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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

IN SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOLS:

A SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY MIXED METHODS ANALYSIS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

STEVEN REESE KELLNER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2012

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I would like to express my appreciation to the six superintendents who were kind enough to agree to be part of my research study. I appreciate the never-ending demands of their schedules and owe them a sincere debt of gratitude for their willingness to share their perspectives. Without their participation, this study would not have been completed.

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ABSTRACT

This research study explored the critical nature of the connection between student achievement and superintendent leadership. A great deal of scholarship has addressed either student achievement or leadership and previous evidence has suggested the impact of both parental education and racioethnicity on student achievement, but few studies have investigated the relationship between the superintendent's leadership authority and the achievement of his or her students.

The central research questions of this study are:

- 1) To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
- 2) To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
- 3) When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methodology. Participants included six superintendents from the 71 districts in suburban Chicago that include high

schools. Three of these superintendents led districts where student achievement is exceeding projections and three led districts where student achievement is not meeting projections. Participation in the study was voluntary and included the completion of a “Letter of Cooperation,” a “Letter of Consent,” and a 60-minute interview with the researcher consisting of open-ended questions. The subsequent data collected from the superintendents’ interviews was triangulated with community-aligned student achievement data as well as Sergiovanni’s five sources of authority.

This study concluded that community-aligned student achievement data predicted 93.6% of the variance in student achievement as measured by the ACT composite score. Additionally while superintendents used all of Sergiovanni’s sources of authority with different audiences, superintendents who used moral authority in decision-making that directly impacted the classroom had a positive and measureable impact on student achievement.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In recent years public schools in the United States have become a favorite target of politicians and pundits. While contemporary criticism of public school districts began with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, since the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), often called No Child Left Behind, it has been even more popular to criticize schools for what they are failing to do. Headlines such as: “Failing Schools Have Nowhere to Hide,” “City Schools Under the Gun to Improve,” and “How Exactly are Florida Schools Failing Johnny? Do the Math” are commonplace (Butcher, 2011; Hale, 2011; Pasciak, 2011).

The lion’s share of this criticism is often laid at the feet of teachers or principals for failing our children. Similarly, when an education-related story runs in the local paper it typically features the good works of students and teachers. In his acceptance speech at the 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards Ryan Murphy, the producer of *Glee*, thanked “public school teachers everywhere” for the work that they do to inspire the youth across the country (Wild, D. & Macks, J., Writers and Weiss, G. & Blieden, M., Directors, 2010). It is clear that the public perception of education in schools revolves around the classroom in the form of teaching and learning.

What is missing from this common vision is the impact of the school's chief executive officer, the superintendent. Since the current recession began in 2008, school districts have begun to find themselves facing higher and higher student achievement standards with less funding to meet those standards. The public scrutiny of school districts and their ability to lead effective change has reached unprecedented levels (Gordon & Louis, 2009). Needless to say the public views school administration in general and the superintendent in particular with a significant amount of skepticism. In fact, former Secretary of education Bill Bennett used the term "blob" (bloated educational bureaucracy) to refer to personnel "in the educational system who work outside the classroom, soaking up resources and resisting reform without contributing to student achievement" (Bennett, cited in Marzano, 2009, p. 1). Similarly, Chester Finn (cited in Rorrer, Sklra & Scheurich, 2008), stated emphatically that "the school is the vital delivery system, the state is the policy setter and nothing in between is very important" (p. 308).

Such derision with or without merit cannot diminish the fact that the layer that exists above the school level impacts at a minimum the degree of autonomy a school leader or a classroom teacher may enjoy. A Superintendent is the most publicly visible and accountable person in the school organization; his or her influence on the attitudes and behaviors of his or her subordinates make the link to student achievement a reasonable connection for exploration.

Furthermore, the abundance of literature that purports that school leadership in general impacts student achievement suggests that leadership at all levels of the

educational organization, no matter how distant from the classroom must have *some* impact on student learning (Marzano 2009; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rorrer, Sklra & Scheurich, 2008). As school districts navigate these increasingly challenging times, it is important to understand the role of the superintendent and the impact this critical position has on the ability of principals to lead, teachers to teach and most importantly for students to learn.

Rationale for the Research

When examining the published work in the areas of superintendent leadership and student achievement it becomes clear very quickly that there is little consensus on what constitutes the key competencies for superintendents, how to reliably measure student achievement, and finally how to connect the behavior of the superintendent to the performance of students (Burnett, 1989; Cuban, 1984; Hallenger 2003; Marzano 2003). Given this inconsistency in the literature, it is critical to establish the basis for this study by first examining the use of standardized tests to measure student achievement at the high school level.

Standardized tests have long been used to evaluate academic performance for schools and their students, and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has greatly increased the focus on such testing (No Child Left Behind, 115 STAT. 1425, 2001). There is no question that standardized tests have significant limitations, yet they remain the most feasible way to evaluate large numbers of students, schools, and districts (Sirin, 2005). What has always been challenging however is finding an instrument that was both universally given to students and has been found to be reliable and valid.

The current standardized test used by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), has gone through too many changes to be a dependable measure (Karp, 2010). Additionally, determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), based upon whether a student meets or does not meet standards, loses much information by turning a scale score into pass/fail. This conversion produces data that are too variable for school improvement use (e.g., a 20 percentage point change for a subgroup can be due solely to random chance). National tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are problematic due to the fact that, despite the high quality of the tests, they currently are of minimal importance to the already “overtested” high school students in Illinois (Mcgee, 2004). Hence, students are not motivated to perform at a high level when taking them.

Finally, the participation and performance in Advanced Placement (AP) testing is very useful in assessing a school's curriculum rigor and therefore student learning. AP also can accelerate the college completion timeline and potentially save a student thousands of dollars (The 7th Annual AP Report to the Nation, 2011). However, given the variety of AP tests, and the differing degrees to which schools become involved with AP testing (even among otherwise high-performing schools), summary measures of AP participation and performance alone do not provide a sufficiently precise measure of student performance to be used as a universal rating. It also can be difficult to gather accurate AP data for large groups of schools (Schneider, 2009).

There is little debate that the simplest way to provide a picture of school performance across the Chicagoland suburbs is to compare their ACT scores. However,

such an evaluation has two major limitations. First, many schools may have experienced significant improvement or decline within recent years. Such changes may be attributable to changing demographics within the district (e.g., a large influx of non-English speaking students). More commonly, in the era of No Child Left Behind, school performance levels have increased due to intentional school improvement efforts by administrators and faculty members (Murphy, 2009). Therefore, to evaluate the effect of the efforts of a school's current staff members, it is critical need to examine whether the school has made significant improvement in its performance in recent years.

Secondly, suburban schools in Illinois differ substantially from each other by demographic and economic characteristics. Additionally, suburban Chicagoland has seen significant demographic changes since 1990. Chicago's suburbs are significantly more ethnically and linguistically diverse and have a higher concentration of poverty than ever before (America's Children At-Risk, 1997 and Population Distribution and Change 2000 to 2010, 2011). It is critical to consider these differences in student demographics when examining student performance levels. These differences impact both initial performance and potential for growth (Sirin, 2005). Therefore, test scores alone should be seen more as an evaluation of *student* performance than an evaluation of *district* performance. In order to have a better focus on what the district did do to improve student performance, it is necessary to consider student and community characteristics.

There are hundreds of demographic data sets that could be analyzed when examining student achievement; however, two specific categories merit further investigation: parental education and at-risk racioethnicity. While the link between

socioeconomic status and student's achievement has been studied by researchers for many years, there is a consensus among researchers that parental education and racioethnicity are far and away the most predictive factors and therefore deserve continued investigation (Cordogan, 2008, 2009; Maguson & Duncan, 2006; Sirin, 2005).

Despite these limitations, the ACT is instrument best suited to determining high school student performance in Illinois. The ACT is almost universally administered to Illinois students and has a decades-long track record of reliability and validity for its composite score (Allen, Bassiri & Noble, 2009). Therefore, it can provide a complete and generally accurate picture of how well our students are learning. It has a much higher level of importance to high school students than most standardized tests, since higher levels of performance will significantly enhance student options for college choice and scholarships. Additionally, final ACT data for each graduating class are included in the ISBE-issued school report card, and are downloadable as a database, so the data can be analyzed. This allows both school districts and researchers to determine how high school student performance compares from one district to another using realistic benchmark performance and progress.

In order to better understand educational research in Illinois it is necessary to examine the unique structure to school districts across the state. Illinois has 868 school districts, by far the most per capita in the United States (Kersten, 2008). This proliferation of districts traces its origin all the way back to the Land Ordinance of 1787, commonly referred to as the Northwest Ordinance. This congressional statute divided the Midwest, into six-mile square townships, each composed of 36 one square mile blocks,

the Act specified the requirement that Section 16 of the 36 mile square block be set aside for the maintenance of public schools (Brimley & Garfield, 2002). While many other Midwestern states altered their educational structure to reflect county or city boundaries, in Illinois this structure remains largely intact to this day.

This has resulted in multiple elementary (K-8) districts in a single township sending their students to a single secondary (9-12) district that encompasses the entire township. In the northwest suburbs of Chicago for example Niles Township is composed of the following elementary (K-8) districts: Golf School District 67, Skokie School District 68, Skokie School District 69, Morton Grove School District 70, Niles School District 71, Fairview School District 72, East Prairie School District 73, Skokie School District 73½ and Lincolnwood School District 74. All of these students attend Niles Township High School District 219 for grades 9-12. Outside of the suburban Chicago are some school districts in Illinois are actually unit (K-12) districts due to consolidation or other geographical factors (Kersten, 2008). When conducting research surrounding student achievement and superintendent leadership in Illinois and it is critical to remember that nearly half of the superintendents in Illinois do not have high school students in their districts (Durflinger & Maki, 2007).

In addition to the ability of quantitative elements to measure student achievement it is also key to review some qualitative principles that connect leadership and achievement. It has been well-documented by Dr. Douglas Reeves that schools with student populations over 90% ethnic minority and 90% poverty (as measured by free and reduced lunch applications) have shown that more than 90% of students can meet

academic achievement standards. This research, known as the 90/90/90 studies took place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from 1997 until 2005 (Reeves, 2001 & 2005). Reeves (2005) himself notes that while “these results show that all students can achieve, the real challenge for school leaders is to duplicate these results across the country” (p. 105). This challenge implies what researchers have suggested: superintendent leadership, no matter how distant from the classroom must have *some* impact on student learning (Marzano 2009; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rorrer, Sklra & Scheurich, 2008).

There is little argument that the expectations for school leaders are exceptionally high. In an effort to identify the qualities necessary for success the National Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) identified key competencies as published in the Educational Leadership and Policy Standards in 1996 and updated them in 2008. The ISLLC 2008 standards highlight the critical need to identify the qualities necessary for excellence in school administration. M. Christine DeVita (2007) writes in *A Bridge to School Reform*, “The national conversation has shifted from ‘whether’ leadership really matters or is worth the investment, to ‘how’ to train, place, and support high-quality leadership where it’s needed the most: in the schools and districts where failure remains at epidemic levels” (p. 5). These standards represent the broad, high-priority themes that education leaders must address in order to promote the success of every student. These six superintendent standards call for:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning.
2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts (EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP POLICY STANDARDS: ISLLC 2008).

At a time when the nationwide educational conversation is narrowly focused on high stakes testing, the ISLLC standards provide a clear target for all school leaders. It is in this context that today's superintendents are challenged on a daily basis.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine the leadership characteristics of superintendents across the 71 suburban Chicago school districts that include high schools and to more specifically answer these three research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban

Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

The first two research questions were answered using a quantitative model used to conduct two previous studies in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois. In these studies he created a variable entitled BARR (bachelor's degree minus at-risk racioethnicity) which combined the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus one-half the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school district.

Null Hypotheses

This study explores several null hypotheses. Those hypotheses are articulated as follows:

To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

1. There is no relationship between parental education and high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland.

To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

2. There is no relationship between at-risk racioethnic group (Hispanic, African American and Native American) students' BARR and their academic achievement in suburban Chicagoland.

When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

While this portion of the sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, 2007) is qualitative in nature, it is important to recognize the potential null hypotheses. After investigating the interview responses of suburban Chicagoland superintendents it is important to understand that the data could reveal that there is no difference between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (1) Bureaucratic Authority. Additionally, the same could be true of the relationship between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority or (5) Moral Authority.

Conceptual Framework

This research is grounded in the concept of leadership authority as defined by Thomas Sergiovanni (1992). His work involved identifying five types of authority including: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority. Identifying the type

of authority a leader uses allows researchers to draw comparisons between districts and superintendents.

This study is an appropriate application of a sequential explanatory design because of the critical nature of the connection between student achievement and leadership. A great deal of scholarship has addressed either student achievement (Kim, 2005; Murphy, 2009; Schmoker, 2006; Schneider, 2009; Sirin, 2005) or leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Fullan, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Schein, 1985; Senge, 1990) but few studies have investigated the relationship between the superintendent and the achievement of his or her students. Unless the type of student achievement of a district is compared with the leadership authority in a specific district one is left to make speculations about those connections. Far too often leadership is discounted as being a matter of “style”. Leadership authority when paired with student achievement can become a powerful tool for evaluating the effectiveness of individual superintendents and can begin the conversation around effective educational leadership on a larger scale.

It is widely accepted that members of the public and boards of education are expecting tangible increases in student achievement. There is little doubt that in this day and age superintendents can no longer be managers of a school system, they are instead expected to be instructional leaders (DiPiola & Stronge, 2000). As noted in the evolution of the ISLLC standards from 1996 to 2008, it is critical for effective leadership at the superintendent level to focus student learning. There are many individual components that enable a superintendent to effectively implement a “widely shared vision for learning” (ISLLC, 2008, p. 4). It is clear that selecting and professionally developing

classroom teachers, consistently using a well-defined curriculum planning process and cultivating collaborative relationships are all necessary for superintendents to bring about systemic change and sustained improvement in student learning (Johnson, 1996; Patton, 1999; Reeves, 2009; Rosborg, McGee, & Burgett, 2007; Yun & Moreno, 2006).

With this clear need to focus on student learning, it is vital to understand how each superintendent approaches his or her concept of authority. According to Thomas Sergovanni (1992), “a leader’s source of authority is central to his theoretical framework.” Sergovanni defines five sources of authority:

Bureaucratic Authority – this often takes the form of mandates, rules and job descriptions deferring to the system rather than the individual situation. In short, there is a right way and a wrong way to do things in the school district. For those who comply with the leader’s mandates, there are rewards such as tenure or recognition among peers. For those who are not in alignment with the mandates, there are punishments such as disciplinary actions up to and including termination.

Psychological Authority – relies on motivational technology and human relations skills to accomplish tasks and goals. Leaders who rely on psychological authority are relying on their own personality to build relationships with faculty members. The leaders then use that relationship as the means to get teachers to do what the leader wants them to do.

Technical-Rational Authority – uses logic and scientific research to justify actions and persuade others of the direction chosen. Leaders who

primarily rely on this source of authority may view themselves as the experts in the current research on best teacher practices or in student performance data analysis.

Professional Authority – comes from the mindset that there is a responsibility larger than the school or the district. As educators we have a duty to seek the best opportunities for our students. Professional authority recognizes that teachers’ classroom experiences and expertise are valuable to the overall organization and that, instead of relying on rules or personality leaders can rely on accepted standards of practice which lead to student success.

Moral Authority – takes the form of obligation and duties derived from widely shared values, ideas and ideals. This is “uncommon leadership” because it often requires the leader to defer to the shared values rather than imposing them on others. If the leader does this successfully, then the organization will transform into a community of people committed to shared values and people’s actions will be in concert with the shared values.

Additionally the type of authority a superintendent uses will determine the approach he or she will employ when leading an entire school district in a direction that will ultimately improve student achievement. The school superintendent takes on a filtering effect or “gatekeeper role” emanating from the moral authority ascribed to the Office of Superintendent (Schlechty, 1997). In the end many educators share the view of

Dr. Jennifer Lam (1992) when it comes to the ultimate goal of a successful superintendency: “the role of the superintendent is to cultivate the leadership potential of every single employee, student and parent in our school system.”

Methodology

The sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, 2007) of this study focuses on measuring student achievement as measured by the ACT composite score in 71 Chicagoland suburban school districts (containing 129 high schools) which are located in Cook, Lake, DuPage, Will, Kane and McHenry counties. The work replicates a model used to conduct two studies in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois and seeks to extend these findings. Subsequent to the quantitative data collection and analysis, a semi-structured interview protocol will be generated and six superintendents, three from higher performing and three from lower performing districts will be purposively sampled.

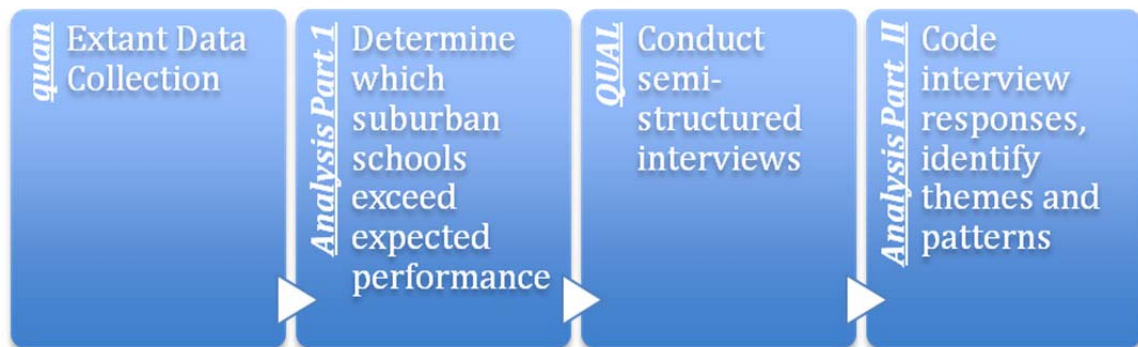


Figure 1. Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Research Protocol

There is no easy and foolproof way to adjust for differences among school demographic or economic characteristics, but recent studies of 2010 data in the state

school report card database and other district demographic data available from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2008 data are the most recent available) have shown that two factors consistently demonstrate the highest level of predictive power for suburban school ACT performance:

- the percentage of parents in the district with at least a bachelor's degree, and
- the percentage of students who are members of academically at-risk racioethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, and Native American).

These factors, while highly related to income (e.g., at-risk racioethnic levels explain 80.5% of the variance in free-reduced lunch levels), provide higher levels of explanation than any analyses using income-related or other (e.g., mobility rates, % single parent families) variables. They explain the same amount of variance regardless of whether they are combined in a multiple regression analysis or used to create a single variable: the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus one-half the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school, which has been used in past quantitative studies (Cordogan, 2008, 2009). Either approach explains at least 94.5% of the variance in suburban school district ACT Class of 2009 composite score levels, a figure consistent with findings for the previous two years. Incidentally, the relationship was not found to be meaningfully curvilinear, so the linear explanation of variance figure fits the data well (Cordogan, 2008, 2009).

The measure of parental bachelor's degrees found in each school district often predict higher achieving students for a variety of reasons including: greater parental emphasis on academic achievement; greater involvement in their child's education;

higher levels of financial support for the schools; higher paid faculty members and administrators, and less student at-risk issues due to poverty (Murphy, 2009).

Using these at-risk and education level data, a regression analysis model can be produced that predicts expected ACT performance based upon a schools at-risk level. By subtracting the schools actual ACT score from the score predicted by the model, one can determine the number of points the school's performance is above or below expected performance. The computation of that score's difference from expected ACT score can be used as another measure to understand suburban school performance.

The study will include 71 of the 75 public school districts with high schools that are located in the collar counties, consisting of suburban Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will. The four districts that were located within Will, Kane, and McHenry county and were excluded from the analysis exemplify predominantly rural characteristics such as low population density, lower per pupil expenditures and more limited curricular offerings rather than suburban characteristics such as medium population density, higher per pupil expenditures and extensive curricular offerings (Population Distribution and Change 2000 to 2010, 2011). These districts enroll 282,704 high school students, over 44.0% of the state's 641,976 public high school students. Therefore, any findings contrasting suburban school performance with state averages must consider the fact that 44% of the state average for any measure is produced by suburban schools. So in this study, suburban schools will be compared to each other rather than to non-suburban schools.

Summary

There are many pitfalls in trying to assess school quality, and even the multiple measures used in this proposal are limited in their accuracy by many considerations. Other factors, such as significant fluctuations in scores between years, changes in school demographics and frequent changes in district leadership must be considered before reaching any conclusions about a school's performance. However, when the information to be gathered from this study is applied with the understanding of other considerations within individual schools and districts, an honest assessment of Illinois suburban schools' performance and its leaders can be completed.

No single measure can define school district performance. ACT scores measure only a part of the knowledge and skills our students need for the 21st century. A more authentic way to evaluate school district performance is to examine how much student performance grew while the student attended school within the district. This analysis could only be completed with stable and valid test pre-post data, which are not yet available in Illinois for all schools. But even if such data were available, growth levels will be substantially impacted both by district demographics and its leadership.

The combination of student achievement data and leadership authority used by superintendents can provide insight into a framework for student success. School districts are large and complex organizations. Too often there are many factors that obscure the primary purpose of schools: student learning. To promote the greatest impact on student learning it is vital to connect how students are performing to the leadership

provided by their superintendent. With this knowledge our educational leaders can provide more effective and meaningful educational opportunities for children.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the literature surrounding the topics of student achievement, the superintendency and leadership authority in order to provide the appropriate context to answer the following research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

More specifically the three topics will each be explored in detail. Within the purview of student achievement it is critical to understand the nature of high-stakes testing in the United States, the relationship between parental demographics and student

achievement and finally a focus on how high schools are uniquely impacted by the current reality of high stakes testing. Secondly, in order to better understand the superintendency, a review of who currently occupies the position nationwide and how they ascended to the role is necessary. This foundation will provide the appropriate context to appreciate the change in focus of the superintendent's role to that of an instructional leader. Finally in this study it is necessary to investigate the current academic literature for an understanding of leadership authority and why the contribution of Thomas Sergiovanni and his concept of "moral authority" is best suited to analyze both superintendent leadership and student achievement.

Student Achievement

High Stakes Assessment

High-stakes standardized testing has become the face of educational accountability over the past two decades. Diane Ravitch (2002) stated, "holding not only students, but also teachers, principals, schools, and even school districts accountable for student performance, is a recent invention" (p. 9). According to Mazzeo (2000), the role of student assessment can now be viewed as a powerful instrument of reform and change. Numerous researchers (Mazzeo, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Perkinson, 1995; Wong & Nicotera, 2007) have found that policymakers in the United States, and around the world, have increased the use of student assessment based on the belief that these policies will motivate students, parents, teachers, administrators, and will guarantee that appropriate curriculum is taught. In response to federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) achievement targets, performance standards for grade advancement and promotion have

been implemented from kindergarten through twelfth grade. While much of the initial attention given to NCLB focused on its impact at the elementary and middle school levels, the escalating impact of the standards-based high-stakes assessment and accountability movement at the high school level has, according to WestEd (2003), resulted in 30 states instituting exit-exams as a high school graduation requirement.

While the impact and importance of high-stakes testing currently appears to be reaching its zenith, these efforts represent a pervasive movement whose goal is to reform education by raising stakes for students, teachers, administrators, schools and school districts (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). According to Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey and Stecher (2000), educational leaders should understand that testing policy represents a political solution to an educational problem. High-stakes standardized testing as a means of reform has captured the support of many local, state, and national political leaders including the presidents Obama, G.W. Bush and Clinton, members of Congress, a majority of governors, state legislatures, and boards of education (Haney, 2009).

As a direct result of his role as Governor of Texas and as President of the United States, George W. Bush became one of the most influential supporters of reforming schools by using state-mandated high-stakes tests. On August 1, 2001, then president George W. Bush said, “accountability is an exercise in hope. When we raise academic standards, children raise their academic sights. When children are regularly tested, teachers know where and how to improve. When scores are known to parents, parents are empowered to push for change” (Hamilton, Stecher & Klein, 2002, p. 16). Policymakers expect testing programs to certify a student’s level of achievement, provide information

about an education system's effectiveness, motivate student performance, bringing coherence to a curriculum, and hold schools and educators accountable for student performance (Klein et al., 2000).

According to the *Fact Sheet* prepared by the U.S. House of Representatives Education and Workforce Committee (2002), high-stakes testing and the accountability that accompanied it was the centerpiece of President Bush's plan to improve public schools and close the achievement gap that has existed between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. According to Wong and Nicotera (2007), the standards-based movement's central new expectation is that "all children should receive the high level of education once reserved for a fraction of our nation's students" (p. 11). The underlying belief is that school districts need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate their teachers to improve instruction and particularly to push the least motivated ones to perform (Stecher & Hamilton, 2002).

The extensive use of high-stakes testing presupposes that it will help school districts focus on what is important to teach (Schlechty, 1997). Wong and Nicotera (2007) note that data from high stakes testing provides information that can be used by administrators, teachers, and support staff to influence instructional improvement. Furthermore depending on the format, these assessment data can provide indications of the extent to which students have learned instructional objectives as well as providing an indication of individual student progress from year-to-year (Mertler, 2007; Wong & Nicotera, 2007).

While school districts, educational leaders and teachers are often the focus of any

high stakes testing discussion, it is critical to remember that students most directly experience the effects of high-stakes testing. Proponents maintain that poor achievement on high-stakes tests will lead to an increased effort to learn on the part of the student. A study conducted in the Chicago Public Schools found that for 102 low-achieving sixth and eighth graders who were placed in a high-stakes testing context, the majority of the students showed increased work efforts which, in turn, translated into higher gains in learning (Roderick & Engel, 2001). In addition, a study of higher education students showed that frequent testing was more effective than frequent homework for improving their retention of information particularly among low-achieving students (Tuckman, 2003).

