitting values from one generation to the next. In order to maintain society and ensure social cohesion, it is necessary that the values being handed down are consistent with those held by the wider society. The lay public, consequently, must have within its power the authority, rewards, and sanctions to accomplish this end (Guthrie, Thomason, & Craig, 1975).

This authority generated by American custom and law is granted to local school boards (Guthrie et al., 1975). The boards of education delegate much of this authority to their chief executive, the superintendent. This executive position is relatively new, spanning approximately 150 years, and has become a vastly different job today than it was when it was created in the 1830s (Mattocks, 1987). The position of superintendent has undergone a transformation from a clerical one, with the superintendent having little control over the operation of the school, to today's executive who controls what is, in some of the nation's largest cities, a billion dollar operation (Knezevich, 1984).

The evolution of this authority delegation was a gradual process. American public schools exist primarily to serve the general welfare of a democratic society, by assuring that the knowledge and understanding necessary to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship are not only made available but actively inculcated (Butts, 1973).

Early in colonial America it became obvious that formal education was a way of preserving democracy and of developing a fledgling nation. Education involved a philosophical or ideological perspective. There is no such thing as neutral education (Provenzo, 1986). This philosophical preservation was originally the task of the family in frontier America. When, however, it was realized that poor families could not educate and philosophically inculcate the "democratic way," common schools were proposed. These schools, usually controlled by school committees, were created, at least in part, to fill the educational gap between the rich and the poor. The prevailing administrative system in New England until the 19th century consisted of towns divided into districts, each maintaining and managing its own school through a local school committee (Guthrie et al., 1975). These schools were supported by local taxes which were augmented by funds from town school committees and from revenue from a state school fund.

By the close of the 19th century, America's population had grown dramatically, rising to 72,000,000 by 1900. However, by 1970, the number of local school districts had dropped from 110,000 to less than 17,000 (Guthrie et al., 1975). This consolidation of districts combined with the surge of population led to a change of school governance in many districts. The role of the public school leader began to undergo a transformation. School administrators, especially superintendents of urban districts, sought to develop new modes of governance, organization, and control. While school governance in rural districts remained largely in the hands of elected boards who administered one-room schools taught by a single teacher, superintendents in large urban areas had to deal with increasingly complex issues of organizing schools to serve thousands of students, many of whom were

children of new immigrants (Guttek, 1986). Administrators in many districts, of necessity, were required to make decisions heretofore reserved for boards.

These changes in the demographics of American schools and the role of school leadership have caused the superintendency to become a very critical role. Accordingly, the hiring process to fill this role also became a subject of intense interest. It is this hiring process that this study attempted to examine. The selection process of superintendents in chosen North Dakota schools served as the data base for the study.

Purpose and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to learn the relative importance of (a) hiring practices, (b) administrative skills, and (c) superintendent attributes that defined desirable superintendent candidates as perceived by selected North Dakota school board members.

Present national hiring strategies vary, with urban districts trying new methods in hopes of finding the best executive leader. Oklahoma City board members, for instance, demonstrated this quest in the commentary reported in the September 1988 issue of *The American School Board Journal*:

Your top-notch superintendent has just announced that he's moving on. As you and your fellow board members express regrets and good wishes, you can't help thinking about what lies ahead--a superintendent search. We know all about this in Oklahoma City, having wooed, won, and then lost six excellent school chiefs in the past 20 years. We also know that searches often are expensive and exhausting. But careful planning can make all the work and money you pour into a superintendent search pay off. (p. 32)

After planning, the Oklahoma City board used a consortium of Oklahoma universities, established a step by step hiring process, and invested \$50,000 to find their next leader.

Other experts insist that hiring a search consultant often is the best way for school board members to get valuable, knowledgeable assistance as they look for a new superintendent (Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). Still, other school boards place emphasis on seeking an interim superintendent in hopes of buying time to facilitate the proper executive choice. Here is a case in point:

Your superintendent resigns, effective in only a few weeks, and you can't see any way to replace him without a gap of several months. What does the board do? On the basis of recent experience, I suggest you hire an interim superintendent--someone from outside the school system who has successful experience as a superintendent. (Young, 1986, p. 41)

Finding the right superintendent is a matter of matching a candidate's talents and expertise with the unique needs of a school system (Hornung, 1986). This study intended to analyze present North Dakota superintendent selection practices and to investigate representative attempts at making this match. What are the qualifications that board members prefer? What techniques are being used by selected North Dakota schools to screen superintendent candidates, narrow applicants for interviews, and come to a fruitful conclusion in the selection of their next leader?

The writer proposed to assess the perceived importance of certain demographic and biographic criteria found in typical candidates for the position of superintendent. The demographics to be assessed included the following:

1. Age of the applicant
2. Gender of the applicant
3. Amount of education an applicant has
4. Number of years of experience the applicant has had as a superintendent and/or as a principal
5. Current job location of an applicant
6. Religion of an applicant
7. Personal morals of an applicant
8. Physical appearance of an applicant
9. Personal honesty and integrity of an applicant
10. Number of children of an applicant
11. Involvement in community clubs/activities of the applicant
12. Ability of an applicant to take criticism

These demographic elements would be used to create 12 superintendent attributes that selected board members could rate, thereby showing the perceived relative importance of these superintendent attributes.

In addition, selected board members were asked to complete two informal rating sections relating their perceptions of hiring practices criteria and of administrative skills. The writer established importance ratings from the three-part survey, investigated general procedures used by school boards when choosing a new executive leader, and informed the reader regarding the importance rating of 21 skill areas. All of the survey materials are explained in chapter 3, and related material is contained in appendices. In short, the writer sought to identify varying degrees of importance within the personal realm by having selected North Dakota school board members rate superintendent attributes, administrative skills, and general hiring practices.

The population for this study was a select group of school board members chosen to represent schools in the state of North Dakota. All schools that had hired a new administrative leader in the last three school years (1990-93) were selected for the study. Only those current board members who had been on the board at the time of the hiring of the superintendent were included in the sample. The data collected were analyzed by examining relative rankings and discernible differences.

The survey instrument contained information regarding hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes. Each board member who completed the survey instrument was asked to make a judgment, or "importance decision," for each of the applicant characteristics presented. Through statistical analysis with the Factor Analysis technique, a composite "score" was established for each criterion so as to ascertain which characteristics respondents deemed most important when hiring a superintendent. By grouping the scores of all board members according to general categories, a pattern was established when it came to hiring a superintendent. By grouping the scores of all female

board members into one group, and the scores of all male board members into another group, it was possible to determine a generalized pattern for each gender of respondent in the sample. Isolating individual superintendent attributes, administrative skills, or hiring practices led to a generalized pattern regarding the importance rating of the specific areas within the hiring process. These data were then analyzed using an ANOVA in hopes of finding significant patterns in the realm of general superintendent hiring in North Dakota schools.

Survey participants were given two weeks to return the survey instrument before a follow-up call was made to the school superintendent. If the selected school had not returned the survey within two weeks after the follow-up call, the superintendent was reminded a second time to collect and return the surveys.

Research Questions

This study and its subsequent statistical analysis were designed to answer seven questions:

1. How important are hiring practices in selecting a new superintendent?
2. How important are administrative skills in selecting a new superintendent?
3. How important are superintendent attributes in selecting a new superintendent?
4. Are there significant differences in perceptions between how male and female board members assess the three major categories of the survey?
5. Are there significant differences in perceptions related to years of board incumbency in the three major categories of the survey?
6. Are there significant differences in perceptions of board members based on association with schools of varied enrollments?
7. Are there significant differences among statistical factors clustered for analysis within the three major categories of the survey?

(When it came to analyzing the data, research questions 1, 2, and 3 were collapsed for simultaneous analysis. Research question 4 became 2, 5 became 3, and so on.)

Delimitations

The data which were collected for this study were limited by a number of factors:

1. Only those schools in North Dakota that had hired a superintendent within the last three years were eligible for inclusion in the study.
2. Only those officials on the selected North Dakota school boards during the 1993-94 school year were eligible for the study.
3. Only three requests were made for the completed surveys from selected board members.

Definition of Terms

School district: A local, independent entity embracing the citizens within a legally described geographic area who operate a school system, kindergarten through grade 12, under the direction of a lay board and with the employed assistance of professional administrative and instructional staff and of other support staff.

Superintendent: The chief executive officer of the school board of a North Dakota school district.

School board member: A layman from a local school district who was elected or appointed to serve on the school board for the 1993-94 school year.

School board: The legally constituted governing body of the local school district in each North Dakota public school district.

Hiring practices: Those general hiring procedures rated by board members in part one of the survey instrument which tend to be present in most superintendent selection processes.

Administrative skills: Those evaluative concepts and organizational skills that were rated by school board members in part two of the survey instrument.

Superintendent attributes: Those personal characteristics rated by board members in Part 3 of the survey instrument, including 12 demographic-biographic elements.

Organizational skills: Those qualities, traits, or skills exhibited by a superintendent applicant that relate to curriculum, plant management, or facilities development.

Financial expertise: The ability to manage and budget the monetary holdings and allocations of a school district.

People-centered skills: Those qualities, traits, or skills exhibited by an individual that relate to personnel relations, community relations, and internal communication.

Demographic-biographic criteria: Those characteristics that are possessed in varying degrees by each applicant for the position of superintendent. These traits include age of the applicant, gender of the applicant, amount of education an applicant has, number of years of experience as a superintendent and/or as a principal, current job location of an applicant, religion of an applicant, personal morals of an applicant, physical appearance of an applicant, personal honesty and integrity of an applicant, number of children of an applicant, involvement in community clubs/activities, and the ability of an applicant to take criticism.

Factors: Those statistically generated clusters of related variables that are distinguishable components of a larger group of variables derived from a factor analysis.

Organization

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature dealing with superintendent selection and a brief overview of the historical development of the roles of school board members and superintendent, as well as focusing on relevant research regarding administrative competencies and national superintendent hiring practices. Chapter 3 details the procedures used in the study focusing on the methodology, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents a summary of the data assembled in the study. The final chapter, chapter 5, contains the writer's summary, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for future action.

Significance of the Study

The questions raised and the ensuing discussion were viewed to be recommendations for practice, for policy, and for further study. The results of this study should give legislators, school board members, administrators, teachers, and other interested parties involved in superintendent hiring in the state of North Dakota guidance and structure. In the event that major reorganization of North Dakota public schools takes place, it will be of paramount educational importance that school boards have an organized, intelligent concept of what is desired in a chief executive and what processes should be initiated to secure one. Elements of equity, fairness, and professionalism will serve as the foundation for successful transition if North Dakota is to move from approximately 200 superintendents in 1990 to about 100 by the year 2000 as many school leaders predict.

The study is believed of substantial importance to the North Dakota School Boards Association, local school boards, state administrators, teachers, and the public since it could facilitate present hiring practices in North Dakota schools. The planning, intent, design, and implementation could serve as a model for other states and generate organizational and management alternatives in response to increasingly difficult financial circumstances in the realm of administrative cost and necessary personnel costs schools now must bear when selecting new leaders.

The study was designed to identify whether there existed differences in perceptions on the questions of administrative skills criteria, superintendent attributes, and general hiring practices. Such insight, even were it not generalizable or conclusive, might offer some hints as to North Dakota hiring practices and school board personnel preference.

Further, the study might provide data or insight useful in assisting boards in the very important task of hiring a chief executive.

The three-pronged hiring survey of the study attempted to identify the varying personnel opinions expressed by school board members when hiring a new superintendent. This study differed from previous studies of administrative competencies in that it attempted to determine relative importance of strong superintendency attributes, as well as focusing on general hiring practices. The listing of variables attributed to candidates is similar to Mattocks (1987), but the incorporation of the other personnel facets made the study unique. Other studies, such as Behner (1979), Hahaldi (1985), Phillips (1981), and Ross (1983), chose to study ideal and perceived roles of the superintendent, while Powell (1982) centered his attention on the competencies most important in selection and evaluation of the chief executive. Discovery of the varying degrees of importance placed on each of these characteristics, combined with general practice and school board executive evaluation, should add substantially to this body of knowledge and be of special interest to those institutions that train prospective administrators and to the professional organizations in which board members and superintendents hold membership.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

In order to facilitate an understanding of the superintendent hiring process, a review of literature about administrative hiring was essential. Much has been said about the historical development of the superintendency (Butts, 1973; Guthrie et al., 1975; Mattocks, 1987; Provenzo, 1986). Far less was available regarding the logistics of the selection process itself. The focus of the present study, however, addressed those logistical issues. It is for this reason that the review of literature focused primarily on the hiring process, not the historical evolution of the superintendency or the authority delegation patterns of schools in America. An attempt was made to highlight hiring practices, hiring problems, and superintendent/board relationships during the hiring process.

In order to draw together the diverse concerns and relevant information regarding present superintendent hiring, the following major topics were developed in this chapter: (a) hiring problems related to choosing a superintendent, (b) hiring guides and suggestions, and (c) superintendent/board relationships germane to the hiring process.

Hiring Problems Related to Choosing a Superintendent

Choosing a superintendent is the most important job a school board undertakes (Matika, 1991; Sendor, 1981; Wildman, 1988; Young, 1986; Zakariya, 1987). It is only reasonable, then, that great care must be taken to select the best possible candidate (Dimperio, 1993; Ham, 1990; Hess, 1989; Krinsky, 1992; McKenzie, 1991). There are many questions to be addressed. Should a consultant be hired to assist (Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987)? Is it better to use an assessment center to review candidates (Joines,

1986)? Should young, promising school leaders be given support and incentives (Holcomb, 1987)? These are just a few of the perplexing problems facing school boards when they set out to choose a chief executive.

"Hiring a search consultant often is the best way for school board members to get valuable, knowledgeable assistance as they look for a new superintendent" (Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987, p. 30). The needs and personality of a school board will influence the use of a consultant (Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). Much of the decision regarding hiring structure will have to do with money and time. A good search process will take an abundant supply of time and cost more than most boards realize (Herman & Heller, 1986; Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). In exploring the desirability of a search consultant, boards should consider the time a consultant has available to serve, any individuals/groups the consultant represents, special hiring services that he or she will provide, methods used to construct a profile of the type of superintendent sought, and the techniques and sources he or she will choose for advertising (Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). It is also necessary to be aware of the way in which the consultant would handle preliminary screening of applicants (Johnson, 1982).

"The fundamental question when considering a consultant is this: Would consultants help us make a wiser choice and reduce the chance of error?" (Johnson, 1982, p. 40). It is also important to ascertain whether or not boards have the necessary experience or sufficient time to conduct a search. Would the reputation or expertise of the consultant expand the pool of applicants (Johnson, 1982)?

Many school boards tend to believe that a consultant will help attract better candidates. There is not total agreement, however. Wildman (1988) stated:

Many boards now hand over most of this responsibility (hiring superintendents) to a search consultant and limit their own involvement to interviewing candidates from the consultant's short list. I believe this is a big mistake. A board can do at least as well as a consultant--and probably better. (p. 27)

Time spent by board members on the search fosters support for the new superintendent, and consultant fees are often too expensive--a consultant is not necessary (Hess, 1989; Wildman, 1988). This sentiment is countered by Matika (1991) when he noted, "Curtailing your search efforts simply to save money is a false economy. Indeed, hiring an experienced search consultant can be a good investment, especially if board members cannot devote enough of their own time to the search" (p. 25).

Two questions should be present in a search. What does the community want in its new superintendent and who will run the search? When the board handles the search alone there are advantages. It gives local control over the superintendent selection, and it saves money for the district (Clear & Fisher, 1983; Zakariya, 1987).

Other problems come into play early in the review of superintendent selection. Newspapers across the nation lament the shortage of candidates for major big-city superintendencies. Stories abound about superintendents retiring early (Bennett, 1991). "Why are qualified and interested urban superintendent candidates in short supply today" (p. 22)? This condition is at least partly a result of the change of the structure and makeup of urban school boards. Over the past 20 years, school boards have undergone a dramatic change in constituency (Bennett, 1991). The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the waning of the civic-minded board member and the onset of the politically minded board member. The idea of serving on a board out of a sense of public service has given way to a desire to find political stepping stones (Bennett, 1991).

"If political board members believe the superintendent is jeopardizing their chances for gaining re-election or attaining higher political office, the natural and expedient thing to do is to withdraw support" (Bennett, 1991, p. 24). In short, in Bennett's logic, the superintendent becomes a tool to be used to advance a board member's political career.

The public image of urban superintendents has also been harmed. Too often the job is seen as an impossible task. In many cases, potential candidates for large

superintendencies gravitate to smaller, more manageable schools. In some cases, the dollar rewards are not great enough to justify the stress that comes with the job (Bennett, 1991; Hess, 1988; McKenzie, 1991). "An urban school board in search of a new superintendent today clearly faces a seller's market" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 25). Boards need to consider new tactics in attracting the best candidates (Bennett, 1991; McKenzie, 1991; Young, 1986).

A complex version of musical chairs takes place in urban superintendencies because boards desire to hire proven leaders and ignore deputy administrators or personnel new to the chief executive post (McKenzie, 1991). "The problem more precisely is the lack of enough veteran superintendents to go around" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 25). "The superintendency isn't a glamour job anymore. There's more stress and tension, and the economic returns haven't kept pace with the returns for teachers" (Zakariya, 1987, p. 35).

A crisis is brewing in school leadership. For years, the ranks of U.S. school administrators have been graying, and within the next decade, we face the real possibility that large numbers of these experienced men and women will retire. If this happens, we might discover we don't have the qualified people to replace them--and that bodes ill for the future quality of our schools. (Hess, 1988, p. 43)

In the eyes of Hess (1988), salaries and benefits are too low, graduate programs are not practical enough, and certification standards need to be reviewed. This situation is worsened by the fact that responsibilities and pressures far exceed raises, and people no longer resist the chance to accost leaders on the streets with business problems (Hess, 1988). We must improve training, salaries, and certification. University programs should place emphasis on practical skills, not coursework. There is a need for more internships, pragmatic exercises, and greater certification requirements (Hess, 1988). While the circumstance may not be so difficult for smaller districts, some of the same concerns exist.

Yet another conundrum school boards must confront is the applicant pool within a school district. As Sendor (1981) asked, "Should your new superintendent be an insider or an outsider" (p. 30)? Too often school boards go through the motions of a long and

costly search without realizing what inside candidates can provide. There are both advantages and disadvantages to hiring from within (Sendor, 1981). If the public seems happy with the school at present, an insider may be the best choice--insiders know the characteristics of a district's present circumstance. An outsider is the best choice if the system needs a shake-up or if there is old baggage within the district that needs a fresh look. The outside candidate also brings new life to a school that has been involved in illegal actions (Sendor, 1981). Regardless of who the school board chooses, Webb (cited in Sendor, 1991) emphasized:

Handle them (inside candidates) with a lot of feeling; these are people who are loyal to the schools. Board members should be the first to tell insiders not chosen, so they don't get the news from someone else or hear it in a cold, routine letter. (p. 42)

To complicate matters further, schools sometimes see superintendent applicants as saviors. They quest after the perfect candidate instead of accepting the fact that being a school superintendent is not an exact science; the school is more like a political arena. Schools look for miracle workers, not administrators (Bennett, 1991; Holcomb, 1987; Matika, 1991). As Holcomb (1987) stated, "They (school board members) want people who like kids, people who know curriculum and instruction, people who are effective managers and business people, people who will be good stewards of the public's interest" (p. 33). Being a superintendent is a very difficult job (Bennett, 1991; Matika, 1991; Wildman, 1988; Young, 1986).

Boards must have a vision of what they want and how they will find that person (Herman & Heller, 1986; Hess, 1989; McKenzie, 1991; Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). Other questions that need answering include the following: What characteristics are you seeking? Do you have a clear vision of where the district is heading? How will the job be marketed? How will you narrow the field? Should a brochure be used? How will the interviews be conducted? How will you decide on a candidate (Herman & Heller, 1986)?

Amid this myriad of problems, two points are worthy of mention. An interim superintendent might be a legitimate choice for a school district. As Young (1986) explained, "Hiring an interim superintendent relieves your board of the pressure to find a new school chief right away" (p. 41). This allows a board time to mold a vision of what is desired in the new leader and to assure that proven success will get the district ready for the newcomer. The interim superintendent also can serve to provide free consulting advice (Young, 1986). Second, based on the premise that interviews are inadequate, schools should contemplate the use of an assessment center when hiring a new chief executive. This takes time. Good selection will be defined by much more than just an interview and a visit to a former school (Joines, 1986). Many of these quandries will be examined in the next section, as hiring strategies and suggestions are presented.

Hiring Guides and Suggestions

The literature search included recommendations to school boards. Much of this section, therefore, presents suggestions for informal adjustments which boards should contemplate when choosing a new chief executive. Clear and Fisher (1983) emphasize the necessity of answering two questions at the outset of a superintendent search. As they noted, "What does the community want in a new superintendent? And where do you start to find that person" (p. 36)? Two widely accepted options on how to proceed include a board can advertise and hire the chief executive itself or select a consultant to facilitate the hiring process.

Handling the search gives a board control over the selection and saves money, but there are drawbacks. What does a lay group of elected officials know about hiring? When 80 or 100 applications come in the mail, what does the board do? Even advertising is complex. How do you advertise (Clear & Fisher, 1983)?

Great care must be taken to assure that the hiring process does not just happen in a haphazard manner. As Matika (1991) noted, "Cliché or not, no other task does so much to

determine school quality as selecting the superintendent--so why does it cause so much trouble" (p. 25)? Many boards fail to spend the time necessary and refuse to learn from the mistakes of other boards (Matika, 1991). Take it slowly and plan from the outset. Do not begin the search until you have formally accepted the resignation of the current superintendent (Krinsky, 1992). Make every effort to arrange for a dignified departure regardless of the reason for the present superintendent's resignation (Krinsky, 1992).

Second, the literature suggests that boards take a visionary look at the hiring process. Discuss and select the process before you even consider the product (Clear & Fisher, 1983; Herman & Heller, 1986; Hill, Hermes, & Donweth, 1988; Johnson, 1982; Krinsky, 1992; Matika, 1991). Finding the best superintendent for your school is a matter of matching a candidate's talents with the school's needs (Clear & Fisher, 1983; Dimperio, 1993; Hornung, 1986). Identify the school's needs. Take a good look at the concerns of the school over the next five years. Review such items as enrollment, facilities, local economy, school climate, and federal guidelines related to the operation of your district (Hornung, 1986). Include the ideas and feelings of people affected by the administrative selection (Boone, 1989; Collins, 1990; Hornung, 1986; Krinsky, 1992). In short, have an idea from the start as to what you want in a leader. As Collins (1990) noted, "A superintendent's search should begin with some agreement about the credentials, experience, and talents the school system needs in its chief administrator" (p. 35). Hill et al. (1988) suggested, "Before launching the search for a replacement, pause for some careful planning--and a bit of self-evaluation" (p. 33).

Dimperio (1993) suggests that the background a school board seeks should include a vast array of skills and assets. The ideal candidate should have a wide range of experience. He or she generally was a teacher, a coach, a principal, and a former central office employee. There is a certification requirement in most states for advanced coursework and degrees. Recent growth should be indicated by special training, seminars,

and workshops on current topics. A good track record in working with all types of people is helpful. Dimperio also relates that the gifted candidate should possess excellent managerial and organizational skills, as well as experience in strategic planning. There must also be an understanding of budget planning, labor negotiations, state law, curriculum, and staff development. The ideal choice for superintendent would also possess excellent health, good attendance, an appreciation of children, and a desire to excel (Dimperio, 1993).

The literature suggests that boards should give themselves plenty of time to find the new superintendent. Conducting the needs assessment of what is right for a school district will take two or three meetings during at least one month. The advertising will require one or two work sessions and span a time of about eight weeks. Plans may or may not involve the development of a brochure. Receiving applicants will require one or two work sessions and entail about ten weeks. Narrowing the field will demand two or three work sessions and should be complete in about three weeks. Initial interviews will demand two or three work sessions and demand roughly 15 hours of actual interviewing. Final interviews require about two hours per finalist over a two-week period. Selection, including visits to candidates' former schools, will necessitate one or two work sessions and approximately two weeks (Clear & Fisher, 1983; Collins, 1990; Herman & Heller, 1986; Hornung, 1986; Johnson, 1982).

Boards are advised, however, that just being skilled as an administrator is not always enough for a candidate. The new executive must measure up to constituent expectations and get along with people (Boone, 1989; Clear & Fisher, 1983; Krinsky, 1992). Therefore, as Boone (1989) noted, "No search is thorough unless it actively involves school employees and interested community members" (p. 31). The new superintendent influences the direction of the school system and determines the atmosphere in which employees work and students learn. He or she also personifies the school to

community (Boone, 1989). It is dangerous, therefore, for the board to assume simply that they reflect what the community desires in a new superintendent. Parents, for example, have intense and specific interests in and expectations of the superintendent; by contrast, constituents who are not parents might be more interested in overall quality (Clear & Fisher, 1983).

Gathering information and advice from community and staff can be accomplished in various ways. Surveys, letters, open public meetings, and advisory committees all serve as ways to get input (Boone, 1989). If public meetings are used, Boone suggests putting someone in charge who is skilled in guiding large groups, making each meeting complete in and of itself, keeping a written record of the proceedings, and making sure a board member attends every meeting. In the event that committees are used to set up the hiring process or to help screen candidates, they have a specific charge--involving people to establish a statement of community expectations and a candidate profile, carrying out the recruitment process, screening, or outlining timelines are possible choices (Clear & Fisher, 1983). The groups invited to assist should represent the range of opinion in the community. People to include might include present cabinet members, student leaders, middle management personnel, representatives from the teacher and support staff unions, business leaders, church members, and parent groups (Hill et al., 1988).

Krinsky (1992) noted, "The search can be democratic and egalitarian, but only to a point. You cannot choose a candidate under a public microscope; it has to be done behind closed doors" (p. 35). Once the preliminary vision of the ideal candidate is complete, confidentiality during a superintendent search is essential. A school does not want to scare away good candidates who prefer not to be in the spotlight (Chopra, 1989; Krinsky, 1992; Matika, 1991). Revealing information about candidates too soon can be very embarrassing to the potential superintendent and to the schools involved.

Leaking the names of applicants to reporters or sending a high-profile contingent of board members to visit a candidate's school system is callous.

The result is a degree of exposure that's embarrassing to the candidate and, if he fails to win the position, leaves him to deal with a school board and community that question his commitment to his current responsibilities. (Chopra, 1989, p. 37)

The literature suggests that the board honor the confidentiality of all applicants. Some candidates will pull out of the selection process if they think it jeopardizes their privacy and present job security. Applicants know that job hunting hurts the negotiating position in their present position. It also can lessen administrative effectiveness with personnel and board members in their home district. Live up to open meeting laws, but keep applicants who are not being interviewed out of the press (Matika, 1991).

Board members should monitor one another to assure that discussing candidates occurs after all applications are in, have been reviewed, and are complete. All discussion should be conducted with discretion. Board members should never discuss candidates outside work sessions. A breach of trust could hamper the entire superintendent selection process (Johnson, 1982; Matika, 1991). As Matika (1991) stated, "When you conduct your search with discretion, care, and sensitivity, you will be more likely to get top-notch candidates" (p. 26).

After setting the ground rules and techniques of the search and after selecting a consultant, if that is the choice of the board, it is important that the board use the input gathered from the vision discussed to create a "profile" of the desired superintendent. The profile generally contains four areas: (a) the general capabilities sought, (b) the specific skills needed, (c) the experience needed, and (d) the personal qualities considered most desirable (Clear & Fisher, 1983). The profile must take into account the work of any committees, insights from surveys conducted, and the likely focus of the school district over the next five years.