Despite the well-intentioned efforts of public policy makers, a myriad of challenges stand in the way of the most effective use of high-stakes testing. At the most basic level, many critics take issue with the tests themselves. Standardized tests have long been considered by some scholars as unfair and biased against students of ethnic and language minorities or students of poverty because these tests are based in large measure on the experiences of middle class European Americans (Hilliard, 2000; Neill & Medina, 1989). In addition, when tests are based primarily on multiple-choice items, the response format frequently prevents test-takers from most completely conveying what they understand about a particular topic. Additionally high stakes tests typically do not take into account the possible logical explanations for “incorrect” choices that test-takers make (Falk, 2002).

Policymakers have a multitude of expectations for high stakes tests including

certifying a student's level of achievement, providing information about an education system's effectiveness, motivating student performance, bringing coherence to a curriculum, and holding schools and educators accountable for student performance (Hamilton, Stecher & Klein, 2002; Wong & Nicotera, 2007). Researchers will argue that single high-stakes instruments cannot be designed for these diverse roles, and it is unreasonable to expect them to do so (Lim, 2003). Furthermore, a high stakes test that has been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of an individual student should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school or school district (Cordogan, 2008). According to Huebert and Hauser (1999), assessing a student's mastery of a content standard demands criterion-referenced testing while conversely ranking districts, schools or students demands norm-referenced testing. Therefore, one test cannot adequately do both.

Many superintendents and other educational leaders have expressed concern that exclusively using high-stakes testing is an overly simplistic approach to improving student achievement (Mcgee, 2004). According to Kohn (2004), using catch phrases such as "raising the bar," "accountability," and "higher standards," lawmakers, without an understanding of how children learn, have mandated a test-driven version of school reform that is lowering the quality of education in this country by narrowing the curriculum. While high stakes testing has been a part of education since the early 20th century, test scores have shown no evidence of opening children's access to great literature, to conceptual understanding in mathematics, to fluency in writing, or to other learning experiences that seriously address previous inadequacies in their education

(Denny, 2008; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2000).

Parental Demographics and Student Achievement

Educational leaders have long understood that their communities in general, and the parents of their students in particular, have a great deal of influence over the performance of their students (Morazes, 2011). In 1966 the Coleman Report established parental education level as a powerful predictor of high school academic performance and postsecondary degree attainment (Coleman et al., 1966; Grubb, 2009; Skaling, 1971). It is critical to note however that there is a distinct difference between *prediction* and *predestination* of a student's academic achievement. It is vital for educators to keep in mind that demographics do not predestine academic performance. If predestination were a reality then it would not be possible to close the achievement gap or allow education to serve as a fundamental part of a democratic society (Klein, 2006; Kohn, 2004). Nevertheless, student, school, district, and community demographics often have a significant role in determining of academic performance (Cordogan, 2008). As a result, school and district evaluation always should consider demographic characteristics.

In a meta-analysis of studies investigating socioeconomic status and student achievement Sirin (2005) reported that parent education level was the most commonly used measure of socioeconomic status in research reports included in these analyses. Additionally, Magnuson and Duncan (2006) in a review of achievement gap studies considered the questions of whether or not income, education and occupation should be treated separately or as an interactive composite.

Although there is some debate over whether parental education level is part of a larger parental capital variable, the evidence supports a strong correlation between years of parental schooling and student academic achievement (Magnuson & Duncan, 2006). Despite some disagreement between scholars over how to measure parental education, whether to use maternal education level (Hakkien, Kirjavainen & Uusitalo, 2003) or use the education level of the parent with the higher level (Lee & Bowne, 2006) it is critical to be conscious of the potential inaccuracy of self-reported data (Sirin, 2005).

Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor (2009) found that accounting for socioeconomic factors, including parental education, among elementary students in North Carolina explained much of the achievement gap. Rumberger and Willms (1992) reported similar results in a study of California High School students. Additionally, Nonoyama-Tarumi and Willms (2009) studied students from forty-three nations and described the relationship between parent education and student academic achievement thusly “indeed the correlation between student achievement and parental education is present across grade levels and a wide geographic range” (p. 156).

In a study of Hispanic preschool students, Valencia (1997) found that parental education level did explain student cognitive ability. Sirin (2005) reported that among studies included in his meta-analysis, socioeconomic factors generally had strong effects in elementary school through middle school before diminishing somewhat during high school. However, the higher dropout rate among low socioeconomic high school students may account for the observed decrease in strength of effect (Alwin & Thorton, 1984; Buriel & Cardoza, 1988; Roscigno, 2000).

Descriptive national reports and peer-reviewed literature over the past 15 years have chronicled trends with respect to students whose parents do not have a college education. The trends documented in these reports demonstrate that, while students whose parents did not attend college are matriculating into post-secondary education in higher numbers and contributing to a more diverse student population (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998), this student group still endures many barriers to achievement, access, and attainment. Given the preponderance of research in this area, there is little doubt that a significant relationship exists between parental education levels and student academic achievement (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2009; Nonoyama-Tarumi & Willms, 2009; Rumberger & Willms, 1992).

Unique Impact for High Schools

Since the implementation of NCLB in 2002 the performance of elementary and middle school students have received a great deal of attention from both the media and academic researchers (Center on Education Policy, 2007). Testing frequency is significantly different for elementary and secondary students. One, oft discussed, issue is how frequently students should be tested. NCLB requires that states test students once a year in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in grades 10-12. In addition, states must test in science at least one time in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. States have the option to require additional testing if desired, but they must fund the additional testing. Annual testing is set forth to measure schools' effectiveness while working to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap (Center on Education Policy, 2007).

Nationally, tests are given annually to students in grades 3 through 8. Despite of the burdens of annual testing at the elementary grades, school districts have an advantage if they choose to use these results constructively to enhance student learning. Districts have multiple years to work with students after receiving annual student performance data. These data help craft intervention programs and remediation strategies for struggling students over the course of eight years.

As NCLB performance targets increased however, the unique challenges for high schools and the educational leaders who serve them has become more and more apparent (Denny, 2008). By in large high schools receive performance data on their students only once and do not have an opportunity to remediate these students and allow them to test again. While it is not often labeled as such, the 10th or 11th grade assessment under NCLB is essentially a summative assessment, leaving high schools to be held accountable for 10 years of learning or lack thereof (Bettinger, Evans, & Pope 2011).

Comprehensive public high schools across the United States are charged with serving all students. A primary focus of NCLB is to close the achievement gap between the performances of subgroups. These subgroups include: special education, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficiency (LEP), and racial/ethnic groups. While these same challenges apply to elementary and middle schools, high schools can become penalized by a successful elementary system. Students in grades K-8 receive tremendous amounts of classroom-based and school-wide interventions to address barriers to learning at the earliest possible level (Yun & Moreno, 2006). As a result of these efforts more students than ever before rejoin their classmates at grade level and

often leave behind their ELL or Special Education label (Urban & Waroner, 2009). As educational leaders and school districts work harder than ever before to close achievement gaps for those students with the most challenging learning needs, students that are still achieving below grade level as they enter high school represent individuals with profound obstacles to learning (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Students receiving special education and ELL services at the high school level most clearly exemplify this phenomenon (Morazes, 2011).

Challenges involved in testing special education and LEP/ELL students can be daunting. What makes this even more challenging for many districts at the high school level is the subgroup size established to reflect the performance of these various population groups. In addition to requiring testing of 95% of a school's population, NLCB requires that schools must meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by assessing various subgroups within their population of students (Falk, 2002). As a result of these regulations and due to the overall student population of high schools, a vast majority of American high schools have multiple sub-groups of challenged learners (Perie et al., 2007). Simply put the larger a high school is the more likely they are to have many different sub-groups.

Controversy still exists regarding to what extent assessment scores of the special education subgroup should count towards a school's accountability. Quenemoen, Thurlow, Moen, Thompson and Morse (2003) explained that when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was updated in 1997, "significant new requirements were put into place to ensure that all students had access to and made progress in the

general curriculum to the maximum extent possible” (p. 1). They added,

one way to support this . . . was to require that students with disabilities participate in state and district assessments, with appropriate accommodations if necessary, or in alternate assessments developed for those students unable to participate in general state and district assessments. (p. 1)

A Thomas B. Fordham Institute study (Cronin et al., 2009) illustrates the enormity of the challenge facing our nation’s educational leaders by reporting that in only 2% to 6% of cases did students-with-disabilities (SWDs) achieve their targets. Ultimately even the highest performing schools—schools whose own LEP or SWD subgroups outperformed most or all of the same students in other schools—generally failed their AMO [Annual Measurable Objective]. (p. 13)

As a result of this information educational leaders are left to come to the same conclusion as the Commission on No Child Left Behind “even if a school does an admirable job educating their students with disabilities subgroup, they rarely succeed in moving those students to a proficient level” (Commission on No Child Left Behind, 2006, p. 1).

Another subgroup with challenges regarding testing includes students classified as limited English proficiency (LEP) students or English Language Learners (ELL). The advantage to testing LEP/ELL students is that it ensures that all students are held to high expectations, helping to reduce the achievement gaps between subgroups. However, there are difficulties to holding schools accountable for LEP/ELL students’ results. According

to Abedi and Dietel (2004), “state tests show that ELL students’ school performance is far below that of other students, oftentimes 20 to 30 percentage points, and usually shows little improvement across many years” (p. 1). They added:

Researchers have long postulated that a central cause of flat ELL test scores is the regular removal of high-achieving students from the ELL subgroup. For example, in California, once ELL students become language proficient, they are redesignated as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) and removed from the ELL subgroup. This problem is only exacerbated as students reach middle and high schools. (p. 3)

Educators familiar with ELL students have long wrestled with the of dual challenge of helping students to learn English while at the same time infusing grade-level appropriate content (Dietel, 2011). This challenge is exacerbated at the high school level where academic English becomes less and less accessible to ELL students whose first exposure to English begins at age 14 or later and the implications can be dire. ELL students who lack English literacy are essentially denied access to employment that can earn a living wage (Ovando, 2003).

In addition to the challenges surrounding high stakes assessments and our nation’s neediest students, educational leaders in high schools have unique challenges with the assessment instruments themselves. While each state has specific challenges with regard to their high school high stakes testing, the five states which use the ACT as all or part of their assessment face similar challenges. Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, and Wyoming currently administer the ACT to all their public high school students

(Statewide Administration of the ACT: A Key Component in Improving Student Access to College and Work, 2009). In each of these states the ACT test taken in a student's junior year and is required both for graduation and to meet federal NCLB guidelines. The ACT test is developed by ACT, Inc. and is scored on a common scale that extends from 1 to 36. These tests are considered norm-referenced because individual student scores are compared to a national population of student scores for that same test (ACT, 2007).

As the ACT college entrance examination is at the core of No Child Left Behind compliance for all five states, researchers have raised questions about its individual components. A 2011 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) found that "after controlling for Mathematics and English scores, Reading and Science provide essentially no predictive power regarding college outcomes" (Bettinger, Evans & Pope, 2011). Ironically, research by ACT itself also showed the very weak predictive power of the reading and science tests (ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, Retention, and First-Year College GPA: What's the Connection, 2005). Additionally, most high schools do not have the capacity to conduct the kind of psychometric research necessary to identify the degree to which a test is tied to the standards which are to be measured in the classroom (Heubert & Hauser, 2006). Even the best standardized tests may have little connection to overall individual student performance in the classroom.

Testing should serve to provide results that give a school, district, and state a clear picture of how well students are reaching content and performance standards. As Joel Klein (2006), chancellor of New York City Department of Education, indicated in his

written testimony to the Commission on NCLB, “we need to keep our eyes on the ultimate goal, which is ensuring that every child can read and do math on a high level” (p. 3). While focusing on individual improvement, schools, according to NCLB, must also take into account the various subgroups in order to close the achievement gap. Perie et al. (2009) stated:

An ACT-type (e.g., the ACT PLAN) math test probably would have a meaningful connection to overall 9th or 10th grade math class content, but how accurately the test will measure a specific subject is another matter. For example, such generic instruments may be biased toward algebra at the expense of geometry, or may not necessarily be focused on the specific needs of an honors-level class. Then these results will be generalized to the full population. Now, however, the movement has been towards assessing every student and evaluating every teacher and school. (p. 5)

Superintendency

Composition of Today’s Superintendent

The school superintendent is arguably the most important leadership position in any school district. He or she has the responsibility to ensure the children who attend the district’s schools secure a future built upon a solid education. Superintendents must judiciously and carefully use their authority to ensure quality learning is occurring equitably among all schools that serve the district’s children. As the CEOs of their respective districts, superintendents must orchestrate all resources, both human and material, to fulfill the school district’s mission and to realize its vision (Haddick, 2008).

What is the best way to describe our superintendents nationwide? Primarily, they are white, middle-aged males (Bell, 1988; Brunner, 1998, 1999, 2007; Chase, 1995; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1999, 2007). This disparity in race and gender is notable given the makeup of educators in the United States. Bjork, Glass, and Brunner (2005) indicate approximately 75% of all K-12 teachers are female and 62% are white. This marked difference in demographics creates leadership challenges for all superintendents. For female and minority superintendents there is a benefit from more closely reflecting their teaching staffs while simultaneously facing the challenge of being a distinct minority among their superintendent colleagues. Conversely white, male superintendents face the opposite challenge (Tallerica, 2000).

In Illinois the results were very similar to those reported nationally. The average Illinois superintendent in 2007 was a white male, 52 years old, who had been in education for 28 years, had been a superintendent for eight years, and was in his current position for just over five years. He had a three- or four-year contract and a Certificate of Advanced Study or Education Specialist degree. However, an elementary district superintendent was more likely to be female or minority (Durflinger & Maki, 2007).

These results mirror those that were reported by the Illinois Association of School Boards in 2008. Although the IASB survey had a higher response rate with 47% of Illinois superintendents responding, the results were strikingly similar. 73.8% of the respondents were male and 95.3% were Caucasian. Experience and age responses were also similar: 70% of respondents were 50 years old or older and 50% of the

superintendents had served for at least five years in the role (Illinois Association of School Boards, 2009).

Table 1

Superintendent Demographics in Illinois

Personal Characteristics by District Type	Percentage by District Type			
	Unit N= 62	High School N= 11	Elementary N= 41	Total N=127
Gender				
Male	81.7	90.9	70.7	78.8
Female	18.3	9.1	29.3	21.2
Ethnic Background				
Caucasian	98.2	100	89.5	95.2
African-American	0.0	0.0	5.3	1.9
American Indian	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.0
Latino	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.0
Level of Education				
Masters Plus	6.6	0.0	12.2	8.0
Certificate of Advanced Study	68.9	40.0	36.6	54.9
Doctorate	24.6	60.0	51.2	37.2

Source: Durflinger, N. & Maki, M. 2007

Additionally in Illinois and across the nation an increasing percentage of superintendents were new to the position. In 2002 one third of the superintendents were in the position one to five years, whereas in 2007 and 2008 almost one half of the superintendents were in the position one to five years (Glass, 2009). Given the current educational climate of high stakes testing and declining revenue it is not surprising to see

experienced superintendents decide to opt for retirement rather than extend their tenure through an additional three or four year contract (Wise, 2008).

Route to Achieve Superintendency

As the demands on the superintendent grow, the number of people with an appetite for the job is steadily declining (Reeves, 2005). While the pay and recognition are appealing to outsiders, the real demands of 18-hour days, no job security, perpetual second-guessing and personal attacks on top school leaders take their inevitable toll (Patton, 1999). Superintendents in the 21st century assume far more roles than their predecessors ever did. Currently the work week for school superintendents averages 75 hours including two to three evening meetings (Plotts, 2011). It is no secret that districts are walking a tightrope; they are struggling to meet AYP goals set by No Child Left Behind while they are facing budget shortfalls which often necessitate cutting programs or staff. “While superintendents and schools work within these realities, the political and public outcry is schools are not efficient and they are failing our students” (Sharp, Walter & McDaniel, 2009, p. 2).

Researchers have been able to paint a portrait that begins to describe the stark demographic disparities among current superintendents. It is clear that superintendents predominantly follow one of two distinct career paths (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). The first career path moves from classroom teacher to school administrator to district administrator to superintendent. The second career path also begins with classroom teaching and school administration but then jumps directly to superintendent. Women and ethnic minority educators, who spend on average between five and ten years longer

in the classroom than white men, tend to fall into the first track meaning they spend time as a district administrator, as a director of a specialized service or as a coordinator of a curricular area before ascending to the superintendency. More white men than women or ethnic minorities tend to fall into the second track, jumping from teacher to principalship to the superintendency (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000).

In addition to time in a chosen career path limiting the number of women and minority superintendents, research suggests that bias within the interview process prior to the superintendency may significantly limit opportunities for minority candidates (DeAngelis, 2003). DeAngelis' research focused on African-American Type 75 certificate holders in Illinois. She found that nearly one in five Caucasian candidates received their first administrative position without formally applying. This was not true for a single African-American candidate in her study. Since the principalship is currently saturated with internal non-minority candidates, the likelihood of aspiring minority candidates successfully reaching the superintendency becomes even more remote. When this research is coupled with the knowledge that one in three superintendents surveyed were hired from within the same district where they were employed as an administrator (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000) it is clear that ethnic minority candidates begin an already difficult career path at a distinct disadvantage.

Superintendent as Instructional Leader

Most observers of the daily operation of American schools would agree that the superintendent is central in the operation and administration of these institutions. This observation is based primarily on theory and expectation rather than on clear empirical

evidence (Mitchell, 2011). However outside of the community of educational researchers, few regard the superintendent as the instructional leader of the school system (Björk, 2000). Although studies and research on how well modern superintendents are meeting the demands and expectations of their role are somewhat limited, they exist. A limited number of studies analyze role conflict and role ambiguity as related to job performance and job satisfaction (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1983; Blumberg, 1985; Caldwell & Forney, 1982), some investigate the effects of management and leadership style on effectiveness (Barraclough, 1973; Gilliam 1986; Johnson, 1986; Ortiz, 1987; Southard, 1985), and still others examine role behavior (Duignan, 1980; Pitner & Ogawa, 1981; Willower & Fraser, 1980).

The scope of the school superintendent is evolving into one that encompasses a broad array of skills with a distinct focus on leadership for instruction. In describing the modern superintendent, Dr. Ruben Olivarez of the University of Texas Cooperative Superintendency Program identified 10 functions that a successful superintendent performs as he/she leads a school district. They are: governance, curriculum and instruction, instructional support services, human resource services, finance/budget operations, administrative/business operations, facilities planning and plant services, technology services, Internal and external communications, safety and security services (Olivarez, 2008).

Accountability and high stakes assessments have required a new breed of superintendents who are focused on understanding critical classroom practices which promote higher student achievement (Cooper et al., 2000; Glasspool, 2006). “The need is

there for strong school leadership to prepare students to appreciate and face the future with courage and confidence” (Malone et al., 2000, p. 6). “The school superintendent is no longer a supervisor of procedures and technical operations but a person who is a leader focused on a common goal” (Glasspool, 2006, p. 14).

The role of the superintendent of schools has become a hotbed of political focus in recent years. Brown, Swenson and Hertz (2010) write about a specific context in the state of New Jersey where Superintendent contracts are being capped since Governor Chris Christie took office:

No longer is it sufficient for the designated leader of a school district to be an accomplished educator and respected person. In a climate of high expectations, and blame placing, superintendents are expected to be all things to all populations. From adept politicians to visionaries, superintendents are asked to meld the confusion of here and now, while focusing on a future vision of sweeping success for all. Further, school leaders are expected to perform these functions in the context of institutional hierarchies that allow blame and failure to be placed squarely on doorstep of the superintendent’s office. In short, the role of the superintendent is at once complex, difficult and fraught with potential failure. (p. 9)

Given the current political climate in New Jersey is reflective of a larger national trend superintendents are challenged with what can be best described as a “catch-22”. Although more and more accountability is placed on the superintendent to improve

academic achievement and act as an instructional leader, external forces continue to demand that superintendents focus their time away from the classroom (Cuban, 1998; Glass, Bjork & Brunner 2000; Hodges, 2005; Howley & Pendarvis, 2002).

Understanding this tenuous situation, superintendents today must also be nimble enough to respond effectively to these varied pressures while staying focused on the crucial mission of improving student learning (Houston, 2007). As chief executive of the school board, the superintendent is expected to remain the efficient manager and relate effectively to the board, secure adequate funding, maintain district facilities, relate well to the community, secure and develop highly effective educators, and improve educational opportunities for all students (Cuban, 1988; Willower & Fraser, 1980; Wolf, 1988). In the end, school superintendents are far more motivated in the success of the students they serve than by the transient appreciation (or condemnation) of political forces (Reeves, 2004).

Leadership Authority

Impact of Leadership Authority

Although there is a paucity of information connecting the leadership authority of superintendents and the achievement of their students, the superintendency itself has been the subject of study by researchers for many decades. Kowalski and Bjork (2005) note that the role of the school superintendent was created in the mid-1800s when 13 urban districts employed such an individual. In the early 20th century, as school centralization began to achieve more and more support nationwide and professional education of school

administrators became commonplace, the need for a central authority residing in the superintendency became “professionalized” (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Compared to studies connecting the principal’s leadership authority to student achievement with studies linking the superintendent’s leadership authority to student achievement- there are far fewer. In 1984 Larry Cuban stated “little attention is directed to the role of district leadership and the impact of its authority, concentration upon the local school site and the principal’s leadership dominates the research” (p. 132). A number of studies agree with Cuban’s assertions (Adams, 1987; Bidwell & Karsada, 1975; Bridges, 1982; Byrd, 2001; Clore, 1991; Roerr, Skrla & Scheurich, 2008).

Bridges (2005) commented that “the superintendent stands at the apex of the organizational pyramid in education and manages a multi-million dollar enterprise charged with the moral and technical socialization of youth, aged 6-18” (p. 92). Despite the importance of this administrative role to education and society, less than a handful of studies analyzed in this review investigate the impact of the leadership of the chief executive officer on student achievement outcomes. A quarter century later (Roerr, Skrla & Scheurich, 2008) the scholarly literature on the contribution of superintendent leadership remained wanting:

Intermittent attention to the district as the unit of study has left a void in our understanding of the complexities associated with the ability of district-level leaders to contribute to educational reform. In general ‘school reform’, ‘school improvement’ and ‘school effectiveness’ research over the past two decades has often overlooked, ignored and even dismissed the potential of district leadership

as substantial contributors to systemic reform. In fact a consistent theme among many scholars has been the argument that the responsibility for and control of reform efforts should be located at the individual school level. (pp. 307-308)

Additional research has focused on describing the work of superintendents and the contexts in which they work rather than the impact of the leadership authority of the superintendent (Coburn, 2008; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Hallenger 1986; Pinter & Ogawa, 1981; Trevino, 2008).

The association between district leadership authority and student learning has raised some questions about the validity of this relationship (Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003). Witziers, Bosker and Kruger conducted a quantitative meta-analysis which looked at the research from 1986 to 1996 in an effort to examine the “elusive” direct link to student achievement. This study examined 37 studies and re-analyzed a 1993 study from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) on reading literacy. The authors concluded that there existed “no evidence for a direct effect of educational leadership authority on student achievement on secondary schools” (p. 415).

More recently however, district leaders were encouraged by the work of Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2006) who presented what they deemed a different perspective. Their research suggested that “the research over the last 35 years provides strong guidance on specific leadership behaviors for school administrators and that those behaviors have well-documented effects on student achievement” (p. 7). While all studies, they admitted, have uncontrolled error, Marzano, Waters and McNulty tout the

quantitative meta-analytic approach used in this study because “it provides the most objective means to answer the question ‘what does research tell us about school and district leadership?’” The researchers examined 69 studies involving 846 districts, 2,802 schools, 1.4 million students and 14,000 teachers.

The relationship between leadership authority and student achievement at the individual school level is also affirmed by Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) who, in a review of several empirical studies, outlined seven strong claims about the school principals’ affect on student learning, indicating that school leadership had the second most significant impact on student learning following classroom teaching. While this study did not address the impact of leadership authority at the district level, additional research is beginning to make that connection. The Wallace Foundation released a study in July 2010 which incorporated district-level leadership authority in its analysis and reached a very similar conclusion as Leithwood et al. stating “effective leadership at the school and district level is second only to classroom instruction as an influence of student learning” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 9).

In addition to research aligning superintendent leadership with student achievement, it is equally important to note the research that links leadership and professional ethics. Robert Starratt (2007) poses the question “leadership of what for what” (p. 165) and goes on to answer it by suggesting a new commitment by educational leaders to authentic learning. Educational leaders are in the unique position of possessing the power to serve the good of the student and further the ethics of the profession. In that same light Ronald Heifetz (2004) posits that today’s educational leaders in general and

superintendents in particular should strive to become “adaptive leaders” (p. 61). While Heifetz echoes the sentiment that the challenges facing the modern superintendent may seem so difficult as to be intractable, he urges all educational leaders to seek solutions that are specific to each educational environment and focused on students and families:

We will not meet our current challenges by waiting for higher authorities, such as the state commissioner, the governor, or the federal government, to figure out the answers. The kind of leadership that can fashion new and better responses to those (local) realities needs to come from many places within classrooms, districts, and communities. In this complex environment, it is more important than ever that educators at all levels exercise adaptive leadership. (p. 66).

It is in this spirit that the superintendency as an institution is continually challenged to seek out authority that goes beyond an organizational chart and serves a purpose beyond implementing federal and state guidelines.

Sergiovanni and Moral Authority

Sergiovanni (1992) developed his theory of leadership around a focus that looks away from a specific individual and towards the ideas to which the organization is dedicated. This is a shift from what he felt was an overemphasis on style and individual performance to determine organizational effectiveness. “First, we have come to view leadership as behavior rather than action, as something psychological rather than spiritual, as having to do with persons rather than ideas” (p. 3). In search of the right way to lead, theories abound about which style is better, “warm or cold, autocratic or

democratic, task or relationship, directive or participatory” (p. 2). This has all led to overemphasis on “doing things right as opposed to doing the right thing” (p. 4).

Sergiovanni (2000) believes that leadership needs to be placed “in service to ideas, and to others who also seek to serve these ideas” and as a result, the leadership style becomes unimportant (pp. 128-129). Identifying four components of leadership, Sergiovanni believes each component needs to be present in order to accomplish the mission of the organization. These four components are: leaders, followers, ideas, and action. Both organizations and leaders are useless without one another. In order to be effective both leaders and followers must commit to ideas. It is the commitment to the ideas that brings about an action and that subsequent action brings those ideas to life. Leadership that does not result in action is incomplete (p. 168).

In order to better understand the roles of leader and follower, it is necessary to understand Sergiovanni’s (1992) assumptions concerning what drives human beings to act. Men and women are driven to act not only by self-interest but also by their emotions, values, and beliefs, and by the social bonds that emerge from identification with and membership in various groups. Sergiovanni goes on to say that when understanding human motivation it is critical to remember that both material rewards and psychological needs are driving forces. The important distinction is that neither factor alone is enough to explain fully what drives people to act.

Work, then, is not just about the financial rewards that it offers. Instead, work has the potential for providing intrinsic rewards which can enrich, challenge and help the individual to grow. The effective leader therefore, needs to find ways to meet the various

needs of those he or she is attempting to lead. Sergiovanni (1992) holds that leaders can motivate their followers extrinsically, intrinsically or through a sense of duty or obligation. This premise is used to generate three key ideas. First, in the workplace, what gets rewarded gets done. Second, what is rewarding gets done. Finally, what is good gets done.

Leadership is impossible without followers. According to Sergiovanni (1992), the effective leader works with their employees to motivate them and accomplish tasks that leader wants to be completed. In some cases, leaders are able to create an environment where the work gets accomplished and the employees enjoy doing the work . When followers enjoy the work it becomes the intrinsic reward that can help move the organization to be value-centered. According to Sergiovanni, there is a need for leadership that can “compel people to respond on this intrinsic level” (p. 9).

Connecting with universal intrinsic motivation requires the leader to base his or her practice on compelling ideas, not the leader’s ideas, but the foundation of the organization. “One of the great secrets of leadership is that before one can command the respect and followership of others, she or he must demonstrate devotion to the organization’s purposes and commitment to those in the organization who work day by day on the ordinary tasks that are necessary for those purposes to be realized” (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 334). Whereas subordinates simply complete a task because they are required to do so, followers enter into the task because they are committed to the shared purposes of the organization. Effective leaders see their authority as a “source of energy for engaging others in the task of achieving shared goals and purposes”

(Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 133).

Once the organization makes a commitment to acting on its shared values, the organization is transformed into a “covenantal community” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 129). “A covenantal community is a group of people who share religious or ethical beliefs, feel a strong sense of place, and think that the group is more important than the individual” (pp. 102-103). The role of the leader in this covenantal community then, is to induce clarity, consensus and commitment to the communities (or organization’s) basic purposes. When the leader’s actions are constantly moving the organization in this direction they are practicing “purposing” which helps restore meaning to the actions of the community and its members (p. 72).

In analyzing leadership, Sergiovanni (1992) described five sources of authority as legitimate expressions of leadership, understanding that different situations call for different kinds of leadership. These five sources of authority are: Bureaucratic, Psychological, Technical-Rational, Professional and Moral Authority. In transforming organizations today, Sergiovanni believes that the professional and moral authorities ought to be the primary sources of authority used by all educational leaders so that schools can move from an organization to a community and achieve the desired student success. While Sergiovanni (1991, 1992, 2000) writes directly about school principals using professional and moral authorities, applying Sergiovanni’s sources of authority directly to the role of the superintendent is critical to frame this issue of the impact of superintendent leadership.

Bureaucratic Authority

According to Sergiovanni (1992), “Bureaucratic authority exists in the form of mandates, rules, regulations, job descriptions, and expectations. When we base our leadership practice on bureaucratic authority, teachers respond appropriately or face the consequences” (p. 30). In short, there is a right way and a wrong way to do things in the school district. For those who comply with the leader’s mandates, there are rewards such as tenure or recognition among peers. For those who are not in alignment with the mandates, there are punishments such as disciplinary actions up to and including termination. Teachers should do what the leader says simply because of the position of power the leader holds. This relies on an extrinsic motivation for those being led. Table 2 describes what this authority looks like in practice.

Psychological Authority

“Psychological authority is expressed in the form of motivational technology and human relations skills. When leadership practice is based on psychological authority, teachers are supposed to respond to the leader’s personality and to the pleasant environment that is provided by behaving appropriately and collecting the rewards made available” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 30). Leaders who rely on psychological authority are relying on their own personality to build relationships with faculty members. The leaders then use that relationship as the means to get teachers to do what the leader wants them to do. This source of authority dictates that teachers should do what the leader says because they like the leader and know that if the leader likes them and sees them as cooperative, there will be rewards that follow. This authority also relies on an extrinsic motivation for

those being led. Table 3 describes what this theory looks like in practice.

Table 2

Bureaucratic Authority for Leadership/Supervisory Policy and Practice

Bureaucratic Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hierarchy · Rules and Regulations · Mandates · Role Expectation · Teachers comply or face consequences
Assumptions When Use of This Source is Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teachers are subordinates in a hierarchical system. · Supervisors are trustworthy, but subordinates are not. · Goals and interests of teachers and supervisors are not the same, and supervisors must be watchful. · Hierarchy equals expertise, and so supervisors know more than teachers do. · External accountability works best.
Leadership/Supervisory Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · “Expect and inspect” is the rule. · Rely on predetermined standards, to which teachers must measure up. · Identify their needs and “inservice” them. · Directly supervise and closely monitor the work of teachers, to ensure compliance. · Figure out how to motivate them and get them to change.
Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · With proper monitoring, teachers respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.

Source: Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 36.

Table 3

Psychological Authority for Leadership/Supervisory Policy and Practice

Psychological Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Motivational technology · Interpersonal skills · Human relations · Leadership · Teachers will want to comply because of the congenial climate and the rewards.
Assumptions When Use of This Source is Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The goals and interests of teachers and supervisors are not the same but can be negotiated so that each side gets what it wants. · Teachers have needs, and if they are met at work, the works gets done as required. · Congenial relationships and a harmonious interpersonal climate make teachers content, easier to work with, and more apt to cooperate. · Supervisors must be experts in reading needs and in other people-handling skills, to negotiate successfully for compliance and increases in performance.
Leadership/Supervisory Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop a school climate characterized by high congeniality among teachers and between teachers and supervisors. · “Expect and reward.” · “What gets rewarded gets done.” · Use psychological authority in combination with bureaucratic and technical-rational authority.
Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teachers respond as required when rewards are available, but not otherwise; their involvement is calculated and performance is narrowed.

Source: Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 36.

Technical-Rational Authority

“Technical-rational authority exists in the form of evidence derived from logic and scientific research. When we base our leadership practice on such authority we

expect teachers to respond in light of what is considered to be true” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 31). Leaders who primarily rely on this source of authority may view themselves as the experts in the current research on best teacher practices or in student performance data analysis. This source of authority dictates that teachers should do what the leader says because they know what the research and data says is the right thing to do. This style of leadership also relies on an extrinsic motivation for those being led. Table 4 describes what this authority looks like in practice.

Table 4

Technical-Rational Authority for Leadership/Supervisory Policy and Practice

Technical-Rational Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Evidence defined by logic and scientific research. · Teachers are required to comply in light of what is considered to be the truth.
Assumptions When Use of This Source is Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supervision and teaching are applied sciences. · Knowledge of research is privileged. · Scientific knowledge is “superordinate” to practice. · Teachers are skilled technicians. · Values, preferences, and beliefs do not count but facts and objective evidence do.
Leadership/Supervisory Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use research to identify best practice · Standardize the work of teaching, to reflect the best way. · “Inservice” teachers in the best way. · Monitor the process to ensure compliance. · Figure out ways to motivate teachers and get them to change.
Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · With proper monitoring, teachers respond as technicians, executing predetermined steps; performance is narrowed.

Source: Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 36.

Professional Authority

Professional authority uses intrinsic motivation to appeal to members of the organization. Professional authority is seen in the seasoned craft knowledge and personal expertise of each teacher. “When leadership practice is based on professional authority, teachers can be expected to respond in common socialization, accepted tenets of practice, and internalized expertise” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 31). Professional authority recognizes that teachers’ classroom experiences and expertise are valuable to the overall organization and that, instead of relying on rules or personality leaders can rely on accepted standards of practice which lead to student success. Table 5 describes what this authority looks like in practice.

Moral Authority

The final source of authority, which also focuses on intrinsic motivation, is moral authority. Moral authority is seen as the obligations and duties derived from widely shared values, ideas, and ideals. “When leadership practice is based on moral authority, teachers can be expected to respond to shared commitments and felt interdependence” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 31). In this case, the school community has developed a shared vision of what they are trying to accomplish and the leaders know that everyone involved in student learning is committed to realizing that vision. Teachers do not need to be “monitored” to see if they are doing things the “right way”. Instead, they will simply do the right things for the right reasons. Sergiovanni believes that the moral dimension of leadership needs to be moved to the center of all the leader does. If the leader does this successfully, then the organization will transform into a community of people committed

to shared values and people's actions will be in concert with the shared values. Table 6 describes what this authority looks like in practice.

Table 5

Professional Authority for Leadership/Supervisory Policy and Practice

Professional Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Informed craft knowledge and personal expertise · Teachers respond in light of common socialization, professional values, accepted tenets of practice, and internalized expertise.
Assumptions When Use of This Source is Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Situations of practice are idiosyncratic, and no one best way exists. · Scientific knowledge and professional knowledge are different, with professional knowledge created as teachers practice. · The purpose of scientific knowledge is to inform, not prescribe practice. · Authority cannot be external but comes from the context itself and from within the teacher. · Authority from context comes from training and experience. · Authority from within comes from socialization and internalized values.
Leadership/Supervisory Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Promote a dialogue among teachers that explicitly states professional values and accepted tenets of practice. · Translate them into professional standards. · Give teachers as much discretion as they want and need. · Require teachers to hold one another accountable for meeting practice standards. · Make assistance, support, and professional development opportunities available.
Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teachers respond to professional norms; their practice becomes collective, they require little monitoring, and their performance is expansive.

Source: Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 38

Table 6

Moral Authority for Leadership/Supervisory Policy and Practice

Moral Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Felt obligation and duties derived from widely shared community values, ideas, and ideals · Teachers respond to shared commitment and felt interdependence.
Assumptions When Use of This Source is Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Schools are professional learning communities. · Communities are defined by their centers of shared values, beliefs, and commitments. · In communities, what is considered right and good it is as important as what works and what is effective; people are motivated as much by emotion and beliefs as by self interest; and collegiality is a professional virtue.
Leadership/Supervisory Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Identify and make explicit the values and beliefs that define the center of the school as a community. · Translate them into informal norms that govern behavior. · Promote collegiality as internally felt and morally driven interdependence. · Rely on the ability of the community members to respond to duties and obligations. · Rely on the community's informal norms to enforce professional and community values.
Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teachers respond to community values for moral reasons; their practice becomes collective, and their performance is expansive and sustained.

Source: Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 39.

Why Moral Authority is the “Best Fit”

Sergiovanni holds that there has been an overemphasis on the bureaucratic, psychological, and technical-rational authorities and that it is time for a shift toward the

professional and moral authorities. He believes that leaders need to create a response from within their followers rather than some external pressure which offers rewards to those who act appropriately and punishments for those who do not. “Recognizing that people follow leaders for many different reasons, moral leadership moves that response to an emotional connection that people have to the organization and its core values and shared beliefs” (Fech, 2009, p. 37).

Understanding these sources of authority does not prescribe the leader’s expected behavior. It is in this light that the concept of leadership authority in general and moral leadership in particular is best suited for this research study. “Leadership is a personal thing. It comprises three important dimensions – one’s heart, head, and hand” (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 321). The first dimension, the heart, refers to the leader’s beliefs, values and dreams and their commitment to those. The head of leadership refers to the theories of practice that the leader has developed through experience and the ability to reflect on those experiences through the lens of those theories. Finally, the hand of leadership indicates the leader’s actions, decisions, and management behaviors that become organizational programs, policies, and procedures. When all three of these come together, purposing becomes possible. “When hope, faith, and action are joined, a covenant of obligations emerges raising the stakes from management commitment to moral commitments” (p. 116).

In an educational setting, moral leadership is about placing the core values of the community at the center of all the school district does without giving thought to individual self-interest. This is one of the challenges of moral leadership in schools as

people are engaged in the decision-making process (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 331). In fact, when two choices are in conflict, the leader must choose the one that is good and effective for their schools not what is in the best interest of a single individual (p. 326).

In schools...instead of worrying constantly about setting the direction and then engaging teachers and others in a successful march (often known as planning, organizing, leading, motivating, and controlling) the “leader” can focus more on removing obstacles, providing material and emotional support, taking care of the management details that make any journey easier, sharing in the comradeship of the march and in the celebration when the journey is completed, and identifying a new, worthwhile destination for the next march. (Sergiovanni, 1992, pp. 43-44)

While Sergiovanni (1991) wrote directly about the power that principals hold in the school setting, this is even more apt when describing superintendents because of the access to information they have, as well as the positional power they hold. Because of this “uneven balance of power, there is a moral responsibility that comes with it” (p. 324). The superintendent must then, keep their own self-interests in check, while they work toward fulfilling the vision of the school community. When the superintendent functions at this level, they are working through their moral authority.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to summarize the literature surrounding the topics of student achievement, the superintendency and leadership authority. In order to provide the appropriate context to answer the following research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing low-achieving districts with high-achieving districts, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

While there are many options open to researchers studying the superintendency, there can be little doubt of the appropriateness of Sergiovanni's construct of moral authority for this study. Amitai Etzioni (1996) uses the metaphor "mosaic" to show how both individualism and the common good can be brought together. A mosaic is made up of many individual pieces, each with a unique shape and color, but it is held together by a common frame and glue. Without this frame and glue the mosaic falls apart. "Moral leadership is, unfortunately, in short supply in too many high schools and the frame and glue needed to hold everything together is crumbling" (Sergiovanni, 1999).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine the leadership characteristics of superintendents across the 71 suburban Chicago school districts that include high schools. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach the researcher first analyzed student achievement, at-risk racioethnicity and parental education data to answer these three research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

The first two research questions were answered using a quantitative model used to conduct two previous studies in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois. In these studies he created a variable entitled BARR (bachelor's degree minus at-risk racioethnicity) which combined the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus one-half the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school.

Null Hypotheses

This study explores several null hypotheses. Those hypotheses are articulated as follows:

To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

1. There is no relationship between parental education and high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland.

To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

2. There is no relationship between at-risk racioethnic group (Hispanic, African American and Native American) students' BARR and their academic achievement in suburban Chicagoland.

When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by

Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

While this portion of the sequential explanatory mixed-method design is qualitative in nature, it is important to recognize the potential null hypotheses. After investigating the interview responses of suburban Chicagoland superintendents it is important to understand that the data could have revealed that there was no difference between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (1) Bureaucratic Authority. Additionally, the same could be true of the relationship between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority or (5) Moral Authority.

Mixed Methods

While there are both advantages and disadvantages to using a mixed-methods approach when investigating any phenomenon, combining and integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to research methods can sharpen the understanding of the research findings (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Tashakkori and Teddlie add that through using mixed-methods, researchers can build a study based on the strengths of both research methods, which may provide a more complete picture of a research phenomenon or problem. Furthermore, according to Greene and Caracell (1998) mixed methods design can yield richer, more valid, and more reliable findings than

evaluations based on either the qualitative or quantitative methodologies alone. In addition to these strengths, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) also discuss specific disadvantages to mixed method study design: it may be difficult to sell to reviewers of journals, it may be higher in cost, it requires the researcher to be trained in both methods, it may need additional background information, and it may require researchers to work in multiple teams.

Hanson, Creswell, Plano-Clark, Petska, and Creswell (2005) maintain that both forms of data allow researchers to simultaneously generalize results from a sample to a population and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

Collecting and analyzing both numbers and words in a single study allows the research to mirror the way in which people tend to understand the world around them. By combining both inductive and deductive thinking the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). For this study both quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered sequentially.

Sequential Explanatory Design

The sequential explanatory mixed-methods design consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Creswell et al., 2003). In this design, the researcher first collects and analyzes the quantitative data. The qualitative data are collected and analyzed second in the sequence and help explain, or elaborate on, the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. The second, qualitative, phase builds on the first, quantitative, phase, and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage in the study. The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis

provide a general understanding of the research problem (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick 2006). The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth (Creswell et al., 2003; Rossman & Wilson, 1985; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The strengths and weaknesses of this mixed-methods design have been widely discussed in the literature (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell, 2005; Creswell, Goodchild, & Turner, 1996; Green & Caracelli 1997; Moghaddam, Walker, & Harre, 2003). Its advantages include straightforwardness and opportunities for the exploration of the quantitative results in more detail. This design can be especially useful when unexpected results arise from a quantitative study (Morse, 1991). Furthermore, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design was chosen because multiple methods work to provide the most complete understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007). The limitations of this design are lengthy time and feasibility of resources to collect and analyze both types of data (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006).

Quantitative Measures

The quantitative portion of this study focuses on measuring district-level student achievement as measured by the ACT composite score in 71 Chicagoland suburban school districts (containing 129 high schools) which are located in Cook, Lake, DuPage, Will, Kane and McHenry counties. The work replicates a model used to conduct two studies in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois and seeks to extend

these findings. To avoid unintended bias, data from Township High School District 214 was excluded from this study.

The state of Illinois relies, in part, on the standardized ACT test to measure student performance in high schools. The ACT test taken in a student's junior year is part of the Illinois statewide Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) that all students are required to take in order to graduate (23 ILAC 1.30). The ACT test is developed by ACT, Inc. and is scored on a common scale that extends from 1 to 36. The minimum composite ACT score is 1 and the maximum ACT composite score is 36. The ACT test contains four multiple-choice subject tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science, along with a composite score which is an average of the four subject test scale scores (ACT, 2007). These tests are considered norm-referenced because individual student scores are compared to a national population of student scores for that same test (ACT, 2007).

While a great deal of research has been done on the ACT itself, such as Allen, Bassiri and Noble's (2009) study which examined the relationship between high school core courses taken (defined as four years of English and three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies) and student growth (Allen, Bassiri & Noble, 2009), this research study will analyze the predictive nature of specific demographic characteristics and ACT tests results in suburban Chicagoland.

Quantitative Sampling Plan

The study included 71 of the 75 public school districts with high schools that are located in the collar counties, consisting of suburban Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake,

McHenry, and Will. Four districts that are located within Will, Kane, and McHenry counties were excluded from the analysis. These districts exemplify predominantly rural characteristics such as low population density, lower per pupil expenditures and more limited curricular offerings rather than suburban characteristics such as medium population density, higher per pupil expenditures and extensive curricular offerings (Population Distribution and Change 2000 to 2010, 2011).

The 71 suburban districts included in this study enroll 282,704 high school students, over 44.0% of the state's 641,976 public high school students. Therefore, any findings contrasting suburban school performance with state averages must consider the fact that 44% of the state average for any measure is produced by suburban schools. So in this study, suburban schools will be compared to each other rather than to non-suburban schools.

Demographic Variables

There is no easy and foolproof way to adjust for differences among school demographic or economic characteristics, but recent studies conducted by Cordogan in 2008 and 2009 using the state school report card database and other district demographic data available from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2008 data are the most recent available) have shown that two factors consistently demonstrate the highest level of predictive power for suburban school ACT performance:

- the percentage of adults in the district with at least a bachelor's degree, and
- the percentage of students who are members of academically at-risk racioethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, and Native American).

These factors, while highly related to income (e.g., at-risk racioethnic levels explain 80.5% of the variance in free-reduced lunch levels), have provided higher levels of explanation than any analyses using income-related or other variables (e.g., mobility rates, percent of single parent families) in both the 2008 and 2009 iterations of the study (Cordogan, 2008, 2009). They have in the past explained the same amount of variance regardless of whether they are combined in a multiple regression analysis or used to create a single variable: the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus $\frac{1}{2}$ the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school, which has been used in past quantitative studies (Cordogan, 2008, 2009). Either approach explained at least 94.5% of the variance in suburban school district ACT Class of 2009 composite score levels, a figure consistent with findings for the previous two years. Incidentally, the relationship was not found to be meaningfully curvilinear, so the linear explanation of variance figure fits the data well (Cordogan, 2008, 2009).

The measure of parental bachelor's degrees found in each school district often predict higher achieving students for a variety of reasons including: greater parental emphasis on academic achievement; greater involvement in their child's education; higher levels of financial support for the schools; higher paid faculty members and administrators, and less student at-risk issues due to poverty (Murphy, 2009).

Using these at-risk and education level data, a regression analysis model was produced that predicts expected ACT performance based upon a schools at-risk level. By subtracting the schools actual ACT score from the score predicted by the model, one can determine the number of points the school's performance is above or below expected

performance. The computation of that score's difference from expected ACT score can be used as another measure to understand suburban school performance.

Qualitative Research Design

As this research is explanatory-sequential in design, subsequent to the quantitative data collection and analysis, a semi-structured interview protocol was generated. In order to identify superintendent perceptions of leadership characteristics present in both higher and lower performing districts, six superintendents, three from higher performing and three from lower performing districts, were identified and purposively sampled in the manner detailed in the following paragraphs.

An essential assumption of phenomenological research is that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). The methodology for the qualitative portion of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods research study is phenomenology, as this researcher seeks to understand how superintendents perceive the “shared experience” that is represented by student achievement in light of their leadership authority. This study will examine superintendents’ conscious experience of their “life-world,” that is their everyday professional life and actions (Merriam, 2009; Schwandt, 2007; Willis, 2007). Willis defines phenomenology as “the study of people’s perception of the world, as opposed to trying to learn what ‘really is’ in the world” (p. 107). The focus of this study, thus is understanding the phenomenon of the impact of superintendent leadership authority on student achievement. The phenomena include superintendents’ perceptions, beliefs, judgments, and evaluations (Schwandt, 2007).

In order to examine superintendents' perceptions of leadership authority, this study employed the phenomenological interview as the primary method of qualitative data collection. Roulston (as cited in Willis, 2009) stated that there are six types of interviews which derive from the philosophical orientation of the research: neo-positive, romantic, constructivist, post-modern, transformative, and de-colonizing. "Romantic" interviews directly relate to phenomenology. In this type of interpretive interview, the researcher does not make any claim of being able to obtain complete objectivity. In this study, therefore, it is critical to analyze and reveal the subjectivities of the researcher and strive to generate dialogue that is "intimate and self-revealing" (Merriam, 2009, p. 92). However, as Willis (2009) asserts, "that does not mean anything goes" (p. 199).

To warrant the validity of the data from the interviews this study avoided biases. The first way to avoid bias is for this researcher to bracket or put aside personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. This process is also known as *epoche* (Willis, 2009, p. 25). This researcher has had direct experience working with several Chicagoland superintendents. Therefore, this researcher needed to explore his own experiences, "in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Only then was this researcher be able to "bracket," or put aside temporarily, his prejudices and assumptions so that he can examine consciousness itself (Merriam, 2009, pp. 25-26). Another strategy is *phenomenological reduction* in which the researcher continually returns to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure of meaning in and of itself. The third strategy is *horizontalization*. In this strategy the researcher lays out all the data for

examination and treats the data as having equal weight. The fourth strategy is *imaginative variation* where the researchers view the data from various perspectives and from different angles (Willis, 2009, p. 26). These strategies were also used to analyze the data.

Qualitative Sampling Plan

The analysis of data is one of the most vital aspects to the successful implementation of sequential explanatory mixed-methods research. The emphasis of this particular study is to acquire a better understanding of superintendents' perspectives on the use of leadership authority to improve student achievement. The collection of qualitative research data from the proposed six semi-structured interviews helped this researcher garner and generate a rich, in-depth, and descriptive body of information regarding this topic. The intention of the interview process was to discover what perspectives each of these superintendents hold in their beliefs, values and attitudinal system as it relates to this issue.

The sampling for this study was purposive. Superintendents were selected to participate because they had served at least two years in their current district and that district was part of the 71 districts measured in the quantitative portion of the study. In addition, care will be given to ensure a cross-section of the performance of the districts: higher performing and lower performing, as defined by districts with composite ACT scores above or below the 2011 Chicagoland suburban school average of 21.4. Additionally superintendents interviewed represented districts that were both exceeding and falling short of projections as defined by subtracting the schools actual ACT score from the score predicted by the model. The researcher then determined the number of

points the district's performance is above or below expected performance. This allowed the researcher to determine which districts was higher performing and lower performing in order to purposively sample those superintendents as interview subjects. Subject selection will begin with superintendents who are employed by districts whose students perform at either extreme (highest and lowest) and proceed toward the least extreme.

Data Collection Procedure

Data for this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was collected in two distinct phases. During the first phase quantitative data was collected. The researcher downloaded the final "Class of 2011 School Report Card Database" found on the Illinois State Board of Education website (www.isbe.net). Those data were entered into an SPSS computer software program along with the demographic data obtained via download from the Council of Chief State School Officers which uses 2008 data (www.ccsso.net). These two data sources are free and publically available.

To replicate Dr. Cordogan's 2008 and 2009 studies, a multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the degree of variance explained from expected ACT composite score (positive or negative) based on each of the 71 suburban Chicagoland school districts.

Three scatterplot graphs were then be generated with all three charts using actual district 2011 ACT composite score means on the vertical axis. The first was plotted with actual ACT composite scores on the vertical axis with the percentage of parents/guardians with at least a bachelor's degree on the horizontal axis. The second was plotted with actual ACT composite scores on the vertical axis with the total percentage of each

district's students who were classified as a member of an academically at-risk racioethnic group (Black, Hispanic, and Native American) on the horizontal axis, thus yielding one racioethnic at-risk percentage for each district. The third graph was plotted with actual ACT composite scores on the vertical axis with a horizontal axis of the scores that would have been expected from the combination of the bachelor's degree and at-risk racioethnicity variables. Hence, the expected ACT scores variable is a representative of a combination of the two demographic variables, and is comparable to viewing a single variable representing both bachelor degree and at-risk racioethnicity levels.