Boards are urged to define the leadership traits and management skills they want. Outlining management skills is fairly easy; defining leadership qualities is harder. As Krinsky (1992) noted, "I look for a person with intelligence, compassion, courage, and

sensitivity; the head, heart, and guts have to work together. The best superintendents know when to lead, when to follow, and when to get out of the way" (p. 35).

According to Boone (1989) and Krinsky (1992), good superintendents see themselves as facilitators rather than managers; they operate like orchestra conductors not top-down CEOs. Leadership, integrity, trust, and enthusiasm--along with the ability to relate to people--are all a part of administrative success. "Certain personality traits, like openness and warmth, are important. A superintendent does not necessarily need charisma. Sometimes a quiet competence can be equally effective" (Krinsky, 1992, p. 35).

The board should be prepared to sell its district to candidates. Brochures, applications, and job descriptions should all be written with a positive slant. Because of the competition for superintendents, a school board should seek to present a positive school image. Candidates will be attracted to school districts in which success seems at least possible. Boards are urged to show candidates a glimpse of their probable success (McKenzie, 1991).

Generally speaking, active and passive recruitment are the choices a board can choose when molding a job search. Passive recruitment means advertising and writing letters that solicit nominations. It is suggested that boards stay away from large urban newspapers if they want to keep costs down. Advertising in selected trade and association publications is less costly and more efficient. Boards should be positive when presenting search information (Krinsky, 1992; McKenzie, 1991). "This does not mean a school board should sugar coat problems or downplay the challenges the school system is facing" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 25).

Candidates expect to face difficulties, but they do want a realistic look at shortcomings and strengths (McKenzie, 1991). Authorities suggest using a soft closing date, which means the board will screen applicants until they make an appointment. This

allows the search to continue if first efforts do not draw enough strong candidates (Krinsky, 1992).

In a passive search, the board is interviewing people who are looking for jobs. In active recruiting, by contrast, the board identifies people who fit the profile that was fashioned to fit the school. The goal in active recruiting becomes to find people who fit a particular vision. In this process, a good consultant can be of help (Krinsky, 1992).

McKenzie (1991) believes the school board should have a clear picture of an effective working relationship with the new superintendent. The best candidates are likely to explore the prospective board's working practices with the previous superintendent. The candidates hope to find a board that communicates openly, sets practical goals cooperatively and agrees on an achievement path, distinguishes between policy and practice, and encourages risk taking but has the patience to try many options if first attempts fail (McKenzie, 1991).

The board should be prepared to treat all applicants as if they were special people. By doing this, a board will engender positive feelings about the district in each candidate. Plan to meet candidates at the airport, guide them around the city, give welcome baskets, and take them out for dinner (Fielder, 1992).

As the board shapes the screening and decisions which lie ahead, it should contemplate the salary and fringe package they will offer the new superintendent. This, from initial announcements, should be open and honest. It is important to investigate compensation levels and types of benefits offered by comparable school districts. Plan to pay all the expenses incurred by a candidate in the course of travel to the community for an interview (Johnson, 1982; McKenzie, 1991). Decide whether the school board will provide such items as a housing allowance, use of a school car, an annuity, membership in clubs and associations, and opportunities for consulting work (McKenzie, 1991). Do not be evasive about salary (Matika, 1991; McKenzie, 1991). Keep in mind the adage "you get

what you pay for" (Matika, 1991, p. 26). Avoid confusion about money; be specific with the initial vacancy announcement. Phrases like present salary \$60,000 or a salary in the high fifties all offer school board intentions without committing a school to an exact figure (Matika, 1991; McKenzie, 1991). A phrase like salary based on experience and education is of little help to candidates and will sometimes discourage applicants from applying. It also is of little help to note that a salary is comparative to similar districts or regions.

Candidates should not have to guess what salaries are in a region. As Matika (1991) noted:

If you keep the salary low, your pool of applicants will consist largely of aspiring administrators looking for their first superintendency. If you want something more than that, you'd be wasting everyone's time by advertising a low salary for the vacancy. (p. 26)

A school chief runs what is often the biggest and certainly the most important business in the community. As Fielder (1992) stated, "Too often, school boards select an artificial salary or range that they will not exceed regardless of the situation. That sounds like a fiscally prudent policy, but it's really shortsighted if you lose the best candidate over a money issue" (p. 39). It is also important to offer an excellent fringe benefits package. A superintendent coming from another state might suffer severe losses in retirement benefits. Heavy financial losses by selling a house in a depressed area should also be taken into account (Fielder, 1992; Johnson, 1982; Matika, 1991). Consider attracting good candidates with special benefits such as health club costs or expense accounts (Fielder, 1992).

As Fielder (1992) noted, "Do not plan to conduct hard-ball negotiations. With a willingness to compromise, two parties can negotiate a fair and reasonable settlement" (p. 39). As Fielder suggested, "Don't give ultimatums or use a take it or leave it approach. I also believe the board should negotiate directly with the superintendent. The use of a third party implies mistrust" (p. 39).

With a school board's vision of the candidate profile in place, the mechanism for gathering information agreed upon, and the use of a consultant established, the board

should consider interview methods and the way in which the final decision will be reached. One method to assist in the selection of a superintendent is the use of an assessment center. It is not a substitute for interviews or site visits to candidates' home districts. It is a supplementary process that can help identify the best candidate. In an assessment center, candidates engage in job-related managerial activities while trained, qualified assessors evaluate. The assessment is a comprehensive series of structured interviews, role playing exercises, and written performance tests to help find the best chief administrator (Brown, 1992; Collins, 1990; Joines, 1986).

As Collins (1990) argued, "The compelling reason for using an assessment center is that it is cost-effective by being job-specific: You can arrange tests to measure exactly the skills you're looking for in your new superintendent" (p. 35). Some experts do not believe that the standard interview can be fashioned enough to ferret out the best candidate. As Joines (1986) contended, "The interview is an inadequate method of evaluating a candidate's abilities" (p. 31).

In an assessment center, candidates might spend a day doing written and oral exercises. These activities can be shaped to fit the needs of individual school districts. Board members are generally trained in the basics of listening, observing, and rating job-related behavior; but in many cases they merely understand the process, and hired assessors monitor the activities and interpret the meaning (Collins, 1990).

A sample list of tasks candidates could perform might include (a) in-basket exercises that demonstrate a candidate's writing expertise and his or her ability to solve and to delegate; (b) oral presentations that show communication skills, interaction ability with diverse groups, and leadership style; and (c) group discussions to illustrate consensus building, problem analysis, and persuasiveness based on personal power rather than position power (Joines, 1986).

One assessment center highlighted a leaderless roundtable discussion, personnel, role playing exercises, and a crisis management activity (Brown, 1992). Candidates are scored on their performance in the role playing scenarios. The scores are subjective but designed to discourage personal bias. The activities, designed as a result of brainstorming while developing the school's vision, are prepared to measure organization skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, decisiveness, and perception. Each candidate plays the role of a local superintendent. They are asked to develop guidelines on countywide use of three controversial issues based on real situations. Candidates discuss issues and come to a consensus on solutions. The roundtable exercise lasts one hour (Brown, 1992). In an example of the personnel exercise, each candidate meets with a principal who allegedly is having an illicit relationship with a department head. For ten minutes the candidate talks with the principal, and 15 minutes are given to prepare a written recommendation to the school board. This activity calls for decisiveness and skill in written communication and leads into the crisis management test which entails the handling of a reported shooting on campus. After hearing the details of the emergency, candidates are directed to develop a written plan to address the situation (Brown, 1992). Brown, a strong advocate of the assessment process, noted, "An assessment center identifies individuals who display exactly the skills and attributes you seek. Also, the exercises will prevent candidates from playing to their audience, as often happens in traditional interviews" (p. 36). Brown also believes that the actual abilities of candidates can be made obvious for the board by the use of the assessment center process.

Not everyone agrees with Brown. Many feel the best measure of a candidate's ability is performance in his or her current position. The assessment center does little to fortify the hiring process. The assessment center can also draw attention to candidates and harm confidentiality. In short, no test can predict how someone will react under real pressure (Rist, 1986).

School boards in agreement with Rist, that is, boards not in a hurry to try the assessment center, may want to consider a more standard approach--the interview. As the plan for selecting a new superintendent is developed, care should be taken to assure that the interview and screening of applicants fit the overall hiring mission. Reducing the size of the applicant pool to a manageable number requires special expertise in reading resumé and related materials. The field of candidates must be narrowed to several outstanding applicants (about six or eight) for initial interviews. Time must be given to investigate candidates in the initial pool. Boards should not hesitate to talk to people in the candidates' current and former schools and communities to determine whether each candidate fits the profile of characteristics selected (Herman & Heller, 1986; Hornung, 1986; Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). The consultant (if one is used) will probably do preliminary screening. This does take the first step in screening out of board purview, but it also saves a vast amount of time (Hill et al., 1988).

Consultants usually take one of three approaches to reduce the initial pool of applicants. Using the criteria developed by the school board and working alone, the consultant determines which candidates best match the board's description of a suitable superintendent. A second approach calls for the consultant to work with a screening committee. Each member of the committee reviews all applicants, and choices for interviews are made by consensus. The third approach is for the entire board, with assistance as desired, to review and select candidates for interviews (Rickabaugh & McCarty, 1987). As Rickabaugh and McCarty (1987) noted, "Regardless of the strategy used, the profile adopted by the board always should be the basis on which judgments are made, and board members always should have access to all applications if they wish" (p. 31).

After the preliminary review, boards should notify applicants at once that they no longer are considered a candidate for the position (Hornung, 1986). In the event the pool

is too large after initial screening, a board may want to do further screening by asking candidates to submit written answers to some questions related to the school vision (Hornung, 1986).

Once the board is ready to conduct initial interviews, they need to plan carefully. Preparing for an interview requires more than deciding what questions will be asked. The process as well as its content needs to be considered (Herman & Heller, 1986). Boards should determine in advance what characteristics of personal or management style are important to the school district (Ham, 1990). As Ham (1990) explained, "If your board has just spent much time and money developing a new curriculum program, you won't be happy to discover you've hired someone who insists on revising the program simply to impose his own imprimatur on it" (p. 36).

One of the best ways to assure good communication and understanding prior to the interview is to define terminology. When you ask for a curriculum leader or budget manager, just what do you desire? Send material about the school to candidates, share information related to school needs and desires ahead of time to allow for deeper thinking and communication. In some cases, boards use written questions on applications to get basic questions out of the way. Then during the interview, abilities can be explored in greater depth (Ham, 1990).

As Ham (1990) noted, "The interview shouldn't be seen as an opportunity to catch a candidate unaware. The most productive interviews will be those in which the board and candidate can move past the superficial questions and discuss problems and possible solutions" (p. 36). In short, candidates should be provided more than basic demographic information. They need specifics about pressing problems and challenges in a school system.

Who will set up times and dates for the interviews? Will the board conduct a round of preliminary interviews to narrow the slate of candidates? Will citizen groups or other

personnel be a part of later interviews? Will spouses of candidates attend and/or take part in the interview? Will the interviews be public? If so, will the audience take part? How will you conduct the interview itself (Herman & Heller, 1986)?

Just as the board has been looking at applicants, the applicants are taking a good look at the board. As Matika (1991) explained, "Your board should demonstrate dignity, order, professionalism, and courtesy throughout the interviews. A sloppy interview process reflects badly on the entire school system" (p. 26).

Questions used during individual interviews should be specific and consistent. A spokesperson, perhaps the board president, should move the discussion from topic to topic. Each candidate should be asked the same questions. A guide sheet can be helpful. It allows consistency and a place to write comments or rate comments numerically on individual questions (Hill et al., 1988; Hornung, 1986; Matika, 1991).

Boards, of course, should avoid illegal questions. Board members need to understand that religion, age, marital status, and sex-related questions are both illegal and inappropriate. The board should devise a set of preferred answers and omit questions which do not garner consensus agreement (Hill et al., 1988).

Boards must accept the limitations of an interview. As Ham (1990) noted, "Even the best of communicators cannot discuss adequately a complex education issue in the few minutes usually available during a formal interview" (p. 25). Do not focus questions on competence. The best predictor of future performance is past performance (Ham, 1990). Use the interview to meet the candidate and assess his or her skills in relationship to a school's needs. Do not be rigid about time. Allow plenty of time (from an hour to an hour and a half) (Ham, 1990; Hornung, 1986). Few unstructured interviews last more than two and a half hours--not much longer than rigidly structured ones--but the difference in tone and attitude is perceptible (Hornung, 1986). An additional question can be asked to clarify a point, and an extra sentence or two can be requested to fill out an otherwise incomplete

answer. With applicant permission, tape the interviews for later review and comparison. Make certain all board members are present or it will be more difficult to reach a consensual decision (Hornung, 1986).

Some seemingly obvious questions can be helpful and often make the candidates comfortable. Ask about the candidate's current job, his or her reasons for changing positions, and if he or she would take the job if it were offered. Make appointments for the interviews by telephone and confirm in writing. It is best to have the same person who has served as liaison with the applicants make these contacts (Hornung, 1986).

Have someone host the applicant when he or she arrives. For the interview, arrange seating carefully. Let everyone make eye contact with the candidate. Talk prior to the interviews about reading body language and controlling your own body language (Hill et al., 1988; Hornung, 1986). Nameplates in front of each person are helpful to the candidate. Put someone in charge to explain the process, introduce everyone, specify time limits, launch the questioning, and moderate.

Begin with an easy personal question to relax the candidate. Do not confuse smooth talking with administrative expertise. As Howard Upton (cited in Ham, 1990) explained, "Don't be too impressed by a smooth-talking candidate, and do put communication skills in perspective. Interviews do not provide as much information about a candidate's ability to communicate as you might think" (p. 25).

The literature suggests that these interviews should be private. Board members should not speak to the press about the interviews, and candidates should be encouraged to refrain from public comments also (Hill et al., 1988). After each interview, boards should consider talking briefly to summarize their thinking. Review the individual's resumé to refresh board members' memories regarding abilities and experience. Avoid direct evaluation until all candidates have been heard (Hill et al., 1988; Hornung, 1986). Note a candidate's outstanding abilities, weak areas, and instances where there were unanswered

questions. The summary serves as a basis for the next round of interviews (Ham, 1990; Hornung, 1986).