Once the 71 suburban Chicagoland districts are evaluated based on actual their student achievement relative to the expected student achievement based on demographic factors, a participant sample was created. This participant sample was comprised of six superintendents. All six superintendents were employed by their current districts for at least two years. Three of the superintendents represented districts that are exceeding projections as defined by subtracting the schools actual ACT score from the score predicted by the model. Conversely, the other three superintendents represented districts that are falling short of projections as defined by subtracting the schools actual ACT score from the score predicted by the model. Signed "Letters of Cooperation" were obtained to gain access to these superintendents and invite their participation in this research study. Prior to the actual interview, participants signed a "Consent to Participate in Research" letter (refer to Appendices A and C).

The interviews were conducted in the office of the superintendent or at a location of the superintendent's choosing. The qualitative data was gathered utilizing an open-

ended interview design. This format provided the interviewees with a relaxed atmosphere and allowed the researcher a chance to have open and candid conversations with the participants (Willis, 2009). The open-ended line of questioning offered meaningful and informative responses. This technique also provided more flexibility in the interview because each question was essentially interdependent and more conversational, designed to elicit specific information from the participant. The naturalistic environment and direct interaction or face-to-face introspection helped the superintendents feel comfortable enough to openly share with the researcher aspects of their experiences, as it relates to this area of study. It further offered the potential for participants to reflect on old and derive new interpretations of their past and present perceptions and performances. The role of the interviewer is to ensure an open, fluid, and active interchange as the researcher expects total participation and engagement during the interview encounter.

Upon gaining cooperative access, the researcher secured permission from the study participants to tape record the interview sessions in the documentation of “Consent to Participate in Research” letter. The “Consent to Participate in Research” letter was signed prior to each interview. Utilizing a digital-recording device ensured participant responses to questions were accurately reflected in the data transcript and facilitated data analysis. Research participants were afforded the opportunity to read all interview transcripts and provide the researcher with any further clarification prior to publication. These *member checks* allow the researcher to take the data collected and “tentative

interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204).

Furthermore, the interviewer’s responsibilities entailed synthesizing and extrapolating meaning from the various emerging topics to ensure explicit understanding of each proposed idea shared during the interview process. Most importantly, the researcher also captured the essence of the interview by using recording devices that enabled the researcher to accurately collect and organize exactly what was said. The researcher, in addition, contributed to the collection of data by maintaining thorough notes regarding the information that participants shared during the interview. Each set of notes, six in total, were written up immediately after the interview for clarification and/or elaboration. The unedited transcripts and comprehensive notes served as reference tools during the analysis phase of this investigation.

The researcher used an agreed upon coding system to identify recurring themes in the data to ensure cohesion and uniformity in the analysis of each of the interviews. The initial interpretation of the transcripts and notes was completed individually to permit each researcher more opportunity to study and become familiar with each transcript and its themes. Afterwards, all six interview transcripts were analyzed collectively to discover the emerging themes, ideas, and concerns. The individual and collective analysis process initiated a continuous cycle of writing, edits, and revisions to develop a coherent narrative that will sufficiently contribute to existing literature.

The collected data from the superintendent interviews was triangulated with community-aligned student achievement data and five sources of leadership authority

found in the professional literature. Community-aligned student achievement data reflects not only a district's mean ACT composite score, but additional key factors which influence student achievement such as parent/ guardian education level and racioethnicity. The diagram below illustrates the relationship between qualitative interview data and the quantitative community-aligned student achievement data when compared with Sergiovanni's five sources of leadership authority.

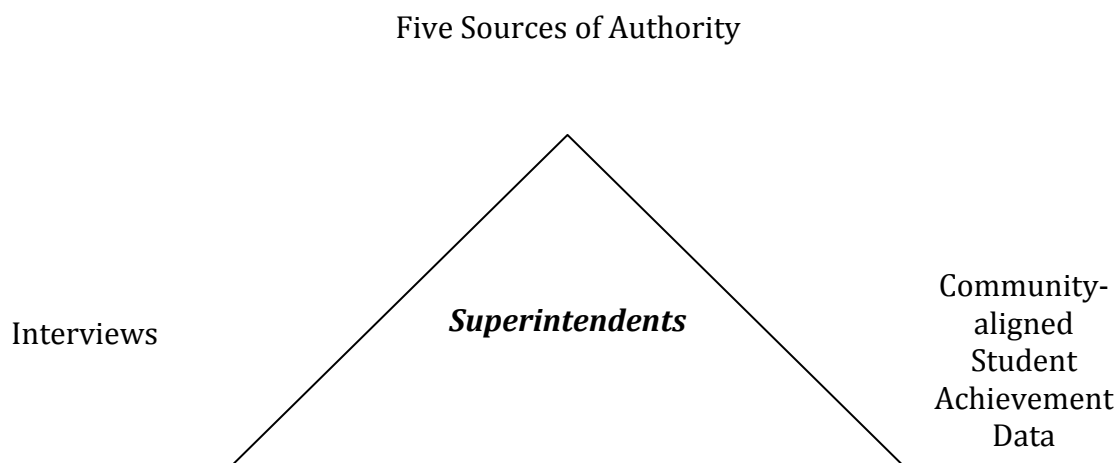


Figure 2. Superintendent Research Triangulation Model

Bias Limitation

There are integrated safeguards to ensure validity (study investigations are on target) and reliability (the results consistency) of this research project (Wolcott, 1990). First, the researcher allowed the participants during the interview to contribute most of the verbal data. Secondly, the researcher's task was chiefly to be that of an observer or interpreter. Thirdly, the participants were asked to submit forms of consent prior to the interview, so they knew the purpose of the study and methodology that was used during the investigation. Subsequently, the data collection guidelines required recordings,

notes, and transcripts so researcher had to documentation to substantiate findings. Additionally, the final report adequately communicates findings and includes primary data to offer further rationale for the conclusions. Lastly, participants were given an opportunity to peruse the document before submission and the researcher sought feedback from the dissertation committee (Wolcott, 1990). This researcher is currently a central office administrator with seven years of administrative experience. To keep his personal biases in check and to prevent them from surfacing during the interview process, the researcher kept a journal of field notes, questions, new information, contradictions, and personal reflections as they arise. The journal was shared with the dissertation director on a regular basis.

Summary

This chapter outlines the methodology used to answer the primary research questions of this study, which are: To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland? To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland? When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority? Despite the limitations identified above, this sequential explanatory mixed-method research design is still the best structure to

answer these research questions. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the basic mixed methods research design, the research procedures for data collection, demographic variables, data and sampling, data collection procedure, participant sample information, and bias limitations.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this research is to examine the leadership characteristics of superintendents across the 71 suburban Chicago school districts that include high schools and to more specifically answer these three research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

This research was conducted using a sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, 2007) in the following sequence:

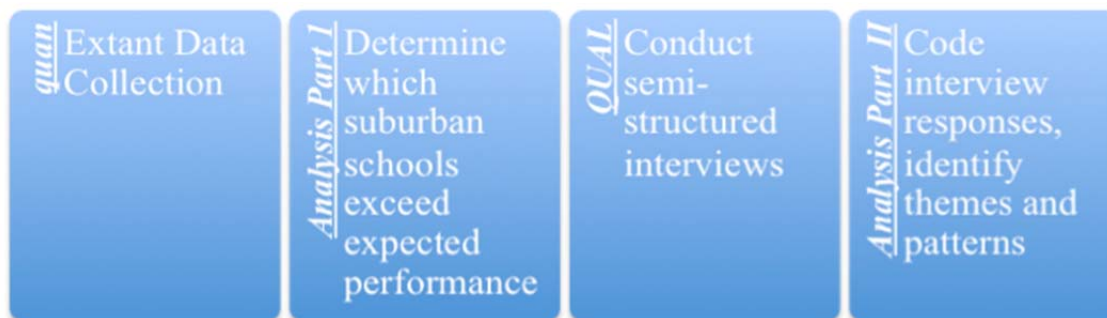


Figure 3. Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Research Protocol

The first two research questions were answered using a quantitative model used to conduct two previous studies in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois. In these studies he created a variable entitled BARR (bachelor's degree minus at-risk racioethnicity) which combined the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus one-half the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school district. The third research question was answered after collecting qualitative interview data from semi-structured one-on-one interviews with six superintendents from suburban Chicago high school districts.

Research Question 1

To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

Following explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the current chapter first presents the results of statistical analyses carried out by the researcher using extant quantitative data to answer the first two research questions. Subsequent to the careful

collection and coding of data, and the entry of those data into SPSS Statistics Standard Edition, descriptive statistics were calculated for the variables of composite ACT score and percentage of parents within each school district who have obtained a bachelor's degree. Descriptive statistics related to the community-aligned student achievement data that reflect not only a district's mean ACT composite score, but additional key factors which influence student achievement such as parent/guardian education level and racioethnicity are included in Table 7.

Table 7

Research Question 1- Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation	N
ACT Composite	21.285	2.7577	71
% of Parents with BA	36.661	15.1488	71

Using regression analysis, the combinations of variables were examined. The most powerful variable in explaining ACT performance was the percent of households in the district where one parent had earned at least a bachelor's degree. This single piece of data predicted 81.1% of the variance in ACT scores within the 71 suburban districts ($R^2 = .811$).

Table 8

Research Question 1- Regression Equation

	B	Std Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	15.575	.378		41.250	.000
% of Parents in District w/BA 2008	.164	.010	.901	17.205	.000

Note: Equation: predicted ACT composite = 15.575 + (0.163994 * Bachelors)

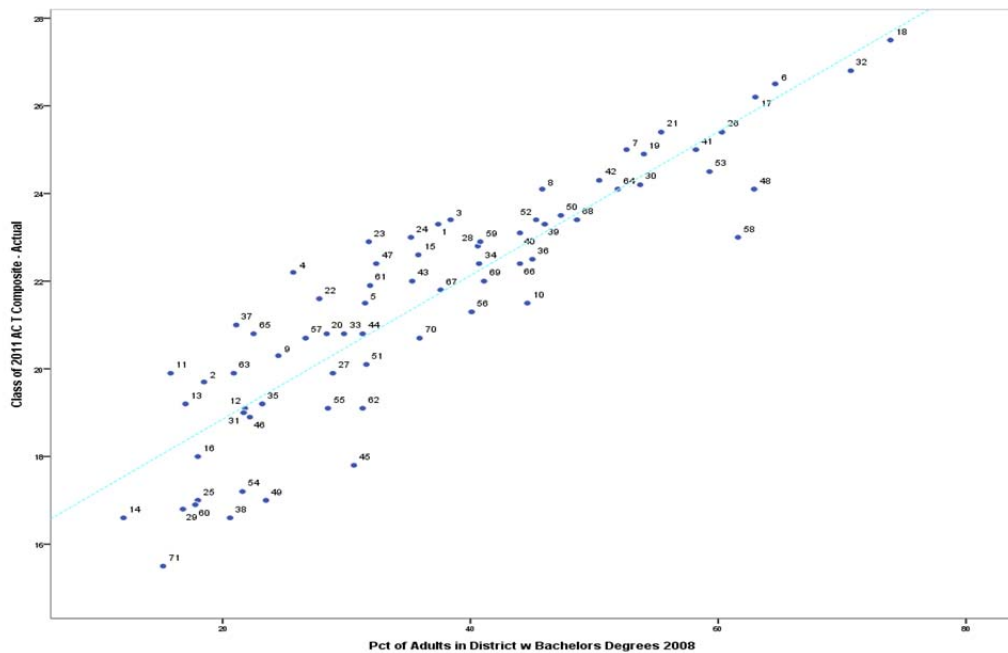


Figure 4. Percentage of Parents with Bachelor's Degrees vs. ACT Composite Score

Pursuant to research question 1, the null hypothesis that follows was tested:

1. There is no relationship between parental education and high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland.

Based upon statistical analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected in that a significant correlation ($p < .0000005$) was found between the two variables, the percentage of households in the district where one parent had earned at least a bachelor's degree and student achievement measured by composite ACT scores.

Research Question 2

To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

Subsequent to the careful collection and coding of data, and the entry of those data into SPSS Statistics Standard Edition, descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the variables of composite ACT score and percentage of at-risk racioethnicity student population. Descriptive statistics related to the community-aligned student achievement data that reflect not only a district's mean ACT composite score, but additional key factors which influence student achievement such as parent/guardian education level and racioethnicity are included in Table 9.

Table 9

Research Question 2 - Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation	N
ACT Composite	21.285	2.7577	71
At-Risk Racioethnicity	36.7972	27.27559	71

Using regression analysis, the combinations of variables were examined. As previously discussed, the strongest predictor in explaining ACT performance was the percentage of households in the district where one parent had earned at least a bachelor's degree. However, the percentage of at-risk racioethnicity in each district was the second strongest predictor of student academic performance. This single piece of data predicted 78.1% of the variance in ACT scores within the 71 suburban districts ($R^2 = .781$).

Table 10

Research Question 2 - Regression Equation

	B	Std Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	24.872	.260		95.518	.0000005
% of Parents in District w/Bachelor's Degrees 2008	-.089	.006	-.884	-15.676	.0000005

Note: Equation: predicted ACT composite = 24.872 + (0.089352 * atriskracd)

The null hypothesis associated with research question 2, states:

2. There is no relationship between at-risk racioethnic group (Hispanic, African American and Native American) students' BARR and their academic achievement in suburban Chicagoland.

Based upon statistical analysis, all three null hypotheses were rejected in that a significant correlation ($p < .0000005$) was found between the two variables, the percentage of at-risk racioethnicity and student achievement measured by composite ACT scores.

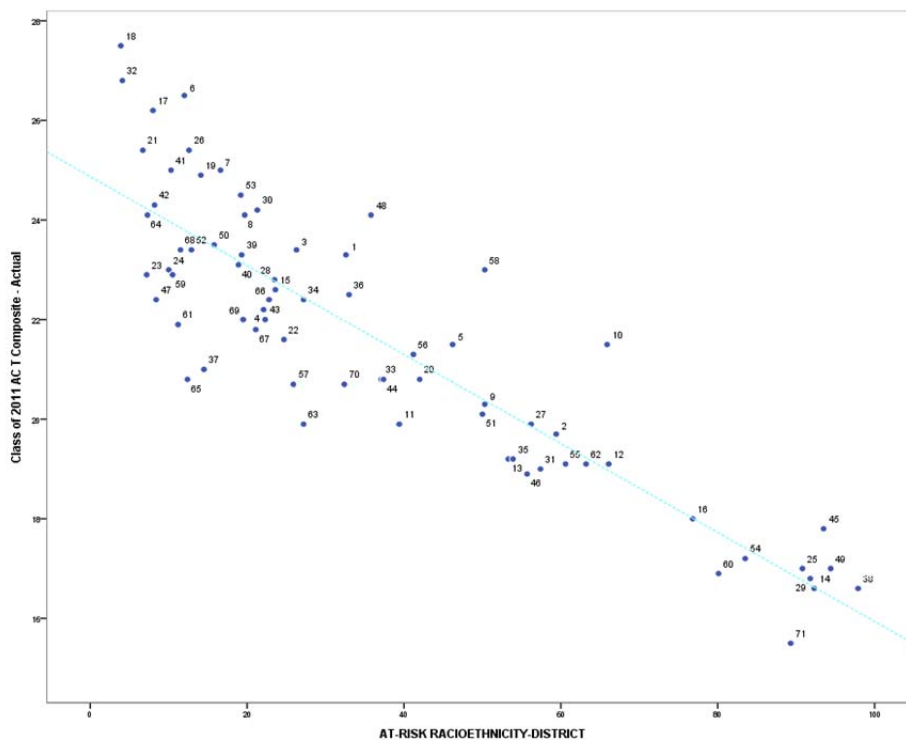


Figure 5. Percentage of At-Risk Racioethnicity vs. ACT Composite Score

The quantitative portion of this study, replicates a design created in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois. In these studies he created a variable entitled BARR (bachelor's degree minus at-risk racioethnicity) which combined the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus one-half the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school district. Using 2011 data the addition of at-risk racioethnic data added an additional 15.2% of explanation of variance. Therefore, the combination of the percentage of households in the district where one parent had earned at least a bachelor's degree and at-risk racioethnicity explained 93.6% of the

variance in ACT scores ($R^2=.936$) for students in 71 suburban Chicagoland high schools.

Table 11

Research Questions 1 and 2 - Regression Equation

	B	Std Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	19.737	.301		65.569	.0000005
% of Parents in District w/Bachelor's Degrees 2008	.103	.006	.564	18.272	.0000005
At-Risk Racioethnicity	-.052	.003	-.515	-16.6888	.0000005

Note: Equation: predicted ACT composite =19.737236 + [(0.102655 * Bachelors) + (-0.052072 * atriskracd)].

Specifically these quantitative data state that demographic factors such as parental education and at-risk racioethnicity can predict much of the variance in academic performance as measured by the ACT composite score. However, it is critical to note that even with this predictive analysis, districts with very similar demographics can have composite scores that vary by as much as three points. In order to examine the impact of superintendent leadership on student achievement six districts was purposively sampled (see Table 12).

These districts were specifically chosen from the overall sample of 71 suburban Chicagoland districts for four reasons: (1) all six districts exclusively serve high school students, (2) the higher performing districts have lower per pupil expenses, and (3) the lower performing districts have a lower percentage of at-risk racioethnicity in their

student populations as well as convenience sampling (4) all six superintendents agreed to take part in an hour-long semi- structured interview.

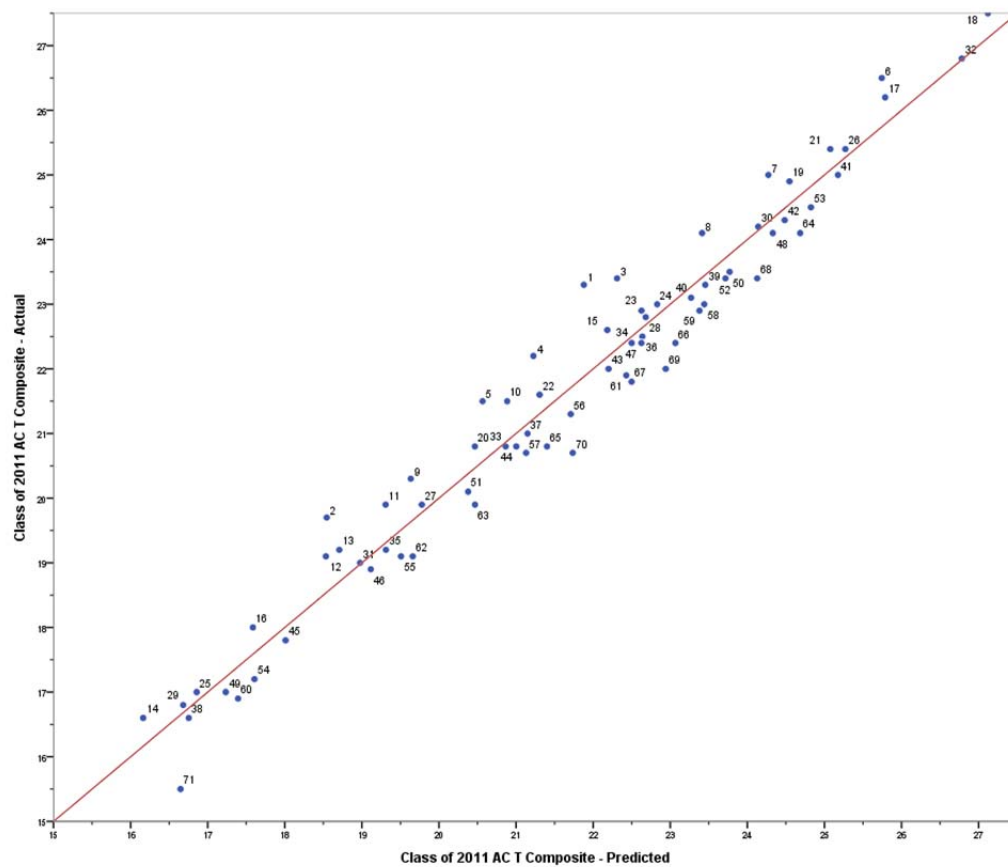


Figure 6. Actual ACT Composite vs. Predicted ACT Composite

Table 12

Superintendent Interview Districts

District	Type	Enrollment	Instructional Expense Per Pupil	At Risk RE	Bachelors	ACT Comp	ACT Difference
3 Higher performing	9 th -12 th	3795	\$7428	22.1	25.7	22.2	0.98
5 Higher performing	9 th -12 th	902	\$8723	46.2	31.5	21.5	0.93
4 Higher performing	9 th -12 th	2874	\$6961	65.9	44.6	21.5	0.62
1 Lower performing	9 th -12 th	2799	\$8709	11.2	31.9	21.9	-0.53
2 Lower performing	9 th -12 th	1887	\$7552	27.2	20.9	19.9	-0.57
6 Lower performing	9 th -12 th	4730	\$12563	19.5	41.1	22	-0.94

Research Question 3

When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

Superintendent Demographics

This chapter presents qualitative data that were obtained from the interviews with the six research participants chosen from a group of 12 districts that met the previously

stated criteria. These six superintendents represent three districts that recorded student achievement higher than expected based on parental education and at-risk racioethnicity and three districts that recorded student achievement lower than expected based on parental education and at-risk racioethnicity. These qualitative data include both the demographic data about the research participants and their responses to the qualitative, open-ended questions from the interviews.

All of the interviews were conducted face to face in the superintendents' offices. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed by a third party. The interviews were conducted during the last two weeks of June and the first three weeks of July 2012. Each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes. Completed transcripts were returned to the research participants for any corrections, clarifications or changes as a means to member check (Merriam, 2007).

As part of the interview protocol, five demographic questions, Questions 1-5, were asked to gain an understanding of the diversity within the participant sample of superintendents. The questions and the responses to the questions are depicted below in chart form along with a brief explanation.

In addition to the demographic questions, participants in this study were asked follow-up questions which focused on educational leadership. The intent of the follow-up questions was to obtain a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of their experiences and perceptions. The follow-up interview questions, numbers 6, 7, 8, and 9 are presented below along with each participant's response.

Table 13

Superintendent Demographic Questions

Superintendent	1	2	3	4	5	6
Student Achievement	Lower	Lower	Higher	Higher	Higher	Lower
How long have you been a superintendent?	2 years	4 years	11 years	4 years	5 years	5 years
How long have you been a superintendent in this district?	2 years	4 years	8 years	4 years	5 years	5 years
How long did you work in educational administration before becoming a superintendent?	7 years	14 years	12 years	14 years	11 years	9 years
Did you work in this district before assuming the superintendency?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How many years of your administrative career taken place in Illinois school districts?	All	All	All	All	All	All
Gender	M	M	M	M	F	F
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	AA	Caucasian	Caucasian
Education	M.Ed.	Doctorate	Doctorate	Doctorate	Doctorate	Doctorate

Question 6: Describe the administrative hierarchy in your district. What changes have you made to this structure since assuming the superintendency? Explain why you made those changes.

In general, responses to this question represent the wide variety of structures and administrative hierarchies within suburban Chicagoland. These range from

superintendents that oversee single school districts, to superintendents also taking on the role of building principal, to districts that employ co-superintendents to the more traditional model of one superintendent with multiple buildings to oversee.

Superintendent 1: We have two high schools within this district and when the former superintendent retired things had been going very well in the district and the board said, “You know, we like what’s going on we don't want to take a gamble with superintendents.” Every time you get new superintendent you kind of hold your breath. And so with that then, the Board put us in as co-superintendents for the past two years. Starting July 1, I will be the sole superintendent. We will go back to more of a traditional model of leadership and in, you know, at some juncture I’ll be looking for – this time next year we’ll have an assistant superintendent for something here.

Superintendent 2: And actually I just served in the role of both superintendent and principal – during this past school year, so the fourth year of my four years of superintendent actually brought me back over to the filling a lot of the principal’s role as well.

I am not saying that it is not working, but I feel overwhelmed at times just with the responsibilities of the needs of the Board in my superintendent role, the needs of my relationships with the community and the business leaders and the other governmental entities. The Superintendent, and that part of my role there is to maintain those relationships and things like that.

Superintendent 3: At the district office we have the two assistant superintendents;

one for Curriculum and Instruction and the other one's for personnel. And then we have our director of business services down the hall along with his assistant, our director of building and grounds is also housed here. We have the other side of the building is mainly the business side of it so we have all of our payroll and accounts receivable, accounts payable, all of those clerks are down there. On this side of course we have the superintendent, the two assistant superintendents, and the director of community relations. So I have six people that I directly evaluate. So there are not a lot (of changes) with the district. We have pretty much maintained.

Superintendent 4: As far as the administrative structure to accommodate that there is one superintendent, I have one principal; I have an assistant principal in charge of the south building and the north building. We have a district director of Curriculum and Instruction, we have a District Director of Special Education, we have a Department of Buildings and Grounds; he is not a true administrator, he is in IMRF and serves on my administrative team. And also our IT, a gentleman that's in charge of technology is not a former teacher but he is in charge of our IT team and technology, and I think that's about it, oh, an athletic director who handles a large athletic program, probably 126 clubs, sports, and activities so it is fairly substantial.

Superintendent 5: We have a pretty small hierarchy. I'm the superintendent and I evaluate the principal. I do not have a business manager, so I'm also the business manager and I have a facility director. I also evaluate him and I evaluate the tech director. I also evaluate teachers and I'm sort of in charge of evaluation so there are five

of us who evaluate teachers. The superintendent, the principal, the curriculum director, the AD and the special education director; they're the only administrators.

Superintendent 6: I have a very flat hierarchy as seen in the board policy and the actual organization chart. I have a cabinet of nine people and they report directly to me and under them are the different functions. Curriculum and instruction reports to me and all the curriculum directors report to her. The assistant superintendent of HR reports to me and all of our lawyers and that chain of directors of HR all report to him.