The literature suggests that boards conduct only one interview per day (Ham, 1990). The characteristics of each candidate tend to blur together if the board conducts more than one interview in a day. Crowding interviews often results in pressure to finish on time. This increases tension for candidates and board members (Ham, 1990). Ideally, candidates would meet individually with each board member for a short time, perhaps ten minutes, before or after the formal interview. This allows more intimate contact, allowing informal interactions that can reveal much about the candidate's personality and ability to communicate at a personal level (Ham, 1990).

At the conclusion of the interview, boards often entertain the candidate and his or her spouse at a dinner. This gives the board a chance to see the candidate in a more relaxed atmosphere and get acquainted with the candidate's spouse (Hill et al., 1988). A private dinner does a better job of preserving confidentiality.

After completing all the initial interviews, boards are advised to hold a general session to evaluate candidates and narrow the field to two or three finalists (Hill et al., 1988; Hornung, 1986). Hold this meeting quickly; if the board delays, there is the chance of losing candidates to other positions. Board members might also forget what they perceive about candidates. Notify candidates who are out of the running and set up final interviews, if the board needs more information. It can be helpful to bring candidates back for a tour of the community. It can be a good way to assess how readily the candidate might adjust to the school and community. In developing questions for the final interview, refer to the notes made during initial talks. Problem solving questions are valuable at this stage (Hornung, 1986).

At or prior to the final interview, school boards should think also about reviewing key details with applicants. Items such as salary and fringe benefits may have seemed

general in early interviews; now they are of paramount importance. Discuss also whether or not finalists should take a physical examination given by a board-designated doctor to ascertain whether he or she is fit to serve (Johnson, 1982; Krinsky, 1992; Matika, 1991). Be certain to allow a time in the interview process to give candidates time to ask questions and express their individuality (Krinsky, 1992).

After the initial interviews, the board should designate a small group to make one site visit to the districts of the leading candidates (Chopra, 1989; Hill et al., 1988; Herman & Heller, 1986; Hornung, 1986; Krinsky, 1992). Talk with superiors and subordinates. Be cautious. Are people too eager to say good things? Perhaps they want to see him or her leave. Be sure you have the candidate's permission to visit. If this is to be your new superintendent, you do not want any "behind-the-back" dealings from the outset. While visiting, speak privately or in small groups to a full spectrum of people who work with the candidate. Regarding site visits, Chopra (1989) cautioned, "Site visits by your board have a tendency to become circuses. Use discretion during on-site visits" (p. 37). The best question, according to Krinsky (1992), is "tell us your perceptions--what kind of person and what kind of educator are we dealing with" (p. 36)?

In many cases, however, the board may decide a site visit is not even necessary. If the board has checked references and background carefully and made private inquiries by telephone with community members, the members probably know all they need to know to make a decision (Chopra, 1989). If the board insists on a site visit, limit it to one candidate you are seriously thinking of hiring (Chopra, 1989). "Visiting the communities of contenders puts these school leaders in an awkward position when they fail to get the job" (Chopra, 1989, p. 37).

Before making a final decision, the board should review impressions and information about finalists. Go over interviews, physical exams, community reactions, site visits, and the opinions of all board members (Johnson, 1982). After the site visit, the

board should make a decision quickly to avoid harming finalists in their present home communities. Word is certain to spread that the candidate is under consideration (Chopra, 1989). Also, "remember to keep in touch with all finalists: You don't want other top choices to construe a delay as loss of interest" (Chopra, 1989, p. 37).

The school board should make its own decision (Boone, 1989; Hess, 1989; Johnson, 1982; Matika, 1991; Zakariya, 1987). Committees react and recommend, consultants assist with process, and community members provide perspectives, but only the board decides. The board should endeavor not to make a final offer until they are certain the job will be accepted. The board should not announce a selection until the offer has been accepted (Johnson, 1982). Boards should be unanimous in their final choice (Johnson, 1982; Matika, 1991). The final selection should be a true consensus choice, and the board should present the news to the public as a unanimous decision (Matika, 1991). The board should make no public announcement until after the contract has been put in final form and signed (Krinsky, 1992).

When board members are ready to negotiate the contract with the candidate of their choice, they probably will want the school attorney's help (Herman & Heller, 1986; Hornung, 1986). The board must be cautious about putting the attorney between the board and the board's choice; the board does not want to appear to mistrust their choice. During this final stage in the search process, the board needs to be both optimistic and careful (Herman & Heller, 1986). Various conditions of employment can be specified in the contract, depending on what the board and the prospective superintendent agree on. The following are a must, according to Herman and Heller (1986):

- The length of the contract--usually from three to five years, with or without an automatic annual renewal (or rollover) clause. [In North Dakota, a maximum of three years if allowable.]
- The salary and fringe benefits.
- The superintendent's major responsibilities.

- The form and process of your board's evaluation of the new superintendent. (p. 30)

Boards should make the final decision, offer the job, and be specific about when they must have an answer. Boards should be considerate and flexible. The final choice may need time to clear responsibilities in his or her current job (Hornung, 1986). Once the appointment is made, the new superintendent and the board chairperson should develop an entry plan describing what people the new superintendent should meet and how. It may also be beneficial to plan an early retreat (Krinsky, 1992). Goals of the retreat should include objectives for the superintendent's first year and the issuance of general statements that set the tone for the new administration.

In summary, the key to a successful superintendent hiring is trust and communication among the members of the board. Selecting a superintendent still remains more of an art than a science (Collins, 1990; Fielder, 1992).

Superintendent and Board Relationships

Germane to Hiring

The literature suggests that successfully hiring a new superintendent is based on trust and communication among members of the board (Collins, 1990; Fielder, 1992; Rogers, 1988). At a time when trusting people is difficult, trust in board colleagues becomes a preface for trusting a new chief executive (Rogers, 1988). As Rogers (1988) noted, "Trusting people is a hard thing to do nowadays: At every level of government, reports of scandal and fraud explode onto the evening news" (p. 29).

Trust is having enough confidence in the superintendent's judgment that a board can raise questions and get sound answers prior to a last minute period of stress and chaos (Rogers, 1988). Trust means being confident enough to express board views openly, sticking to the issue at hand, and avoiding personal attacks. It also means agreeing to disagree.

Boards should seek to trust the democratic process (Rogers, 1988). This means that board members have faith in the intelligence and integrity of fellow board members, accept that some mistakes will be made, and prepare to work with a new superintendent to operate the school system. Individual board members should trust in self and have confidence that each board member is competent to learn and judge right from wrong. To function best, this trust is based on experience and informed reasoning (Rogers, 1988).

Rogers (1988) emphasized:

Trust also means seeking accord and compromise where it can be achieved--sharing information, stating your opinions, and using legitimate forms of persuasion to attempt to convince others of your beliefs. Perhaps hardest of all, trust in the democratic process means supporting decisions you oppose but that were approved by the majority as the wisest course of action. (p. 29)

At the heart of board trust is an acceptance that the board/superintendent relationship does more to determine the quality of education in a school than any other single factor (Nygren, 1992). Therefore, working well together should be the goal of every school board member and superintendent. Boards should be willing to allot the time necessary for this goal. As Castallo, Greco, and McGowan (1992) explained, "The most effective school boards are those that make a point of conducting some type of board retreat several times each year" (p. 32). From the very beginning of a board/superintendent relationship, day-to-day concerns should be set aside to focus on the big picture and cultivate a good working relationship. The working relationship among board members and the superintendent is healthier when both parties discuss and resolve misunderstandings and disagreements (Castallo et al., 1992).

The board president plays an important role in this process. It is his or her obligation to cultivate an alliance with the superintendent. The superintendent can be a board president's best ally (Bisso, 1988). As Bisso (1988) explained, "To lead effectively and contribute to a successful board-superintendent relationship, board presidents would do well to consider some specific guidelines" (p. 38). Among the guidelines Bisso

supported were knowing the president's job, offering sound advice, representing the board's will, setting advanced agendas, avoiding surprises, and running orderly meetings.

Board presidents should quest to know when they speak for the board as a whole and when they speak as a board member. Presidents are board members first; being president does not mean abdicating individual board responsibilities and it does not mean being a school's chief executive. This is especially true with a new superintendent and/or a new board president. As Bisso (1988) noted, "Even trickier is when both the superintendent and the board president are in their first year of office. Each will weigh the other's strength, attitudes, and knowledge. But a board president who tends to act as a chief executive should think twice" (p. 38).

The president should seek to orient the new superintendent to community expectations--share school successes, failures, and volatile issues. This should be done by presenting all sides fairly. The president might have to apprise the incoming superintendent of policies and practices with which he or she disagrees, but the actions and wishes of the whole board must be upheld and supported. The president, while informing the school's new leader, should try to maintain the respect of the board and community (Bisso, 1988). When meeting agendas are established, all board members should be given access. As Bisso (1988) explained, "A dictatorial president makes it difficult for the superintendent to keep a dialogue going with other board members. Sensitivity to issues and personalities is essential" (p. 38).

At the same time, every effort should be made to avoid surprises. Work sessions can be proposed by board members to allow for preliminary, informal discussion. This allows communication and gives the superintendent a chance to preview and prepare for formal board discussion. It is the president who often proposes and guides these work sessions (Bisso, 1988).

The president of the board also helps a new superintendent by conducting orderly meetings. Presidents should seek to chair efficiently, use parliamentary procedure, and refer to the superintendent questions that are in the administrative domain (Bisso, 1988). The president, thereby, reinforces the superintendent's role as educational leader, clarifies the voice of the board, and diverts some responsibility from the new superintendent. The outcome of these efforts by the board president is trust, communication, and the beginning of a successful tenure for a new superintendent. As Bisso (1988) concluded, "The kernel of a good relationship between board president and superintendent, then, is mutual respect. On that basis, both can collaborate in helping the school system succeed" (p. 39).

To arrive at a strong working relationship and expedite collaboration, the school board president and superintendent should communicate regularly, plan agendas together, jointly assess outcomes of board meetings, and agree on the governing parameters of the board president (Freund, 1988). Much of this should be discussed prior to hiring the new superintendent. The new executive should be aware of issues and decisions that might stir up controversy. When these situations develop, the board president should be alerted. With lines of communication open, agendas can be set which are board conclusive and open to post-meeting analysis. Ground rules should be set by the superintendent and the board president to assure that the president runs the meetings, handles difficult board members, and argues on behalf of the board (Freund, 1988).

The superintendent can foster the cooperation with the board president by praising the president publicly; inviting him or her to national, state, and local events; and by using the board president to gain community insights. Praise and public exposure are two of the few rewards of serving on a school board. Praise should be given by the superintendent with diplomacy; however, the allegiance between board president and superintendent must not impede the board as a whole. As Freund (1988) remarked, "Never forget that the

superintendent serves at the pleasure of the entire board, not just the president. Other board members never should be made to feel left out" (p. 39).

Suggestions for success as a new superintendent often center around a blissful relationship with the board (Rogers, 1992). Superintendents must be ready to do the work of the superintendency--attend meetings, finish reports as needed, be involved with the total community, and communicate with the board. To do this, superintendents need to be generalists, avoid greed, and insist on a thorough interview. If the superintendent's salary is controversial in the community, the new superintendent needs to be ready for financial compromise and exercise patience before making great demands. During the interview this should be spelled out. As Rogers (1992) noted, "In a good interview, the superintendent is also interviewing the school district. Seeking a good fit will avoid much grief later on" (p. 32).

Rogers (1992) also suggested that the difference between policy and administration be spelled out. Superintendents should be encouraged to treat board members equally and avoid trying to organize support against the board (Rogers, 1992). As Rogers noted:

Superintendents who become a law unto themselves by acting capriciously or out of meanness of spirit will eventually come to grief. Boards have a tendency to place considerable trust in the good intentions of the superintendent. But once a board becomes convinced its superintendent has committed even one willfully harmful act, trust is irrevocably lost. (p. 32)

Board members, on the other hand, can do much to facilitate the tenure of the new superintendent. Board members should realize that if the superintendent looks good, they look good. Board members should, therefore, seek to improve the superintendent's image; respect the chain of command; and be open, honest, and straightforward with the superintendent (Rancic, 1992). To do this, board members should call the superintendent in advance, not spring problems as a surprise in public. Board members should remember to be a part of the team effort, make a sincere effort to understand the board's role, and serve the community and the children--not themselves (Rancic, 1992).

As Castallo et al. (1992) noted, "Working well together should be the goal of every school board member and superintendent" (p. 32). This can best be done by discussing and resolving misunderstandings that develop. Good communication between a school board and its superintendent is crucial to an effective working relationship (Castallo et al., 1992). In addition to open, regular communication, time should be set aside to discuss concerns, vent frustration, and examine the board-superintendent relationship periodically (Castallo et al., 1992; Nygren, 1992). Nygren (1992) proposed a scoring system entailing 13 relationship statements which could be used to diagnose problems. He also established a scoring mechanism with subjective dialogue that could be used to discuss and explain possible relationship pitfalls. Castallo et al. (1992) presented a questionnaire process designed to help board members and superintendents develop and maintain better working relationships among board members and between the board and the superintendent. Initially developed for use with newly hired superintendents, the process known as Team Review has several benefits, according to Castallo et al. (1992). They noted:

It clarifies expectations among board members as well as between the school board and superintendent. It provides a structured vehicle for keeping communication open. And it provides a regular forum for discussion so that problems are resolved instead of ignored or allowed to fester. And most important, it provides a strategy for making people comfortable with talking and listening to each other. (p. 33)

Using Team Review, every three or four months, the school board members and the superintendent complete a questionnaire that asks them to respond to seven descriptive statements that cover such matters as communication, trust, and decision making. A scale of 1 (need to improve) to 7 (extremely effective) is used to assess board-to-board and board-to-superintendent relationships. In addition, the questionnaire asks board members and the superintendent to note a recent example of successful board conduct and a recent board event worthy of discussion. This process is done also to review recent superintendent performance. The process, as noted by Castallo et al. (1992), provides a starting point for discussion, a communication model, and a way to focus on solving

problems. As they noted, "We'd also give the process good marks as a communication device: It serves as a starting point for discussion, and the format allows us to move quickly through our concerns" (p. 34).

Rancic (1992) reiterated the need for a good board-superintendent relationship based on trust and communication which should be assessed periodically when he concluded:

Superintendents will work more effectively if board members resist trying to run the schools and instead see that schools are well run. The result might not be an extended honeymoon for the superintendent and the board, but it will be a reasoned, productive relationship that can only benefit the schools. (p. 33)

In shaping the relationship with a new board, literature suggests that a new superintendent examine what boards value. Freeman, Underwood, and Fortune (1991) surveyed 3,744 school board members to see how board members assess effective board service. They concluded that board members and superintendents tend to value similar concepts but need to communicate to assure that their values are in alignment. After rating 17 characteristics of effective board members, board members established "four keys to live by": "Maintain focus. Follow your code of ethics. Mind the difference between policy and administration and involve the community" (p. 32). These characteristics were noted as of particular importance when under pressure.

The typical board member is a male in his forties with one or more children. He has a graduate degree, is in a professional occupation, and earns between \$40,000 and \$49,000. Generally this prototype board member was elected, has from one to three years of board experience, owns a home, and lives in the suburbs (Freeman et al., 1991).

Superintendents responding to the same questions about board members rate the facets of board responsibility much the same as board members. Superintendents also have similar opinions regarding board members' abilities. The "four keys" for success expressed by board members were also ranked highly by superintendents, but the ordering varied. Superintendents expressed first and foremost that effective board members clearly

differentiate between policy making and administration in statements and action. This was ranked third by board members. Superintendents agreed with board members' second assessment that effective board members abide by a board-established code of ethics. The third preference by superintendents was the leading assessment of board members--can maintain focus, even amid criticism and controversy. Only with the fourth choice did superintendents deviate from board members' "four keys." Superintendents felt it incumbent that established procedures be used to evaluate the superintendent while, as noted, board members chose citizen improvement/school community cooperation (Freeman et al., 1991).

Superintendents gave board members more credit than board members gave themselves in being able to communicate with and influence constituents. Board members from different size schools rate the importance of the 17 facets of board service largely the same. The same consistency holds among board members in urban, suburban, rural, and small-town school districts (Freeman et al., 1991).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to learn the relative importance of (a) hiring practices, (b) administrative skills, and (c) superintendent attributes that defined desirable superintendent candidates as perceived by selected North Dakota school board members.

Seven research questions were asked in the analysis of the data. They are as follows:

1. How important are hiring practices in selecting a new superintendent?
2. How important are administrative skills in selecting a new superintendent?
3. How important are superintendent attributes in selecting a new superintendent?
4. Are there significant differences in perceptions between how male and female board members assess the three major categories of the survey?
5. Are there significant differences in perceptions related to years of board incumbency in the three major categories of the survey?
6. Are there significant differences in perceptions of board members based on association with schools of varied enrollments?
7. Are there significant differences among statistical factors clustered for analysis within the three major categories of the survey?

After data were collected and the writer proceeded to analysis, the first three questions were grouped into a single question for examination: How important are hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes in selecting a new superintendent? This was done to facilitate comparisons and contrasts among the categories.

This section of the dissertation describes the sample studied, the instrument used, procedures for data collection and scoring of the instrument, and methods used to analyze the data.

The Sample

There were 55 school districts in the state of North Dakota which had hired superintendents from 1990 through 1993. A list of these school districts was obtained from the North Dakota Council of School Administrators. The eligible board members in the schools comprised the population of the study.

For the purpose of the study, each of the school districts in North Dakota which had hired a superintendent from 1990 through 1993 was represented by its school board members. Only those board members still on their respective school boards in the winter of 1994 took part in the study. The identity of participating school board members was not a part of the data-gathering process.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the study was constructed by the writer. Instrumentation possibilities were reviewed extensively with former and present school board members, not from the school districts in the study, serving as critics of draft instruments. Six former school board members, one county superintendent, a personnel class of ten graduate students, and the executive director of the North Dakota Council of School Administrators reviewed and critiqued drafts of the final instrument. A thorough review of the literature was also completed in order to select appropriate information for the instrument. The instrument was titled "Selecting a New Superintendent." (A complete copy of the instrument is contained as Appendix A.)

In the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to assess the importance of 12 hiring practices. Respondents were asked to choose the response that showed the importance they placed on each hiring practice when selecting a superintendent.

Respondents could designate the importance of a hiring practice by circling LI (of little importance), SI (of some importance), I (important), VI (very important), or MI (of major importance). The hiring practices chosen for this part of the questionnaire were selected because of their pervasive recognition in the literature as important tasks in the process of hiring a new superintendent. They included the use of a personnel committee, the consideration of an interim superintendent, and the exploration of written references. Other practices dealt with visiting an applicant's previous job site, the use of phone references, preference for minorities, and having professional staff review the applicants' credentials. The last four practices that school board members assessed for importance ranged from the incorporation of essay responses and the hiring of personnel consultants to getting the advice of the present superintendent and garnering the assistance of the North Dakota School Boards Association.

The second part of the questionnaire was concerned with the relative importance of administrative skills that a prospective superintendent possessed. Using the same five-part importance scale as in part one, school board members assessed the importance of 21 administrative skills. These administrative skills included preparation of board materials, the cultivation of media relationships, the management of personnel records, budget and facilities management, instructional planning, the management of student services, and presentation and interpretation of educational programs to the community. Other skills assessed in part two were the wise use of personnel, future development of facilities, planning ability, communication with the board, salary and benefit management, and fiscal management. Finally, board members judged the importance of the evaluation of curriculum, the ability to fulfill board requests, informal relations with the community, cultivation of employee relations, the development and implementation of goals, and familiarity with school law.

Section three of the questionnaire focused on superintendent attributes. Board members expressed perceptions regarding the importance of 12 attributes using the same five-part scale explained previously. They shared the information of an applicant's age, gender, education, administrative experience, and the location of the applicant's current position. Lastly, the importance of religion, personal morals, physical appearance, honesty/integrity, number of children, involvement in community clubs, and the ability of an applicant to take criticism was provided. The types of questions used in the instrument and the assessment of importance with the five-response forced choice were selected because of their adaptability to statistical study and because of the ease they provided the respondent.

Data Collection

The data collection was completed entirely by mail. The questionnaire was given directly to those superintendents of the selected schools who attended the winter superintendents' conference in Bismarck. Of the 55 packets available at the meeting, 38 were handed out. The remaining 17 packets were mailed to the superintendents who did not attend the conference. A personal letter to each superintendent whose school was involved in the study explained the purpose and the procedures of the study. (A copy of this letter is contained as Appendix B.) The survey instrument was prefaced by a letter of explanation with sample questions for each board member. (A copy of this explanation is contained as Appendix C.) Also included in each of the packets was a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. Each superintendent served as a clearinghouse for questions and as a means of reminding board members to complete the questionnaire. It was hoped that by having these recent superintendents involved in the data collection there would be no air of mystery about these hiring evaluations. Superintendents would know the hiring process was being studied, not their performance.

A reminder was given by phone two weeks after the packets were distributed to those schools which had not yet responded. The phone call stressed that this would be the final request for respondents, and it emphasized the necessity of a complete return.

Names and addresses of superintendents were obtained from the *North Dakota Educational Directory* compiled by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. Each packet contained materials for six school board members. (In most instances, this exceeded the number of board members who met the eligibility criteria.) The superintendent was asked to distribute and collect the questionnaires.

The questionnaires were printed on 11 x 17 paper that was folded so as to give each school board member a three-page booklet to complete. The booklets were printed on colored paper for easy recognition, and demographic data were gathered after part three of the questionnaire. Included in the demographic data were the gender and the number of years on the board of the respondent and the approximate enrollment of the respective school in grades kindergarten through 12. No effort to identify individual respondents was made.

The responses to the completed questionnaires were given a numerical weighting for purposes of statistical analysis by computer. The importance assessments of board members on the 45 questions were scaled from 1-5 with the scale being LI (of little importance) = 1, SI (of some importance) = 2, I (important) = 3, VI (very important) = 4, and MI (of major importance) = 5. The scaled responses were transferred to analysis format and appropriate programs were selected to obtain the proper statistical analysis for the data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the study was done in five parts as follows:

- Part A: an analysis of the data for the assessed importance of the three major categories of the questionnaire: (a) hiring practices, (b) administrative skills, and (c) superintendent attributes as perceived by school members;
- Part B: an analysis of the data for significant differences in perception between how male and female board members assess the importance of the three major categories of the questionnaire;
- Part C: an analysis of the data for significant differences in perception related to years of board incumbency in the importance assessment of the three major categories of the questionnaire;
- Part D: an analysis of the data for significant differences among school districts of various size enrollments; and
- Part E: an analysis of the data for significant differences among factors within the three major categories of the questionnaire.

Computer analysis of the data was used to generate descriptive information including frequencies, ranges and percentages of responses, and/or mean ratings and standard deviations of responses. Data were analyzed and reported by category of respondents based on research questions and demographic information. Data within the three sections of the questionnaire also were grouped by the computer into like factors with similar relations in a factor analysis study. Several analyses were performed to answer the research questions. A significance level of .05 was chosen for rejecting the hypothesis of no difference.

For the purpose of analyzing research questions 2 through 5, the 45 questions in the survey which were answered by school board respondents were arranged into similar groups or "factors." These factors, clusters of related variables that are distinguishable

components of a larger group of variables, were selected and clustered by the computer for analysis.

Factor analysis is one of several methods of analysis that enables researchers to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of "factors." Factor analysis is done by finding patterns among the variations in the values of several variables; a cluster of highly intercorrelated variables is a factor. Factor analysis is only practical using a computer. Once the computer selected those questions within a section of the questionnaire that could be clustered as factors, factor rotation could be used for improving analysis potentials and for describing data. Factor rotation is one of several methods in factor analysis by which the writer attempts to relate the calculated factors to theoretical entities.

In the present study, groups of items--factors--were created by "loadings" which exceeded .40. That is, the relationship between the item and its factor was established by these indications. Where a negative number is included the item with which it is associated was a "reversed" item. More about these factors is included in the next chapter, which presents the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire. The results are presented in tabular and narrative form.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to report the data which were gathered from school board members who responded to the research questionnaire. The data pertain to importance assessment perceptions of school board members when hiring a superintendent. The school board members indicated their perception about hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes that defined desirable superintendent candidates. The data reported in this chapter represent the responses of 124 board members from 39 of 55 North Dakota schools which have hired superintendents in the last three years (1990-93). Each of the five final research questions is dealt with in a separate section of the chapter.

(When it came to analyzing the data, the original seven research questions were collapsed into five questions by the simultaneous study of questions 1, 2, and 3. Question 4 became 2, question 5 became 3, and so on.)

Research question 1. How important are hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes in selecting a new superintendent?

Participants in this study were asked to assess the importance of three main categories: hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes. This section presents the tallies of the rankings and the analysis of the data.

Part one of the questionnaire dealt with hiring practices in selecting a new superintendent. There were 12 questions in this section of the questionnaire. Table 1 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessments. With assessments converted to a numerical scale for comparison and analysis, Table 1 indicates a mean importance assessment of 2.55 for section one of the questionnaire. Using the narrative

terminology from the questionnaire, the mean importance assessment ranks slightly above (.055) halfway between of "some importance" and "important."

Table 1

Hiring Practices Importance Assessments: How School Board Members Perceived
the Importance of Hiring Practices

Importance given assessment	LI (1)	SI (2)	I (3)	VI (4)	MI (5)	*M	Mean
How important is it that:							
1. a personnel committee, made up of non-board members, be used to help select a new superintendent?	53	31	11	16	12	1	2.21
2. an interim superintendent be considered until the new superintendent is hired?	44	21	26	8	4	1	1.76
3. written references about the applicants be used during the screening process?	2	9	26	47	40		3.92
4. the previous job site of those applicants chosen as finalists be visited by the representatives of the board?	22	29	23	29	21		2.98
5. phone references be contacted to assist with the the screening of applicants?	2	9	17	48	48		4.06
6. preference be given to minorities in the hiring?	72	19	22	6	3	2	1.76
7. professional staff (teachers, principals, and other school employees) review the applicants' credentials?	42	34	12	16	18	2	2.46
8. community members review the applicants' credentials?	75	20	8	10	11		1.89
9. an essay response from applicants be included as part of the screening process?	23	29	24	28	19	1	2.93

Table 1--Cont.

Importance given assessment	LI (1)	SI (2)	I (3)	VI (4)	MI (5)	*M	Mean
10. a consultant be hired to assist the board with the selection of a new superintendent?	79	30	10	3	2		1.54
11. the advice of the present superintendent be sought in the selection of a new superintendent?	28	34	29	25	8		2.36
12. the North Dakota School Boards Association assist in the selection of a new superintendent?	46	25	27	16	10		2.35
Data summary for hiring practices							
Number of cases	124						
Mean	2.5499						
Standard deviation	.615						

*M = Missing assessments.

A few hiring practices were assessed as being of considerable importance; items 3 and 5 demonstrated this with means of 3.92 and 4.06, respectively. Board members assessed written references and phone references "very important," approximately 4.0. Most items were assessed between of "some importance," approximately 2.0, and "important," approximately 3.0. The mean for hiring practices was 2.55. Items 2, 6, 8, and 10 were given the least value with means ranging from 1.54 to 1.89.