The assistant superintendent for Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services report to me and under him is all of special education, all counselors, nurses, psyche, social workers, etc. The Chief Information Officer, that's very important reports directly to me and is obviously in just in charge of not just the infrastructure here, but also the professional development and training of both faculty, staff and also the professional opportunities, training opportunities for students; so he reports directly to me as well. And then finally the building principals each separately report to me, so I would say that people would look at my organization chart as a superintendent and say that it is very flat.

Question 7: Describe your work with your administrative team/cabinet. What are the most common topics on your agendas and in your meetings?

While responses to this question seem to center on a standing weekly meeting, the administrators who attend the meeting, the agenda items and the overall focus of the meeting vary substantially from district to district.

Superintendent 1: The typical meeting is really we have set up a standing meeting

time every week. Right and at that meeting it's about an hour and a half and there are standing agenda items that align with our strategic plan. And so the principals and the assistant superintendent and the director of Special Education will bring items to that meeting that speak towards the strategic plan.

Superintendent 2: And we have an Administrative Team, the AT. Now the District Administrative Team consists of four of us: me, the assistant superintendent, and the two assistant principals; the four of us have a bi-weekly meeting schedule. We normally meet on Fridays every other week and I set the timing up because the purpose, our agenda usually centers on two things and then there are some tangent things we are dealing with, but it is preparation for the upcoming board committee of the Whole meeting.

So we set it up so that we have a Friday meeting that is a week-and-a-half prior to the upcoming board committee meeting and we talking about what we need to get done and what we need to work with the Board on, with that agenda and we kind of work on constructing the framework of that agenda, that's one of the primary components of that DAT meeting, you know, there are four of us. The other is there is typically on that Friday we are preparing for the AT meeting, the larger Administrative Team meeting which is typically on Tuesday following that Friday.

Superintendent 3: Then the cabinet group is called the EC; the executive council. The executive council are mainly again the people that report directly to me. So my secretary attends most of those meetings, the two assistant superintendents, the P.R.

person, the technology person, the business person, and that's probably it. There's about seven or eight of us and we meet every week. If we need to meet more often, we do. That's a standing every Tuesday at nine o'clock meeting. That's my key team. That's the team that we really brainstorm. We have a very loose agenda there.

We just deal with whatever the pressing issues are of the day and of the week that we need to be focusing on. That's the group that really helps me work with the Board of Education. As we prepare agendas, as we put our information reports together, our action items, that's the group. We work through that.

Superintendent 4: There are different combinations and versions; for all the names that I mentioned, we meet every Monday as our administrative team meeting once a week. There are times that may vary a little bit depending on what my schedule is or the bulk of the other people as well as the calendar. We meet start of school year, summer gets to be a little lighter; we miss because people are on vacation. I try to respect that and piece things together as needed.

There are standing agenda items relative to discipline, Board initiatives; those kinds of things. After you have cranked through it for a few years you will see those things that will pop up cyclically in terms of time for evaluation, FTE, sectioning, those kinds of things, but for the most part there are two or three standing items and the rest depending of what the initiatives are for that year or depending on what's happened as the year develops become items on the agenda.

Superintendent 5: Well, we have a formal, we call it Ad Co; Administrative

Council, and that would include everybody who I just described. We also have an administrative leadership team that I just met yesterday and that's me and the principal and the curriculum director. So we have – are the academic leaders. Then the curriculum director has the department chairs. Most of our department chairs do not evaluate – they're not administrators but they are department chairs. So that's kind of our leadership team.

Well in the leadership team it's more planning. For example, this was yesterday and we were talking about department chair supervision. We spent a lot of time talking about the new evaluation. We're doing walk-throughs. Academic initiatives – you know we usually have something every year. We've been working on graphic organizers, unit design, reading across the curriculum.

Superintendent 6: I start with big, big issues that require discussion and decision making and then we do an around the table which is basically anybody can bring items that they want their colleague's opinion on or want to make sure that we are all on the same page before executing x, y, or z. We start with the more heavy lifting, which is the more intellectual academic kind of conversations and then we go to the literally mundane HR business issues, even principal's issues with parents and that kind of stuff.

Question 8: In your work with the Board of Education do you use subcommittees or a Committee of the Whole structure? Explain why you chose one over the other.

Answers to this question once again highlight the diversity in superintendent-Board of Education relations in suburban Chicagoland. Responses indicate that both

committee of the whole and sub-committee structures are widely used. Additionally some superintendents indicated that they use both structures depending on the specific issue presented to the Board.

Superintendent 1: Subcommittee. We have really only two subcommittees. We have the finance subcommittee or committee and then we have the facilities committee. Both of those are chaired by the business manager. You know I'm going to break that out a bit more as South High School comes off the role budgetary speaking. Those bonds will be coming due soon. I know they will come off the books. That, just as a community, do you want to keep your levee at the current level and just continue to go, or are you just going to draw down?

The only way that I know how to do that is create a subcommittee, pull in community members from both towns we serve, then begin to identify the needs of the communities or the perceived needs of the community. How can we help meet those needs at the high school? Though I think it could come and go because I don't know -- our projections for enrollment, who knows where it's at. This area was literally on fire prior to the economic downturn.

Superintendent 2: The Committee of the Whole structure, I did inherit. That has not been a long-standing history in the 20 years I have been here. In the beginning until maybe about six or seven years ago there was a structure more like three or four different break-out committees that the board set themselves and assigned themselves with three members on each or whatever it was.

It was about six years ago, I think, you know, two or three years before I became Superintendent my predecessor and the board at that time decided to go with a Committee as a Whole structure and do away with those individual committees, so yes, I inherited it. Since I became Superintendent there has been dialogue with the board about the pros and cons of operating that way and unanimously the board decided to keep it with way it was – with my support, to be honest. I see the pros and cons of it as well, but it is just kind of nice that the Board now know there are two meetings every month.

Superintendent 3: We use committee of the whole. I've done both. When I was superintendent at my previous district, they did have a pretty formalized committee system. Here it's always been committee of the whole, and I have worked in both areas.

And formally I was a school board member myself for six years, president for four I believe, when my kids were in elementary school. I was at on the board at my children's elementary district and there we had a more formalized committee system too, so there are advantages and disadvantages to both.

I guess I prefer committee of the whole because then all of the board members are equally informed. The advantage of the committee system is you have two or three members that are very deeply ingrained in their particular committee so they make recommendations back to the full board. That's a dynamic that's okay; it works.

Superintendent 4: Both. We work with three committees, basically. A personnel committee, which handles personnel and personnel issues; a planning committee that deals with planning relative to curricular issues, maybe long-range planning, those types

of things. And then we have a finance committee which strictly handles the finances and sometimes those committees will overlap with the meeting of those committees obviously we have three board members that serve on those committees. Some board members will serve on two committees; I forget how the math works out. There is maybe one board member or two that just serve on one committee.

Then we do try to rotate it so that all the Board members have experience on one committee or the other to give them a sense of what's going on. At some point in time, if there are major issues or just big events, we will have a Committee of the Whole just to bring everybody up to speed and discuss issues that may be going on at this point in time.

It is something that I inherited; however, I was also part of the forming of that when I was the principal in working with the superintendent. I think it's a great structure. It leaves me some padding so that I am not overly micro-managed so to speak, however, certainly in terms of putting people in the best positions to give and share their expertise has worked out really, really well.

Superintendent 5: We have two committees; one on finance and one on policy. And I have really questioned that to tell you the truth, but I haven't changed it as of yet because to me when anything ends up really being significant we end up having a committee of the whole anyways.

Superintendent 6: Both. We use a sub-committee for policy. They look at all the press policy which comes through which is one of the best services that the Illinois Association of School Administrators has done. It's wonderful, and then any other thing

that we want to add, then eventually it goes to the board, obviously, in an open session, so that's a sub-committee; facilities is also a sub-committee and finance is a committee of the whole.

It was the same. And it is fine. There are just too many meetings for people to go to and honestly I think the different board members have different expertise and different interests and so if they can kind of hunker down on the things that they like and are good at and have a background in, it's great.

Question 9: As part of your responsibilities, do you evaluate building principals? If not which member of your central office has that responsibility?

It is worthy to note that this is the one area where five of the six superintendents agree. All but one, evaluate the principal directly.

Superintendent 1: I do and prior to being the superintendent, I was the principal of South High School. I also have the assistant superintendent for business and HR and then some of the staff in this office here.

Superintendent 2: Now when I was superintendent, the only two people I really evaluated were the principal and the assistant superintendent. But taking on that principal's role is what kind of inherited the other responsibilities, and as Principal I evaluate the teachers. I am in the classroom and I am evaluating teachers as well, which is something when I was just the Superintendent I did not do.

Superintendent 3: No, I do not. Our assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction is a direct supervisor for our two – we have two building principals so he evaluates the building principals.

Superintendent 4: I do; in fact, I evaluate directly the principal, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and we kind of teetered with the Director of Special Education because as we are set up we have a department chair structure of 13 department chairs who are directly in charge of each of the content areas.

Superintendent 5: Yes, I mean there's only one building, one principal but I do have that responsibility.

Superintendent 6: And then finally the building principals each separately report to me, not the director of Curriculum Instruction.

Following the general leadership questions the participants in this study were asked more in-depth questions which focused on leadership and decision-making. The intent of these questions was to focus on specific situations and the process that the participants used to arrive at their final decisions. These interview questions, numbers 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 are presented below along with each participant's response.

Question 10: As the instructional leader of the district what is currently your top priority? Has this changed during your tenure in this district?

While each response is distinct there is a consistent theme of assessment as a top priority running through all six answers. While some superintendents were focused on assessing students, others focused on assessing the district as a whole.

Superintendent 1: Well, the bottom line unfortunately I think is the PSAE, and so how do we fare on a PSAE relative to others? Now, we're not going to make AYP; neither one of my schools are. However, if you look at *Newsweek*, South High School has been identified as one of the top schools in the state of Illinois and so our other indices are these. I want to see our enrollment at 95%. We also have as every other high school in the world it seems these days is pushing AP. Our AP and moment has quadrupled over the last say three years.

Superintendent 2: The top priority, which I say has not changed, it has been a priority, it is really even grown as a priority for me personally and for our school, is the improvement and an emphasis on sound assessment and sound analysis, actual use of assessments for learning as opposed to of learning. I am not banging on our assessments or our teachers' development of assessments. Where I think we fall short though is the use of those assessments to drive instruction, to identify students that one, either aren't being challenged enough, or two, are falling behind and then in turn determining what we can and need to do for those kids that need to be pushed a little further or need some help catching up.

Superintendent 3: I would say we just came off a couple of years of putting together a very, very intense dynamic program of work as an offshoot of just doing some really good strategic planning. We hired the CEC to help us out with that and just did an awesome job.

So we did a lot of leg work with that; a lot of homework. So this was our first year of actually deeply implementing the strategic plan. So it was a really fun year because we've spent a lot of time collecting data and stuff so we're now to the point where we can consume some of that. This was a very different year; very positive.

Superintendent 4: If you have been in education long enough high-stakes testing is high-stakes testing, but it is not always indicative enough of what you would want for every kid in terms of generating a plan for success and generating a plan to fill any gaps that they might have. With that, I have been a strong proponent for many years of a value-added or a growth component. We worked with Marzano, maybe ten years ago, and in speaking with him I kind of solidified that as my philosophy in a sense that I think I can best hold teachers, my staff as administrators and also students accountable for what they have gained when they come to us.

When students to you in the ninth grade, however I think it is fair and pretty much with the direction of where the State is heading now, hold me accountable of when those kids come to my door, you know, if they are reading second or third grade level and we get those kids up to seventh or eighth grade, statistically from that content perspective that's a phenomenal achievement.

Superintendent 5: Probably the most significant thing that I've done as superintendent is hire a math chair who has transformed the math department – transformed it in her three years. She got rid of pre-algebra. Now all the kids are in algebra. We used to have this co-teaching. We had pre-algebra, we had all this stuff for interventions, and it's a small school. So we took, probably, the fifty lowest performers on the test – we put 'em in algebra and they were in Block Three and Four and then her assignment was focused on assessment. For the kids who did not do well, she would take those kids out right then – in her room. She was the third teacher but just every unit was different. She would assess “oh wow, you guys don't know how to factor” – okay, boom, to her room, couple days she sends 'em back, they know how to factor. Now we go to the next thing. Now it's different kids who don't know how to do it.

Superintendent 6: So when the board interviewed me, one of the things that I insisted on was that the board would commit to developing a long-range strategic plan so that I would know what was expected of me and that I could properly administer that and actually realize those goals.

I don't believe that any district that is focused on too many things is ever going to get anything really right and do anything really well. And I do think that when the collective energies of an entire organization are channeled to the pursuit of a specific couple of key goals they can happen and they do happen. I am a very, very big proponent of strategic planning. I would never take a job where I wasn't going to be allowed to develop that plan with the board and then be held accountable for that execution.

When you hear teachers, whether they are presenting on National Board certification or presenting at a science meeting, association or whatever, it is so validating and fulfilling for me to see all people in the organization constantly connecting to the board goals and using them as examples and talking about how they were a catalyst for X, Y, and Z in their classroom, and so for me, that's a great validation of the power of a strategic plan and the necessity of a board and a superintendent and an administration all being on board with the exact same goals.

Question 11: In what areas have you found yourself to be most effective as a leader? In what areas have you found the most challenges with your leadership? Explain why or why not.

The responses to this question varied significantly. Some superintendents discussed their work with teachers, curriculum and assessment within the district, while others chose to emphasize their work external to the district such as communicating with parents, or politicians. Superintendents in higher performing districts tended to focus their attention within the schools while superintendents in lower performing districts tended to focus on groups or issues outside of the schools.

Superintendent 1: I think technology, instructional technologies, we've made huge inroads. You know, prior to being the superintendent, at one time I wrote the consolidated grants for the district and so I wrote them the last two years as well.

However, the point is that a one to one situation or whatever the environment is where the kids are largely surrounded by technology as they learn is really what I wanted

to see. So over the course of the last two years we have seen five new fully transformed classrooms; everything from social studies to English to PE now. So where is the next thing that will engage kids? What is it really?

I think, and this is huge, I think board relations is an area where my co-superintendent and I have struggled. I think, if I were to be completely honest, I think that's where I continue to struggle. In talking with seasoned superintendents that have been in their role for more than a decade, how is that accomplished? The only way that's accomplished is you maintain your board. I had talked to the superintendent down the road who just retired; 18 years in that role and I said, you know, "How the hell did you do that?"

You know, because this tenureship of a superintendent is days instead of years it seems. And he told me, he said, "The way I have done it is I had the same board when I started as I retired." So longevity in part is due to you know those board members and you've worked them, you've worked them, you've worked them. They know you, and all of that. It's when a board – I had four seats up in April. Yeah. That can change the course of a superintendent's career just like that.

Superintendent 2: I guess if there is anything it would be a fundamental shift in the entire school improvement planning and carrying out the process. Again, I don't take credit for the idea because it really came from the state and some shifts that they made in the school program, but I will take some credit for taking it and implementing it in what I think is a very effective way here at school. The year before last, when we started this, I

was Superintendent and really facilitated that, and the leadership of that, and carried it out this past year and we will keep going next year.

Well, I am going to go back to an earlier comment and that is the issue of an allocation of time and physical presence – at key things. So much of what we do in our schools, it is all about relationships in a lot of ways. If you don't have those trusting, comfortable types of relationships it is hard to get things done. I would say there was that challenge initially, and this past year the challenge was again trying to balance the needs of my role as Superintendent and being at Chambers of Commerce meetings and Rotary meetings and those kinds of things, and also being around here, being in the hallways, greeting kids and greeting staff, walking through the lunchroom and things like that, that you would expect a principal to be doing, being visible, being approachable, and things like that. That continues to be a struggle in terms of allocation of time and balance that with all the time that I am dealing with emails and phone calls and whatever else sitting in here. That continues to be a challenge.

Superintendent 3: Probably building a leadership team and nurturing that. I guess I've been blessed in a lot of ways to be surrounded with good people, and maybe two, just the philosophy of having a diverse team. So that any time we do have an opening take the hiring process very, very seriously.

We fully define what it is that we need in that position before we even advertise and start the interview process because we look at the team and we want a balance there. We need a couple chair leaders, we need a couple stats people, we need a couple

structural type thinkers. We need a couple politicians. We need that full picture. So we don't want to hire clones of ourselves.

I guess that to me was or is any success I've had, it really relates back to the team and collaborative decision making. We don't knee-jerk our decisions unless it's a crisis and we don't have a choice. If it's a bomb threat or something you do what you've got to do, but for the most part, I think it's more the building of the team and that common vision and knowing what it is that we need to work on and where we need to go.

Probably the political arena as far as the things, that are beyond your control. We're empowered to take care of 4,000 kids, 500 staff members, \$60 million budget; all that. So it's a very large organization; a very large operation, but there are so many outside influences out there that kind of get in the way sometimes of what your central mission is all about.

As superintendent you have to just work your way through those things. The political frame is not one that I like and enjoy but yet, that's probably where 80% of my time is spent is the politics. So I guess it's just a matter of struggling to understand it and any time a dilemma presents itself I guess I've learned the hard way you've got to peel that onion back a couple layers to find out what's really going on there. We deal with three, actually four very different communities and they don't necessarily like each other.

So there's a lot of that going on and you tip toe around certain issues sometimes to get the job done with the students that we have. The kids, it's not a problem with the kids. It's usually the adults that tend to kind of trip us up a little bit. So I would say

that's been my biggest challenge, is meandering through the political environment.

Superintendent 4: I think in terms of getting teachers to understand you get who you get but it is your job to take them from point A to point B. I think the other thing that I feel I can take credit for: We have a push-pull philosophy which was very difficult. And when I say that, philosophically, I told teachers we are going to push kids in the most rigorous courses that we possibly can, knowing that as the gatekeepers it is your job to pull them along.

In years past that was a reversed philosophy; you know, you tried to pull the kids into those courses and the teachers certainly pushed them back out. So I think in terms of a mindset, and I have been fortunate. When I say 'fortunate', with the retirement ERO and a number of other things, I turned over probably 85% of my staff. So as I have had a chance to hire that is certainly one of the traits and characteristics I have looked at through the hiring process to make sure that people fully understand what they are getting into as they sign on board.

I think push-pull and making sure kids get the most rigorous courses available to them has been my basic philosophy and kind of mantra and direction since I have come on board.

Sure, I think, again, is trying to find systems to generate, I can't say credible data, but to generate the information that actually reflects or gives you a chance to make some adjustments. Again, I am the science guy, so you know, formulas, math; those kinds of things work for me. Variables, I understand that. But when you get into a qualitative

aspect of sometimes what teachers feel is happening or what they want to occur those things don't always jive or mesh and create some systemic challenges.

So I go back to the fact that if I can find some markers, metrics, or some pillars that I can manipulate, and when I say that when it comes to standardized testing, if you have common assessments, if you have common outcomes then at least you can take a look at those and see how they reflect back to those individual students within your class. Of course the way we are set up in a high school setting, putting together a calendar, putting together an opportunity to create that data, you know, at this point in time all that comes together, a culmination around June. Well guess what happens in June? Nobody is here.

We are still not quite there, probably about 85% done, so you create all this data by June, somebody should look at it. Here is where we are right now. We have gotten a good set of common core assessments in place. We have also worked with a data management group, we were probably their beta testing group seven or eight years ago in generating these common assessments and a value-added assessment structure that's at least from a psycho-metric standpoint, a valid testing instrument.

I am confident with the information that is being generated and the data that is being generated that it can be used and the base be used as the basis for decision-making that is going to be impactful. My hope is again the fact that you get all this information about how well your kids performed. Where did they come to you and where did the finish? So if you, like I said before, have taken a kid from point A to point B, that's what

you should be held accountable for. That's it in a nutshell in terms of what my ten years here have come down to relative to philosophy and also some of the programs and structures that have been put into place to support that philosophy.

Superintendent 5: Sometimes I do avoid confrontation and I always say I'm the best supervisor for the high performers. I mean, I know who the high performers are and I will get them anything.

And I'm also very supportive, very encouraging, I mean people like that, they think I am the best because I really get into that. But sometimes I don't know what to do with the low performers. Obviously if they're non-tenured and it's clear we can get rid of 'em, but once they're here, got their time in, I struggle with how to help 'em. I really do. I struggle with how to get them – and that is not just teachers. Secretaries, custodians, my facility director I've struggled with, so, you know, I really still am the instruction leader, and I don't think the principal likes this.

Superintendent 6: So a couple of things that we did, the first thing we did is our website can be translated into any language and so that was something that we focused on, actually the first year and you can go to the website and see it, too, the whole idea that you can translate it into any language. We started the ELL parent center which is an off-site location where parents can go and learn about the American high school experience; learn about how to check their grades and what their kids are doing. We also now offer citizen classes and we also now offer English classes for adults. So that happens at the ELL parent's center.

We then instituted a family liaison program where when you go to one of our major events you will walk in and you will see signs in different languages so a parent can walk up to the table, get a headset in that language by like UN style, the family liaison who they come to know then is translated in real time what they are talking about at college night, for example, and then has a break-out session afterwards to answer any questions for that group of parents.

That family liaison becomes very well known by our Urdu speakers, our Assyrian speakers, our Russian speakers, for example so they really become the conduit then for me to have – for those constituents to have a voice. It has been a really, really successful program and out of that programming groups have spun off which I am just thrilled about. We have a coffee house now where our Spanish speaking parents get together once a month for coffee and every single faculty or staff member who speaks Spanish is invited to come so that those people can see that there are people in the building that speak their language. We have one in Assyrian now and we are starting a Black parent group.

So I am really, really happy with the efforts of the ELL parent's center, and the family liaisons, and the translation services that have really spun off into these people wanting to be together more and have that kind of camaraderie that's kind of the constituents.

Question 12: How do you make decisions to get things done? Explain why you do things that way.

While there was some variation in responses, overall the superintendents tended to focus on structure rather than individual situations. This speaks to the importance that these respondents felt that a system was necessary in working with boards of education, administrators and teachers.

Superintendent 1: Do you know, I think it's critical that it is always mission-based. It goes back to and I know that sometimes I haven't asked my principals but just certainly by their body language they get a little sick of bouncing it back to the strategic plan. Under that strategic plan comes their school improvement plans. They'd much prefer to let's keep front and center my school improvement plan. And if there is one thing I have noticed through time is that principals are centric to their building and they have not yet even evolved, grown, developed into thinking about things holistically. "It's very myopic, and we don't necessarily need to talk about this. How about North High School? Let's get back to North High School."

Superintendent 2: It depends on the issue and there will be different things I do depending on the issue. There are certain things that are very black and white and it is according to law or policy or some sort of governing authority that makes the decision pretty easy. It is just a matter of knowing the policy or knowing the law or knowing the past practice sometimes comes into play. Again, I have the benefit of 20 years here of

knowing and while you never say 'never' there is always some new situation you never dealt with, but it doesn't happen too much anymore, for me, at least.

Some things, like I said where there is not too much discretion, that's an easy decision, it is just a matter of making sure I know what guiding policy or law or whatever else. If I am not sure, I have to do a little homework, maybe, or check with someone or call the lawyer or talk to a colleague: "Do you remember we had this about five years ago, here we go again" and I might do that again, and in certain situations that's what it is.

Superintendent 3: Facilitator mostly. I usually keep my voice out of it for a while, paint the picture, and kind of get the discussion rolling, but then I just take a backseat and sometimes if I have to draw closure or bring a couple consensus statements out; "It sounds to me like we're kind of headed here. Is that where the group's that?" You know, that kind of stuff. I will do some directive stuff, but I enjoy the facilitator role much more than the participant role.

Superintendent 4: Obviously, if you do any research, I would go back to: You have got to have a great board of education. Short of having a great administrative staff, you must have a great board of education. Without that, you are destined for mediocrity and a lot of strife only in that a lot of personal agendas come on that board and it is hard to synergize and many times people run on one or two issues, so you know, as a microcosm of what happens in real life elections and that democratic process, you know,

you are very fortunate when you have people who want to be on the board and who can bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences with them.

That being said, we have been very stable over the last few years. We have had non-contested elections to maybe to two individuals running beyond the incumbents, so you know you will occasionally have your gad fly at the board meeting, usually about six months before elections, but again that notwithstanding, our board is very community oriented so they are well known in the community and to that degree well respected. Again, it has worked out very, very well for us.

Superintendent 5: We had a very, what would I say, you know, an interview process that was consistent, transparent, meaning we spent like a whole day on it meaning every candidate came in. They each had their own 45 minute interview. They each were asked the exact same questions for the exact amount of time and then each board member ranked – privately and individually – they ranked their 12, 1 through 12. Turned their paper over, no changes, just like a teacher – and then I got up and I put the names down, A to Z and asked what did you have for this person, 1-12? Without any changes, without any discussion, at that point nothing. I said I know this will work because at the end of the day, you might not get your top person but you will get one of your top people and we won't have this constant advocacy. And it worked beautifully.

Superintendent 6: I hire great people and I let them work. I don't micromanage. People that work for me recognize that early on; I am very outcomes based, here are the goals, here is what you need to touch and target and I let them do it. I am really, really

happy and excited with the cabinet administration. They are really fun, bright people that get to really take hold of their whole large pie, whatever that may be, and also have their own accountability structure and vision and things because what is right for me may not be right for them. That's definitely been validated as well.

Question 13: What are the metrics of success that you use to measure whether or not a particular decision was successful?

This question once again brought a wide variety of responses. While there seemed to be agreement in the previous question surrounding structure, responses to this question were very idiosyncratic using the specific details of each situation to determine success. It is worthy to note however that the three superintendents of higher performing districts all focused their responses on students and student-related issues.

Superintendent 1: I don't know if you know or not but we had a situation in this district last year where the wife of the head basketball coach was changing the grades of the basketball players. And so that consumed this district for a month and a half, two months.