Part two of the questionnaire dealt with administrative skills in selecting a new superintendent. There were 21 questions in this section of the questionnaire. Table 2 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessments. With assessments converted to a numerical scale for comparison and analysis, Table 2 indicates a mean importance assessment of 4.24 for section two of the questionnaire. Using the narrative terminology from the questionnaire, the mean importance assessment ranks about one fourth of the way between "very important" and of "major importance."

terminology from the questionnaire, the mean importance assessment ranks about one fourth of the way between "very important" and of "major importance."

Table 2

Administrative Skills Importance Assessments: How School Board Members Perceived the Importance of Administrative Skills

Importance given assessment	LI (1)	SI (2)	I (3)	VI (4)	MI (5)	*M	Mean
How important is/are:							
13. the preparation of materials and reports for the board?	0	0	6	50	68		4.50
14. the cultivation of media (newspaper, radio, tv) relationships?	7	14	40	38	25		3.48
15. management of personnel records?	1	0	13	51	59		4.24
16. budget preparation/management?	0	0	2	16	106		4.84
17. managing/maintaining present facilities?	0	0	11	39	74		4.51
18. instructional planning/development?	0	3	15	48	58		4.30
19. the management of student services? (attendance, discipline, health-safety, and special needs)	5	7	30	40	42		3.86
20. the presentation and interpretation of educational programs to the community?	1	6	26	62	29		3.90
21. the wise use of personnel?	0	0	8	48	68		4.48
22. future development of facilities?	0	6	27	50	41		4.02
23. planning ability? (fiscal/instructional vision)	0	1	5	45	73		4.53
24. communication with the board?	0	1	1	25	97		4.76
25. salary and benefit management?	0	4	20	58	42		4.11
26. fiscal management and thrift?	0	0	12	48	64		4.42
27. the evaluation of curriculum and instruction?	2	5	9	48	60		4.28

Table 2--Cont.

Importance given assessment	LI (1)	SI (2)	I (3)	VI (4)	MI (5)	*M	Mean
How important is/are:							
28. the ability to fulfill board requests/demands?	0	2	15	47	60		4.33
29. informal relations with the community?	0	6	26	57	34	1	3.97
30. cultivation of employee relations?	0	5	19	60	40		4.09
31. the development of district-wide goals/objectives?	1	5	22	55	41		4.05
32. the implementation of district-wide goals/objectives?	3	4	19	52	46		4.08
33. familiarity with school law?	1	1	14	44	62	2	4.43
Data summary for administrative skills							
Number of cases	124						
Mean	4.2435						
Standard deviation	.432						

*M = Missing assessments.

Few responses were assessed of "little importance" in the administrative skills criteria rating. There was generally a high number of responses in the domains of "very important" and of "major importance." This was reflected in the high mean (4.24) for this category of the survey. Administrative skills was clearly a hiring focus for respondents. Prospective superintendents must convince board members that they have these skills to succeed in the hiring process. Item 16 was assessed the highest with a mean of 4.84. Board members felt that budget preparation/management (item 16) was more than "very important." Item 24 (communication with the board) had a mean of 4.76. It was also more than "very important" to board members.

Part three of the questionnaire dealt with superintendent attributes in selecting a new superintendent. There were 12 questions in this section of the questionnaire. Table 3 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessments. With assessments converted to a numerical scale for comparison and analysis, Table 3 indicates a mean importance assessment of 2.87 for section three of the questionnaire. Using the narrative terminology from the questionnaire, the mean importance assessment ranks just under (3.0) "important."

Table 3

Superintendent Attributes Importance Assessments: How School Board Members Perceived the Importance of Superintendent Attributes

Importance given assessment	LI (1)	SI (2)	I (3)	VI (4)	MI (5)	*M	Mean
How important is/are:							
34. an applicant's age?	50	42	26	3	3		1.93
35. the gender (sex) of an applicant?	98	14	9	3	0		1.33
36. the amount of education an applicant has?	0	8	26	61	29		3.90
37. the administrative experience of the applicant?	1	11	31	47	34		3.82
38. the location of the applicant's current position? (i.e., instate, outstate, regional)	46	34	31	9	3	1	2.10
39. the religion of an applicant?	111	4	5	3	1		1.22
40. personal morals of an applicant?	5	4	18	53	43	1	4.02
41. physical appearance of the applicant?	13	11	44	41	15		3.27
42. personal attributes of honesty and integrity?	0	0	2	40	82		4.65
43. the number of children an applicant has?	106	11	3	3	1		1.19

Table 3--Cont.

Importance given assessment	LI (1)	SI (2)	I (3)	VI (4)	MI (5)	*M	Mean
How important is/are:							
44. involvement in community clubs/activities?	8	24	52	29	11		1.85
45. the ability of an applicant to take criticism?	1	6	34	49	34		3.88
Data summary for personal superintendent attributes							
Number of cases	124						
Mean	2.8656						
Standard deviation	.422						

*M = Missing assessments.

When rating superintendent attributes, respondents had diverse opinions. Assessment of importance proved very high in some areas, such as honesty, morals, and experience, but quite low in areas such as gender, age, and religion. These assessments were in recognition of the potential to discriminate in inappropriate and, even, illegal ways. Items such as age, religion, and gender cross the line into the realm of private information. Many respondents expressed discomfort regarding assessing these personal attributes. These attributes will be discussed further in chapter 5.

In summary, the assessment of administrative skills in selecting a new superintendent is a little above "very important" with a mean of 4.24, while superintendent attributes are not quite "important" with a mean of 2.87. Hiring practices is the "least important" of the three major categories with an assessment of 2.55, about halfway between "somewhat important" and "important."

For the purpose of analyzing research question 2 and, subsequently, 3, 4, and 5, the factor analysis discussed in chapter 3 was used. It also was necessary to note and label the 13 factors that were clustered by the computer. (See Appendix D for rotated factor

matrix.) In section one of the questionnaire, Hiring Practices, the 12 items were factored into four clusters with similar mean importance assessments. The first of four factors dealing with hiring practices was comprised of items 1, 2, 7, and 8. These items, labeled as "advisory elements" by the writer, included the use of a personnel committee, an interim superintendent, professional staff, and community members in the hiring process. This factor was also labeled by the computer as hiring factor number one.

Hiring factor number two dealt with items 6, 9, 10, and 12. This factor, named "screening logistics," included the use of a hired consultant, the North Dakota School Boards Association, essay responses by applicants, and minority preference in the hiring process. Hiring factor number three, items 3 and 11, given the title "evaluation sources," was made up of the incorporation of written references and the advice of the former superintendent. Lastly, factor four, "in depth background assessments," was clustered as items 4 and 5; it dealt with final applicant insights gained by visiting an applicant's previous job site and garnering phone references about applicants.

Section two, Administrative Skills, was clustered into six factors--the first of which dealt with items 15, 21, 24, 25, and 26. It was termed "personnel administration and fiscal management." It was comprised of managing personnel records, wise use of personnel, communication with the board, salary and benefit administration, and fiscal management. The second administrative skills factor, "visioning skills," included future development of facilities, general planning abilities, development of goals, and goals implementation. This cluster included items 22, 23, 31, and 32. Administrative skills factor number three, "curriculum and instruction," contained items 18, 19, and 27 and dealt with instructional planning and development, overseeing student services, and the evaluation of curriculum and instruction. "Public relations," the fourth administrative skills factor, included items 14, 29, and 30. It assessed informal relations with the community and the cultivation of media and employee relations. Preparation of board materials, budget preparation, and

managing present facilities served as the basis for administrative skills factor number five, "management tasks." It included items 13, 16, and 17. "Proactive policy execution," administrative skills factor number six, was a cluster of items 20, 28, and 33. It ranged from presenting the educational program to the public to fulfilling board requests and familiarity with school law.

The third section of the questionnaire, Superintendent Attributes, contained three factors: "demographic characteristics," "personal characteristics," and "professional preparation." "Demographic characteristics," items 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, and 43, assessed the importance of an applicant's age, gender, religion, previous job location, physical appearance, and number of children. The second superintendent attributes factor, "personal characteristics," was made up of items 40, 42, 44, and 45. It included the applicant's morals, honesty, community involvement, and ability to take criticism. The final factor, "professional preparation," dealt with item 36, applicant education, and item 37, administrative experience.

Research question 2. Are there significant differences in perceptions between how male and female board members assess the three major categories of the survey?

For the purpose of analyzing differences in perceptions between how male and female board members assess the three major categories (hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes) of this study, the 45 questions in the survey which were answered by school board respondents were arranged into similar groups or factors. Table 4 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessments data for the 13 factors used from the factor analysis. Table 4 indicates the questions which comprise each factor, the male and female means for each factor, the *F* probabilities for each factor, and whether or not there was a significant difference for each factor. Any *F* probability of less than .05 demonstrated a significant difference between genders.

Table 4

Gender Perception Differences: How Male and Female Board Members FactorAssessments Vary

	Questions	Male mean (N=90)	Female mean (N=34)	F probability	Significance
Hiring practices factors:					
Advisory elements	(1,2,7,8)	2.1322	2.1953	.7559	no
Screening logistics	(6,9,10,12)	2.1494	2.1136	.8165	no
Evaluation sources	(3,11)	3.2921	3.2059	.6264	no
In depth background assessments	(4,5)	3.4551	3.7206	.1647	no
Administrative skills factors:					
Personnel administration and fiscal management	(15,21,24, 25,26)	4.3551	4.6118	.0075	yes
Visioning skills	(22,23,31, 32)	4.1124	4.3309	.0995	no
Curriculum and instruction	(18,19,27)	4.0749	4.3235	.0982	no
Public relations	(14,29,30)	3.8068	3.9412	.3575	no
Management tasks	(13,16,17)	4.5581	4.7647	.0091	yes
Proactive policy execution	(20,28,33)	4.1341	4.3529	.0328	yes
Superintendent attributes factors:					
Demographic characteristics	(34,35,38, 39,41,43)	1.8371	1.8939	.6349	no
Personal characteristics	(40,42,44, 45)	3.9006	3.9412	.7359	no
Professional preparation	(36,37)	3.7247	4.1912	.0028	yes

In the domain of hiring practices, no significant differences were found.

Regardless of gender, board members consistently assessed that hiring practices were of limited importance. Using the descriptive terminology from the survey to describe board perceptions, those assessments "of little or no importance" had a mean value of approximately one (1), while two (2) described those factors of "some importance," an assessment of about three (3) defined "important," four (4) related a value assessment deemed to be "very important," and approximately five (5) related a board member assessment that was "of major importance." "Advisory elements" and "screening logistics" for both genders were deemed of "some importance" by respondents. Importance

assessments for these two factors ranged from 2.11 to 2.19. Both factors had means below the category mean which was 2.55 (see Table 1). Such items as the use of an interim superintendent or a personnel committee, the input of professional staff, and a community review ("advisory elements") were not assessed of "much importance." "Screening logistics" like minority preference, essay responses, the use of a consultant, and the assistance of the North Dakota School Boards Association were given similar lackluster assessments. "Evaluation sources," written references and the advice of the present superintendent, had factor means of 3.21 for females and 3.29 for males. Though there was no significant difference between genders, this factor was of greater merit. It was deemed as "important" by respondents. "In depth background assessments" was nearly "very important." Females perceived an assessment of 3.72 while males rated this factor at 3.46.

Those factors in part two of the survey provided three examples in which factors were significantly different based on gender. "Personnel administration and fiscal management" was assessed a 4.61 by female respondents and a 4.36 by male respondents. Females perceived significantly different than males. Such items as personnel records management, the use of personnel, communication with the board, fiscal management, and salary management were perceived significantly more important by female board members than male board members.

"Management tasks," which included preparation of board materials, budget management, and facilities maintenance, was also a significant factor. Females assessed this factor at 4.76 while males deemed it significantly less important with an assessment of 4.56. "Proactive policy execution" again proved significant based on gender. Males rated this factor 4.13 and females rated it 4.35. In short, females consider the presentation of educational programs to the public, the ability to fulfill board expectations, and familiarity with school law significantly more important than do males. The other three factors in part

two were not significant based on gender. It is noteworthy that the pattern of females assessing factors higher than males continued. The factor "public relations" was the least important of the six administrative skills factors. The overall category mean of 4.24 was consistently expressed by its factors with respondents generally relating that administrative skills are "very important" in the hiring of a new superintendent.

Superintendent attribute factors provided one factor which was significantly different based on gender in part three of the survey. Females expressed a significant difference in how they perceived "professional preparation." Males rated this factor a mean of 3.72 while females assessed it a mean of 4.19.

Research question 3. Are there significant differences in perceptions related to years of board incumbency in the three major categories of the survey?

For the purpose of analyzing differences in perceptions based on the length of board incumbency, a factor analysis was conducted by clustering the 45 questions of the survey into 13 factors. Board incumbency was divided into three groups. Group 1 was that group of respondents who had three years or less of service on the board. Group 2 consisted of board members with four to seven years of service, and Group 3 was comprised of members with more than seven years of incumbency. Table 5 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessments among the three groups. The table indicates the questions which make up each factor, the mean assessment for each group, the *F* probability for each group, and whether or not groups were significantly different.

In only one case was there a significant difference among the three groups. In the third part of the survey, board incumbency proved significant for "demographic characteristics." Those board members with less experience on the board (Group 1) believed that items such as age, gender, job location, religion, physical appearance, and the number of children applicants had were significantly more important than did more

experienced board members (Group 2 and Group 3). The other 13 factors of the survey statistically expressed a consistent lack of significance based on board incumbency.

Table 5

Board Incumbency Perception Differences: How Board Members Factor Assessments Vary According to Length of Service on the Board

Questions	Group 1 mean (N=40)	Group 2 mean (N=48)	Group 3 mean (N=36)	F prob	Significance	
Hiring practices factors:						
Advisory elements	(1,2,7,8)	2.1731	2.0904	2.1838	.8913	no
Screening logistics	(6,9,10,12)	2.1908	2.0904	2.1528	.8237	no
Evaluation sources	(3,11)	3.1625	3.3542	3.2500	.5919	no
In depth background assessments	(4,5)	3.4625	3.6875	3.3611	.2657	no
Administrative skills factors:						
Personnel administration and fiscal management	(15,21,24,25,26)	4.4600	4.4292	4.3778	.7561	no
Visioning skills	(22,23,31,32)	4.1375	4.2344	4.1181	.6786	no
Curriculum and instruction	(18,19,27)	4.1167	4.1875	4.1296	.8937	no
Public relations	(14,29,30)	3.8718	3.9375	3.6944	.2975	no
Management tasks	(13,16,17)	4.6750	4.6042	4.5648	.4653	no
Proactive policy execution	(20,28,33)	4.0684	4.3056	4.2000	.0954	no
Superintendent attributes factors:						
Demographic characteristics	(34,35,38,39,41,43)	2.0583	1.7518	1.7546	.0230	yes
Personal characteristics	(40,42,44,45)	3.7885	3.9948	3.9167	.2720	no
Professional preparation	(36,37)	3.8250	3.9375	3.7917	.6654	no

Note. Group 1 = 0-3 years of service on the board; Group 2 = 4-7 years of service on the board; Group 3 = 8-15 years of service on the board.

Research question 4. Are there significant differences in perceptions of board members based on association with schools of varied enrollments?

For the purpose of analyzing differences in perceptions based on school enrollment, a factor analysis was conducted by clustering the 45 questions of the survey into 13

factors. School enrollments were divided into three groups. Group 1 (small schools) was schools with 24 to 231 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12. Group 2 (medium-size schools) consisted of enrollments from 232 to 525 in grades kindergarten through grade 12, and Group 3 (large schools) consisted of all school enrollments over 525 students. School board respondents were placed in their respective groups based on school enrollment. Table 6 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessments among the three groups. The table indicates the questions which comprise each factor, the mean assessment for each group, the *F* probability for each group, and whether or not groups were significantly different.

In 12 of the 14 factors there was no significant difference based on school size. Section one of the survey contained one factor which was significantly different based on school size. "Advisory elements" was perceived to be significantly more important to large schools (Group 3) than for medium-size schools (Group 2) or small schools (Group 1). Board members from large schools assessed such items as the use of an interim superintendent or a personnel committee, the input of professional staff, and a community review as significantly more important than did medium-size or small schools. Board members from large schools assessed this factor to have a mean importance rating of 2.56 while medium-size and small schools showed a board preference mean of 2.01 and 1.86, respectively. The range of 1.86 for board members from small schools to 2.56 for board members from large schools was a significant assessment difference. In short, the smaller the school the less advice the board valued.

"Demographic characteristics," the first factor in part three of the survey, also was a significant factor. Medium-size schools showed a mean assessment of 1.98 while large schools had a mean of 1.66. The *F* probability of .0285 was significant for these two groups. Board members from large schools care significantly less about age, gender,

location of the previous job, religion, physical appearance, and the number of children an applicant has than board members from medium-size schools.

Table 6

School District Enrollment Perception Differences: How Board Members
Factor Assessments Vary According to School Size

	Questions	Group 1 mean (N=42)	Group 2 mean (N=40)	Group 3 mean (N=42)	F prob	Significance
Hiring practices factors:						
Advisory elements	(1,2,7,8)	1.8537	2.0066	2.5610	.0021	yes
Screening logistics	(6,9,10, 12)	2.1707	2.1000	2.1500	.9101	no
Evaluation sources	(3,11)	3.2857	3.3125	3.1905	.8024	no
In depth background assessments	(4,5)	3.5595	3.4000	3.5952	.6159	no
Administrative skills factors:						
Personnel administration and fiscal management	(15,21,24, 25,26)	4.4238	4.4100	4.4381	.9659	no
Visioning skills	(22,23,31, 32)	4.1250	4.1437	4.2381	.7031	no
Curriculum and instruction	(18,19,27)	4.2540	4.1583	4.0317	.3927	no
Public relations	(14,29,30)	3.6911	3.8750	3.9683	.2029	no
Management tasks	(13,16,17)	4.6270	4.5833	4.6349	.8196	no
Proactive policy execution	(20,28,33)	4.3000	4.2417	4.0635	.0878	no
Superintendent attributes factors:						
Demographic characteristics	(34,35,38, 39,41,43)	1.9187	1.9833	1.6627	.0285	yes
Personal characteristics	(40,42,44, 45)	3.8171	3.9750	3.9286	.4705	no
Professional preparation	(36,37)	3.7381	3.7500	4.0833	.0721	no

Note. Group 1 = 24 to 231 students enrolled (K-12); Group 2 = 232 to 525 students enrolled (K-12); Group 3 = 526 to 3,200 students enrolled (K-12).

Research question 5. Are there significant differences among statistical factors clustered for analysis within the three major categories of the survey?

For the purpose of analyzing differences in board perceptions within categories of the survey, a factor analysis was conducted by clustering the 45 questions of the survey

into 13 factors. The first section of the survey, hiring practices, contained four factors; the second section, administrative skills, contained six factors; and the third section, superintendent attributes, contained three factors. Table 7 shows a complete tally of respondent importance assessment means. The table indicates the items which comprise each factor, t values, probabilities for each factor, and whether or not the factors were significant at the .05 level.

In the hiring practices section, "in depth background assessments" received the highest mean assessment. Previous job sight and phone references received a mean assessment of 3.52. This was a significant difference within this category of the survey when compared to other category factors. "Evaluation sources," written references and the advice of the current superintendent, received a mean assessment of 3.27. This was a significant difference when compared to "screening logistics" and "advisory elements."

Section two of the survey, administrative skills factors, produced a mean importance assessment of 4.63 for "management tasks." This board assessment was significantly different than the other five factors in the section. "Personnel administration and fiscal management" was significantly different than four of the factors in section two with the second highest mean importance assessment of 4.44. "Proactive policy execution," "visioning skills," and "curriculum and instruction" were not significantly different, but these three factors were significantly different from "public relations," which had the lowest mean of 3.87.

A ranking of section three of the survey, superintendent attributes, produced no significant difference between "personal characteristics" and "professional preparation." Their mean importance assessments were 3.91 and 3.85, respectively. These two factors were, however, significantly different from "demographic characteristics" which had a mean of 1.85. In summary, there were significant differences in mean importance factor assessments within the three categories of the survey.

Table 7

Board Member Factor Assessment Differences: How Board Member**Factor Assessments Vary within Survey Categories**

	Questions	Mean	t value	Probability	Significance
Hiring practices factors:					
In depth background assessments	(4,5)	3.5202	-2.38	.019	yes
Evaluation sources	(3,11)	3.2727	-11.37	<.001	yes
Screening logistics	(6,9,10, 12)	2.1405	.20	.844	no
Advisory elements	(1,2,7,8)	2.1154			
Administrative skills factors:					
Management tasks	(13,16, 17)	4.6257	4.71	<.001	yes
Personnel administration and fiscal management	(15,21,24, 25,26)	4.4393	5.61	<.001	yes
Proactive policy execution	(20,28,33)	4.1995	-.27	.784	no
Visioning skills	(22,23,31, 32)	4.1844	.35	.730	no
Curriculum and instruction	(18,19,27)	4.1612	3.88	<.001	yes
Public relations	(14,29,30)	3.8678			
Superintendent attributes factors:					
Personal characteristics	(40,42,44, 45)	3.9098	.68	.499	no
Professional preparation	(36,37)	3.8537	-26.05	<.001	yes
Demographic characteristics	(34,35,38, 39,41,43)	2.8523			

A brief summary of the study, conclusions from the data analysis, and specific recommendations follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

A total of 124 North Dakota school board members responded to this study by providing perceptions of importance assessments on 45 questions related to hiring a new superintendent. The importance assessments made by the board members were divided into three major categories on the survey. These categories--hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes--were then clustered into 13 statistically generated factors for analysis and review. For purposes of communication and clarity, labeling names were assigned to the 13 factors. The factors were then analyzed by gender, board incumbency, and school size. This analysis, plus a review of the mean importance of each major category of the survey and a comparison among factors within the categories, served as the basis for recommendations for practice, policy, and study.

The respondents in the study were fairly consistent in their assessments. Literature supported board member assessments in that the visionary side of the hiring process received less time and emphasis than other portions of the selection process. Mean importance assessments and literature pointed to the fact that administrative skills dominate the selection of a new superintendent. Board members even place more importance on personal attributes of candidates than they do on hiring practices.

Female board members generally recorded higher importance assessments than male board members. This was especially true when it came to "management tasks," "proactive policy execution," and "professional preparation." Female board members

involved in the hiring process demanded greater education, experience, and management skills than did male board members when hiring a new superintendent.

Board incumbency seemed to be a negligible variable in the hiring of a new superintendent. In short, it does not matter how long a board member has served on a school board when it comes to assessing the importance of the characteristics of the hiring process. Only in the factor of "demographics" was this statement contradictory.

Board members from large schools assessed demographic characteristics lower than did board members from medium-size schools. In summary, board members from large schools were less concerned about age, gender, current job location, religion, physical appearance, and the number of children applicants had than were board members from medium-size schools.

Within the three sections of the survey, there were significant differences among statistical factors. Using the descriptive terminology from the survey to describe board perceptions, those assessments "of little or no importance" had a mean value of approximately one (1), while two (2) described those factors of "some importance," an assessment of about three (3) defined "important," four (4) related a value assessment deemed to be "very important," and approximately five (5) related a board member assessment that was "of major importance." School board members, responding to the survey, revealed an importance assessment in section one, hiring practices, that demonstrate that they believed "in depth background assessments" to be the most important hiring practices factor when selecting a new superintendent. Visitation of the previous job site and phone references were rated as being more than "important" but less than "very important." "Evaluation sources," written references and the advice of the current superintendent, were viewed as approximately "important" to board members. "Screening logistics" and "advisory elements" were of only "some importance." In short, minority preference, essay responses, the use of a consultant, and the help of the North Dakota

School Boards Association were not "very important"; nor were "advisory elements." School board members assessed such items as the use of a personnel committee or an interim superintendent, the advice of staff, and a community review as of "some importance."

Section two factors related that board members viewed "management tasks" as the most important board assessment. This factor received a mean importance assessment of 4.63. Board members find it nearly of "major importance" that applicants be skilled at preparing materials for the board, budgeting, and managing facilities. "Personnel administration and fiscal management," including such skills as management of records, the wise use of personnel, communication with the board, salary management, and fiscal management, was also more than "very important." With a mean of 4.44, this factor was the second highest ranked factor in the survey. "Proactive policy execution," "visioning skills," and "curriculum and instruction" were all factors in the "very important" category. There was no significant difference among these factors. Such items as presentation skills, planning ability, fulfilling board requests, familiarity with school law, development of facilities and district goals, and the implementation of district goals were as important as instructional planning, management of student services, and the evaluation of curriculum and instruction.

"Public relations," the cultivation of media, informal relations in the community, and employee relations, was significantly last in importance assessment. In section two, the most important category on the survey, "public relations," was revealed to be less than "very important." The mean for this factor fell to 3.87.

The analysis of section three of the survey, superintendent attributes, revealed that "personal characteristics" and "professional preparation" were assessed as more important factors than "demographic characteristics." It is more important that candidates have high morals, be honest, be involved in the community, be able to take criticism, be educated,

and be experienced than it is that their demographics--age, gender, location of current position, religion, physical appearance, and the number of children they have--match the criteria of the superintendent selection process.

Conclusions/Implications

The purpose of this study was to learn the relative importance of (a) hiring practices, (b) administrative skills, and (c) superintendent attributes that defined desirable superintendent candidates as perceived by selected North Dakota school board members.

Five research questions were asked in the analysis of the data. They are as follows:

1. How important are hiring practices, administrative skills, and superintendent attributes in selecting a new superintendent?
2. Are there significant differences in perceptions between how male and female board members assess the three major categories of the survey?
3. Are there significant differences in perceptions related to years of board incumbency in the three major categories of the survey?
4. Are there significant differences in perceptions of board members based on association with schools of varied enrollments?
5. Are there significant differences among statistical factors clustered for analysis within the three major categories of the survey?

As a result of the analysis of data presented in chapter 4, the following implications were drawn:

1. In North Dakota, very little credence is given to minority preference in the selection of a superintendent. This is supported statistically by the findings from the present survey. This may explain somewhat the low incidence of minority superintendents in North Dakota. There are relatively few minority citizens in North Dakota. The largest group, American Indians, represents only about 3% of the population in the state. This

low incidence of minority persons may cause boards to lack sensitivity to the issue of minority preference. Another concomitant reason may be that there are relatively few minority applicants from which boards could select.

2. Superintendent applicants in North Dakota can be confident that phone references will be used in screening applicants. This is possibly explained by the networking ties of administrators and school boards in North Dakota. With fewer than 700,000 people and fewer than 300 school districts, it is not uncommon for a board member or administrator to know someone on an in-state applicant's reference list. A quick, informal phone call serves as a way to reinforce more formal written references.

3. North Dakota school boards assume that they were chosen to represent--to make decisions for--the people of their districts; therefore, they apparently place little importance on the advice of the community or the teaching staff when selecting a superintendent. This also might be related to the rural, local-control mentality that is so often expressed by school board members. It is not uncommon to have outspoken board members relate that they were elected to do the job, not take advice.

4. It is unlikely that a personnel committee will be used to help select a superintendent. This may be related to the rural independence mentioned previously. If a board member is not soliciting advice from the community, it is not likely that there will be a strong need perceived for committees to screen candidates or provide advisory service of some other variety.

5. Written references are a major part of the superintendent selection process. This also may be related to the freedom and confidence of North Dakota school board members. They appear confident that a reference or a list of references will provide a name or relationship to probe. North Dakota is a place where the common citizen often has ties to public officials. Many, for example, have spoken to the governor, to the mayor of their home town, or to the president of their child's college.

6. North Dakota school board members do not judge the use of interim superintendents as very necessary. This may be explained by tight budgets in a poorly funded state, about \$1,600 per student for foundation aid, and the relatively short searches that are done in small schools. In some cases, North Dakota schools will go without a superintendent if it will save money (Minot--1992--or Surrey--1994).