And it was an agenda item to keep us out of the newspaper and how do we establish legitimacy again with our constituents, with kids, with parents and to suggest that was kind of a rogue behavior. She's obviously no longer with us, but that just goes to the core of who we are. So that kind of rocked our world and so that changes everything. Rather than having a weekly meeting, it was an every other day meeting. Because we were closing ranks. We needed to stay on top of this and how do you change

the course of a district that is now in doubt by the community? You know what I mean? And so those unscheduled events are, they're wickedly disruptive. I think it made us grow up pretty quickly. Do you notice, sometimes you assume processes and procedures are tight. And you don't know until it's actually tested and our spin to the newspapers was at least we caught it. We're the ones that caught it.

Superintendent 2: Sometimes, and as we make decisions, and again depending on the type of decision it is, you know, if it is a policy or a program to implement or discontinue or something like that as a team we are trying to identify as a decision is made, you know, how will we know. Is this a decision that we will need to follow-up on in a year or a month and identify what as a team we talk about what are the indicators to know if this was a good decision or not, or if it had the impact that we wanted or not?

I mean, we are kind of looking at data ad nauseam sometimes, but the key is to be looking at relevant data that actually gives us good feedback on whatever it is. Maybe an example would be something we piloted last year and we continued it this year with little modifications and we probably need to do more modifying looking forward.

Superintendent 3: A lot of that's built into our strategic plan because we – the accountability piece was kind of lacking as well. We think we're doing okay because we're doing blah, blah, blah, but you don't loop that stuff back around like you should and now we've also joined with a data management consulting firm. We've just joined them and they've been helpful along with the CEC too to kind of wrap us back around so that we can spin that kind of accountability evaluation piece around a little better than we

have in the past. So we're using some of those vehicles.

Superintendent 4: When it comes to gifted education, I can't let 10% of our student body drive the outcomes for the other 90% of students. Because once the International Baccalaureate (IB) program was in place fully it would deplete the AP opportunities for some of our other students. We didn't argue but we had some strong conversations behind closed doors in terms of how to develop this. And at some point in time, I get to be the Superintendent and say, "No," and I did in a number of cases. However, at the end of the day we created a Gifted Academy which I am still working through as far as the name is concerned because we are not taking in all gifted kids.

Certainly if I am a parent and I am being sold an opportunity to have a gifted academy, sure if my kid is gifted, well you are not in 90th percentile, we are stretching down to maybe the 80th percentile which then brings on the other challenges especially for a few kids that are in the high 70th percentile so is this truly a gifted academy or was this just a ploy to resolve some issues with a few of our high-end parents who wanted their kids together? You work through those kinds of things to try to have your cake and eat it too.

Superintendent 5: A lot of our kids – half of our kids go to the community college. A bunch of them have to take the 099 classes and it's really a problem. So we started this class called College and Career Readiness and it's a requirement. It's a full 83-minute block and it's compass-test practice, basically, and it's for any senior who does not get a 20 on their ACT.

I think I had a really good idea. We have this young English teacher; brand new, and young math teacher and a counselor. In their second year; they're very dynamic teachers and the kids really relate to them. And I said, I said, let's change this up. Yes, it's gonna be CCR but let's start having Mount Union Community College over here. Let's make it more like that College 101 class that they require. Let's do it more on career planning. Let's go to Mount Union every week.

So we told the kids it's gonna be in first block – first block starts at 8:30 but they have to be here at 8:00 on Friday morning 'cause we're actually going to transport them to Mount Union Community College to show them there's this welding program, every week we're gonna show 'em something else. And now that they have these three guys Mike and Dave and Kevin, these three dynamic teachers, I think the kids are gonna turn around. I'll be shocked if it doesn't.

Superintendent 6: And then at the end of each year, we also publish the five-year plan and this was the first year and you will see five-year plan, year two and this is the one that came out this year, five-year plan, year three. Basically what happens is it will go through those goals. It will talk about what we have done. It will talk about actual outcome data and what we are seeing, what the next step is, what we hope to see, costs and things like that, that's kind of all here, facility, again, stuff.

It is kind of on the web, it's videos, it's on our cable station, it's in print and so there are different people in the community that utilize different medium and so we try to hit everybody in some way, shape or form so that they know where their tax dollars are

going and they know what we are working on and how we are monitoring the results of that work. So that's kind of an example of why that is really important to have a superintendent to do that.

Question 14: How do you communicate with the various stakeholders of your school district?

Superintendents tended to draw on common themes in their responses. All subjects referred to multi-modal communication and mentioned the challenge in reaching all the diverse groups of stakeholders.

Superintendent 1: You know, that's – it's a challenge. I belong to civic organizations. That is a challenge of mine. That's an area that I probably have to get better at. I, on a weekly basis, go to Rotary. I have a newsletter. We're going to use the Internet, our website a little differently this year.

I am going to expand subcommittee work. We have in both buildings a monthly breakfast to celebrate our kids' achievement. Often times I will get up and talk about what's going on in the school at that time; kind of in a celebratory fashion.

And then every year we have golf outings and all of that kind of stuff, so you are at all that crap and shaking hands and talking about what's important in the district. I could, we could do a better job with that. It's something that I will continue to find different ways of – I might start a one-way blog this year. Things like that to communicate. So yes, I do believe it changes your decision-making because you hear things from those people that you would not have otherwise heard.

Superintendent 2: Many modes, that's the first thing. There is no one way to communicate. I can kind of run through the litany of different scenarios and situations but when it comes to the building emails become the predominant method of disbursing information to individuals, groups, or the entire staff.

Whenever I can, if I need to talk to one or two people, I am getting up and walking to their office. Again, it gets me in the hallways, gets me out there and it forces me to get the heck out of here. Again, it depends on the situation and usually I will go to them as opposed to asking them to come to me.

I didn't quite address the outside world. Again, it is kind of the same thing. It is getting out of this building and being at the Chamber of Commerce luncheons and sitting with people that sometimes I know and sometimes I don't and just meet and greet and so forth, they always give us a little mic time and it gives me a chance to say, just in 30 seconds or less, here is what is going on at the high school this month or coming up. I am part of the local Rotary Clubs, again there is again a good networking opportunity to brag about things that are going on here with our kids or our staff or our athletic teams or whatever, promote things we are doing.

Superintendent 3: That's a really good question and we've really focused on that. That was one of our key goals a couple years ago that we really needed to take a serious look at how we communicate and of course with the electronic digital world that we're in now, we use a lot of vehicles.

I think once upon a time it was all print. You'd put out a monthly newsletter and

you'd try to get in the newspaper every other day if you could, and we did, and all that, but now we use electronic newsletters. We do an e-blast. We have got e-mail blasts going out that we can target or blanket, either way depending on what we need. We use Twitter, we do use Twitter, we use Facebook. We use every different style that's out there and you almost have to.

Superintendent 4: That's probably one of the biggest challenges, I think for a superintendent to make sure people fully understand what they have available. I go back again to the whole piece that there is a lot of history here so when you inherit or build on a culture of achievement, that's a lot different than going into a district that is struggling or has had a history of failure.

Again, the challenges, you can't be good, you have to be twice as good just by virtue of the fact that you were. The pressures we get from community members waiver on a .2 or .5 difference in ACT scores and all of a sudden the sky is falling. Again, you talk about communicating with people, of course, I have a quarterly newsletter, you know, websites have helped out tremendously. We are not sending out all-school mailings the way we used to.

Superintendent 5: I'm on the Chamber of Commerce, I've really gotten to know the mayor and the village trustees, when you're from the area originally it helps 'cause you all have this common history of growin' up, right. Everybody's Catholic, everybody's Irish, it's goofy but it's helped because it's helped me to be connected with the mayor, the trustees, the chamber, the business owners.

I think because I'm out there and communication is not as much of a problem because I do think I have impacted that people think "oh, she's doin' a good job over there. She's doin' a good job" and they think that because they see me. I hope I am; I believe I am but that helps the perception.

Superintendent 6: So one of the things you will notice is I have three town hall meetings a year, one of them is on the annual review of programs and personnel. Every single year I publish what the administrative recommendations are for change in any personnel or programs. That also goes on the website and it is kind of put out where we can possibly put it out through parents and advisory group at the principal level, through the union committees, curriculum committee, professional development committee, through the staff council, whatever we can, every single group, student government so that the kids see it.

And so you will see here the annual review programs, you will see it here for the last year. The one that is going to be published will be published August 6th. So it will say the actual recommendations of the summary of public comments because we also have those available online, the video of the pack form on the annual review which was this town hall meeting.

Then I also have a cable TV show where I actually put on a little – I am kind of the host of the show, if you will, and we highlight something that is going on in the schools relative to the board goals so that our cable station, it is really weird that people watch this stuff, but they do. They kind of service, it is kind of like a 20-minute show,

but when we add our commercials in there, we literally have commercials; it turns into a half-an-hour show. It is kind of cool. That's kind of how we reach out to different constituents.

Question 15: What factors or considerations influence and/ or inform your decision-making?

In responses to this question, superintendents focused on either internal components such as students, teacher and building culture or external components such as community perception and union relationships.

Superintendent 1: I have found that and I've watched through time, just the body language and something when I go into those meetings and in the back of my mind, which I find intriguing, is when you have a multi-school district, how do you keep them on the mission not only of keeping their school going but also things that are larger than the school itself.

Superintendent 2: Rarely am I ever going to make a decision without talking to the team or minimally key administrators that are in the know or part of or are going to be affected by that decision; administrative decisions, if there is an issue that comes up, it is going on that DAT agenda and possibly on the AT agenda where we are going to hash out as a Team and try and arrive at a consensus, try and look at it.

And then there is going to be situations where we need to go beyond that, I need to sit with the union president, maybe, if it is something that's a labor relations thing or a

working conditions issue, I will run it by him and let him talk to his people a little bit.

Again, it is all going to depend on who is impacted by that decision.

Superintendent 3: I think building the culture, shaping the culture, and enhancing the culture is a long-term thing. The climate is a day-to-day kind of thing but the culture is more of that long-term. I think a lot of it is it takes you a couple years just to learn your community, just to learn what's out there. Unless you have been brought up in the system and are a product of that, you are really coming into foreign ground.

I think what I've noticed in the profession, those that are the two and three people that turnover quickly are those that maybe come in and try to do change too quickly. They have not discerned all the underlying stuff that's there, all of the political stuff that's there before they just jump in and institute monumental change. Those are the ones that are usually the short-termers. I think it's a matter of doing your homework.

It's like getting back to some of Covey's stuff; you reap what you sow; there's no shortcuts. There's no short cuts. If you're going to enhance a place and leave it better than what you found it's going to take a lot of time and energy and working with people. So probably longevity is a result of embracing the culture, understanding it before you try to shape it; if that makes sense.

Superintendent 4: I am confident with the information that is being generated and the data that is being generated that it can be used and the base be used as the basis for decision-making that is going to be impactful. My hope is again the fact that you get all this information about how well your kids performed. Well, what does that mean?

Where did they come to you and where did the finish? So if you, like I said before, have taken a kid from point A to point B, that's what you should be held accountable for.

If that kid already came to you knowing calculus and actually doing pretty well, you are probably a margin of pushing that kid forward is going to be minimal. By the same token in years past when that kid got a 31 or a 32 on the ACT, you got full credit for that as if you made a great impact. But notwithstanding, we have gotten to a point where we have a great deal of information and data issued at this point in time and we are trying to get teachers to come in over the summer periodically to take a look at that data.

Superintendent 5: And our biggest problem is, I would say, our biggest problem is complacency on the part of the students, they are not poorly behaved, they just don't have the drive to do anything. And if, as a teacher, you are a high performer, have at it, because these kids are like a piece of clay and you can really do it here. If you really want to be a teacher, this is the place to come, because our kids need these great teachers they don't have. You know a lot of our students do not have homes where their parents are that educated and that they know exactly what to do. And yet they're nice kids, they appreciate – most of them came from Chicago; they know this is a nice place; it's safe. But you gotta do it.

And you know, that is – and so, when the average teacher's making \$86,000 and we have every sport there is, you get paid for everything, I can't believe one thing that you could complain about. I don't get it. If you want to be a teacher – oh my God, it's like the best place ever.

Superintendent 6: What has been really great is in board meetings to be able to say: I want to remind the community that last year the board room was filled with people who didn't want this, this and this and look at the results. So we are always juxtaposing what some of the constituents' fears were and anger and in reality what the progress monitoring is showing.

After year one, we are happy, our decision is validated. That doesn't mean we won't change courses in the future, as of now it was the right decision. Those are really cathartic moments, I think, for even the people in the union that are sitting there going: "Uh-hum, it does seem to be working." So I always make sure that I point that out and at the same time very, very transparently point out when we took the wrong course and say: We are going to commit to this for another year, but our initial analysis is showing that there is not a return on investment here.

The program costs \$1 million dollars and we are not seeing that these kids are improving at a rate any different than if they weren't in this program on their own, and so we are going to watch this for one more year and then evaluate whether or not this needs to be discontinued. We are also very honest about what things are not working.

Question 16: When a member of your leadership team disagrees with one of your decisions, describe how do you typically respond. Could you give an example of this in action?

The responses to this question reveal the decision-making preferences of each superintendent. Subjects tended to respond in one of two ways: directive or facilitative.

Directive responses tended to emphasize the CEO nature of the superintendency whereas facilitative responses tended to emphasize the process over the personality.

Superintendents in higher performing districts indicated a preference for facilitative decision-making while superintendents in lower performing districts were more directive in their decision-making.

Superintendent 1: Where our disagreements come now really it's in the area of commonality and so as we move forward as a district and it is becoming more and more it seems that South High has an approach and North High has an approach and so in the cabinet meeting this is our goal.

Well, how different can we be? That's the question. For example, I am running to summer schools; one up here and one over there. It is a huge balance I think to empower your principals. I am seeing more and more allowing some flexibility and some freedom, some latitude with how things go on in the building. So you put in a parameter and that parameter is you have 60K to run your summer school. As long as you're meeting the minimum requirements for credit, have at it.

Superintendent 2: It ties to administrator evaluation of teachers and the impact of staff attendance on their evaluation. That's the topic. We have in our teacher evaluation plan one of the items of our core expectation is: 'Maintains attendance according to our contract, to the bargaining unit'. The bargaining unit outlines, you are supposed to call by a certain time; you get this many days a year and so on, and so forth.

So this division administrator felt that these teachers needed to be ranked down, or told ahead of time that if you get over that you are going to and now with PARA and the sequencing, someone not getting an excellent, someone may have been ticked off about it, but hell, whatever. Now they realize they may lose their job over this somewhere down the line if they aren't ranked as an excellent. So the stakes get real high and the union is now getting involved and so on and so forth. This particular administrator really wanted to stick it to the guns and say, no we are not going to – and we talked as a Team on multiple occasions.

I had an unhappy administrator when I made the decision, it was like, “No, we are not going to rate down people this year, but we are telling them now that next year be ready, and 15 days is your number and be ready to be rated down in the category.” And so she was unhappy but she certainly had her voice listened to and it was multiple and all opinions were voiced at multiple times and in multiple situations. And then I had a private conversation with her outside the meeting, too, to go through it and make sure she understood where I was coming from and making sure I was listening and making sure where I was coming from as well.

She respected it and we are moving on and I feel it was the right decision. I still think she would have rather had it her way but I mean the relationship is intact still between us and she moved forward and hopefully there is not baggage continuing to be carried on.

Superintendent 3: It's pretty rare because I think our group has worked together

for so long we kind of know each other's nuances. We kind of know what trips each other's triggers and that kind of stuff. We also know that we really don't leave the room until we're all pretty comfortable.

Will it ever be 100 percent? No, but we get awfully close. Usually it's once we find that common ground and we just build on that common ground. The differences are going to be there but most of the decisions – when we come out – because all of our conversations are confidential and treated that way and we trust each other and you can say anything and it stays.

That's a beauty too, we trust each other. So you can have it out behind the closed door but when we walk out of that door we're all marching to the same drum. We're all shoulder to shoulder. I think that's important for the organization to see too. Yes, we're human and we're not always going to be 100%, but we're going to get 'er done.

I usually keep my voice out of it for a while, paint the picture, and kind of get the discussion rolling, but then I just take a backseat and sometimes if I have to draw closure or bring a couple consensus statements out; “It sounds to me like we're kind of headed here. Is that where the group's that?” You know, that kind of stuff. I will do some directive stuff, but I enjoy the facilitator role much more than the participant role.

Superintendent 4: Well here you go, you fight behind closed doors and you present in public. That's my philosophy. We can talk and say whatever we need to behind closed doors, I want honest opinions. Because I am the superintendent doesn't mean that I have all the answers and also doesn't mean that I can't be disagreed with or

wrong. Behind closed doors I think those are the kinds of conversations you have, and as you roll things out to faculty and to the community you want to make sure you have the best product possible rolling out so you don't have any of those subversive forces. Let's say this: You minimize those subversive forces to that degree if we can at least come to some consensus, not 100% agreement, but some consensus.

Superintendent 5: When I was the principal, the superintendent just let me run the school and he was here, he was running a referendum, he didn't do anything with academics. But I'm not like that because I think I can still run the school more effectively than my principal and that's not good. It's not the best model. I should have more confidence in my administrative team and you know maybe I'm just so cocky, maybe I can't let go of anything. It could be, or you know, I know more about instructional leadership maybe. I'm not sure what it is.

I think I am and I think my curriculum director is, but I think the other three administrators are not that academically curious. I'll put it like that. Like, just curious yourself personally about what works. They're very curious about what works on the football field – my principal is a nice guy and he's a hard workin' guy. You can't make somebody into somethin' they're not, either, and you know, you can't make somebody into you. And that's not right; that's not right.

Superintendent 6: So people who work for me know that I really want critical discourse, that I want people to disagree with them, with each other. I want them to be very critical of me in that room, in that cabinet room. And then ultimately I sit, I listen

and I make a decision. That's how ultimately I am the adjudicator. I am responsible for setting the direction of the district. I am responsible for those.

That is a top-level management so anything that gets to us is ultimately my responsibility and so we do spend a lot of time on just debating, you know, being very critical of one another, asking questions, playing the devil's advocate, and then I make a decision. And it usually looks like, "I have heard enough now, I am going to think a little more about it and I will have a decision next week or I have heard enough now, this is the direction we are moving in." Yes, of course, they wouldn't be on the team if they didn't and, yes, of course, it's a great environment. I think that quickly people will see through a different lens and even though perhaps they came out of the gate thinking we should do "A" after listening to the principal's perspective and the legal perspective and to my perspective, to the public relations perspective, quickly those issues are distilled very, very quickly, actually and you see things through a different lens and I would say the majority of time people are like, "Yeah, we really do need to go in that direction." And even though I made that final decision, it is quite obvious, which is the beauty of being in a group of people like that so that the actual individuals see through different lenses.

Question 17. Describe how you have changed as a leader during your career as a superintendent.

All of the responses to this question focused on how each respondent saw schooling differently as a result of their experience as a superintendent. While not all of the subjects were pleased about this change, it is clear that the superintendent's office has

no parallel in K-12 education. All of the subjects remarked about the unique nature of the superintendency.

Superintendent 1: In that I have changed a lot. What has changed isn't very good. My latitude for silliness, my willingness to listen to silliness has lessened and it's unfortunate. These jobs are awesome, awesome jobs, but you know what, the element of being carefree and the element of being naive, the element of being around kids is a wonderful thing. What ends up happening here is, I said this isn't the school.

And the unfortunate reality is here I am not in any building. As a building principal you can go out and you can watch kids. Here, everything is legal. Every corner you turn is legal. And so when I am being snowed by either my principals or my ADs or the union, I become more short, which is unfortunate. My advice to up and coming administrators is to fight that as much as possible because – you have to evolve in your leadership skills and as you get further and further away from what got you here, particularly if you stay within the same district, you have to morph. You have to find new leadership approaches and styles. We are in unprecedented times. There's more dictate coming now than ever and so you're latitude for creativeness is narrowed, I think.

Superintendent 2: In this role, I felt that those 16 years had prepared me. Every job, every succession move that I had, I felt that the job prior had prepared me to be successful of the next job and when I made the transition over here it was a much more significant transition than any other transition I had ever made and I am not saying that I

wasn't prepared but I didn't come in and I came to realize pretty quickly that I had a lot of growth and learning that needed to be done in the Superintendent's role.

Prior to that my focus was on teachers and kids and it wasn't that I didn't deal with board issues because we are a one-school district so I was always at the board meetings as principal and even as assistant principal before that, so I had familiarity. When you are the guy, when you are the one, things change significantly. I think the two things that I had to grow in, the two areas I had to grow in were number one, the funding issue. First of all I was very involved in the spending of the money, I never really had to worry or think too much about where the money was coming in or understanding how to predict. It is a guessing game. We are in the business of unpredictability in terms of what we are going to get from the state, what we are going to get from the Feds, and what we are actually going to collect from the local revenues and so forth. Again, not having that experience that one position where I didn't have a lot of experience, but I had a lot of growth that I had to go through in understanding the whole financing aspect of a public school.

I had the courses and all that but until you really get your hands dirty. And the other side of it was just the dynamics of Board members and dealing with people that don't know your craft, really; don't have personal experience with it. I shouldn't say 'don't know' I don't mean to belittle Board members but they see it from the eyes of a parent or community member and so it took me some time and through stepping into some pitfalls ever once in a while with the Board to be able to get them together working

as a team and develop those relationships, those trusting relationship and to deal with the situations where Board members are sometimes out of line.

As a rookie coming in your gut may tell you: I am getting a call from a Board member about playing time on a sophomore football team, or something. Again as a new Board member you kind of know this isn't right, but they just hired you so what are you going to do? I am going to talk to the sophomore coach. In hindsight, what am I doing?

Superintendent 3: Probably getting back to that political acumen, developing that over the years. It's heartwarming because the superintendent needs to be the lightning rod for the district. You take the hit. It's your job to be out there and you take the hit, and I think in our profession the longevity, especially in the suburban area, of the superintendent is not real long.

The real reason is you've got to make some tough calls sometimes. It's a lonely chair. It's a lonely chair. Just over the course of the year just making decisions like you make, you're going to make some significant political enemies. It's just the reality of the situation. So you need to kind of minimize that or at least understand that and work your way through.

So I've been blessed. Some of the key leaders, like the three mayors of the three municipalities we work with, we're good friends. I am on a first name basis with the state senator and rep for this school district. We have each other's cell phones. They'll call me when there is a decision about to be made on the floor wanting to know, "How do you feel about this; is this a good or bad? I don't know enough about it."

Those relationships are key and those are relationships the rest of the organization doesn't, they're not even aware of. But I think that's what I've maybe nurtured over my career is the ability to kind of make those relationships. It's about the people business. That's my job as superintendent. I have to be the external person.

I have to be the person out there protecting my district; protecting my kids and the staff that work here. That was very uncomfortable when I first started the job. But as you build these relationships, I am becoming more comfortable doing that. I'm probably in Springfield five, six times a year. Do I enjoy it? No, but it's part of the job and I've got to go down there and slay a dragon once in a while.

Superintendent 4: It has been very difficult to transition into a not day-to-day person in terms of being directly involved with creating some of the ideas and managing some of the ideas. That has probably been the biggest challenge for me. It is probably a bigger challenge especially when you are a one-high school district. You are in the same building as the principal; that can be very challenging.

I think the advantage I had was I came from a multi-school district previous to this but as luck would have it, guess whose building housed the superintendent? Mine. Of all the other buildings in the district, mine, so I was used to parents disagreeing with me and walking right down to the superintendent's office and saying, "I need an appointment," whereas the other principals had a little bit more of a buffer to that degree. By the same token having the superintendent walk down your halls and see actually what you were doing and where you were implementing some of the district initiatives and

also what were you doing as a building; so again, that was a very useful experience for me to have.

Now the shoe is on the other foot that was and still to some degree is the biggest challenge for me in terms of trying to weigh out how much to be involved because certainly I don't want to micro manage because people still remember me as a principal so they go right around the principal and say, "what would you do?" I have to be very careful in how I answer that because at the end of the day I am still the Superintendent even though it may just be my opinion, all of a sudden it is, "The superintendent said," so you know you do have to manage that. The difficult part is again, establishing a direction and a philosophy and just trying to manage and establish how much you want to be directly involved and how much are you now dictating versus collaborating.

Superintendent 5: I don't like our culture here, with the teacher's union. You know we have a union president, she's been the same president forever and nobody makes a move without askin' her. I'm tellin' ya, I'll be getting together with the evaluation committee – and I'll be showing them what we learned and until they go to her and she gives her okay on this, they won't be okay about it and that has been very discouraging to me. I thought once people see me, they see how hard I work, they see, I'm smart and all that, they're gonna relax. But they don't. They're always suspicious. That's the culture here and I – I really thought I would be able to change that. I thought the previous superintendent, he was kind of a tough guy and I think, and I thought, you know, 'but I will be able to' but I haven't been able to.

I mean yeah, it's a lot of work. It is a lot of work if you do a good job, but that's what it is to be a teacher. I mean, you know, I don't understand that and I guess – and there's some part of me that's just not – that's my biggest challenge and it's, you know, I don't know – I thought I would be able to change their hearts. I really did, and I'm not able to do that.

Superintendent 6: Change in me as a leader, you know, it's humbling to be given the opportunity to have a vision and actually see it realized. How many people on this planet actually get to do that? I am really, really blessed and it's wonderful that I can come to a place and use my intellect and experience every day and like I say have a vision and see it realized. It is humbling. I would say that it has been validated over and over again that every child has the ability to be great and that the systems are what hold children back, not children themselves. That's definitely been validated.

Question 18. Please discuss a particular controversial decision that needed to be made during your time as superintendent and the story behind it. Discuss the processes used and the stakeholders involved.

While all of the individual controversial decisions discussed have unique qualities, what ties all six responses together is the degree to which they do not directly involve teaching and learning. All of the subjects chose to emphasize a particular controversy that involved the Board of Education, the collective bargaining agreement or both.

Superintendent 1: Two years ago in our first year we renegotiated, we opened up the collective bargaining agreement. We were able to get the union to come to the table and open up and they didn't have to. We opened up the collective bargaining agreement. We began talking about wage freezes, salary freezes, and we were able to do a solid freeze. Everybody went into a freeze for this current year, this past year.