7. As the findings suggest, where a superintendent candidate previously worked is not as important as generally thought. The responding board members in the survey assessed this component as of only "some importance," about a 2.0 assessment. This may be explained by community pride in North Dakota. Fargo or Bismarck apparently is not necessarily better than Grenora or New Salem. The emphasis in a North Dakota selection interview is often what can the applicant do for us, not where did he or she work before.

8. The advice of the current superintendent is inconsistently assessed as important by board members in North Dakota. Some assessed this concept as being quite important while others rated it very low. This may be related to the previous history of the departing superintendent. If he or she was a long-time community pillar or if he or she was asked to leave seems to make quite a difference to board members in how the board might use this current superintendent to select a successor.

9. Findings suggest that board members may ignore or neglect the importance of process. It is the writer's opinion that a school board without administrative guidance is potentially leaderless. Generally, board members have limited experience in hiring superintendents and the writer's personal observations include many bizarre happenings based on lay people with limited education or limited relationship to the education industry designing the hiring process for the selection of a superintendent.

10. Organizational skills are valued very highly by board members in North Dakota; therefore, superintendent applicants should seek to demonstrate the ability to

prepare materials, manage budgets, facilitate curriculum, orchestrate personnel matters, be familiar with school law, and communicate well with the board and the community.

11. North Dakota school board members do not place--at least do not report--much importance regarding demographic characteristics in selecting a superintendent. An applicant's age, religion, gender, physical appearance, and number of children were assessed to be of limited importance.

12. Both experience and education are very important to school board members in North Dakota when selecting a superintendent, but experience is more important than education.

13. School boards generally do not use the assistance of the North Dakota School Boards Association when selecting a new superintendent. This may be explained by the informal networking that exists in North Dakota and the independent nature of board members.

14. Public relations is the least valued administrative skills factor; therefore, cultivation of the media, informal relations with the community, and employee relationships are often overlooked in the hiring process. This can be explained partially by the high ratings given organizational skills by school board members. It appears board members view the superintendency as primarily cognitive in nature.

15. Goal setting and implementation abilities are valued highly by North Dakota school boards. This is particularly significant when compared to hiring practices assessments. Though board members do not seem to value planning the hiring process, they do demand chief executives who can and will goal set and plan well.

16. Personal characteristics, such as morals, integrity, and the ability to take criticism, are valued highly by North Dakota school board members. This may be related to the intimacy of such a rural state. People still exhibit strong personal values and still like to be treated consistent with the Golden Rule.

17. Female board members place significantly higher value on personnel administration and fiscal management than do male board members. They also place more emphasis on professional preparation and prefer superintendent candidates who demonstrate management skills and are proactive in regard to solving problems. Female board members may quite simply demand higher standards than their male counterparts.

18. The amount of time a board member has served on the board has very little to do with hiring preferences when selecting a new superintendent. Veteran board members and inexperienced board members assess candidates in similar ways. This may be related partially to the limited superintendent hiring experience that board members tend to have. Whether a board member serves one term or several terms does not correlate with frequency of superintendent hiring. While serving as a consultant in medium-size midwestern schools, this writer found that only 1 out of 20 board members had experience in selecting a superintendent.

19. In most cases school size has very little to do with how school board members assess the importance of hiring characteristics, but school board members from large North Dakota schools are more likely to seek hiring advice in the superintendent selection process. Perhaps they do not always feel the direct tie to the people that board members from small schools seem to exemplify. This conclusion is supported in the personnel literature about more urban areas than North Dakota.

20. Findings in the present study suggest that school board members from medium-size schools in North Dakota pay more attention to the demographic characteristics of a candidate than do board members from other size groupings. No particularly persuasive rationale for this finding can be advanced.

Recommendations for Practice.

Policy, and Study

The following recommendations based on this study are suggested for action regarding the selection of superintendents in North Dakota:

1. The North Dakota School Boards Association should consider getting more involved in the superintendent selection process by offering a series of seminars on candidate screening and superintendent selection.
2. Where graduate students lack experience, graduate school programs in educational administration should emphasize internships with good exemplars which foster the growth and enhancement of superintendent experience.
3. Additional research and study should be conducted on the personal demographic characteristics of superintendent candidates. If school board members do not place importance on these items, why are there so few female superintendents?
4. More emphasis should be placed on the logistics of hiring practices in the selection of superintendents. The fact that school board members in North Dakota value this part of the selection process very little has an impact on who is selected and how the selection is done.
5. A parallel study should be done to ascertain school board preferences and assessments when they wish to get rid of superintendents. Do they validate what they value during the hiring process?
6. Graduate schools in educational administration should emphasize classes in ethics in light of the importance placed on morals, honesty, and integrity by board members.
7. Since school board members place limited importance on public relations during the superintendent hiring process, greater efforts should be made by state agencies

to facilitate school public relations after superintendent selection. Both administrators and school boards need training in public relations.

8. Incentives for hiring minorities in North Dakota should be investigated since school board members do not see minority consideration of much importance when hiring a superintendent.

9. Research should be conducted to ascertain community importance assessments of superintendent candidates. With high turnover on school boards, disenchanted community members may have a negative impact on superintendent selection and the longevity of superintendents.

10. School board members should be encouraged to align the mission of their school with the selection of a new superintendent. A visionary look at a school should be a part of superintendent selection.

11. A study should be done on superintendent evaluations in North Dakota. Are school boards evaluating those items which they valued most when they selected the superintendent?

12. A parallel study should be considered from the superintendents' point of view. What do superintendents value most in the hiring process, and what input can they give to better superintendent selection in North Dakota?

13. This study should be made available to the North Dakota School Boards Association.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

SELECTING A NEW SUPERINTENDENT

I. Hiring Practices: Choose the response that shows the importance you place on the hiring practice when selecting a superintendent. **CIRCLE** the letter which best indicate your perception or opinion.

- LI** (of little importance)
SI (of some importance)
I (important)
VI (very important)
MI (of major importance)

How important is it that:

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|---|----|----|
| 1. a personnel committee, made up of non-board members, be used to help select a new superintendent? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 2. an interim superintendent be considered until the new superintendent is hired? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 3. written references about the applicants be used during the screening process? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 4. the previous job site of those applicants chosen as finalists be visited by the representatives of the board? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 5. phone references be contacted to assist with the screening of applicants? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 6. preference be given to minorities in the hiring? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 7. professional staff (teachers, principals, and other school employees) review the applicants' credentials? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 8. community members review the applicants' credentials? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 9. an essay response from applicants be included as part of the screening process? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 10. a consultant be hired to assist the board with the selection of a new superintendent? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 11. the advice of the present superintendent be sought in the selection of a new superintendent? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 12. the North Dakota School Boards Association assist in the selection of a new superintendent? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |

II. Administrative Skills: Circle the response that shows the importance you place on each administrative skill when selecting a superintendent.

How important is/are:

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| 13. the preparation of materials and reports for the board? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 14. the cultivation of media (newspapers, radio, tv) relationships? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 15. management of personnel records? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 16. budget preparation/management? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 17. managing/maintaining present facilities? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |
| 18. instructional planning/development? | LI | SI | I | VI | MI |

19. the management of student services? (attendance, discipline, health-safety, and special needs)	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
20. the presentation and interpretation of educational programs to the community?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
21. the wise use of personnel?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
22. future development of facilities?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
23. planning ability? (fiscal/instructional vision)	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
24. communication with the board?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
25. salary and benefit management?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
26. fiscal management and thrift?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
27. the evaluation of curriculum and instruction?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
28. the ability to fulfill board requests/demands?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
29. informal relations with the community?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
30. cultivation of employee relations?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
31. the development of district-wide goals/objectives?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
32. the implementation of district-wide goals/objectives?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
33. familiarity with school law?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI

III. Superintendent Attributes: Circle the response that shows the importance you place on each of the following when selecting a superintendent.

How important is/are:

34. an applicant's age?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
35. the gender (sex) of an applicant?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
36. the amount of education an applicant has?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
37. the administrative experience of the applicant?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
38. the location of the applicant's current position? (i.e. - instate, outstate, regional)	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
39. the religion of an applicant?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
40. personal morals of an applicant?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
41. physical appearance of the applicant?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
42. personal attributes of honesty and integrity?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
43. the number of children an applicant has?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
44. involvement in community clubs/activities?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI
45. the ability of an applicant to take criticism?	LI	SI	I	VI	MI

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON FILLING OUT THIS SURVEY:

Are you male ____ or female ____?

How many years have you been on the board? ____

What is the approximate enrollment of your school (k-12)? ____

APPENDIX B
SUPERINTENDENT LETTER

Kent Hjelmstad
801 Oak Street
Grand Forks, ND 58201
772-2074 (H)
777-4255 (UND work #)

Dear Superintendent,

I am working on a dissertation at the University of North Dakota. The topic is dear to your heart--**Superintendent Hiring Practices in ND**. You were hired within the past four years by your board. I am asking you to assist me to ascertain board hiring practices and attribute preferences.

Please do one of the following:

A. Take 15 minutes during a meeting or work session to survey board members who were **on the board when you were hired**. Collect their surveys and mail them to me in the packet provided.

-OR-

B. Hand out the surveys and have board members, who were **on the board when you were hired**, answer them within two weeks and return them to you. Then mail them to me in the packet provided.

I have included a data sheet on the back of this letter for you to fill out when you are ready to mail the surveys to me. This greatly helps my study. Thank you for your assistance. Feel free to call me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Kent Hjelmstad

Enclosures: 6 board surveys

SUPERINTENDENT DATA SHEET

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

**# OF PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS THAT WERE
ON THE BOARD WHEN YOU WERE HIRED** _____

OF SURVEYS ENCLOSED _____

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE SURVEY RESULTS? _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

Kent Hjelmstad

APPENDIX C
LETTER OF EXPLANATION

Kent Hjelmstad
801 Oak St.
Grand Forks, ND 58201

Dear School Board Member:

I am completing a doctorate at UND by doing a study on **superintendent hiring practices** in North Dakota. Please fill out the attached survey and return it to your superintendent for mailing. Do not sign it. I want your opinions to be confidential and anonymous. Your school was chosen for the study because you recently hired a superintendent.

On the next two pages, you are asked to respond to the importance of each item **when you select a superintendent**. Circle the letters which best indicate your perception or opinion.

EXAMPLES:

Study the following importance scale:

- LI - of little or no importance
- SI - of some importance
- I - important
- VI - very important
- MI - of major importance

SAMPLE A. How important is it that superintendents have experience as teachers?

LI SI I VI MI

B. How important is it that superintendents once taught craft classes?

LI SI I VI MI

Please note that your completion of the survey implies consent to use it for the study of North Dakota superintendent hiring practices. Thank you for helping me with my dissertation data collection.

Sincerely,

Kent Hjelmstad

APPENDIX D
ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX

Rotated Factor Matrix: Hiring Practices

Survey question	Factor 1 (Advisory elements)	Factor 2 (Screening logistics)	Factor 3 (Evaluation sources)	Factor 4 (In depth background assessments)
8	.83912	.17659	-.04831	.14255
7	.77267	-.08026	.00597	.24756
1	.75653	.27439	-.03987	.00784
2	.49540	.24236	.33310	-.39784
10	-.08399	.69208	.25724	.13333
6	.19713	.66911	-.15143	-.15738
9	.18362	.60680	-.11560	.17330
12	.20780	.43249	.36389	.19528
3	.13412	.04111	.78435	.07303
11	-.21374	-.07375	.61455	-.02611
4	.24732	.18233	-.07439	.72419
5	.06668	.06690	.43864	.64543

Note. The computer clusters the three sections of the survey into groups (dimensions) that have similar relations (not necessarily values). These clusters, "factors," were given names for discussion and analysis.

Rotated Factor Matrix: Administrative Skills

Survey question	Factor 1 (Personnel administration and fiscal management)	Factor 2 (Visioning skills)	Factor 3 (Curriculum and instruction)	Factor 4 (Public relations)	Factor 5 (Management tasks)	Factor 6 (Proactive policy execution)
24	.73459	.07007	.04774	.26761	.09406	-.06675
25	.71319	.11551	.20552	-.09496	.21862	.19538
26	.60287	.24588	.06946	.05776	.11061	.30127
15	.54275	-.09161	.22715	.25468	.36141	.10183
21	.53490	.36531	.18684	.15524	.30671	-.25860
31	.15102	.76635	.26846	.40564	-.06016	-.12455
23	.19246	.74901	-.05022	.03034	.04235	.32269
32	.18446	.70324	.17337	.44414	-.08889	-.11766
22	.04251	.59692	.36150	-.03348	.31844	.08369
19	.18487	.06853	.88170	.04644	-.01966	.15344
18	.15394	.21952	.68572	.13499	.21056	.05573
27	.44589	.26842	.48124	.30124	-.12105	.08404
29	.10141	.10765	.11239	.74791	.07778	.27996
14	.00935	.10024	-.06894	.69277	.42853	-.08497
30	.26829	.26469	.18716	.65282	-.03685	.00065
16	.27660	.10094	-.05705	-.00517	.74165	.08396
17	-.04165	.42948	.43078	.02427	.58253	.06108
13	.18869	-.13314	.08473	.23657	.48902	-.03808
33	.12993	.06332	.22344	.26360	.17814	.65542
20	.37525	.19325	.35969	.28374	.08378	-.54905
28	.32375	.15442	.22174	.03611	-.07570	.51979

Rotated Factor Matrix: Superintendent Attributes

Survey question	Factor 1 (Demographic characteristics)	Factor 2 (Personnel characteristics)	Factor 3 (Professional preparation)
34	.79961	.10495	.15664
43	.67221	-.30295	.09636
41	.63308	.19869	.18504
35	.61283	.17723	-.03818
39	.59519	-.01609	-.14286
38	.52369	-.30842	.40138
40	.20454	.74390	-.02457
42	-.10987	.74071	-.05637
45	-.16013	.62371	.30946
44	.20314	.49862	.17201
37	.00772	.01641	.84506
36	.11452	.24867	.78410

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