At the same time -- so we were contracting, we were contracting in terms of our course offerings, what we were offering athletically and our clubs and so forth. Yet, I made the decision; we made the decision, to expand our fine arts program. Now, how the hell does that happen? And how can you float that well. We ruffed people.

That was a very, very fine line and so we've brought together to the union all of the upfront work. The upfront work is significant for change. In the fine arts, we are opening up a full program of strings which we've never had before. That's expensive. It is an FTE and that's expensive and in a time where everybody else has contracted.

So working with the union we were able to convince them that it is an expectation of this community that we offer this to our kids because here comes the first class out of the middle school that's had strings so for the high school to shut this down would be heresy. It would be really difficult for the community to accept. So we opened it up. Politically, it's beautiful. It will do nothing -- the whole question of you're taking away from something else. That's going to hurt my elective; maybe yes, maybe no. Who knows? So I would tell you the upfront work with unions is absolutely critical. Where I see young administrators fall is when they disregarded the power of the union.

Superintendent 2: We, for years, had a policy that was pretty common in most high schools and that was kids were allowed to have cell phones. Our policy for years was they could have it and it had to be turned off and out of sight and not allowed to be used from the time Period 1 bell rang until the time the Period 8 bell ended, so within the confines of the school day.

Well the discipline committee made the recommendation to the Board of Education to modify the Cell Phone Policy and basically become more liberal and allow the kids to use it during non-academic time which means now your 4-minute passing period to get from Period 1 to 2, as well as you are sitting at lunch.

The significant change was letting kids use their phones, get their texting in, checking their Facebook, do whatever; well, the Board approved the recommendation. There wasn't a lot of dissention. There wasn't a lot of major discussion and in hindsight, and this was completely unintentional but it all occurred almost as the Board was changing over. The meeting that this was going on was right at an election time. In hindsight looking back the Board members weren't really paying attention, I think, or if they were it didn't register with them as a big deal. So the policy changes, election occurs and four new Board members are elected to the Board.

We are about one month into the next school year, and one of the new Board members is asking about the Cell Phone Policy. And then we get this dad, one dad who keeps showing up who also happens to be pretty good friends with a couple of these new Board members, really banging his drum about how this is completely in appropriate and

a distraction and talking about all the negatives. Some of it legitimate, some of his concerns were expressed were expressed back when this was taking place.

So anyway, we have now got this split between – because three board members were on the board back then and all voted okay. One of those three is sort of questioning the wisdom of it and is saying, “I am not sure if I really agreed or really understood back then.” And now with the four new board members, they are sort of split three and one and they were ready this past October to change the rule right then and there.

I tried to convey to them, “You may not agree with the policy but the previous Board approved it and let’s give it a year. Let’s monitor and see.” I tried to talk them off the ledge and I tried to convey the rippled impact, not just on cell phones but the message you send to the staff and that committee. What kind of a Board do you want to be if all of a sudden you just decide at the flip of the switch you are going to change a significant policy that affects every kid in the building and staff and so forth?

I referred to some training that the board had gone through about through the School Board Association: Your job is to stay up here in the balcony. You don’t go down to the dance floor or the factory floor or whatever analogy you want to use. You don’t manage, you govern. And so they listened.

And they decided to not take the action and said, “Okay,” but the message is that when the Disciplinary Committee reconvenes to talk about the Policy for the next year they have to take into account these concerns I got down. Tell me all your problems or

issues with this and let me bring that back down to the Committee and let's do this the right way, procedurally at least, and so that happened.

I felt my role as Superintendent in guiding that process and that decision-making was to make sure that they understood everything at stake. I felt that that was my main concern. Part of my role as Superintendent with the Board is to recommend and try to guide them toward a certain decision, but at the same time it's about educating them and making sure they understand. I feel I did that. There were other parent groups that came in barking just as loudly that the Policy should say and this other data I mentioned; so again, I tried to be respectful of both sides and being very open about what I thought made sense and I was okay with it to be honest.

Superintendent 3: A lot of examples would be we've been on the referendum trail – for six times. We have not been successful. That just brings up all kinds of potential discussions. We have battles between the communities over boundaries. “Okay, why should I vote for this when my kids are going to go to the old school?” That kind of stuff, so you have a lot of those have and have-not kind of discussions that you've got to wade yourself through.

In some of those issues it's really hard to build consensus, but I think our message has always been focused on what's best for kids. That's the underlying question. So it's that utilitarian mindset that we have adopted as an administrative team. As utilitarians, we tried to do the greater good. So every decision we make, we sort of hit the pause button and look at where's the greater good.

Now, that's not always possible. In a perfect world it would be, but there's times when there is no greater good. The decision that has to be made is going to do some damage. So then you go to the flipside of the equation; where's the least damage? Because I think what we try to do as an administrative team is anything that we decide needs to be in the light of day; that transparency thing.

Where if we're on the front page of the newspaper tomorrow with a headline, what are we going to be comfortable with? Can we stand behind what that statement might be? Can we defend that based on it's the greater good or the least damage kind of thing?

And you do get into those dilemmas especially when you have a limited budget. Everybody wants a bigger piece of the pie; there's only so much pie. So you get into all of that philosophical stuff. We just need to defend our kids. That's what we're here for; to help more kids learn more. That's what we're supposed to do.

Superintendent 4: Sure. I go back to I am probably in a more unique situation than most in the sense that the board know who I am from the ten years I was here as principal. There is a different trust level that you may have with a superintendent that just comes in hired from another outside district or for that superintendent who makes a huge jump there have been times, I know at a neighboring school district, for example, you had a department chair who had a pretty substantial history jump into the superintendent's role. Well when you do that like I said, hopefully you have enough of a

track record that the trust is built and it goes back to the dynamic too that hopefully your board is a stable Board.

If I were to lose or turn over my board in the next couple of years I may be starting all over. When I say 'starting all over', establishing credibility, getting them up to speed with the kinds of things we have done, where we would like to go, where we need to go, that takes years; years of, I can't say craftsmanship, but certainly a collaborative working with a board who trusts you and you trust them in terms that they are not micro-managing but allowing you to do, and also what you need to do because they feel this is the direction we need to go.

It is a very intricate dynamic that if it is working the way it should be working than it is always a give and take. However, they trust us as professional as and allow us to make the decisions that we ultimately need to make as long as you are producing, so who can argue with production? When you say that, I say again our Board has been very good.

When we say 'stable' we have had Board members who have been on the board for ten years. Probably our least experienced Board members now have been on for two terms which they are in their sixth and seventh years, I think. That's substantial, that is absolutely substantial. They have seen our school change demographically from a predominantly majority school to a now predominantly African-American school and that's okay.

Back to the board, that's why it works, that's why my original statement was: If you have a stable board who is a professional board who understands what those outcomes should be, who don't have personal agendas. I say that because they all do but they are not micro-managing or pushing those to a degree that doesn't allow you to do your work as an administrator.

Superintendent 5: We had a really great contract last time and we were low, you know, compared to the other districts around here and we got like a 4, a 4.25, a 4.75 and a 5. It was really good. Now, even though we have money in this community; that is not okay. I would be willing to just sit down in a room for an afternoon and come to what I think would really be a just contract, something we could all agree on – but it's not gonna happen. It's not gonna happen. I'll have to get our attorney; they'll get their uniserve director. We'll sit for months and at the end of the day we'll probably end up with what I originally know it right.

Superintendent 6: There is not a single decision where everybody is happy, it just isn't that way and so the strategic plan and the long-term vision guides those decisions and so we constantly talk about: This is the long-term delivery of instruction and the long-term commitment that every child can succeed. As the administrators and board of education that are placed with that heavy, heavy burden and responsibility we are doing what we believe is the best thing to achieve that goal which I don't think anybody can argue with and that is kind of the standard mantra.

With the union, it also comes, I understand that you are here and that your role is to protect jobs and I admire that. We don't view District 219 as a jobs program and I know that hurts all of you in the audience tonight to hear that, and I will just be honest but we are not a jobs program so we are not going to employ people in positions that we no longer need. It is very simple like that.

I will say that if you stay on course and you continue with your vision that is child centered all of those other distracters really are – dissipate to the proper weight of those issues and the real success of the district does outshine all of those moments of discontent, they really do.

Research Question 3 - Null Hypotheses

While this portion of the sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, 2007) is qualitative in nature, it is important to recognize the potential null hypotheses. After investigating the interview responses of suburban Chicagoland superintendents it is important to understand that these qualitative data could reveal that there is no difference between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (1) Bureaucratic Authority. Additionally, the same could be true of the relationship between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority or (5) Moral Authority.

Superintendents 1, 2 and 6 represent school districts where student's academic performance as measured by their ACT composite score was lower than expected based on the parental education and the percentage of at-risk racioethnicity in the student body. When analyzing the behavior of these superintendents when compared with Sergiovanni's theoretical framework the following patterns of behaviors are present. While the following tables do not represent every comment made during the semi-structured interviews the comments presented serve as a representative sample of these qualitative data displayed previously in this chapter.

Table 14

Sources of Authority - Superintendent 1 (Lower Achieving District)

Source of Authority	Audience	Behavior	Assumption	Consequences/Results
Bureaucratic	Students	Well, the bottom line unfortunately I think are the PSAE, and so how do we fare on a PSAE relative to others? Now, we're not going to make AYP; neither one of my schools are. However, if you look at Newsweek, South High School has been identified as one of the top schools in the state of Illinois and so our other indices are these. I want to see our enrollment at 95 percent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •External accountability works best. •Hierarchy equals expertise, and so supervisors know more than subordinates do. 	With proper monitoring, subordinates respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.

Psychological	Administrators	I have found that and I've watched through time, just the body language and something when I go into those meetings and in the back of my mind, which I find intriguing, is when you have a multi-school district, how do you keep them on the mission not only of keeping their school going but also things that are larger than the school itself.	Congenial relationships and a harmonious interpersonal climate make teachers content, easier to work with, and more apt to cooperate.	Develop a district climate characterized by high congeniality among administrators and between administrators and supervisors.
Technical-Rational	Teachers	I think technology, instructional technologies, we've made huge inroads. You know, prior to being the superintendent, at one time I wrote the consolidated grants for the district and so I wrote them the last two years as well. However, the point is that a one to one situation or whatever the environment is where the kids are largely surrounded by technology as they learn is really what I wanted to see. So over the course of the last two years we have	Supervision and teaching are applied sciences. Values, preferences and beliefs do not count but facts and objective evidence do.	With proper monitoring, subordinates respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.

		seen five new fully transformed classrooms; everything from social studies to English to PE now.		
Professional				
Moral	Community Members	I don't know if you know or not but we had a situation in this district last year where the wife of the head basketball coach was changing the grades of the basketball players. And so that consumed this district for a month and a half, two months. And it was an agenda item to keep us out of the newspaper and how do we establish legitimacy again with our constituents, with kids, with parents and to suggest that was kind of a rogue behavior.	Felt obligation and duties derived from widely shared community values, ideas, and ideals	Community members respond to community values for moral reasons; their practice becomes collective, and their performance is expansive and sustained.

Table 15

Sources of Authority - Superintendent 2 (Lower Achieving District)

Source of Authority	Audience	Behavior	Assumption	Consequences/Results
Bureaucratic	Teachers	<p>And well the state did something that in hindsight I think was very, very positive and very beneficial and the way we implemented it was very positive was they moved to this method of developing school improvement plans and action plans to carry out the goals of those plans by using this Rising Star online school improvement system.</p> <p>It wasn't revolutionary in terms of the process of school improvement, in terms of doing self-assessment, identifying goals, action planning that reached those goals, assessing your progress, and so forth, but it really gave a framework. We carried that out over the past two years to really completely restructure the way we work on school improvement.</p>	<p>External accountability works best.</p> <p>Hierarchy equals expertise, and so supervisors know more than subordinates.</p>	<p>With proper monitoring, subordinates respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.</p>

Psychological	Administrator	<p>And then I had a private conversation with her outside the meeting, too, to go through it and make sure she understood where I was coming from and making sure I was listening and making sure where I was coming from as well.</p> <p>She respected it and we are moving on and I feel it was the right decision. I still think she would have rather had it her way but I mean the relationship is intact still between us and she moved forward and hopefully there is not baggage continuing to be carried on.</p>	Supervisors must be experts in reading needs and in other people-handling skills, to negotiate successfully for compliance and increases in performance.	Administrators respond as required when rewards are available, but not otherwise; their involvement is calculated and performance is narrowed.
Technical-Rational	Board Members	I referred to some training that the board had gone through about through the School Board Association: Your job is to stay up here in the balcony. You don't go down to the dance floor or the factory floor or whatever analogy you want to sue. You don't manage, you	Values, preferences, and beliefs do not count but facts and objective evidence do.	With proper monitoring, board members respond as technicians, executing predetermined steps; performance is narrowed.

		govern. And so they listened.		
Professional	Board Members	I felt my role as Superintendent in guiding that process and that decision-making was to make sure that they understood everything at stake. I felt that that was my main concern. Part of my role as Superintendent with the Board is to recommend and try to guide them toward a certain decision, but at the same time it's about educating them and making sure they understand. I feel I did that. There were other parent groups that came in barking just as loudly that the Policy should say and this other data I mentioned; I tried to be respectful of both sides and being very open about what I thought made sense and I was okay with it to be honest.	Situations of practice are idiosyncratic, and no one best way exists.	Board members respond to professional norms; their practice becomes collective, they require little monitoring, and their performance is expansive.
Moral				

Table 16

Sources of Authority - Superintendent 6 (Lower Achieving District)

Source of Authority	Audience	Behavior	Assumption	Consequences/Results
Bureaucratic	Administrators	So people who work for me know that I really want critical discourse, that I want people to disagree with them, with each other. I want them to be very critical of me in that room, in that cabinet room. And then ultimately I sit, I listen and I make a decision.	Hierarchy equals expertise, and so supervisors know more than subordinates.	With proper monitoring, subordinates respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.
Psychological				
Technical-Rational	1) Community members 2) Board Members	1) And then at the end of each year, we also publish the five-year plan and this was the first year and you will see five-year plan, year two and this is the one that came out this year, five-year plan, year three. Basically what happens is it will go through those goals. It will talk about what we have done. It will talk about actual outcome data and what we are seeing,	1) Supervision and teaching are applied sciences. 2) Values, preferences and beliefs do not count but facts and objective evidence do	With proper monitoring, subordinates respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.

		<p>what the next step is, what we hope to see, costs and things like that, that's kind of all here, facility, again, stuff.</p> <p>2) I am a very, very big proponent of strategic planning. I would never take a job where I wasn't going to be allowed to develop that plan with the board and then be held accountable for that execution.</p>		
Professional				
Moral	Community Members	<p>That family liaison becomes very well known by our Urdu speakers, our Assyrian speakers, our Russian speakers, for example so they really become the conduit then for those constituents to have a voice.</p>	<p>Felt obligation and duties derived from widely shared community values, ideas, and ideals</p>	<p>Administrators respond to community values for moral reasons; their practice becomes collective, and their performance is expansive and sustained.</p>

Conversely, superintendents 3, 4 and 5 represent school districts where student's academic performance as measured by their ACT composite score was higher than expected based on the parental education and the percentage of at-risk racioethnicity in the student body. When analyzing the behavior of these superintendents when compared

with Sergiovanni's theoretical framework the following patterns of behaviors are present. While the following tables do not represent every comment made during the semi-structured interviews the comments presented serve as a representative sample of the data displayed previously in this chapter.

Table 17

Sources of Authority - Superintendent 3 (Higher Achieving District)

Source of Authority	Audience	Behavior	Assumption	Consequences/Results
Bureaucratic				
Psychological	Community Members	The political frame is not one that I like and enjoy but yet, that's probably where 80 percent of my time is spent is the politics. So I guess it's just a matter of struggling to understand it and any time a dilemma presents itself I guess I've learned the hard way you've got to peel that onion back a couple layers to find out what's really going on there. We deal with three, actually four very different communities and they don't necessarily like each other.	Congenial relationships and a harmonious interpersonal climate make teachers content, easier to work with, and more apt to cooperate.	Teachers respond as required when rewards are available, but not otherwise; their involvement is calculated and performance is narrowed.

Technical-Rational	Administrators	I would say we just came off a couple of years of putting together a very, very intense dynamic program of work as an offshoot of just doing some really good strategic planning. We hired the CEC to help us out with that and just did an awesome job. So we did a lot of leg work with that; a lot of homework. So this was our first year of actually deeply implementing the strategic plan. So it was a really fun year because we've spent a lot of time collecting data and stuff so we're now to the point where we can consume some of that.	Scientific knowledge is "superordinate" to practice.	With proper monitoring, teachers respond as technicians, executing predetermined steps; performance is narrowed.
Professional	Administrators	Facilitator mostly. I usually keep my voice out of it for a while, paint the picture, and kind of get the discussion rolling, but then I just take a backseat and sometimes if I have to draw closure or bring a couple	Authority cannot be external but comes from within the educator.	Subordinates respond to professional norms; their practice becomes collective, they require little monitoring and their performance is expansive.

		<p>consensus statements out; “It sounds to me like we’re kind of headed here. Is that where the group’s that?” You know, that kind of stuff. I will do some directive stuff, but I enjoy the facilitator role much more than the participant role.</p>		
Moral	Administrators	<p>Probably building a leadership team and nurturing that. I guess I’ve been blessed in a lot of ways to be surrounded with good people, and maybe two, just the philosophy of having a diverse team. So that any time we do have an opening take the hiring process very, very seriously. We fully define what it is that we need in that position before we even advertise and start the interview process because we look at the team and we want a balance there. We need a couple chair leaders, we need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Schools are professional learning communities. •Communities are defined by their centers of shared values, beliefs and commitments 	<p>Educators respond to community values for moral reasons; their practice becomes collective and their performance is expansive and sustained.</p>

		<p>a couple stats people, we need a couple structural type thinkers. We need a couple politicians. We need that full picture. So we don't want to hire clones of ourselves.</p> <p>I guess that to me was or is any success I've had, it really relates back to the team and collaborative decision making.</p>		
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Table 18

Sources of Authority - Superintendent 4 (Higher Achieving District)

Source of Authority	Audience	Behavior	Assumption	Consequences/Results
Bureaucratic	Community Members	You talk about communicating with people, of course, I have a quarterly newsletter, you know, websites have helped out tremendously. We are not sending out all-school mailings the way we used to.	Hierarchy equals expertise, and so supervisors know more than teachers do.	With proper monitoring, community members respond as technicians, executing predetermined scripts, their performance is narrowed.
Psychological				
Technical-Rational	Administrators	Sure, I think, again, is trying to find systems to generate, I can't say credible data, but to generate the information that actually reflects or gives you a chance to make some adjustments. Again, I am the science	Scientific knowledge is "superordinate" to practice.	With proper monitoring, teachers respond as technicians, executing predetermined steps; performance is narrowed.

		guy, so you know, formulas, math; those kinds of things work for me. Variables, I understand that.		
Professional	teachers	I am confident with the information that is being generated and the data that is being generated that it can be used and the base be used as the basis for decision-making that is going to be impactful. My hope is again the fact that you get all this information about how well your kids performed. Well, what does that mean? Where did they come to you and where did the finish? So if you, like I said before, have taken a kid from point A to point B, that's what you should be held accountable for. That's it in a nutshell in terms of what my ten years here have come down to relative to philosophy and also some of the programs and structures that have been put into place to support that philosophy.	The purpose of scientific knowledge is to inform, not prescribe practice.	Subordinates respond to professional norms; their practice becomes collective, they require little monitoring and their performance is expansive.
Moral	students	I can't let, not a handful, but probably 10 percent of our student body, drive the other 90 percent outcomes for everyone else because once that got in place fully it would deplete the AP opportunities for	Communities are defined by their centers of shared values, beliefs and commitments.	Educators respond to community values for moral reasons; their practice becomes collective and their performance is expansive and sustained.

		some of our other students. We didn't argue but we had some strong conversations behind closed doors in terms of how to develop this. And at some point in time, I get to be the Superintendent and say, "No," and I did in a number of cases.		
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Table 19

Sources of Authority - Superintendent 5 (Higher Achieving District)

Source of Authority	Audience	Behavior	Assumption	Consequences/Results
Bureaucratic				
Psychological	Community Members	I'm on the Chamber of Commerce, I've really gotten to know the mayor and the village trustees, when you're from the area originally it helps 'cause you all have this common history of growin' up, right. Everybody's Catholic, everybody's Irish, it's goofy but it's helped because it's helped me to be connected with the mayor, the trustees, the chamber, the business owners.	Congenial relationships and a harmonious interpersonal climate make teachers content, easier to work with, and more apt to cooperate.	Community Members respond as required when rewards are available, but not otherwise; their involvement is calculated and performance is narrowed.

Technical-Rational	Board members	Each board member ranked -- privately and individually -- they ranked their twelve, one through twelve. Without any changes, without any discussion, at that point nothing. I said I know this will work because at the end of the day, you might not get your top person but you will get one of your top people and we won't have this constant advocacy. And it worked beautifully.	Scientific knowledge is "superordinate" to practice.	With proper monitoring, board members respond as technicians, executing predetermined steps; performance is narrowed.
Professional	Students	Probably the most significant thing that I've done as superintendent is hire a math chair who -- before, we had this math/science chair 'cause it's so small. But she has transformed the math department. Transformed it in her three years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The purpose of scientific knowledge is to inform, not prescribe practice. •Authority cannot be external but comes from the context itself and from within the teacher. 	Subordinates respond to professional norms; their practice becomes collective, they require little monitoring and their performance is expansive.
Moral	Students	I would say, our biggest problem is complacency on the part of the students, they are not poorly behaved, they just don't have the drive to do anything. And if, as a teacher, you are a high	In communities, what is considered right and good is just as important as what works and what is effective; people are motivated as much by emotion and beliefs as by self-interest.	Educators respond to community values for moral reasons; their practice becomes collective and their performance is expansive and sustained.

		<p>performer, have at it, because these kids are like a piece of clay and you can really do it here. If you really want to be a teacher, this is the place to come, because our kids need these great teachers they don't have. You know a lot of our students do not have homes where their parents are that educated and that they know exactly what to do. And yet they're nice kids, they appreciate -- most of them came from Chicago; they know this is a nice place; it's safe. But you gotta do it.</p>		
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Based upon these qualitative data collected, all five null hypotheses were rejected due to the clear and distinct differences that emerged between superintendents in districts with lower-achieving high school students and superintendents in districts with higher-achieving high school students, in their use of (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority and (5) Moral Authority. While all six superintendents at one time or another used the preponderance of all five sources of authority, the key differences arise with the audiences where each source of authority was used. Superintendents 3, 4 and 5 all tended

to use moral and professional authority when leading on issues related to administrators, teachers and students. Conversely, while Superintendents 1, 2 and 6 also used moral and professional authority, they tended to use it when leading with the community or board of education. Given that students in these districts 3, 4, and 5 were more academically successful than students in district 1, 2, and 6, this researcher concludes that the superintendents who use professional and moral authority to make decisions that are closest to the classroom may contribute to a positive measureable impact on student achievement.

Summary

In this sequential explanatory mixed methods design, extant quantitative data was collected to answer the first two research questions. Secondly, six active superintendents in suburban Chicagoland were interviewed for this study. Chapter IV presents both the quantitative and qualitative data collected. In the next chapter, the interview data will be analyzed and triangulated with the Sergiovanni's five sources of authority and the community-aligned student achievement data collected for this research study.

The purpose of this research is to examine the leadership characteristics of superintendents across the 71 suburban Chicago school districts that include high schools and to more specifically answer these three research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?

2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of research methods, a summary of the research findings, and links between this study and related literature. Also considered in this chapter are the limitations of the current study along with recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and interpret these data obtained during this sequential explanatory mixed method research study. The collected data from the superintendent interviews were triangulated with community-aligned student achievement data and Sergiovanni's five sources of leadership authority found in the professional literature. Community-aligned student achievement data reflects not only a district's mean ACT composite score, but additional key factors which influence student achievement such as parent/guardian education level and racioethnicity. Then these data were analyzed with an eye toward emergent themes. Finally, in this chapter, limitations of this study and the opportunities for further research are identified.

Summary of Rationale and Research Methods

The purpose of this research was to examine the leadership characteristics of superintendents across the 71 suburban Chicago school districts that include high schools and to more specifically answer these three research questions:

1. To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
2. To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
3. When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

The first two research questions were answered using a quantitative model used to conduct two previous studies in 2008 and 2009 by Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois. In these studies he created a variable entitled BARR (bachelor's degree minus at-risk racioethnicity) which combined the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus $\frac{1}{2}$ the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school district. The third research question was answered after collecting qualitative interview data from semi-structured one-on-one interviews with six superintendents from suburban Chicago high school districts.

Conclusions

Research Question 1: *To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?*

There is little disagreement in the literature regarding the link between student academic achievement and the level of parent education (Coleman et al., 1966; Grubb, 2009; Skaling, 1971). What is notable about these results is the degree to which parental education predicted student academic achievement. The single most powerful variable in explaining ACT performance was the percent of households in the district where one parent had earned at least a bachelor's degree. This single piece of data predicted 81.1% of the variance in ACT scores within the 71 suburban districts. While this level of prediction is higher when compared to other studies of parental education (Magnuson & Duncan, 2006; Sirin, 2005), the data are similar to previous studies completed using the same quantitative model (Cordogan, 2008, 2009).

Research Question 2: *To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?*

Previous studies (Cordogan, 2008, 2009) suggested that while the percentage of at-risk racioethnicity in each district would predict a high degree of variance in student academic performance it would not be the strongest predictor. The 2011 data support this same conclusion. At-risk racioethnicity predicted 78.1% of the variance in ACT scores within the 71 suburban districts ($R^2 = .781$) making it the second strongest predictor of student academic performance.

Although many other studies examining the academic performance of minority students analyze the predictive power of data surrounding family income and poverty (Alwin & Thorton, 1984; Buriel & Cardoza, 1988; National Center on Education Policy, 2007; Roscigno, 2000) at-risk racioethnicity allows for a stronger comparison. There is no argument surrounding the positive relationship of at-risk racioethnicity to low income status. However, the most widely used measure of low income status, free/reduced lunch, is a flawed measure of such status. For various reasons (the stigma of registering, fear of identification for undocumented families, lack of interest in eating a school lunch, etc.), many low income students are not registered for free/reduced lunch and as a result these studies tend to underrepresent students of poverty belonging to at-risk racioethnic groups (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2009). Due to its increased accuracy, the predictive power of the relationship between a school district's at-risk racioethnicity percentage and the student academic performance is worthy of note.

To fully replicate the data analysis completed by Cordogan in 2008 and 2009, both sets of data were combined into a variable entitled BARR (bachelors degree minus at-risk racioethnicity) which combined the percentage of bachelor's degrees in the district minus one-half the percentage of racioethnically at-risk students in the school district. Using 2011 data the addition of at-risk racioethnic data added an additional 15.2% of explanation of variance. Therefore, the combination of the percentage of households in the district where one parent had earned at least a bachelor's degree and at-risk racioethnicity explained 93.6% of the variance in ACT scores ($R^2=.963$) for students in

71 suburban Chicagoland high schools.

While this combination of variables was the most powerful predictor of student performance in both 2008 and 2009, it is noteworthy that this combination of variables would be so much more powerful than a (albeit flawed) measure of low income. The fact that bachelor's degree level of the population and at-risk racioethnicity can explain 93.6% of the variance in suburban school ACT composite scores, all but 6.4% of the variance, is extremely surprising. Social science and educational research rarely see explanations of variance larger than 70% (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2001). The fact that this research closely mirrors both the 2008 and 2009 results suggest that these are not aberrant data, rather that these comparable results form a trend which offer a clear method of predicting student academic performance for suburban Chicagoland districts.

The policy implications for these results are clear: evaluation systems that do not consider demographic differences are largely meaningless. This also means that, once demographics are accounted for, district performance levels are not as different from each other as previous measures would have led us to believe (Center on Education Policy, 2007).

It is critical to note that these findings do not mean that district performance is predestined by demographics. If predestination were a reality, then it would not be possible to close the achievement gap or allow education to serve a fundamental part of a democratic society (Klein, 2006; Kohn, 2004). Consequently when a district does show student academic achievement at a higher level than other districts with similar

demographic profiles there all the more reason to attribute these differences to the leadership, curricular alignment and teaching that is taking place in those successful districts. And conversely when student performance is lower than other districts with similar community-aligned student achievement data, the effectiveness of the leadership in that district can legitimately be examined for its effectiveness.

Research Question 3: When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school students to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

The six superintendents interviewed for the qualitative portion of this study constitute a representative sample of the demographic variation that exists in suburban Chicagoland. The school district sizes ranged from 902 students to 4730 students. The superintendents represented both single high school districts and multi-high school districts. Additionally, per pupil spending ranged from a low of \$6,961 to a high of \$12,563 across the six districts. The average experience of these superintendents was 4.66 years compared to an Illinois average of 4.23 years (Illinois Association of School Boards, 2009).

One area in which these superintendents differed significantly from their peers in Illinois as well as their peers nationally was their employer prior to becoming

superintendent. Nationally 1 in 3 superintendents are hired from within their district (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000) but within this sample all six superintendents (100%) were hired from within their districts. Regarding their ascent to the superintendency, four of the six described a rather traditional path of interviewing along with a pool of candidates while the two female participants in the study detailed a process by which they were sought out and asked to apply for the position:

Superintendent 5: “When I was principal, the superintendent, who had already had his intent to retire approved by the Board, came into my office and said ‘do you want to be the superintendent?’ They were just like practically handing me the job, but I was still reluctant.”

Superintendent 6: “I was the assistant superintendent and then when the superintendent planned to retire my job kind of turned into the deputy superintendent and then the understanding was if things went well for two years I would be the superintendent of schools.”

These cases run contrary to the research regarding the administrative careers of minority and female applicants. The research contrasted the opportunities offered to Caucasian men with minorities and women (DeAngelis, 2003). In the 2003 study 20% of the Caucasian men received administrative positions without a formal interview process while none of the women or minority candidates had that advantage. While the two cases included in this 2012 study may reveal questionable ethics on the part of retiring superintendents, it also serves to illustrate the change in the perception of female

administrators in Chicagoland as worthy of the same “insider” considerations of their male counterparts.

With regard to Sergiovanni’s sources of authority, it became clear through the interview process that all six superintendents lead using different sources of authorities depending on the audience and the situation (see Tables 10-15). The key difference between superintendents of higher performing districts and superintendents of lower performing districts was with which audience they chose to lead using moral and professional authorities. Superintendents in the higher performing districts (superintendents 3, 4 and 5) all chose to use moral and professional authority when leading on issues related to administrators, teachers and students. Conversely, while superintendents in lower performing districts (superintendents 1, 2 and 6) used moral and professional authority, when leading with the community or board of education. Given that students in these districts 3, 4 and 5 were more academically successful than students in districts 1, 2, and 6, this researcher concludes that the superintendents who use professional and moral authority to make decisions that are closest to the classroom have a positive and measureable impact on student achievement.

Sergiovanni (1992) believes that the moral dimension of leadership needs to be moved to the center of all the leader does. If the leader does this successfully, then the organization will transform into a community of people committed to shared values and people’s actions will be in concert with the shared values. Given this context it should not be surprising that Superintendents 3, 4 and 5 chose to use moral authority for their

leadership on the issues that most directly impact students.

Superintendent 5: “If you really want to be a teacher, this is the place to come, because our kids need these great teachers, they don’t that at home.”

Superintendent 4: “I can’t let, not a handful, but probably 10 percent of our student body, drive the other 90 percent outcomes for everyone else because once that got in place fully it would deplete the AP opportunities for some of our other students.”

Superintendent 3: “I guess that to me any success I’ve had, it really relates back to the team and collaborative decision making.”

When decisions closest to the classroom are given the highest priority and the leader centers his or her decision-making around moral authority then the district will transform into what Sergiovanni (1992) describes a community of people committed to shared values. As a result, people’s actions will be in concert with the shared values all focused on providing better opportunities for students.

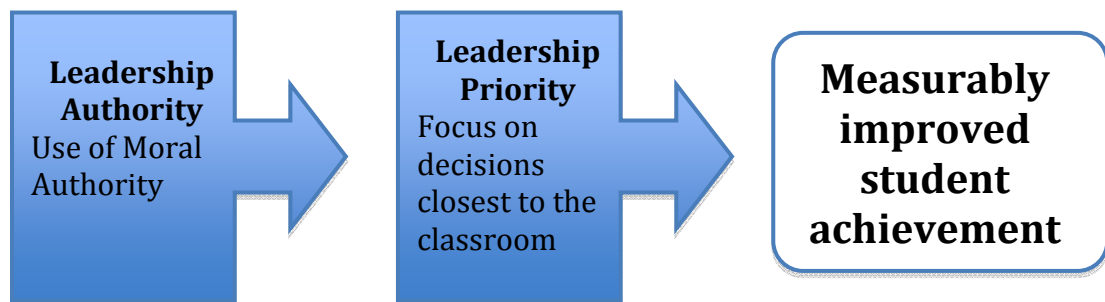


Figure 7. Moral Authority Closest to the Classroom

Implications for Educational Practice

The success or failure of a school district and its students often hinges on the effectiveness of leadership. If the impact of a classroom-focused superintendent using moral authority so clearly improves outcomes for students then why is this phenomenon not more widespread? The answer to this question lies in better understanding all of the factors that inhibit superintendents from maintaining a classroom focus.

While there are innumerable obstacles for superintendents to overcome in order to maintain a focus and direction for the district they lead, the single factor that all study participants referenced repeatedly was the stability (or lack thereof) of the Board of Education. As Superintendent 4 stated “if you spend all of your time putting out fires and settling petty disputes with Board members you will not be able to be the type of instructional leader you want to be, it simply isn’t possible.”

For an example of how difficult achieving this focus can be, Superintendent 2 spent six months working on a dispute between Board members and a change to the school cell phone policy. He stated that during this six-month process:

I felt my role as Superintendent in guiding that process and that decision-making was to make sure that they understood everything at stake. I felt that that was my main concern. Part of my role as Superintendent with the Board is to recommend and try to guide them toward a certain decision, but at the same time it’s about educating them and making sure they understand. I feel I did that. There were other parent groups that came in

barking just as loudly that the Policy should stay so again, I tried to be respectful of both sides and being very open about what I thought made sense.

There is little doubt that Superintendent 2 had a myriad of curricular issues that required his attention during that six-month period but it is also understandable why a leader would use a bureaucratic or technical-rational authority to make decision on those same issues: expediency. Solving curricular questions this way typically results in a narrowing of performance with teachers responding as technicians (Sergiovanni, 1992) but it allows a superintendent to make a decision quickly and return to the Board-centered challenges that tend to occupy more than the desired amount of time.

In addition to the degree of stability of Board of Education a second significant factor that is necessary, but not by itself sufficient for success, is the ability for the superintendent to understand the district culture and build relationships that will help avoid time consuming pitfalls. Superintendent 3 offered a particularly salient perspective on this issue derived from the fact that he experienced his first superintendency in a district where he did not have previous experience and his second superintendency in a district where he had experience as a principal.

I think building the culture, shaping the culture, and enhancing the culture is a long-term thing. The climate is a day-to-day kind of thing but the culture is more of that long-term. I think a lot of it is it takes you a couple years just to learn your community, just to learn what's out there. Unless

you have been brought up in the system and are a product of that, you are really coming into foreign ground.”

Superintendent 4 notes he benefited from experience and relationships built over a decade-long tenure in his current district:

I am probably in a more unique situation than most in the sense that the board know who I am from the ten years I was here as principal. There is a different trust level that you may have with a superintendent that just comes in hired from another outside district or for that superintendent who makes a huge jump, I know at a neighboring school district, for example, you had a department chair who had a pretty substantial history jump into the superintendent’s role. Well when you do that like I said, hopefully you have enough of a track record that the trust is built and it goes back to the dynamic too that hopefully your board is a stable Board.

It is important to understand that service to a district alone does not determine the ability of a superintendent to be an effective instructional leader. Superintendent 2 notes that even his long tenure in the district did not prepare him for the change in the role of the superintendent this past year.

Again, I have the benefit of 20 years here of knowing and while you never say ‘never’ there is always some new situation you never dealt with. This elimination of the principal role here in our district is a perfect example, I am not saying that it is not working, but I feel overwhelmed at times just

with the responsibilities of the needs of the Board in my superintendent role, the needs of my relationships with the community and the business leaders and the other governmental entities.

As a result, when considering candidates for the superintendency the impact of tenure should be considered with the understanding that while experience is necessary, it is not sufficient for successful leadership. As Heifetz (2004) notes: the solutions for effective leaders “lie not in technical answers, but rather in people themselves”. The issue is not how many years of experience a superintendent has in a particular district, but rather what he or she learned in those years.

Considerations for Boards of Education

As superintendents across the country are employed by their Boards of Education it is important to note just how large a role those boards have in the ability of their superintendents to be effective instructional leaders. As described by these respondents, without the “noise” of personal and political disputes among the ranks of board members, superintendents can devote the critical time and energy towards classroom-based decision making that can directly impact student achievement.

Additionally while it may be attractive to the community for Boards of Education to trumpet the results of a “nation-wide search” for their next superintendent, it is critical for board members to understand what challenges relative to organizational culture face an incoming superintendent with little or no knowledge of the district. As superintendent

3 describes it this “foreign ground” requires time, energy and effort to decode and understand. This is critical because as superintendent 4 stated: “you will always use 100% of your time, the question is what will you be doing with it.” In this case, as new superintendents are attempting to understand and acclimate to the culture of their new districts they are not able to devote as much time to the critical issues of teaching and learning that directly impact the classrooms across the district.

Considerations for Superintendents

There will always be obstacles to any organization maximizing its effectiveness. In the case of school districts the leadership of the superintendent has the most significant ability to remove those obstacles. Regardless of the current political and economic climate, superintendents will always be faced with challenges that distract their focus from the teaching and learning that goes on every day in their school districts. Glasspool (2006) notes that “the school superintendent is not longer a supervisor of procedures and technical operations but a person who is a leader focused on a common goal.”

Based on the findings in this research study it is the recommendation of this researcher that superintendents examine that “common goal” in each of their districts to affirm that it is exclusively focused on the teaching and learning in the classroom. Superintendents who operated with this focus on the classroom (Superintendents 3, 4 and 5) saw their students make achievement gains that outpaced predictions based on demographic factors. Superintendents in this study who directed their attention elsewhere (superintendents 1, 2 and 6), saw student performance suffer as a result.

In addition to an organizational focus on teaching and learning, superintendents are encouraged to re-examine how they make their decisions. Superintendents who focused their moral and professional authority on individuals and organizations outside of their schools saw student performance suffer as a result. Even noble efforts such as those made by Superintendent 6 involving employing a family liaison for community outreach “that family liaison becomes very well known by our Urdu speakers, our Assyrian speakers, our Russian speakers, for example so they really become the conduit then for those constituents to have a voice” can serve to inhibit efforts to use that same moral authority in decision making for the classroom. While it is optimistic to think that superintendents can operate at this high level for all of their decisions the results from this research study would suggest otherwise. Moral Leadership takes valuable time. It is impossible for superintendents to operate from this authority with every decision they make. There is no doubt that prioritizing decision making to emphasize expediency in decisions external to the schools and deliberate moral authority in decisions closest to the classroom is challenging. Based on the results of this research, superintendents can make these difficult changes in practice knowing that student achievement will directly benefit from their efforts.

Limitations

This research study is subject to a number of limitations imposed by the research design and time constraints. From a quantitative perspective it is important to note that the proposed parental education data comes from a 2008 Council of Chief State School

Officers (CCSSO) database and that comparable 2010 census data has not yet been released. These data are collected by municipality with a high degree, but not perfect, of alignment with school districts. Additionally the ACT data included in school report cards in Illinois are always one year behind (e.g., the 2011 school report cards will have ACT data collected in the spring of 2010).

Secondly, the use of at-risk racioethnicity slightly favors districts whose Hispanic populations are disproportionately classified as ELL. The Classes of 2009 and 2010 have few ELL students in their data, since most ELL students take the PSAE ACT with state accommodations, which renders the test unofficial in ACT's eyes, excluding it from the computation of school and district means for final class means. Therefore, a district will have a higher at-risk level but will not have a corresponding level of at-risk students taking an ACT. Due to the fact that only three of the 71 districts have student populations that fit these criteria, the overall impact on the findings is minor.

In keeping with the model established by Cordogan in 2008 and 2009, multiracial students were not included in calculating at-risk racioethnicity. Some multiracial students have racioethnic combinations that include one or more at-risk racioethnic category, as a result at-risk racioethnicity is slightly underestimated.

The data received from ACT is likely to be slightly flawed. An examination of the data in the electronic file from which the final class report is generated shows students without identifiers and students who are not even in our district. However, the error rate was only 1% at most, so the measures remain very accurate.

From a qualitative perspective, it is critical to note that the researcher has a professional acquaintance with the interview subjects. Through his professional career and work as a doctoral student the researcher has met or worked with many of the 71 superintendents in the Chicagoland area. This personal knowledge is important to acknowledge as it may have influenced both the participation rate and quality of the interviews.

The researcher kept a journal relative to the interview process. Following each interview entries were made to collect impressions of the researcher about the subject and his or her affect that could not be captured via audio recording. Additionally, the researcher explicitly stated any bias he perceived regarding his opinion of the interview subject or the school district. These entries were reviewed as these data were collected to control for any potential misrepresentation of these qualitative data.

Additionally four of the six superintendents interviewed received their doctoral degrees and superintendent certification through Loyola University Chicago. Although two of the superintendents led higher performing districts and two led lower performing districts, this common academic background knowledge is important to acknowledge as it may have influenced both the participation rate and quality of the interviews. Finally, all six superintendents were hired from previous positions within their districts. Although this is not the norm nationally, it was true of all six participants with in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the unique nature of Illinois' school districts this research was conducted with high school student achievement measured by ACT composite scores and interviews that were conducted with superintendents who were in charge of districts that served exclusively 9th-12th grade students. Research that expands this design to include superintendents that serve both elementary and secondary students would be a welcome addition to the professional knowledge base.

While this study was conducted using a sequential explanatory mixed methods protocol there is a great deal of potential in pursuing further research on superintendent leadership from a quantitative perspective. Research that proposed scaling Sergiovanni's sources of leadership authority for use with Hierarchical Linear Modeling would contribute a great deal to the literature due to the fact that it would limit researcher bias in this key area.

Summary

This research study explored the critical nature of the connection between student achievement and superintendent leadership. A great deal of scholarship has addressed either student achievement or leadership and previous evidence has suggested the impact of both parental education and racioethnicity on student achievement, but few studies have investigated the relationship between the superintendent's leadership authority and the achievement of his or her students.

The central research questions of this study are:

- 1) To what degree does parental education predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
- 2) To what degree does racioethnicity predict high school student achievement in suburban Chicagoland?
- 3) When comparing districts with lower-achieving high school to districts with higher-achieving high school students, and taking into account factors of parental education and racioethnicity, how do Suburban Chicagoland superintendents differ in their use of the following five sources of authority for leadership as defined by Sergiovanni: (1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority?

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methodology. Participants included six superintendents from the 71 districts in suburban Chicago that include high schools. Three of these superintendents led districts where student achievement is exceeding projections and three led districts where student achievement is not meeting projections. The subsequent data collected from the superintendents' interviews was triangulated with community-aligned student achievement data as well as Sergiovanni's five sources of authority.

This study concluded that community-aligned student achievement data predicted 93.6% of the variance in student achievement as measured by the ACT composite score. Boards of Education are encouraged to examine the impact of their practice on the

effectiveness of the superintendent. As superintendent 4 noted: “you will always use 100% of your time, the question is what will you be doing with it.” Thus, when Board of Education members can reduce the “noise” of their personal and political disputes, superintendents can devote their critical time and energy towards classroom-based decision making focused on the growth of children in our schools instead of mediating arguments between adults. Time is a zero sum game. When Boards of Education and their superintendents can align their efforts toward improving student achievement rather than appeasing the multitudes of interest groups in their communities, real opportunities for success can become reality for our students. Additionally while superintendents used nearly all of Sergiovanni’s sources of authority with different audiences, superintendents who used moral authority in decision-making that directly impacted the classroom had a positive and measureable impact on student achievement.

This researcher does not doubt that the sentiment expressed by Reeves in 2004 is still deeply held by superintendents across the country “school superintendents are far more motivated in the success of the students they serve than the transient appreciation (or condemnation) of political forces.” It is the sincere hope of this researcher that superintendents will use the results of this study to reinforce their commitment to student achievement and as a result increase the success of their students.

APPENDIX A
LETTER OF COOPERATION

LETTER OF COOPERATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Superintendent Leadership and Student Achievement in Suburban High Schools: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis.

Researcher: Steven Kellner

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marla Israel

Introduction:

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Steven Kellner for his dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because of your professional experiences in school district leadership and the fact that, as superintendent, you face critical decisions (affecting others) on a regular basis.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in this study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the superintendency from the perspective of student achievement. This research will examine decision-making processes of superintendents, specifically how they make critical decisions related to student achievement and what strategies inform those critical decisions.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions of the researcher you wish before agreeing to participate in this study. You may contact the researcher at 224-456-5881.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Sign and return this “Letter of Cooperation.” Please download this “Letter of Cooperation” onto your personal stationery. Please sign the form and return it to the researcher in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. Signing and returning this letter of cooperation will indicate your agreement to participate in this research study.
- Participate in an hour-long interview about your experiences involving your route to the superintendency and your decision-making as superintendent. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to sign a “Consent to Participate in Research” letter. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. The transcriber hired for this

purpose has also signed a confidentiality agreement. Throughout the interview, your responses will be checked with you for accuracy. You will have the opportunity to suggest revisions to the transcript, if necessary. Once the transcript is in a final stage, all identifiers will be removed.

Risks/Benefits:

There are slight risks to be considered in the participation of this study. The researcher's intent is to have an open conversation about the superintendency and decision-making as it relates to student achievement. Scrupulous precautions will be undertaken to ensure your anonymity as a study participant. There are no direct benefits to you from participation; however, it is hoped this study will add to the body of research in leadership, education, and the superintendency, in particular. Additionally, it is hoped the information cited in this study will benefit current and future educational leaders.

Confidentiality:

- All responses will remain confidential. Each respondent will receive a unique identification number. All data will be analyzed/coded using the identification number. Individual names or the names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing.
- The audio tape recordings of the interviews will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home. Once the final writing of the research is completed, the recordings will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you may elect not to answer a specific question or to withdraw from participation in the study at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please contact:

Steven Kellner at kellner.sr@gmail.com

Dr. Marla Israel at misrael@luc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Cooperation

I, the Superintendent, agree to cooperate in the research to be conducted by Steven Kellner, a Loyola Doctoral student. His project, entitled "*Superintendent Leadership and Student Achievement in Suburban High Schools: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis*," along with the outlined research protocols are understood.

Superintendent Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions

Let's talk about your career trajectory:

How long have you been a superintendent?

How long have you been a superintendent in this district?

How long did you work in educational administration before becoming a superintendent?

Did you work in this district before assuming the superintendency?

How many years of your administrative career taken place in Illinois school districts?

General Leadership Questions

Describe the administrative hierarchy in your district. What changes have you made to this structure since assuming the superintendency? Explain why you made those changes.

Describe your work with your administrative team/cabinet. What are the most common topics on your agendas and in your meetings?

In your work with the Board of Education do you use subcommittees or a Committee of the Whole structure? Explain why you chose one over the other.

As part of your responsibilities, do you evaluate building principals? If not which member of your central office has that responsibility?

Sergovanni Questions

(1) Bureaucratic Authority, (2) Psychological Authority, (3) Technical-Rational Authority, (4) Professional Authority, (5) Moral Authority.

As the instructional leader of the district what is currently your top priority? Has this changed during your tenure in this district?

In what areas have you found yourself to be most effective as a leader? In what areas have you found the most challenges with your leadership? Explain why or why not.

How do you make decisions to get things done? Explain why you do things that way.

What are the metrics of success that you use to measure whether or not a particular decision was successful?

How do you communicate with the various stakeholders of your school district?

What factors or considerations influence and/ or inform your decision-making?

When a member of your leadership team disagrees with one of your decisions describe how do you typically respond. Could you give an example of this in action?

Describe how you have changed as a leader during your career as a superintendent.

Please discuss a particular controversial decision that needed to be made during your time as superintendent and the story behind it. Discuss the processes used and the stakeholders involved.

APPENDIX C
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Superintendent Leadership and Student Achievement in Suburban High Schools: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis.

Researcher: Steven Kellner

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marla Israel

Introduction:

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Steven Kellner for his dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because of your professional experiences in school district leadership and the fact that your position faces critical decisions (affecting others) on a regular basis.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in this study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the superintendency from the perspective of student achievement. This research will examine decision-making processes of superintendents, specifically how they make critical decisions related to student achievement and what strategies inform those critical decisions.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an hour-long interview about your experiences involving your route to the superintendency and your decision-making. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. Throughout the interview, your responses will be checked with you for accuracy. You will have the opportunity to suggest revisions to the transcript, if necessary. Once the transcript is in a final stage, all identifiers will be removed.

Risks/Benefits:

There are slight risks to be considered in the participation of this study. The researcher's intent is to have an open conversation about the superintendency and decision making as it relates to student achievement. Scrupulous precautions will be undertaken to ensure your anonymity as a study participant. There are no direct benefits to you from participation; however, it is hoped this study will add to the body of research in

leadership, education, and the superintendency, in particular. Additionally, it is hoped the information cited in this study will benefit current and future educational leaders.

Confidentiality:

- All responses will remain confidential. Each respondent will receive a unique identification number. All data will be analyzed/coded using the identification number. Individual names or the names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing.
- The audio tape recordings of the interviews and the transcripts will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home. Once the final writing of the research is completed, the recordings will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you may elect not to answer a specific question or to withdraw from participation in the study at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please contact:

Steven Kellner at kellner.sr@gmail.com

Dr. Marla Israel at misrael@luc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Superintendent's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, _____, have agreed to perform the duties of audiotape transcriber for a research study being conducted by Steven Kellner, Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago.

I understand the nature of this work will involve sensitive and confidential information about the interview subjects. By signing this agreement, I agree to keep all transcript information confidential and in a secure place when in my possession. Furthermore, the information in my possession will not be shared verbally or visually with anyone except the researcher.

Steven Kellner will provide the necessary equipment for me to transcribe the audiotape interviews from his study. This will include earphones, so that I may listen to the tapes confidentially. Transcriptions and audiotapes will be kept in a locked portfolio, provided by the researcher, while in my possession.

I agree to the confidentiality terms of this agreement.

Signature of Audiotape Transcriber: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

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VITA

Steven Kellner is a Chicagoland native, born in Lake Forest, Illinois, growing up in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Steven earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, majoring in Speech Communication and History in 1993. He then earned his teaching certification in English and Social Science as an Eli Lilly fellow in the Teacher as Decision Maker graduate program at Indiana University.

While working as a classroom teacher at Community High School District 94 in West Chicago, Illinois, he earned a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Type 75 certification from Aurora University in 2006.

Steven began his administrative career in 2006 as a Division Head for Social Science, Foreign Language and English Language Learning at Wheeling High School in Township High School District 214. He also served as Associate Principal for Instruction at Wheeling from 2007 until 2011.

In the fall of 2008, he began the doctoral program in Educational Administration and Supervision at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois.

Currently, Steven is the Director of Professional Learning for Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois where he lives with his wife and son.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation submitted by Steven Reese Kellner has been read and approved by the following committee:

Marla Israel, Ed.D., Director
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Meng-Jia Wu, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Harry Rossi, Ed.D.
Part-Time Faculty, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago